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UNBECOMING SILICON VALLEY: TECHNO IMAGINARIES AND MATERIALITIES IN POSTSOCIALIST ROMANIA

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

FEMINIST STUDIES

by

Erin Mariel Brownstein McElroy

June 2019

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Table of Contents

Abstract, iv-v

Acknowledgements, vi-xi

Introduction: Unbecoming Silicon Valley: Techno Imaginaries and Materialities in Postsocialist Romania, 1-44

Chapter 1: Digital Nomads in Siliconizing Cluj: Material and Allegorical Double Dispossession, 45-90

Chapter 2: Corrupting Techno-normativity in Postsocialist Romania: Queering Code and Computers, 91-127

Chapter 3: The Light Revolution, Blood Gold, and the New Times of IKEA: Impossible Spaces of Dissent in the Dawn of Techno-fascism, 126-188

Chapter 4: Postsocialism, Technofascism, and the Tech Boom 2.0: From Technologies of Racial/spatial Dispossession to the Dark Enlightenment, 189-252

Chapter 5: Hacking the Inimical of Post-Cold War Time: Mr. Robot, the Dark Army, and the Doomsday Machine, 253-301

Chapter 6. Non-Alignment in Outer Space: From the Ruins of Postsocialist Astrofuturism, 302-336

Epilogue: Blackface on the Nightshift, Proptech AI, and the Posthuman Landlord, 337-344

Bibliography, 345-402

Endnotes, 403-404

Abstract

Unbecoming Silicon Valley: Techno Imaginaries and Materialities in Postsocialist Romania

by Erin McElroy

Unbecoming Silicon Valley: Techno Imaginaries and Materialities in Postsocialist Romania traces the racial and technocultural worlds tethering postsocialist Romania and post-Cold War Silicon Valley. Geographically, it traverses the Romanian cities of Bucharest, Cluj, and Râmnicu Vâlcea, the Molovan city of Chișinău, as well as the San Francisco Bay Area. Questioning what it means for postsocialist Romania to desire "becoming" Silicon Valley, it also asks how imaginaries of illiberal, corrupt postsocialist Eastern Europe informs the post-Cold War West. Methodologically, I engage ethnography, as well as reading and at times coproducing technology, maps, speculative fiction, media, infrastructure, and archival work. While deeply invested in the politics of displacement, I focus upon how socialist and pre-socialist techno-urban histories are updated, hacked, and rearranged in postsocialist times.

Analytically, I engage the concept of *Silicon Valley imperialism*, or the global condition in which Silicon Valley's existence is necessitated by its unending growth, and in which it devours people's intimate lives and personal data while also consuming global and even outer space imaginaries in novel ways. Silicon Valley imperialism deploys what I describe as *racial technocapitalism,* a concept that I use to map racial dispossession amidst technocapitalism. Engaging these twin concepts allows for a decentralized analysis of race, space, politics, and technocultural reproduction. By tracking their geographic entwinement, I theorize a postsocialist

moment. In this way, I read postsocialism as a post-1989 condition that endures on both sides of the former Iron Curtain, and that recodes configurations of race and empire today. In this way, I position the current "Tech Boom 2.0" in Silicon Valley as a postsocialist phenomenon. I also analyze how, as socialist-era techno-culture is pathologized on both sides of the former Iron Curtain, pre-socialist fascist technological imaginaries are reinterpreted in the name of anticommunism. And yet, socialist-era technologies and their aftermaths endure, entwined in wires and infrastructure, while also coded into hardware and speculative fiction. As I question, how, by reading technological futures past, might we dream of new technological futures yet-to-come, futures illegible to Silicon Valley imperialism and racial technocapitalism alike.

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Introduction—Unbecoming Silicon Valley: Techno Imaginaries and Materialities in Postsocialist Romania

"Is this what it's really like in Silicon Valley?" my friend asks me, imagining that the Romanian city of Cluj's recent rebranding as "the Silicon Valley of Europe" implies two-way comparativity. Somehow, we've managed to find our way inside the Japanese NTT Data's new Cluj branch, and feelings of curiosity and clandestineness have overcome us, even though there's nothing sneaky about our being inside. NTT Data, an information technology (IT) firm "nearshoring" an array of software services and "real-time solutions" with "global delivery capabilities" in forty countries, acquired Romania's own EBS software company in 2013. Soon after, it remodeled the former office, in part paving the way for "urban renewal" of the downtown Mărăști neighborhood. Flashing a colossal sign godlike upon the techno horizon, NTT's interior is replete with fake wall plants, human-shaped robots, and large soft mushroom statues, all appealing to the astrofuturist science fiction aesthetic of outer space travel and speculative futures. The fourth floor, home to wEBSiteBistro, is now opened up to guests, where one can order food and drinks from electronic pads on the balcony, surrounded by cranes and the echoing sounds of new development. This is where we are, sitting upon the threshold of Europe's new Silicon Valley.

Over the last decade, Romania's IT industry has gained international attention, with the country boasting the continent's fastest internet and a growth of startups and firms, particularly in Bucharest and Cluj, but also in cities such as Timișoara, Iași, and Brașov. Across these cities, technology capital, real estate, and urban politics

have been entangling in new ways, often resulting in increased rents around newly constructed IT office buildings, as well as racial dispossession. As property values and entrepreneurial culture boom, Roma residents are frequently pushed to peripheral wastelands, to interstitial spaces squeezed between the urban and rural. At the same time, anticommunist protests known as the "Light Revolution," largely designed by the IT sector, use technology to index Western aspirations and create temporal distance from Romania's "dark" socialist past. In doing so, they often fetishize the pre-socialist interbellum, which in Romania was marked by fascism and eugenics—other technologies of race and racialization. It was then that Bucharest was recognized as "the Little Paris of the East," and Timișoara as "the Little Vienna of the East." How do these past moments of aspirational comparativity relate to the updated "Little Silicon Valley" of today? What other worlds might come into being or become visible if Silicon Valley ceased being read as the zero point of contemporary analysis, and if we began instead to read history as connected and accumulative rather than as just comparative? To address these quesions, in this project, rather than employing a comparative framework, in which two distinct spaces are compared side by side, I advocate for connected methods, which foreground entanglements across space and time.[1] My connected approach remains rooted in community organizing, and centers housing, technological, and cartographic justice as fields of inquiry.

While economists understand the contemporary tech boom to be driving economic and urban growth in Romania (Colliers International 2018), IT usage and effects vary dramatically across the country. After all, Romania not only contains one of the EU's highest poverty rates, but also fewer IT personnel per total employment

than any other European country except Greece, along with a low IT GDP percentage (Eurostat 2018a; Eurostat 2018b; Eurostat 2018c). Yet in Cluj, IT is the largest professional sector, driven by global capital and outsourcing, meanwhile fed by public universities offering a wealth of courses in programming, hardware development, and more. Most firms are outsourcing ventures, seeking cheap labor, technological prowess, and a form of "Europeanness" harder to obtain in more geographically but also culturally distant Global South and East locales.

In Mărăști, but also in Bucharest's Pipera neighborhood, once home to socialist era computer development, many IT workers earn up to five times more than their neighbors (Fiscutean 2014a; Petrovici 2019). Today, these technologists are enwrapped in contexts of gentrification, much as in California's own Silicon Valley. At the same time, Western tech workers, some of whom parade as "digital nomads" by using anti-Roma racially appropriative language, are landing in Romania, contributing to contexts of global tech-induced gentrification.

Nevertheless, Romania is clearly not Silicon Valley. Further, this is not the first time in which the country has experienced a technology boom. Cyber development was deeply entrenched within the socialist project, while also uniquely characterizing socialist and postsocialist underground IT practices. While Romania produced the most third-generation computers in the Eastern bloc during socialism (1960s and 1970s machines with integrated circuits and miniaturized transistors), it also hacked Western computer models to produce an array of fourth-generation microprocessor computers in the 1980s. After socialism, underground practices of cabling, piracy, and hardware assemblage characterized the transitional period.

Siliconization has meant the capitalization of these practices and infrastructure, along with the cheap labor that nearshoring provides. What does Romania's current Silicon Valley status index of its postsocialist present, and what unique IT and property histories endure, formally and underground?

My friend and I, as members of Căși Sociale Acum (Social Housing Now), are in the midst of a collective mapping project of Mărăști gentrification, and there is probably no better place than NTT's balcony from which to observe the terrain. As we have been charting, with the Siliconization of the neighborhood, evictions are on the rise, disproportionately targeting Roma households. In this way, Siliconization echoes processes of tech-driven racial dispossession in California's own Silicon Valley, where technocapitalist growth constitutes and is co-constituted by a form of racism – one coated in (and coded through) liberalism. In Cluj, or *orașul viitorului* (city of the future), socialist-era infrastructure is hollowed and mined to become the technology of the future. This transpires as Roma residents are displaced, some of whom end up homeless, racially banished to the city's waste site, Pata Rât.

Siliconization, in other words, dispels those remaindered by techno-urban renewal to the wastelands of Western modernization, to interstitial geographies known as the *maidane* that border the urban and rural. Just blocks away from NTT, on Anton Pann Street, a Roma family who had been living there for twenty-two years was recently evicted. And today, we ran into a Roma couple who will be displaced later this month. Living upon a crumbling lot without running water or utilities, squeezed between the new City Casa residential complex and the new German iQuest campus, they knew that their time was limited as soon as the cranes came in. "All of

the space around here is becoming too valuable," they shrugged on their break from a job recycling cardboard with a motor-less cart. While socialist urbanization provided housing and jobs to Roma (many of whom had been living precariously before socialism began in 1946 due to a *longue durée* of racism), postsocialist technological urbanism, or techno-urbanism, restores former racialized property regimes.

This dissertation project focuses upon the fictions and frictions caught up in postsocialist Siliconization. By fictive, on one hand I allude to the speculative fantasies and desires entrenched in both socialist and postsocialist technocultures. But also, I suggest that Romania's Siliconized status is one of many imagined narratives that, while partly true, also elides other histories. In this way, my project refers to imaginaries that the contemporary tech boom is simply a result of what I describe as *Silicon Valley imperialism*, or the global condition in which Silicon Valley's existence is necessitated by its unending growth, in which, zombie-like, it penetrates and devours people's intimate lives and personal data while also consuming global and even outer space imaginaries in novel ways. It's true that as an imperial form, Silicon Valley aims to augment its own reproduction "at home" in California by instilling new fantasies of "becoming Silicon Valley" upon various terrains. This occurs in its urban peripheries, for instance, in Oakland, but also globally. Yet whether in Oakland or in Romania, while Silicon Valley imperialism (or *techno-imperialism* for short) is real, so are older histories of racial capitalism and imperialism, upon which Siliconization rests. Also real are other techno-urban futures and futures past, unrecognizable to Silicon Valley imperialism. These are often deleted through Silicon Valley's attempts to maintain sovereignty. Yet some

obstinately remain, rubbing up against and put into friction with Western aspirations, desires, materialities, and imaginaries (Rofel 2007; Tadiar 2009; Tsing 2005). These deleted and enduring histories, futures, and futures past, I argue, are requisite in understanding the contours of the postsocialist present. Their very infrastructures and visions are enfolded into the Silicon Valley of the East, haunting its real and unreal present—sometimes overtly, sometimes in back-end code.

Romania, a country that bears long and complex histories of fantasizing the West, is an apt place from which to study both real and imagined iterations of Silicon Valley imperialism and its methods of *techno-normativity*, or the reproduction of Silicon Valley's futurity through installations of Western aspirational fantasies. Techno-normativity erases Romania's own cyber deviance from historical memory, installing fantasies of Western recognition. Silicon Valley, as a Cold War construct exacerbated in post-Cold War times, has not only helped shape the dreams wrapped up in postsocialist transition, but it has also materially altered the landscape. In doing so, it instantiates what I describe as *racial technocapitalism*, an analytic in which, in order to map racial dispossession amidst technocapitalist geographies, I draw upon Cedric Robinson's observation that capitalism has always been co-constituted by racism, beginning within Europe (1983).

This project engages the twin concepts of racial technocapitalism and Silicon Valley imperialism to allow for a decentralized analysis of race, space, politics, and technocultural reproduction. By tracking their entwinement in Romania and Silicon Valley, I theorize a postsocialist moment. Here I should note that I understand postsocialism as more than just a historical phase and/or geographic descriptive, but

rather as a conceptual frame that denotes both the displacement and enduring significance of socialism (Atanasoski and Vora 2018; Gille 2010; Popa 2019). In this way, I read postsocialism as a post-1989 condition that haunts and informs both sides of the former Iron Curtain despite normative accounts of "the end of history" (Fukuyama 2006). I also read postsocialism as recoding configurations of race and empire today (Chari and Verdery 2009). As such, postsocialism, as an analytic, helps shed light upon novel shifts and obfuscations between public and private realms, neo/liberalism and illiberalism, and global race/space and its unevenness (Horvat and Štiks 2015; Moodie and Rofel forthcoming). It also points to how socialist institutionalized practices and visions survived the end of state socialism, and how they endure alongside both end-of-history revisionist narratives and socialist nostalgia (Rofel and Yanagisako 2019; Yurchak 2013). Yet postsocialism additionally highlights utopian futures past and present, many of which involve technology and infrastructure (Buck-Morss 2002; Chelcea and Pulay 2015; Collier 2011; Kurtović and Sargsyan 2019; Murawski 2019).

Throughout this project, I analyze three phenomena unique to Romania's relationship with Silicon Valley imperial circuits: entanglements of technology, race, and urban lifeworlds; socialist and Cold War techno histories as they inform those of the postsocialist/post-Cold War present; and the entwining of Silicon Valley and Romanian IT imaginaries and materialities. In doing so, while wary of Silicon Valley analytic hegemony in studies of technoculture, I remain curious about the local frictions that transpire when Silicon Valley culture brushes up against that of Romania in both expected and unexpected ways. For instance, even during socialism,

Romania maintained numerous technological trade agreements with Western countries and the UN, unlike its neighbors. And today, regardless of ongoing paranoia about human informants lurking in the midst, and despite ongoing reporting of deviant activities to the Romanian Intelligence Services (the postsocialist specter of the socialist-era notorious *Securitate*), there is little regard for the impact of data colonialism on people's everyday lives. How can the layering of two very different surveillance regimes from opposite sides of the Silicon/Iron Curtain be understood as constitutive of the postsocialist technological present? How does postsocialist theory help us understand such configurations while also queering techno-normative approaches of materializing Siliconized futurity? After all, techno-normative reproduction is only one of many means of crafting techno-future possibilities. How do postsocialist analytics point to other futures past and present unarrested by technocapitalist dreams and desires?

This project is based upon ethnographic work in the Romanian cities of Bucharest and Cluj, as well as in the San Francisco Bay Area and Silicon Valley. I also briefly visit the Romanian city of Râmnicu Vâlcea and the Moldovan city of Chişinău. *Unbecoming Silicon Valley* emerges from reading and, at times co-producing, technology, maps, speculative fiction, infrastructure, and archival work. By doing so, it traces shifting relationships to technological futurity, race, and space. I ask what Romania's current Silicon Valley status indexes of its postsocialist present, and what unique IT and property histories endure, formally and underground. By focusing upon how techno-urban growth is differentially understood according to race/ethnicity, class, and generation, I map the uneven postsocialist spacetime of

racial technocapitalism and Silicon Valley imperialism alike.

In what follows, I question why technology in Romania and postsocialist space has been so central to understandings of progress, be they of socialist modernity or transition to liberal democracy. Put differently, what does technology have to do with socialism, the Cold War, and their intersecting "posts"? In the spacetime of Siliconized Romania, both totalizing and localizing narratives fall short when constructed in isolation. Analysis thus necessitates a transnational approach, coupled with deep ethnographic engagement and interdisciplinary reading practices.

Racial Technocapitalism

In California's own Silicon Valley and its urban peripheries, technocapitalism has long induced contexts of racial dispossession as Black and Latinx residents are disproportionately displaced to pave way for a largely young, white, wealthy, and male IT workforce (McElroy 2019; Mirabal 2009). Might it be that Siliconization inheres contexts of racial dispossession by accumulating momentum and geography? This is what my friend and I ask ourselves upon NTT's balcony as we attempted to map what Ananya Roy describes as contexts of "racial banishment," or the expelling of subaltern communities to the far edges of urban life (2017), in this case, to the wastelands, or the *maidane*. But there, sitting upon the *orașul viitorului*, we find ourselves growing suspect of a form of comparativity that sees Romanian cities as Silicon Valley rather than as non-fungible techno spaces in and of themselves. As I suggest, while Silicon Valley imperialism does indeed transmit new forms of racial technocapitalism, by simply understanding Siliconized Cluj as such, unique techno

histories are torn from the palimpsest that is postsocialist Romania. These histories have everything to do with the intertwinement of technology, space, and race in the specific histories of Romania, and Romania's unique historical transnational engagements.

As such, and as I further elaborate upon in Chapter 1, my approach to gentrification studies here diverges from those who center Western cities as models for comparativity (Atkinson and Bridge 2005), as well as those that privilege class over race in assessing the causes and effects of dispossession (Lopes-Morales 2016; Slater 2017; Walker 2018). Instead, my approach aligns with scholarship coming out of critical race studies, feminist studies, and postcolonial studies that necessitates theorizing race and its transnational transits (McKittrick 2006; Lowe 2015; Roy 2014; Silva 2007). This approach attends to the violence of technocapitalism, yet understands that race is not simply subordinate to, but rather co-constitutive of, technocapitalism's ability to transform space.

Gentrification in Romanian cities functions in part by restoring pre-socialist understandings of racialized space through practices of property restitution "transitional justice" mechanisms, in which pre-socialist property is returned to the heirs of former owners (Chelcea 2012). Due to a long accumulation of racism in Romania, few Roma were pre-socialist property owners, and thus very few are able to claim restitution rights (Achim 2004; Petrovici et al. 2019). Not only did many Roma workers lose employment after 1989 as factories became privatized, but many lost their homes. And yet, restitution in Romania is coded through the liberal language of transitional justice and heritage (Florea 2016), signaling who is and who is not

designated as human upon postsocialist geographies of rights (Atanasoski 2013; Lemon 2018; Yoneyama 2016). This language also reflects what Liviu Chelcea and Oana Druță describe as "zombie socialism" (2016), or the anticommunist discourse that, in valorizing neoliberal futurity, pathologizes socialism as a dark and deadened aberration to be overcome. In this way, the socialist period becomes conflated with the fascist one that preceded it. Yet for numerous poor and racialized residents, socialism offered employment and housing for the first time in national history—provisions that evaporated with postsocialist transition. Indeed, long before its more Stalinist turn, socialism in Romania emerged in response to fascism. In exploring the various housing injustices that transition has concretized, I align this project with that of the Housing Justice in Unequal Cities network, which prioritizes *housing justice* rather than gentrification as a field of inquiry.[2] To this, I add *technology justice* as a supplemental field, one that doesn't conflate all technology into the domain of imperialism, and that rather understands technological justices of the past and present as real.

To understand zombie socialism upon racialized technospace, a postsocialist analytic approach is requisite. As Neda Atanasoski and Kalindi Vora argue, postsocialism, as an analytic, needs to become less simply a description of time and space and more a mode of theoretical engagement (2018). After all, why should postcolonial studies so often do the theoretical heavy lifting, with postsocialism relegated to geographic and temporal descriptives? Because technology was such a central component of state socialism and the Cold War (Beller 2018; Buck-Morss 2002), and because, as scholars of postsocialism have argued, both projects endure

(Dzenovska and Kurtović 2016; Rofel 2019; Scott 2013; Yurchak 2017), postsocialist theoretical work might attend to technological geopolitics, cultures, and infrastructures as they existed during socialism and transformed after 1989. As Joseph Masco observes, in post-Cold War times, much of the world remains scrambled upon a "utopian-apocalyptic circuit board" (2016), shaping understandings of technology, utopia, and deviance. For instance, while Russian and Romanian "illiberal" hackers have been framed as guilty by US liberal pundits for having "hacked" US democracy, inciting the "postliberal" dawn of Donald Trump, it has since been revealed (via the 2018 Cambridge Analytica scandal) that Silicon Valley practices of data colonization, algorithmic governance, and Big Data may be more at fault. While I study this phenomenon in more detail in Chapter 4, its complexity illuminates the more general need to maintain a postsocialist approach in analyzing Silicon Valley and Eastern Europe entanglement. Such an approach is aligned with Sharad Chari and Katherine Verdery's call for "post-Cold War ethnographic" practices (2009), or ethnographic work that foregrounds the connections and discontinuities between Cold War and post-Cold War imperial forms and racial technologies.

Since the emergence of the Trump era, liberal pundits in the US have been blaming illiberal Eastern European and Russian hackers for Trump's victory. Borrowing Cold War grammars and projecting neo-McCarthyistic hysteria, US liberal media has used this to pin down their case against Trump. Of course, Trump has also been waging his own war on socialism, which crumbles these contradictory alignments. And, the Russian oligarchs with whom he has colluded are wealthy because they capitalized upon the collapse of the Soviet Union. This sheds light upon

an epistemological impasse brought on by the Cold War paradigm—that is, the positing of liberalism and illiberalism as opposites in the political-ideological spectrum. This Cold War opposition once mapped the so-called free and unfree worlds. Yet by continued reliance upon it today, we fail to understand how this map enables fascism to grow. I map this out in Chapters 3, 4 and 5, looking to the rise of fascist dreams in California's own Silicon Valley, as well as to popular protest culture and techno-urban development projects in Romania. As I observe, in the heart of the post-Cold War (today's Silicon Valley), fascist "alt-right" ideologies such as the "Dark Enlightenment" accumulate,[3] recoding past eugenicist aspirations. Meanwhile, fascist imaginaries of the pre-socialist era are reinterpreted in postsocialist Romania in order to pathologize the "darkness" of socialist technology and urbanism. Today, on both sides of the former Iron Curtain, fascist futures differentially yet connectedly entwine with technofuturist visions, informing what might be described as *technofascism*.

How might postsocialism, as an analytic, help map the updating of pre-socialist fascist imaginaries on both sides of the former Iron Curtain? How can postsocialist conceptual frameworks help us understand the connections between fascism, imperialism, and their technological reinterpretations? During the time in which state socialism was solidifying across the Eastern bloc, both Hannah Arendt (1971) and Karl Polanyi (2001) studied connections between liberal democracy and fascism. They each, in different ways, suggest that fascism (particularly Nazism), emerged out of crises in liberal empires. Arendt maps a Nazi genealogy rooted in the late-19th century German colonial expansion and genocide in Namibia. Nazism,

located within Western history, after all espoused the acquisition of “vital space,” an imperial project funded through “race thinking.” Meanwhile, Polanyi sees the 1930s rise of fascism as an effect of state-enforced laissez-faire and self-regulating market economies. These markets, left unhindered, could not but help produce colonial domination, he suggests.

Nikhil Pal Singh argues that although these two thinkers offer a great deal to studies that connect liberalism, imperialism, racism, and fascism, they both failed to fully understand the raciality of US liberalism, as well as its implications in Cold War socialist space (2017, 111-113). As he also points out, Arendt’s critique of Stalinist totalitarianism and German Nazism have too easily merged in popular interpretations, leading to conflations of fascism and socialism (a reification that endures in liberal imaginaries on both sides of the former Iron Curtain). Yet it was anticommunism that enabled the US to globally extend “Manifest Destiny” during the Cold War, under the aegis of “containing” Communism. This endures following the Cold War, updated in the Cold War 2.0. How can one understand this expansionism in connection to the fascist mode that preceded it, particularly as the former reproduces contexts of racist genocide, deportations, incarceration, and more?

Postsocialist analytics, I suggest, help illuminate how both liberalism and fascism have historically relied upon imperialism. Post-Cold War Silicon Valley imperialism builds upon prior imperial iterations, mobilizing liberalism in the name of containing illiberalism. At the same time, it allows racial technocapitalism to grow unhindered. In its bolder moments, the merging of these twin concepts—Silicon Valley imperialism and racial technocapitalism—spawn the possibilities of

technofascism. Today, as the West looks toward the East for illiberal prefiguration, it is imperative to look at the conditions than enable fascism (imperialism and racism) rather than fall into the ahistorical trap that understands fascism as endemic to socialist Eastern Europe. And in Eastern Europe, if the liberal fantasy of technocapitalism liberates nothing except technofascism, perhaps it is time to imagine other technological futures. In this way, Romania might be a better space from which to theorize the perils of liberalism rather than illiberalism. At the same time, Silicon Valley remains an apt space from which to theorize the raciality of technocapitalism and imperialism alike.

While absorbing technological histories and infrastructure of the socialist period, and while bolstering the restoration of pre-socialist property regimes as part of a broader urban renewal process, racial technocapitalism in Romania also preys upon the linguistic prowess of Romanian workers. As I have heard recounted numerous times, the only real requirement for IT call center work is English fluency. NTT, for instance, boasts 100 percent English fluency (NTT 2018). This fluency can be traced back to socialist and transitional histories. During socialism, people were mostly restricted to watching only one television station. But eager for more, people began illegally streaming neighboring countries' channels, learning foreign languages, from Bulgarian to Serbian. After 1989, Western programming flooded the channels, and people, already accustomed to learning language through TV, quickly mastered English. "Now they teach English to all the kids at school," a colleague observed, "but our generation, we learned from the Cartoon Network." A former call-center worker in Bucharest mentioned that it was by watching US television that she learned

how to smile like an American and feign a US genre of enthusiasm, one largely absented from service work in Romania but necessary for outsourced labor (cf. Hochschild 2012). She worked for a US company for two years, where she was forced smile even while writing emails to clients "who could tell." Meanwhile, those with coding skills are praised by their employers for "being so damn good at programming," one friend in Timișoara working for a small Seattle-based startup told me. But he is only paid a small portion of what his US contemporaries are. "It's beyond patronizing," he shrugged. Yet his colleagues herald Western companies as salvific, he told me over a beer after work one evening in a bar that would soon be shut down in the gentrifying neighborhood. But why is it that there is such technological prowess in Romania to begin with?

Unbeknownst to many promulgators of Siliconization, Romania excelled in hardware production during socialism. In part this was due to the country's own maverick status in the Soviet-led satellite state trade agreement, Comecon (Mureșan 2008). Though Romania was slated to specialize in agriculture, the Communist Party dreamt of other futures, ones involving industrialization, urbanization, and informatics. Vasile Baltac, who had been a key researcher in the state's first computer projects, and who rose to become Minister of Machine Tools, Electrotechnics, and the Electronics Industry in the 1980s, today leads a software company in the same office in which he worked during socialism. As he recounted one morning to me in the tall and relatively narrow brick building in Bucharest's Pipera neighborhood, surrounded by photographs of early MECIPT-2 computer teams from the 1960s, socialist Romania invested heavily in computer production. Soon it began selling machines to

China and the Middle East. University informatics, physics, and cybernetics research centers were highly valorized by the regime, and there was far more gender equality then than in the Siliconized worlds of today, he added. By the end of socialism, Romania had produced more than twenty-five computer models, from the Felix in Bucharest to the TMS in Timișoara. As other programmers have reminisced, the national radio station even broadcast raw code after midnight on Thursdays so that emergent programmers could tape it and then spend the week decoding it. “Mostly it was just airplane schedules, or information about the weather, but still, it taught us a lot,” my friend’s brother recalled, with a large grin across his face.

After 1989, the land that factories (computer and otherwise) sat upon was bought by real estate speculators, divided into joint stock trades, and sold. Western firms such as IBM, Hewlett Packard, Microsoft, and Oracle swept in to absorb former IT workers. In Cluj, the production of HC386 computers was halted, and “everything just shut down,” Bogdan Tirziu, a self-taught programmer and retro-computing enthusiast, explained one rainy day over drinks. There are only four of HC386s left in the country today. Bogdan is trying to implement a local computer museum in Cluj, but he has gotten no support from the City Hall. Official computer memory, it seems, has become devoured by zombie socialism as well. But Bogdan offers another insight useful in theorizing the entwining of Siliconization and zombie socialism in Cluj. “Contrary to what people think, the tech boom is not being led by firms, but by a particular generation of people, now in their mid-30s.” This “Xennial” generation, occupying that interstitial space between Gen X and Millennials, correlates with what Bogdan describes as the “X86 Generation,” a reference to Intel’s x86 microprocessor

architecture.

Conceived of in Cold War Silicon Valley in 1978, the x86 microprocessor has since embodied numerous iterations, and still dominates desktop and mobile technology. While in the West, Xennials are defined as being born pre-digital, but easily adapting to digitization in the 1990s. But in postsocialist Romania, most Xennials were not able to afford Silicon Valley technology, despite the growing prevalence of Western firms and products. Instead, this generation had to learn how to create its own hardware and infrastructure, often by adapting and hacking existing models. By reading computer magazines and by hanging out at internet cafes, Bogdan learned how to create his own internet network, and soon connected twenty-four people in his block. "It's really people in this generation that are creating all of the software and systems that the West wants today," he tells me. Unlike Millennials, who grew upon digital technology platforms, the Xennials had to make the leap from analogue to digital. In Romania, it was the perfect combination of socialist IT continuity, socialist and postsocialist austerity, and Xennial temporal placement that concretized the foundation that the West entered to exploit.

While Bogdan became a retrocomputing expert and while some of his peers became software programmers, others became hackers—people now pathologized by the West as dangerous and illiberal, threatening to destroy US democracy. As such, we can understand racial technocapitalism as a multifaceted process that stabilizes pre-socialist racial configurations while at the same racializing the socialist period and its continuities. In other words, while Roma continue to be racialized in Romania and made subjects of internal (and also external) racism, racial technocapitalism also

functions by racializing the space of Romania as technologically backwards and retrograde. This process does not affect all lifeworlds in Romania evenly—far from it. But it does result in the ruination of numerous lives, objects, and futures.

Silicon Valley Imperialism

Gentrification in Romanian cities is not the fault of socialist and transitional technological development, nor that of the X86 Generation, though it does capitalize upon transitional histories and socialist remains. Gentrification is also a result of other times and racial configurations, some of which predate the very transformation of Silicon Valley from the orchard capital of California to the suburbanized land of Silicon chips. Perhaps gentrification in postsocialist techno-urban space might best be understood as a complex process in which Western firms prey upon: 1) a unique layering of socialist and transitional technological histories; and 2) postsocialist urbanizing processes that restore pre-socialist racialized property relationships. Nevertheless, Silicon Valley is not an innocent player. In attempting to reproduce itself elsewhere, Fukuyama's "end of history" predictions gain strength.

Although past technological and urban history is sometimes hidden in IT infrastructure and imaginaries, sometimes it stands out overtly. While NTT absorbed EBS, even maintaining the CEO of the former company, much of the surrounding "chic modernist" development builds upon former industrial and residential spaces. The German iQuest campus sits upon the ruins of the Flacăra textile factory on Someșului Street, near to where the also German Bosch is developing a new campus. The canteen of the former factory now houses firms with abstruse names such as

Doc.Essensis and CCSCC. One block down, the old Napochim plastics factory ((known as "The Red Flag" when it first opened in 1947) and the former Arbator butchery are being transformed into a new apartment block and into the "Oxygen Mall" respectively. Still on NTT's balcony, my friend and I laugh, "See, it's not the greenwashing of postsocialism—it's the oxygen-washing!" This oxygen-washing, or the covering up of and parasiting off of socialist-era urban infrastructure—while simultaneously instilling new racial meanings of space and future—is precisely what I mean by Silicon Valley imperialism.

Silicon Valley does indeed imagine itself as imperial, and in doing so, it shapes and reshapes understandings of progress, from within its California imperial hub to understandings of progress in Western and Eastern Europe alike and beyond. Silicon Valley contains more billionaires per square foot anywhere else on earth, more patents than anywhere else in the US, more venture capitalists than anywhere else globally, and three of the world's largest companies—Google, Apple, and Facebook. Most devices of networked life and the smart city run on networks constructed by Silicon Valley companies. As Richard Walker writes, "the mythology of the plucky tech entrepreneur has diffused around the world, becoming a key element in the capitalist dream world of today" (2018, 7). This dream is alive and well in Bucharest and Cluj, where Western entrepreneurs offer workshops, TED talks, and more around the clock on how to become better at capitalism, how to successfully amass Big Data and mobilize artificial intelligence (AI), or how to successfully pitch one's startup to a Silicon Valley funder. Significantly, Silicon Valley emerged as the center of global technocapital during the Cold War (O'Mara

2015); its position has only enhanced afterwards in post-Cold War times, stabilizing its cultural, political, and economic centrality. This stabilization also facilitates the epistemological erasure of other technological futures, past and present, deleting routes that fail to appear on Google Maps. But how to map this?—my friend and I wonder, still sitting upon NTT's balcony.

There, blankly staring out at new construction surrounding us, my friend, older than I, begins to remember the thrill that she had as a child in the 1970s, when the nearby Central Commercial Center opened its doors to the public for the first time. Today, the top floor of the building has been transformed into ClujHub, a coworking space with daily talks in which successful Westerners attempt local entrepreneurial inculcation. It also houses Uber, much to the chagrin of local taxi drivers, many of whom are Roma and who have been engaged in protests against the California-based "unicorn" startup. Recounting her first visit to the very same space with her mother, my friend pauses, questioning if that not-so-distant memory mirrors that of NTT opening its cosmological fourth floor up to us today. How much does contemporary change rest upon socialist times, when industrialization, urbanization, and also informatics became central priorities of the regime? "Is the contemporary landscape more like 1970s urbanism, or more like contemporary Siliconization elsewhere?" we wonder. How does one reconcile the reality of multiple origin points and non-linear entanglements?

While remaining critical of Silicon Valley's imposition as the Greenwich Mean Time for all technofuturist imaginaries, and of its tendency to clone contexts of racial banishment abroad, perhaps more generative understandings of local techno-

urbanism might emerge through analytic decentralization (Amrute 2016; Chan 2013; Ouředníček 2016; Rai 2019). After all, the Siliconization of Cluj does not simply reproduce technocultural dynamics upon a *tablă ştearsă* (*tabula rasa*). On the contrary, it lands upon the infrastructure of former plants, many of which were part of socialist modernity's own project of techno-urbanism—an endeavor aimed at implementing class equality, national autonomy, and urbanization. Siliconization rests upon these histories and their infrastructures, while also entwining with post-1989 infrastructural processes of racialized restitution and privatization.

Not only is it important to study technocultures urban lifeworlds often overlooked in Silicon Valley imposition and comparativity alike, but it is also necessary to read technological modernity from the perspective of those who lived through the demise of socialism in their countries (Chari and Verdery 2009; Petrovzsky and Ţichindeleanu 2011). In her monograph on Cold War and post-Cold War technologies of communication, Alaina Lemon observes that there has been far more curiosity amongst Russians about US culture and technology than the other way around, while US proponents of liberal democracy grow increasingly squeamish of its Cold War counterpart (2018). Indeed, ethnographies of Cold War technology have been either overly US-centric, or disproportionately focused upon Soviet and US antipodes and their "flashy flagships" of the US/USSR space race and nuclear armament (Hecht 2011, 2). In contrast, while I theorize Siliconization and technology from the space of Romania, I also theorize Silicon Valley through postsocialist analytics. This decenters the West and the Soviet Union from studies of socialism, but also brings the West into conversations on postsocialism, where it is often vacant.

Silicon Valley imperialism can be onto-epistemological in nature (Barad 2003), or, as some of my friends in Romania describe, self-colonizing. Gentrification, as both a popular understanding of urban change, but also an analytic, can mean deleting socialist techno-urban histories and the politics that informed them, eliding their entanglement with the present. In this way, by reading postsocialist urban transformation simply as a result of gentrification, technological pasts and presents become gentrified. This paves way for the heralding of Western firms such as Google and IBM, both of which sponsored Bucharest's most recent LGBT Pride, much to the chagrin of leftist queer organizers. Thus, gentrification, as an analytic, can mean imposing Silicon Valley comparativity as mode of framing the present, while also assuming the West as the center of technological and geopolitical knowledge production. What other futures past and present might emerge by reading the techno-urban present through other fields of inquiry, from that of housing to that of technological justice?

Queering Postsocialism, Corrupting Techno-Normativity

Silicon Valley imperialism functions through the expansion of techno-normativity, reproducing its own future by penetrating formerly impenetrable space, from intimate bodies to outer space to postsocialist geographies. In Romania, techno-normativity instills techno-imperial understandings of progress, deleting what might be rendered queer, corrupt, and illiberal cyberculture from Romania's socialist and transitional past. In doing so, it draws upon Elizabeth Freeman's "chrono-normativity," or the use of time to meld human bodies into maximum productivity

(2010), while also inculcating "illiberal" geopolitical spaces and cultures with desires of becoming chrono-normative. Techno-normativity thereby facilitates the penetration of Silicon Valley technologies, practices of AI, and data colonization.

Indeed, Silicon Valley imperialism and zombie socialism are techno-normative in their temporal framing, and by queering postsocialism, other technological futures come into play. Queering in this sense looks to socialist-era transitional technological practices, some of which endure below the surface of both the state and Silicon Valley imperialism. In this way, queering postsocialism provincializes techno-normativity and techno-imperialism. Methodologically, queering unearths antiracist and anti-capitalist techno futures past, some of which materialized, some of which are still being dreamt.

By queering, and aligned with queer theory, here I diverge from reading queerness as a simple identarian code or sexuality descriptive, but rather, in the words of Ronak Kapadia, "as a critical set of interpretive strategies that makes possible the production of alternative knowledges, affects, and affiliations" (2014, 230). He goes on to describe what he calls "queer cartographic critique," or a mode of inquiry that maps "how knowledge is secured under the conditions of late modern imperialism, but also prioritizes the affective, sensorial, and everyday visions, sounds, and practices of diasporic and minoritarian life" (ibid., 230). As a methodological antidote to what Ella Shohat diagnoses as the "disciplinary and conceptual boundaries that continue to quarantine interconnected fields of inquiry" queer cartographic technique places "often ghettoized histories, geographies, and discourses in politically and epistemologically synergetic relation" (Kapadia 2014, 229; Shohat 2006, 15). Here I

want to expand upon Kapadia's antidote in order to connect postsocialist with queer understandings of Silicon techno-normativity.

By queering techno-normalization, one also ends up corrupting postsocialist understandings of temporality. While anticommunists in Romania and in the US frequently pathologize socialism and its endurance as "corrupt," here I question how we can queer the concept of corruption (without also undermining legitimate concerns of neoliberal violence post-1989). Queering and corrupting here thus look to techno-utopic futures past and futures yet-to-come, those coded as excess in both state socialist and postsocialist techno-imperial understandings of futurity (Popa 2019). In this way, I understand queerness as engaging with desires for futures unrecognizable by the state (whether socialist or not), and unreadable through Google glass. In other words, queerness does not align itself with state socialism, but it does question the pathologization of anti-capitalism in the postsocialist Siliconized present. It finds alignment with queer of color critique (Hong and Ferguson 2011; Ferguson 2004; Muñoz 1999), in that it understands emancipatory antiracist and queer postsocialist futures as inextricably entangled. It also finds connection and intimacy in projects of non-alignment, be they of international solidarities past or present.

Queering postsocialism thereby involves studying technologies of prior times, not for the sake of recuperation, but rather, in the words of Carolyn Dinshaw, to "touch the past" (2006), or to "touch across time" (2001, 203). While this allows the exploring of what Jonathan Flatley describes as the "dead ends and detours we might share with those who came before us" (2008, 7), it also recognizes that the corrupt past is not fully dead. Like that application icon you dragged into your computer's

trash bin forgetting that the icon is only one many files having to do with an application's programming, there are uncounted bytes hiding on your aesthetically new (but infrastructurally entangled-with-the-past) machine. Queering postsocialism thus engages with practices of memory. Karen Barad suggests, "Remembering is not a process of recollection, of the reproduction of what was, of assembling and ordering events like puzzle pieces fit together by fixing where each has its place. Rather, it is a matter of re-membering, of tracing entanglements, responding to yearnings for connection, materialized into fields of longing/belonging, of regenerating what never was but might yet have been" (2015, 406-407). But what if the materials of this re-membering are rendered contaminant, corrupt, and black? In this case, touching the past becomes a queer act in and of itself. In what follows, I engage in queering postsocialism by scavenging through the corrupt past, digging out dismembered computer parts, salvaging discarded IT magazines, hacking together futures past and futures yet to come unrecognizable to, and yet beyond intimate with, Silicon Valley imperialism.

Today, Western tech companies with branches in Romania have followed trends emergent in San Francisco to pinkwash queer justice work (cf. Stanley 2018). Pride parades marinate with Google balloons, while Ikea billboards welcome queer consumers into their calculations of capital accumulation. For Google, this means rendering Silicon Valley as the future of liberal inclusivity, aligned with what Jodi Melamed describes as racial liberalism, or a post-Second World War set of Western strategies for managing the racial contradictions that antiracist and anticolonial movements exposed. As she writes, "In contrast to white supremacy, the liberal race

paradigm recognizes racial inequality as a problem, and it secures a liberal symbolic framework for race reform centered in abstract equality, market individualism, and inclusive civic nationalism" (2006, 1). In this way, antiracism and homonormativity have become absorbed into US capitalism, with racial liberalism providing its logics. Silicon Valley imperialism updates this imperial technique by adapting what Atanasoski and Vora describes as "technoliberalism," in which "technology advances humans towards a postracial future by asserting a post-labor world in which racial difference, along with all human social difference, is transcended" (2019, 2). And yet, postracial futures continue to instill racism and hetero/homonormativity, temporally reliant upon the reproduction of racial technocapitalism and Silicon Valley imperialism.

David Scott argues that temporal experience is always discursively rendered through fictive models that connect beginnings, middles, and endings, along with pasts, presents, and futures (2015, 70). Both underground and official technological projects of the socialist era, particularly in the realm of cybernetics, informatics, and computation, had different temporal imaginaries than those of Silicon Valley, state socialism's technological counterpart. There were different futures at stake. While the project of transition into the end of history sought to obviate technological difference and homogenize techno imaginaries into Cold War Silicon models, the end of history has yet to arrive. Underground practices of cyber deviance continued to flourish in Romania in the 1990s and 2000s, from DIY cabling practices connecting neighborhood blocs to cities such as Râmnicu Vâlcea, known as "Hackerville" by the West, seeping with illiberal, corrupt threat. Today, despite Siliconized narratives that

gentrify socialist and transitional underground techno-urban pasts with totalizing explanatories of top-down globalization, other techno histories queer the wires of the Siliconized present. These, like “leftovers from a former future stranded in the present” (Scott 2015, 5), corrupt Silicon Valley imperial time, or postsocialist common time.

As Anita Starosta suggests, the forging of this common time transpires through the act of translation, or “a process of a never-finished synchronization among multiple temporalities—and, by the same token, the process of forging the only possible authentic ‘we’” (2014, 2005). And yet, as she marks, translational is never a fully finished process, and that due “perverse tongues,” the common “we” of postsocialism is never fully concretized. These perverse tongues queer the locution of the socialist past and its endurance. Queering thus means reading socialist and transitional pasts, rendered corrupt, as simultaneously touching, bolstering, and corrupting what is articulated as the Siliconization of Romania. Siliconization, like the common time of history’s end, can thus be read as a heteronormative event, one that reproduces teleological dreams of Western becoming in ways that fuel the labor and resource needs of the West. One that becomes corrupted by coding technologic presents as inextricably entangled with socialist histories. Atanasoski and Vora offer, “Postsocialism marks a queer temporality, one that does not reproduce its social order even as its revolutionary antithesis” (2018, 141). Continuing, “Resisting the revolutionary teleology of what was before, postsocialism creates space to work through ongoing legacies of socialisms in the present” (ibid., 141). As I question here, in Romanian techno space, what are these legacies, and how do they queerly corrupt

Silicon Valley techno-normativity? How can queering refuse the resurrection of state socialism, instead offering a framework through which one can read deviant techno-entanglements of the present?

Degentrifying Gentrification Studies

Just as Silicon Valley dominates geographic and epistemological centrality in conversations on technology and technoculture, Western cities and their processes have long taken the center stage in gentrification debates. These understand contemporary Western urban trajectories as auguring non-Western futures. This is particularly evident in Bucharest and Cluj, with primary-colored Google balloons and neon astrofuturist signage holding the urban horizon in place. But these processes also invoke the pre-socialist era, a time in which Bucharest was described as "the Little Paris of the East." Not coincidentally, this was also a time of extreme fascism, marked by the attempted elimination of Roma and Jews. While fantasies of becoming Western go back to the Enlightenment in Romania, and as state socialism itself can be understood a post-enlightenment trajectory (Buck-Morss 2002), fantasies of Westernization uniquely bracket the socialist period, invoking multitemporal bidirectional spacetime travel fantasies of becoming Western and White. It is in part because of this that Liviu Chelcea suggests that to understand gentrification in Eastern European cities, scholarship needs both be more attentive to issues of displacement, and to issues of time and space (2017). Here, I attempt to be more attentive to all, diverging from, yet nevertheless conversing with, debates emergent in comparative urbanism. These debates question whether or not gentrification has

"gone global," and if comparativity imposes Western theories into Global South and East locales (Ghertner 2015; Maloutas 2012; Ouředníček 2016; Roy 2017; Shin, Lees, and López-Morales 2016).

While there are good points to be made as to the problematics of, as Matthias Bernt articulates, both universalizing and individualizing comparisons in these debates (2016, 643), importantly they have been ongoing for some time in postcolonial studies, anthropology, and comparative literature (Appadurai 2000; Chakravarty 2009; Comaroff and Comaroff 2012; Lowe 2015; Rofel 1999; Spivak 1988; Tsing 2000). While it is promising that these conversations now too in media res in urban studies, with scholars such as Asher Ghertner suggesting that gentrification, as an analytic, may not apply in "much of the world" (2015), there may be much to learn from other fields that long reworked comparativity. For instance, in Sanjay Subrahmanyam observes that comparative approaches to traditional area studies might force false reductions, and that perhaps rather a connected approach might be more useful in understanding spatial tethering and transactions (1997, 745). A connected approach to reading techno-urban change and their accompanying desires in Romania foregrounds its current multitemporal racial conjuncture. As Barad studies, past moments are always enfolded into the present, so that any moment in time is haunted by, and entangled with, futures past (2017). This also aligns with Marilyn Strathern's insights on partial connections (2004). Further, as Bernt observes, comparative urban studies debates are often stymied by the theoretical foundations of gentrification research; other fields need to come into the fore if such debates are to be advanced (2016, 643). More specifically, Roy (2017) argues that urban studies too

often elide deep histories of racial disposability that contemporary neoliberalism rests upon, and that engagement with other disciplines is requisite in understanding processes such as racial banishment.

As such, to degentrify gentrification theory from the ground up, one must foreground unique configurations of temporality entangled in postsocialist cityscapes not necessarily familiar in the field of urban studies. Critical race studies, postsocialist studies, and postcolonial studies are particularly useful in examining imaginaries of a return to pre-socialist racial property regimes—processes of ridding postsocialist cities of their "subhuman" inhabitants. These fields are also useful in reading fantasies that see Silicon Valley as liberating postsocialist time from the darkness of socialism. While there is much to learn from those mired in leftover time, or the lifeworlds rendered surplus in neoliberal calculi of Western liberal becoming, there is also much to learn from the very idea of time travel itself and the post-Enlightenment dreams it promises. These dreams are founded upon what Sylvia Wynter defines as an incorporative logic of becoming "Man," or the white human of Western modernity (2003). To become Man, one must continually reincorporate a set of master codes about who does and who does not constitute the proper subject of the future, substituting one set of codes for another to maintain human verses non-human grids of intelligibility.

In postsocialist times, liberalism codes socialism and its afterlives as non-human. In Siliconized contexts, this coding can be understood as what Neferti Tadiar describes as metropolitanist processes of "uber-urbanization," in which "intermittent detours into leftover spaces, where the pools and eddies of excess life-times—the life-

times of the urban excess—collect" (2016, 57-58). These pools, these "remaindered life-times," exist beyond the pale of social reproduction. They "consist of a diverse array of acts, capacities, associations, aspirations in practice, experiential modes, and sensibilities that people engage in, draw upon, and invent in the struggle to make and remake social life under conditions of their own superfluity or disposability" (Tadiar 2013, 23). In doing so, these lifetimes disrupt the presumed end of history, rendering the triumph of Western globality merely fiction.

While urban studies literature is not known for its investigations of time travel, nor its explorations of racial capitalism for that matter, there are important interventions that postsocialist urban studies does make. Urban studies was, after all, revitalized in the 1990s following the end of the Cold War to better theorize the newly accessible "world of cities" (Robinson 2002), many of which were transforming through new injections of neoliberal democracy. But through this, a dominant analytic emerged, one that understands postsocialist cities as "correcting" themselves, catching up to their Western counterparts. As Martin Ouředníček writes, "The need for an appropriate explanatory and predictive basis within post-socialist urban geography, coupled with the newly opened borders, the rejection of the socialist past, and the admiration of everything Western, have created ideal conditions for an uncritical implantation of Western theoretical concepts, for the westernization of the spoken language in general, and in academic vocabulary in particular" (2016, 547). Nearly three decades later, postsocialist urbanists have begun to realize the problematics of such an approach, now more apt to acknowledge the limitations of Western conceptual frames, aligning themselves with postcolonial urban studies. But

nevertheless, as Örjan Sjöberg worries, postcolonial urban studies, much like postcolonial studies more generally, always seems to do the heavy theoretical lifting, while postsocialism becomes used simply as a geographic or temporal descriptive, with postsocialist cities simply rendered "case studies onto themselves" (2014)—a concern shared by critical scholars of postsocialism more generally. As such, here I think alongside Atanasoski and Vora (2018) in their provocation to consider what postsocialism as method might do to studies of postsocialist techno-urban formations.

Postsocialism as Method

Racial technocapitalism in the postsocialist city, violent as it is, and dynamically magnetized as it is to both old and new centers of global capitalism, does not reduce peripheral lifeworlds simply as racial technocapitalism's effects. In order to read these worlds outside of racial technocapitalism's purview, one might learn from the leftover time of the *maidane*. Otherwise, such lifetimes only appear to be an effect of capitalism, without their own agency and analytics. As Starosta suggests, in postsocialist times, "perverse modes of personhood and locution—deriving from the socialist past but not reducible either to its official doctrines or to its official dissident cultures—persist in the present" (2014, 207).

By aligning with those whose lives and struggles disrupt the common time of post-1989 global neoliberalism, one might read postsocialist urbanization as a racial technology that recodes both historical and transnational modes of racial banishment, dispossession, and possession in the name of liberal democracy and the liberal (techno)human who constitutes it. As Roy offers, "the foundational dispossession of

certain subjects is constitutive of liberalism and its economic geographies" (2017, A9). Postsocialist Eastern Europe is an integral space from which to theorize liberalism and its neoliberal iterations, as not only was the collapse of socialism designed by proponents of liberal democracy, but after its disintegration, Silicon Valley imperialism crafted postsocialist space as a laboratory for racial technocapitalism. It is thereby useful to focus upon how everyday lives and intimate spaces have been impacted by technologies of transition.

Unbecoming Silicon Valley engages in a multimethodological and interdisciplinary practices of reading other lifeworlds and studying archives, fiction, media, and infrastructure. In doing so, I follow Lisa Lowe's methodological approach of "reading across archives" to understand the "intimacies and contemporaneities that traverse distinct and separately studied 'areas'" (2015, 6). Doing so unsettles, she writes, "the discretely bounded objects, methods, and temporal frameworks canonized by a national history invested in isolated origins and in dependent progressive development" (ibid., 6). Following her lead, I suggest that to understand both racial technocapitalism and Silicon Valley imperialism in postsocialist Romania, one must depart from isolated practices of only reading from one genre, but also only from singular geographies and temporalities. Here I read from an array of sources and spacetimes, from Communist archives of informatics and computation to speculative fiction created in postsocialist space, from urban planning logs of Siliconized space to infrastructure itself.

The need for a more interdisciplinary approach in understanding the unique layering of geographies, technocultures, and urbanities, invokes Arjun Appadurai's

writing on *technoscapes*, or the disjunctures imposed when technological development entwines with global flows of people, cultures, and capital in irregularly shaped spaces (1990). Technoscapes, he suggested decades ago now, can of course be understood in part by traditional indicators and comparisons such as World Bank reports, but the complexity that underlies their formation "are further out of reach of the 'queen of the social sciences' than ever before" (1990, 298). In part, this is because technoscapes are also informed by imaginaries, from those of imagined worlds to those of imagined communities, from those of financial speculators to those of housing justice activists speculating upon anti-capitalist technological futures (Anderson 1983; Bahng 2017). Imaginaries bear material effects upon geographies of postsocialist gentrification. To read and learn from them, one must, in addition to engaging in anthropological fieldwork, look to the creative work, literature, counter-maps, and media created at the interstices of both socialist and Siliconized technoscapes.

In part, Appadurai writes of technoscapes and their transnationality against the tradition of area studies and its tight bounding of geopolitical space, a claustrophobic mapping practice that partitions the globe into digestible fragments for US scholarship and governance alike (1996). Like Intel's x86 microprocessor, area studies emerged under the auspices of Cold War knowledge production. While the Intel's technology was hacked, modified, and altered by those in Romania to get away from technocapitalism's paywall, critical area studies too has emerged to provide think accounts and details needed to decenter Western vocabularies, promoting transnationalism, fieldwork immersion, linguistic proficiency, and even

interdisciplinary inquiry (Arondekar and Patel 2016, 155). Indeed, despite its Cold War incentives to apportion space, as David Ludden suggests, area studies has become perhaps “the most creative venue for studies of imperialism and the imperial aspects of globalization,” having become “a necessary counterweight to the decontextualizing force of universal globalism” (2003, 136). This has incited scholars such as Warwick Anderson to propose postcolonial area studies of technoscience (2009, 169), one that Fa-ti Fan argues must be “non-essentializing and de-territorializing” (2007, 8). In engaging in such a practice, Anderson, also building off of Kuan-hsing Chen’s work on “Asia as method” (2010, 223), asks what it might mean to theorize “Asia as method in Science and Technology Studies (STS)” (2012). For Anderson, such an approach, rather than establishing a canon or methodology, points to a locus of enunciation, one that aims to decolonize Western universalism Yet also, as a mode of border thinking (Anzaldúa 1987), such an approach understands the simultaneity of the local and global, yet it remains open to multiple frames of reference.

Building upon Anderson’s provocation, here I ask, what might it mean to theorize postsocialism as method in Science and Technology Studies (STS)? For one, it would engage what Atanasoski and Vora describe as pluralizing postsocialism as method (2018), or the studying of local and transnational socialisms of the now and of futures past through a multitemporal and multi-spatial scope, shattering fictions of socialism’s and capitalism’s supposed singularities. In addition, theorizing Romania as method in STS understands the frictions of Romanian socialist and transitional-era technoscapes as they brush upon against those of Silicon Valley imperialism. The

frictions that these bifurcated yet entangled technological worlds pose and repose with each other is far from monolithic; they look different depending upon one's vantage point.

Ethnographic methods, consisting of formal interviews, as well as participant observation, are integral in understanding not only the material impacts of IT globalization, but also how different understandings of futurity, technology, and postsocialism collide and entangle. Ethnography facilitates the weaving together of complex perspectives, from those compiled at tech meetups to those of socialist-era hardware engineers now unemployed and nostalgic. It offers a lens through which to read the imaginaries of Light Revolution liberals to those organizing for housing justice from the *maidane* of urban renewal. Ethnography can help map the frictions of postsocialist spacetime, for instance those in US rental property technology call centers in Cluj, and those of Hackerville, the infamous mountain town where computer hackers such as Guccifer (known for hacking Hillary Clinton's emails) have emerged. Indeed, in the wake of the 2016 US elections, Romania, Russia, and Silicon Valley have emerged as more tightly entwined than ever. An interdisciplinary ethnographic approach sheds light on its tautness, foregrounding the material effects of Silicon Valley imperialism and racial technocapitalism alike.

The research that follows has been conducted in collaboration with two housing activist groups that I am part of in Romania, as well as one critical cartography and digital humanities collective that I cofounded in San Francisco, the Anti-Eviction Mapping Project (AEMP). Emerging in the height of the San Francisco Bay Area's Tech Boom 2.0, the AEMP has since been documenting dispossession

and resistance struggles in Silicon Valley's backyard (McElroy 2019). Committed to theorizing technological futures outside those of technocapitalism, the AEMP looks at technofutures past and present that use technology to fight against the racially dispossessive effects of Silicon Valley. I explore the AEMP more in length in Chapter 4, which studies racial dispossession in Silicon Valley's own California backyard. As I suggest, postsocialist analytics, along with community-led critical cartography projects, are useful tools in understanding the present.

In recent years, the AEMP has collaborated with Bucharest's Frontul Comun pentru Dreptul la Locuire (Common Front for the Right to Housing / FCDL) and Căși Sociale Acum, based in Cluj, to produce data and analytics useful to anti-displacement organizing. The two Romanian collectives work with displaced tenants, holding direct actions and community events for housing justice. Operating outside of NGO and non-profit models, priority is placed upon producing work that directly empowers on-the-ground struggles, creating research with and not for communities most impacted by postsocialist disaster capitalism (Klein 2007; Tallbear 2014). In this dissertation, I draw upon collaborative work conducted with the AEMP, FCDL, and Căși, for instance in Chapter 1 where I explore double dispossession in postsocialist Cluj, or the process in which Roma are physically evicted to the *maidane* of urban renewal as Western digital nomads and "digital Gypsies" displace Roma in allegorical incantation. At the same time, drawing upon this collaborative work, much of which relies upon and crafts new technologies and critical cartographic methods, I question, how might mapping racial dispossession as connected across time and space help create new forms of international solidarity? How might we use technology to

create technofutures unrecognizable to Silicon Valley imperialism?

In her provocation to entwinte comparative literature and area studies (2003), Gayatri Spivak writes, “Just as socialism at its best would persistently and repeatedly wrench capital away from capitalism, so must the new Comparative Literature persistently and repeatedly undermine and undo the definitive tendency of the dominant to appropriate the emergent” (2003, 100). Not writing for a new comparative literature, but rather for a new understanding of techno-urbanism in Romania, it appears that without an interdisciplinary lens attentive to both local and transnational field languages, the imaginaries and materialities that enable the becoming and unbecoming of Silicon Valley fall flat. It is this practice of intertwining the local and transnational, while attending to the temporal technological entanglements of futures past and present, that I describe as a connected and postsocialist methodological approach. Postsocialist Romania, as part of Western Europe’s own *maidane*, bears its own heterogenous technocultures and technologies of race, but these are always in some way entangled with the West, refusing singularity and any semblance of postsocialist common time.

At the same time, I suggest here that postsocialist analytics are important in theorizing urban transformation even within the Bay Area, where increasingly commonist space, from public bus stops to public parks, from SRO hotels to sidewalks, are unevenly being appropriated and expropriated by Silicon Valley imperialism. Silicon Valley itself is a Cold War phenomenon, with its imperiality constitutive of posts and ghosts. Digital nomadism emerges from these specters, updating Romantic Orientalism while landing upon pre-socialist fascist fantasies.

Why should postsocialist urban studies be confined to formerly socialist space, especially if the post-Cold War is global? What might considerations of postsocialist temporality do to understandings of urban transformations across the planet, from Bucharest to Berkeley, from the Silicon Valley of Europe to that of California?

Chapter Map

My first chapter, "Digital Nomads in Siliconizing Cluj: Material and Allegorical Double Dispossession," studies the arrival of digital nomads in Cluj, Romania. I focus upon what I describe as double dispossession, in which "digital nomads" allegorize technocapitalist fantasies by appropriating Roma identity on one hand, and in which Roma are evicted to make way for the arrival of Western digital nomads and tech firms on the other. While Roma are materially dispossessed as Cluj Siliconizes, they are doubly dispossessed by the conjuration of the deracinated digital nomad/Gypsy. As I suggest, this figure discursively drags with it onto-epistemological residues of 19th-century Orientalism—a literary genre that emerged within the heart of Western European empires. The recoding of the nomad today, I argue, indexes techno-imperiality. Double dispossession, as a phenomenon, makes clear that prior histories bolster, and are consumed by, globalizing techno-imperialism. Here I advocate for a connected rather than comparative approach in understanding double dispossession, focusing upon connections across time, space, and genre.

My second chapter, "Corrupting Techno-normativity in Postsocialist Romania: Queering Code and Computers," looks the remembering and recoding of

socialist-era and transitional "corrupt" technology in the postsocialist present. I focus upon how prior technocultures, wires, games, and computers have laid the groundwork for contemporary Siliconization, which attempts to coopt and erase the infastructures of the past all at once. Today, outside of corporately funded hackathons, other technoscapes also live, often pathologized by the West as threatening the longevity of techno-normative time. In investigating socialist underground IT cultures that have endured since socialism, I ask, how can Romanian cyber deviance pervert the temporality of Silicon Valley techno-imperialism, while queering the analytics used to understand the reproduction of contemporary technoscapes? Might it be that narratives of Siliconization are heteronormative in their framing of temporality, and that by queering postsocialism, other understandings come into play? In asking these questions, I look to speculative techno futures past and yet-to-come.

In "The Light Revolution, Blood Gold, and the New Times of IKEA: Impossible Spaces of Dissent," I examine postsocialism as an emerging theoretical concept useful in assessing contestations of post-1989 liberalism. Rather than fall into stereotypical invocations of Eastern Europe as a historical and geopolitical site from which to prefigure of illiberalism and totalitarianism in a post-Brexit and post-Trump era West, I instead ask, what can Eastern European postsocialist politics of protest, development, and renewal teach us about the perils of liberalism? How does the reorganization of public and private space undergird the conditions of forgetting that enable postsocialist disaster capitalism, which speaks not only about Eastern European specificity, but also more broadly about the contradictions of Euro-

American liberalism made apparent in its recent crisis? Empirically, I study the 2013 Save Roșia Montană campaign against a Canadian goldmining company. I trace the movement's adaptation into a liberal space of "all protestors matter" ethos, which I suggest helps explain the liberalism of the 2017 Light Revolution protests against socialism, corruption, and technological backwardness. As I ask, why is it that today, hundreds of thousands take to the streets to purge socialist ghosts, but not the violence of neoliberal corporations, for instance, IKEA, which has been clearcutting Romanian forests at alarming rates, and which bears actual fascist histories? Posing these questions allows me to investigate the contours of the political within a particular postsocialism-liberalism nexus.

My fourth chapter, "Postsocialism, Technofascism, and the Tech Boom 2.0: From Technologies of Racial/spatial Dispossession to the Dark Enlightenment," centers upon the postsocialist spatiotemporality of Bay Area gentrification, postracial liberalism, techno-utopics, technofascism, and antifascist dissent in the post-Cold War Bay Area. Postsocialist temporality here envelops Tech 2.0, which follows the racial booms and busts of the late-1990s Dot Com Boom and the 2008 subprime mortgage crisis. The Cold War and its cessation, I argue, are key events in understanding the Bay Area's tech booms. At the same time, Bay Area Siliconized geography is an apt spatiotemporality from which to theorize postsocialism. In this way, I read postsocialism as a heterogeneous and global condition, as well as an analytic entry point for understanding contemporary political rearrangements, continuities, and discontinuities that inform whiteness and liberalism in the Bay Area. In reading contemporary Bay Area techno-urban transformations ethnographically, it

becomes clear that regional racial, fascist, and liberal imaginaries today are not only haunted by, but also co-constitutive of, Cold War ghosts, posts, and updates. How might we read new forms of data colonialism enacted by companies such as Facebook as techno-imperial and as a product of post-Cold War times? How might a postsocialist approach to post-Cold War Silicon Valley enable new insights regarding techno-imperial algorithms?

Maintaining a postsocialist analytic, the fifth chapter, "Hacking the Inimical of Post-Cold War Time: Mr. Robot, the Dark Army, and the Doomsday Machine," explores the framing of contemporary hacking plots, from the fictive ones of Sam Esmail's television series, *Mr. Robot*, to contemporary attacks on the Democratic Party, blamed on Russia. Critical of how US dystopic imaginaries have transformed bombs into hacks, I study the liberal conjuring of Cold War ghosts as they frame postsocialist spaces such as Hackerville as centers of illiberalism. From the fictive hacking groups of *Mr. Robot* such as F Society and the Dark Army, to hackers Guccifer and Guccifer 2.0 – Romanian and Russian monikers made infamous for having hacked the Democratic Party—cybersecurity threats have reached the level of bomb in nuclear Cold War culture. Thus, in this chapter, I focus upon postsocialist temporality, postsocialist technoculture, and the crisis of liberalism, particularly as the latter reinterprets racial, fascist, and imperial configurations. As I ask, how, in the Cold War 2.0, have understandings of both the enemy and temporality been hacked?

My final chapter, "Non-Alignment in Outer Space: From the Ruins of Postsocialist Astrofuturism," focuses upon socialist outer space cosmologies as portrayed in Romanian film, art, and speculative fiction. While space race desires

contoured technological dreams on both sides of the Iron Curtain, little work has explored Communist intergalactic visions. Where Western conversations on Astrofuturism position the galaxy as either a place to colonize or to create anti-racist futures within, what happens when we shift lenses to the time and space of socialism? By reading futurist and social realist work, I study dreams of developing anti-capitalist and anti-fascist utopias in outer space, to then cultivating them on earth. These ambitions correlated with dreams for a third-world internationalism, yet Romania's ability to confront its own internal racism remained questionable. As I question, is this in part why Romania never fully managed to join the non-alignment movement and sustain its utopic dreams in outer space?

The epilogue, "Blackface on the Nightshift, Proptech AI, and the Posthuman Landlord," looks at novel forms of anti-Black racism in postsocialist Romania, and how racism transits. Most focus is placed upon the Invitation Homes call center in Cluj. Invitation Homes, the US's largest landlord corporations, a post-2008 phenomenon, that now also uses property technology and artificial intelligence to manage its real estate. But it also outsources labor, creating contexts in which both anti-Black racism and anti-Eastern European xenophobia entangle. What do these practices reveal about postsocialism, race, and technology in a postsocialist moment? How does race travel through technology, and how might a connected approach help chart new routes for international solidarity?

Chapter 1: Digital Nomads in Siliconizing Cluj: Material and Allegorical Double Dispossession

In 2018, Cluj-Napoca's mayor Emil Boc announced the introduction of a public robot named Antonia as part of Cluj, Romania's newfound status as "the Silicon Valley of Europe." Although Antonia proved only to be a computer algorithm, lacking the robotic stock image body displayed in the press, she, as the first "public robot mayoral servant," was nevertheless conjured as part of a widespread techno-futurist vision reflected in Romanian infrastructure and imaginaries alike. One only has to momentarily walk through Cluj's Mărăști neighborhood to breathe in new construction particles and observe fiber optic cabling sticking out of buildings like alien tentacles, waiting to be connected. Former industrial socialist factories, from the Flacăra textiles factory to the Napochim plastics factory, are being converted into IT plants for foreign firms like Bosch and iQuest, or into fancier residential blocks.

Blocks away, the co-working ClujHub just relocated to the top floor of the Central Commercial Center, a socialist-era department store opened in the 1970s. There, talks, gatherings, and meetups occur around the clock, mostly geared towards inculcating Romanian programmers with entrepreneurial skills. These spaces also attract "digital nomads," transient IT workers largely hailing from the West. Sometimes digital nomads just enter Romania briefly to give talks; sometimes they reside for longer, taking advantage of Cluj's budding IT scene, largely dictated by practices of Western outsourcing. Outsourcing, also known in Romania as "nearshoring" due to the country's geographic proximity to "the West," scripts

Romanian IT workers into the robots of Western technocapitalism. Often, outsourcing is directed by digital nomads and Western IT firms alike.

Digital nomads, also problematically self-ascribed as "digital Gypsies," refer to tech workers who both fantasize and actualize the dream of being able to live and work anywhere, while at the same time remaining plugged into Silicon Valley infrastructures, economies, and lifeworlds. Divorced from Roma materialities and identities, digital nomad/Gypsy fantasies today rather resemble 19th-century Romantic Orientalist narratives written by white men from the hearts of European empires that fetishize "Gypsy freedom" (Lemon 2000; Saul 2007; Trumpener 1995). These feature bourgeois protagonists who exoticize the freedom and taboo of the racialized, sexualized Gypsy—an allegorical figure that, like the digital nomad, abstracts and mutilates diverse Roma experiences. Outside of Western texts, most Roma are not "nomadic," and many have been subject to violent histories of forced displacement, racial dispossession, and racist representation (Achim 2004; Lancione 2018; Pusca 2015; Woodcock 2007). Why is it that digital nomads/Gypsies allegorize technocapitalist fantasies by appropriating Roma identity, while Roma evictees are subjected to forced nomadism to make way for their arrivals? What does this have to do with past imperial forms and fantasies?

In Siliconizing Cluj, digital nomadism today is accompanied by forced and racialized "nomadism" for others. It was in the dead of a cold December night in 2010 that a collective of over 300 Roma residents were displaced from their homes on Coastei Street in the city-center, so that the Finnish IT company, Nokia, could construct a downtown office building. While much of the city heralded the migration

of the tech company's branch from Germany to Romania, representing in the popular imaginary modernization and Europeanization, the displaced Roma, many of whom were forcibly relocated to "social housing" adjacent to the city's municipal waste site, Pata Rât, felt differently. Nokia had been offered a two-year tax break to move to Cluj, through a city-initiated program to incentivize tech growth. However, before the office was completed, Nokia abandoned its Romanian outpost altogether to relocate to China, where new tax breaks awaited.

In the temporality of postsocialism, Roma matters are spatial matters.[4] Today, the displaced Roma residents remain mired in the toxicity of Pata Rât, beached upon the *maidane*—supposedly uninhabitable wastelands squeezed between the rural and urban. Stranded in postsocialist space, Romania's most racially subjugated minority are pushed into toxic sinkholes as tech speculation takes hold. There, in postsocialist time, the rhythm of modernity's drumbeat only registers as progress to some.

This chapter looks at the spatialization of inherited yet global dispossessions in postsocialist Cluj. It focuses upon how digital nomads and global IT capital use material advantages to unwittingly (and sometimes wittingly) appropriate the spaces and identities of Roma, whose lives are made more precarious as a result of gentrification. While Roma are materially dispossessed to make way for new IT office buildings and residential complexes, they are doubly dispossessed by the conjuration of the deracinated digital nomad/Gypsy. As I suggest, this figure discursively drags with it onto-epistemological (Barad 2003) residues of 19-century Orientalism—a literary genre that emerged within the heart of Western European empires. Orientalist texts frequently appropriated "Gypsy" freedom to allegorize the

sexuality and raciality of Western imperialism. The figure being updated today, I argue, indexes the imperiality of technocapitalism, or techno-imperialism. As in the past, nomadic fantasy hinges upon a Western imperial hub, one that has expanded from Western Europe to now also include California's Silicon Valley.

One might venture that racial dispossession in the Silicon Valley of Europe mimics that of other Siliconizing spaces, most obviously the gentrifying San Francisco Bay Area where tech speculation incites the rampant displacement of tenants of color (Maharawal and McElroy 2018). There are also other "Silicon Valleys" popping up across the world, including, but not limited to: Silicon Alley in New York City, Silicon Fen in Cambridge, Silicon Wadi in Israel, Silicon Mountain in Cameroon, Silicon Cape in South Africa, Silicon Savannah in Nairobi, Silicon Lagoon in Lagos, Silicon Island in Kyushu, Silicon Plateau in Bangalore, Silicon Peninsula in Dailan, Silicon Paradise in Costa Rica, Silicon Bayou in New Orleans, Silicon Valley North in Ontario, Silicon Forest in Portland, Silicon Slopes in Salt Lake City, Silicon Prairie in Dallas, Silicon Hills in Austin, Silicon Beach in Los Angeles, another "Silicon Valley of the East" in Penang, Silicon Gulf in the Philippines, Silicon Oasis in Dubai, Silicon Saxony in Dresden, Silicon Allee in Berlin, Silicon Docks in Dublin (considered another European Silicon Valley), and the list really does go on and on. Understanding these spaces as undergoing similar phenomena, for instance evictions, might invoke universalizing methods and analytics (e.g. Eviction Lab 2019; Slater 2017), as well as urban studies literature on comparative urbanism, plantetary gentrification, and global cities (e.g. Shin, Lees, and López-Morales 2016; Robinson 2011). While there is exciting work being in

these domains, particularly work critical of Anglo-American theoretical dominance (Ghertner 2016; Roy 2017), the phenomenon of Siliconization, as well as double dispossession, in Cluj, for instance, calls for an approach beyond traditional urban studies and social scientific studies, attentive to complex interplays of imperialism, temporality, globalization, and race. This is not to deny the importance of comparative work, but it is to also call for something else.

In assessing these entanglements in postsocialist, Siliconizing Cluj, it becomes clear that prior histories bolster the present. Postcolonial and postsocialist studies offer important perspectives in understanding this history. Their analytics are useful in theorizing racial dispossession locally and globally, but also materially, allegorically, and historically. Spivak, in writing of the Siliconization of Bangalore and the historic dislocations it recodes, suggests, “Every rupture is also repetition” (2000, 5). Building upon this, I argue that the Siliconization of Cluj is only possible through the accumulation of material and allegorical dispossessions (double dispossession), put in “friction” with new global flows and entangled histories (Barad 2011; 2017; Tsing 2005). I thus advocate for a connected rather than only comparative approach in understanding double dispossession in times of techno-imperialism, one that, while rooted in place, analyzes tethered displacements across time, space, and genre.

A connected approach highlights what I describe as racial technocapitalism, a global racial project that flourishes under the conditions of postsocialist “development” and “democratization,” both techno-imperial projects. Racial technocapitalism draws upon and then attempts to overwrite the earlier racial projects

upon which it relies—a mode of Spivak's repetitive rupture-making. These earlier projects include slavery and failed reparations in Romania, as well as settler colonial violence of the 19th century Western Europe that deracinated Roma lifeworlds. Racial technocapitalism and techno-imperialism are thus twin concepts that I rely upon here to theorize entangled histories as they manifest in and between postsocialist Romania and Silicon Valley. The figure of the digital nomad, also racial, marks the spatiotemporality of this new techno-entanglement.

In what follows, I explore double dispossession by thinking from the *maidane* of allegory and evictions, and by thinking from the time and space of globalization. First, I introduce the concept of digital nomadism and the Silicon Valley desires it co-constitutes. I proceed to retrieve allegorical genealogies of digital nomadism, looking to 19th-century Orientalist literature. 19th-century subjunctive forms are now being updated to both allegorize and enable techno-imperialism. This illuminates why traditional urban studies scholarship alone is insufficient in theorizing digital nomadism, techno-imperialism, and racial technocapitalism. Other approaches attentive to fantasy and history are requisite, for instance the reading of contemporary media pieces, 19th-century Orientalist literature, digital nomad blogs, and antiracist digital story-maps—all of which I study here to supplement ethnographic work.

This ethnographic research in Cluj largely transpired between 2016 and 2018, and it informs three empirical sections. This includes a study of racial property histories before, during, and after socialism. I also map the racial banishment that Roma residents experience amidst Siliconization. Lastly, I turn to the landing of digital nomads in Cluj as they constitute, and are co-constituted by, techno-

imperialism. In these sections, I draw upon narrative data collected with Căși Sociale ACUM (Căși / Social Housing NOW), a housing justice collective with whom I collaborate. Căși works with displaced tenants, many of whom are Roma, conducting research that directly empowers on-the-ground struggles. With Căși, I collaboratively produced an online interactive story-map, *Dislocari*, referenced in this chapter. *Dislocari* features narratives and eviction routes of seven Roma residents now living in Cluj's waste site, Pata Rât. Each narrator describes a series of past displacements from the city-center that eventually landed them in the *maidane*. Their stories shed light on the *longue durée* of racial dispossession upon which techno-imperialism rests. These narratives disrupt digital nomad notions that Roma mobility is steeped in enchantment.

Digital Nomadism

While digital nomads can be understood as a genre of "lifestyle migrants," or middle-class and wealthy Western travelers who profit from incomes earned at high rungs of uneven global labor divisions, and while urban studies scholars are importantly linking the landing of lifestyle migrants with contexts of transnational and tourism-related gentrification (Hayes 2014; Cócola-Gant 2018), digital nomads are also embedded in older colonial allegorical structures. Thus, in addition to understanding digital nomadism through urban studies and globalization frameworks, cultural, literary, and decolonial analyses are also useful. As Claudia Breger suggests, to displace the dominant and disfiguring narratives written about "Gypsies," we might have to read them "in terms of their discursive constitution as well as with regard to

the (fictional and/or historical) lives of their protagonists, narrators and authors" (133). Following her lead, in this section I explore the fictional and historical lives of digital nomads—their desires, their world views, and their genealogies. In doing so, I focus on the racial, sexual, and colonial contours that undergird digital nomadic lifeworlds. As I argue, 19th-century forms haunt contemporary dreams of spatiotemporal independence. By seeing how discursive forms inhere over time, insights are gained into contemporary spatiotemporal processes that otherwise would be hidden in urban studies analyses.

As a phenomenon, digital nomadism is often attributed to Tsugio Makimoto and David Manners and their 1997 *Digital Nomad*, in which they presaged a future run by wealthy IT business professionals, equipped with a "digital toolkit," who could live a life of "location independence." But even decades earlier, other speculative futurists such as Arthur C. Clarke envisaged the idea, foretelling a world much like today, in which "any businessman, any executive, could live almost anywhere on earth and still do his business" (Australian Broadcasting Company 1974). As he elaborated, "In the global world of the future, it will be like if you're living in one small town, anywhere anytime, about a third of your friends will be asleep. . . So, you may have to abolish time zones completely, and all go on the common time, the same time for everybody" (AT&T 1976).

Clarke's "common time" is the same time that many of today's digital nomads venerate as enabling location independence. Just as digital nomad racial fantasies of today are no longer confined to 19th-century allegories, neither are they restrained to Clarke's speculative fiction—though one can argue that differences between

speculative fiction and reality have always been fictive. As Aimee Bahng suggests, "Both financial speculation and speculative fiction participate in the cultural production of futurity – a term that highlights the construction of 'the future' and denaturalizes its singularity, even while acknowledging its substantial effects on how we materialize the present" (2015, 666). Today, in the words of Alexis Lothian, "the spectacle of speculative destruction converges intimately with the unpredictable yet repetitive events of climate change; science fiction imagery becomes indistinguishable from news reports" (2018, 2). Yet at the same time, queer, decolonial, and Afrofuturist speculative future writing from the past has opened up future possibilities and imaginaries of the present (brown and Imarisha 2015; Muñoz 2009). But here, it might be that technological forecasting of the Cold War 1970s opened up digital transit and technocapitalist fantasies of the present. For instance, today's digital nomads are paid Silicon Valley salaries, and enjoy easy transit between "exotic" locales, aligned with Clarke's projections. From the Latinx Mission District of San Francisco to spaces farther away from Silicon Valley, such as Bali and Bucharest, digital nomads traverse the globe without losing capital to tourism costs. For instance, James Taylor, who identifies as an "award-winning entrepreneur," a "white middle-class professional living in a first world country," wrote a 2011 blog post describing the rise of this new lifestyle. He and his wife transit between Europe and the US running app-enabled auto-pilot businesses. In his words, "being a Digital Gypsy is more a frame of mind than genealogy" (Taylor 2011). As his testimony evidences, the Gypsy/nomad endures transnationally, enabled by Silicon Valley technology capital and infrastructure.

As becomes evident when studying Gypsy fictions and their colonial geographies, Gypsy figures often emerge from the hearts of imperial geographies, thereby reflecting imperial consciousness. Walter Mignolo writes of how, by latticing itself with coloniality during the Renaissance, modernity became the inevitable present of history, with Europe as its center. Afterwards, during the Enlightenment, Greenwich was remapped as "the zero point of global time," or the common time of the era (2011, 22). During the 19th century, at the height of Romantic Orientalism and numerous European colonial projects, imperialism encapsulated new times and spaces into the common time of empire. Gypsy novellas, poems, and theater reflected colonial aspiration, along with imperial ambivalence and violence. In this way, Gypsy fiction mapped imperial dreams as they manifested new frontiers, often within Europe.

Romanticism, as a literary, artistic, and intellectual movement positioned against industrialization, Enlightenment norms, and the logics of scientific rationalization, reached its peak by the mid-19th century, remapping national geographies of self-determination. Aesthetically, it embraced the sublimity of nature, emotion, spontaneity, individual heroism, and imaginaries of ancient national traditions, characterized by "a new and restless spirit, seeking violently to burst through old and cramping form . . . expressing an unappeasable yearning for unattainable goals" (Berlin 1990, 92). This restlessness interpellated the Gypsy into popularized epic poetry and novellas, where the figure effectively became the workhorse of national movements across the continent, connecting one imperial project to the next.

This coincided with the rise of Orientalism, a system that juxtaposed the exotic and haunting worlds of the Orient against those of a progressive, mechanistic, and cold Europe.[5] Roma, who have been more prevalent in Eastern Europe since their medieval continental entrance, and who originally (albeit complexly) migrated in multiple waves from Northern India a millennium ago, have long been considered an Oriental European object. At the time, Orientalist fantasies of the East were frequently represented through racial and sexual symbolization, most prominently in graphic imagery of white Western men possessing sexually submissive Eastern women as a "male power fantasy" (Said 1978, 247). So too were Roma racialized and sexualized in European Orientalist literature. Therefore, the Gypsy in 19th-century texts stands in for peripheralized, less-than European locales, while simultaneously legitimizing the ontology of the nomadic colonizer.

As I suggest, it is no small coincidence that Gypsy allegorical forms are reinterpreted today. Contemporary Silicon Valley imperium—a phenomenon in which the Valley materializes new nodes and edges to facilitate surplus capital accumulation—is enabled by a nomadic avatar conditioned by 19th-century subjunctive forms. In other words, digital nomads both enable and constitute Silicon Valley imperialism. Silicon Valley Time has now abdicated Greenwich Mean Time's throne, a resignation that remains illusory yet integral to digital nomadic spatiotemporal visions, or Clarke's "common time." Often also illusory to the settler/nomad are its material effects, not to mention its genealogical underpinnings. Few digital nomads that I have spoken with or read consider the ways in which their landing and settling a place contributes to its gentrification, and none have

acknowledged the racial appropriation upon which their avatar depends.

Take, for instance, digital nomad Matt Mullenweg of the San Francisco startup Automatic. In a recent film on digital nomadism by Youjin Do, "One Way Ticket: The Rise of the Digital Nomad," Mullenweg brags that 95 percent of his 400 employees live outside of San Francisco, in 47 countries. He aims to attract talent that questions, "Why do I have to commute to Mountain View every day and sit in a bunch of meetings and things like that?" As Mullenweg ventures, prospective employees will think, "Maybe I want to live in Mountain View part of the year, but maybe during the summer I want to go to Italy, or to Thailand, or Australia, or wherever it is, it doesn't matter" (qtd. in Do). But as much as he promulgates spatiotemporal flexibility, his company's nomads remain tethered to the physical concreteness and centrality of San Francisco—Silicon Valley's urban outpost. In-person meetings are still held there, and physical mail is still sent. Also, rents there have become the United States' most expensive.

Meanwhile, when departing from San Francisco and other Western locales, digital nomads often contribute to new forms of gentrification upon arrival. As digital nomad Kay self-critiques by blog: "This is gentrification at its simplest. This is globalization. This is the result of some very selfish, very narrow thinking" (2015). Continuing, "Every dollar we spend, every blog post we write, and every coworking space we patronize contributes to this inequality." Not all digital nomads are this self-critical, and there are variations and discrepancies amongst them. There are wealthy nomads from San Francisco who live months at a time in various locales, who periodically return to their companies' headquarters. Others from Western European

countries now permanently live in Romania, where they manage Western outsourcing firms. Some digital nomads have moved to Romania to take advantage of cheap labor, and to launch their own startups. Others are not employed by firms, and instead pick up online gigs as they meander. I have interviewed several nomads of each of these genres in Cluj, and have found that while their stories all vary, the fact that they benefit from Western incomes is constant.

Today, there are countless meetups, blogs, websites, and even comparative ranking sites advertising prime locations for nomadism. As one self-proclaimed libertarian digital nomad from San Francisco articulated in a Cluj café, the idea of settling down is not at all appealing to his millennial generation. The world is global, and success means being at home in the global world. "People used to brag about buying and selling real estate developments. I brag about developing my own apps while living in Airbnbs." As Kyle Chaykya (2018) writes, "In the competitive freelance economy, geographic mobility has become a superficial sign of both success and creative freedom: the ability to do anything, anywhere, at any time."

For digital nomads, location independence is often enabled by a phenomenon that digital nomad "guru" Timothy Ferris, popularized as "geoarbitrage." This refers to geographic arbitrage, which offers a spatial dimension to the financial concept of arbitrage, in which commodities and labor are bought and sold in different markets or derivative forms to take advantage of better prices. While geoarbitrage effectively expanded post-Bretton Woods with the end of the Gold Standard era, with speculators deriving new tactics of profit and extraction, in more recent it has been adopted by lifestyle migrants (Hayes 2014, 1954). "Digital Gypsy" James Taylor, for instance,

uses outsourced labor platforms like Elance and ODesk to accumulate money in his bank account while he sleeps.

While geoarbitrage is real, and in the case of digital nomadism, undoubtedly linked to fantasies and materialities of location independence, there are more than simply capital calculations that determine where digital nomads land. As scholars of racial capitalism argue, the spatial inheres the racial, and one cannot theorize the contours of what Harvey terms "accumulation by dispossession" (2003) without also centering how racism has always informed the workings of capital (Chakravartty and Silva 2012). As Gaurav Jashnani, Priscilla Bustamante, and Brett Stoudt suggest (2017), processes of racial dispossession in gentrifying contexts are best understood as "dispossession by accumulation." Thus, dispossession itself is accumulative, stockpiling up histories of racialized acts of eviction, containment, and expulsion. By inversing Harvey's formula, here they suggest that not only does wealth accumulate by expropriating people and land, but that dispossession too is cumulative. Put otherwise, displacement is not a one-time event that dispossesses one person or entity so that another can profit; profit inheres multiple displacements, all with multiple temporalities and geographies that coalesce in particular spatiotemporal conjectures. Double dispossession is one form of accumulative dispossession, in which allegorical and material dispossessive histories compile and grow. It takes an interdisciplinary approach to understand this layering, one attentive to entangled rather than only comparative histories and geographies.

Further, as Megan Moodie and Lisa Rofel write, in postsocialist contexts, Harvey's understanding of the production of privatization and accumulation in times

of neoliberalism often elides unique postsocialist rearrangements of blurred private and public domains (forthcoming). This is certainly the case in Romania, where what was nationalized housing, infrastructure, and factories are now being re/privatized, while "social housing" is being crafted by municipalities along with Norwegian NGOs and Christian charities in public waste sites. Reading across sites and genres, while connecting the past with present, illuminates the raciality of double dispossession in postsocialist contexts and its particular, rather than random, geographies.

In Cluj, double dispossession transpires through the accumulation of racist histories and fantasies. Other racial histories undergird the Siliconization of Cluj and the new contradictions of mobility that such processes inhere. Further, it is necessary to merge the practice of urban study with the practice of reading fantasy and desire (McElroy and Szeto 2018; Tadiar 2009). Doing so aligns with Arjun Appadurai's understanding that technoscapes cannot be understood without attending to imaginary worlds and the irregularities that inform in their transits (2000). As he observes, work outside of the confines of traditional social sciences is often requisite. For instance, performing a "case study" in order to map the landing of digital nomads in Cluj would not likely brush up against a study of racial banishment to the *maidane*. Likely neither would consider the dreams and imaginaries of those willingly or unwillingly transiting from one locale to the next, and how such visions materialize uneven futures.

Deracination

The temporality of the digital nomad is enabled by liberal ontologies of freedom tethered to property rights, yet seemingly exceeds Lockean and heteronormative articulations of the free property-owning subject. More important to the digital nomad is freedom of mobility—a freedom often paired with techno-imperial speculative logics. As digital nomad Timothy Ferriss wrote in his 2009 bestseller, *The 4-Hour Workweek: Escape the 9-5, Live Anywhere and Join the New Rich*: “$1,000,000 in the bank isn’t the fantasy. The fantasy is the lifestyle of complete freedom it supposedly allows” (13). In his words, the capitalist fantasy of property ownership has been displaced by techno-utopic desires of freedom. Yet this falls apart when studying colonial histories. To expand and control space, and to accumulate surplus value within it, colonial regimes have long privatized in the name of freedom (Lowe 2015). Otherwise put, mobility has long enabled the settlement of colonial regimes, materially, epistemologically, and ontologically.

Historically, racial appropriation has been one technology of such coloniality, functioning through the deployment of reiterative stereotypes of the other, strategically disciplining and domesticating alterity. While digital nomads capitalize upon prior histories in Romania, they also appropriate the deracinated figure of “the Gypsy.” Racial appropriation has long functioned by deploying reiterative stereotypes of others, strategically deracinating, disciplining, and domesticating alterity. Jodi Byrd observes that appropriation of Indigenous lives in the US emerged as a colonial technology, in which Indigeneity became “a site through with the US empire orients and replicates itself” (2011, xiii). Put otherwise, appropriating Indigenous—and arguably also Romani—culture abets colonialism, much like land appropriation feeds

settler materiality (Asavei 2019). Critical of digital nomadism's imperiality, Daniel Kay offers:

> Nomads like to talk about their enlightened lifestyles, but when it boils right down to it, we're just a new breed of hipster. We appropriate places and lead trends, we go where life is cheap but hip, and we are a little bit in love with our own lives we have the economic potential to destroy communities.

In this way, racial appropriation obviates Roma lifeworlds and contemporary realities. As Mihaela Drăgan, a Roma actress and playwright, admonishes of Roma personification in the arts and beyond: "We have an entire history of oppression and silencing, so no non-Roma artist has any right to represent us without asking us first" (quoted in Iancu 2017).

The appropriation that Drăgan critiques (and that digital Gypsies embody) bears 19th-century Romantic Orientalist traces. This figure could transgress the borders of modernity, the nation-state, and private property. From Britain's George Borrow to France's Prosper Mérimée, from Germany's Wilhelm Jensen to Russia's Alexander Pushkin, 19th-century authors prolifically crafted stories of the fantastical wanderer. Frequently, these texts feature a white male protagonist who falls in love with a sexualized "Gypsy woman." Often, he attempts miscegenation and life as Gypsy, but then realizes his dream's impossibility, tragically murdering her. Most frequently written by authors whose countries were engaged in colonial projects, "the dark passionate Gypsy woman" and her death have been argued to allegorize

heteromasculine settler desire, as well as settler nostalgia for a pre-modernity (Lemon 2000, 37).

In Britain, 19th-century Gypsy novellas and poetry invoked a "national nomadology" (Duncan 1998, 382), in which the state allegorized its territorial expansion through the figure of the nomad. These works encode a nostalgic fantasy of pre-industrial landscapes and disengagement from modern life, mapping an imperial, open-range cartography. As the British John Clare characterized in his 1825 "The Gipseys Song," Gypsies fantastically "pay no rent nor tax to none / But live untythd [sic] & free . . . In gipsey liberty" (1996, 52). This figure possesses the ability to transverse frontiers, find shelter in the dwindling commons, and evade paying rent and tax (resonant with contemporary sharing-economy endeavors), but also blends into the bucolic landscape, conceptualizing a country unscathed by the mechanization and boundedness of industrializing empire. Characterizing a nearby Gypsy camp, Clare journaled, "I thought the gipseys camp by the green wood side a picturesque and an adorning object to nature and I lovd [sic] the gipseys for the beautys [sic] which they added to the landscape" (ibid., 1985). Here, by signifying a premodern past and spatial transgression, the Gypsy stands in for British indigeneity and colonial expansion, mapping a new and contradictory understanding of national space and historicity.

For instance, the protagonist of British George Borrow's 1851 *Lavengro* and its 1857 sequel, *The Romany Rye*, is an Irish non-Roma scholar who performs the life of a Gypsy tinker, travelling with a band of Romani people upon English pathways. Borrow, a self-trained philologist, was fascinated by English Romanichals (Romani

people who migrated into Ireland and Britain as early as the 16th century) as well as Irish Travellers (semi-nomadic people indigenous to Ireland, many of whom migrated to England to escape British colonial and industrial forces). As the periphery to England and the British empire was in constant flux during this time, Borrow's text recovers "an England deconstructed beyond ancestral Celts and Saxons, beyond a primordial Britain, into Gypsy origins, fastidiously unmapped in to secret margins and coverts, and the inner darkness of an unsettled, quasi-autistic self" (Duncan 1998, 390). Thus, Borrow's Gypsies, as Indo-European migrants untouched by modernity, are made the authentic carriers of Western civilization. While earlier British disfigurations falsely ascribed Romani origins as Egypt, hence the vernacular perversion "Gypsy," Borrow also incorrectly ventures that Roma come from Rome—a Western imperial birthplace. As he writes, "I should not wonder after all . . . that these people had something to do with the founding of Rome. Rome, it is said, was built by vagabonds" (1991, 107). Nomadized imperial Rome thus becomes the centrifugal space of the timeless Gypsy, who, with a clairvoyant crystal-ball mythos, time-travels a premodern imperial myth into the historic present. As Toby Sonneman observes, "While romantic metaphors freeze the Gypsy image in the past, they contradictorily allow them a special vision into the future as well" (1999, 130). Not only are Gypsies free to wander beyond the spatial boundaries of empire, but also, they are endowed with the ability to detach from normative temporality, remaining fixed in the past while time-travelling into the future.

As a movable (racial) figuration, the Romantic Orientalist Gypsy maps colonial desire—a desire that also transits between empires. For example, inspired by

Pushkin, in 1845, the French Prosper Mérimée composed Carmen, informed by Borrow's fabrications (Lemon 2000). In the words of Mérimée, "You asked me the other day where I obtained my acquaintance with the dialect of the Gypsies. I got it from Mr. Borrow; his book is one of the most curious which I have read" (qtd. in Northup 1915, 143). Thus, the disfigured Gypsy depictions in Carmen were informed by transnational myths. Like Pushkin's poem and Jensen's text, the heterosexual desires for the untamed figure of Carmen in the poem represents colonial dreams; it was right before the novella's conception that first Napoleon, and then Chateaubriand, occupied Spain, coinciding with Spain's fading as a global power. José Colmeiro suggests that, as Spain became a less threatening imperial rival, it morphed into France's submissive other, represented by the figure of the Gypsy (2002, 129): "Because exorcising the exotic other is ultimately a way for European bourgeois culture to exorcise its own demons," he writes, "Carmen always must die" (ibid, 128). Yet within the novella, there endures a distinction between the Spaniards and Carmen/the Gypsies. This difference shows that even as Spain's powers wane, Spaniards remained connected to the European body, unlike Carmen.

Noteworthy here is that Carmen was created through a transnational fantasy spread by white men dreaming from the hearts of empire. Might the diffusion of digital nomadic fantasies be similarly operating, spread amongst Western technologists by blog rather than poem and play? Might this dissemination concretize techno-imperial imaginaries but also materialities? What has transformed between the scripting of these 19th-century texts and digital nomad blog posts of today? Perhaps there is something to be learned from the repeated murder of the sexualized and

racialized Gypsy and the imagined embodiment of the figure in contemporary technoculture.

For instance, in the case of German Orientalism, which was informed by the solidification of the German Empire in 1871, textual forms utilize the Gypsy to consolidate German national identity. Wilhelm Jensen's 1868 Die braune Erica, for instance, is narrated by a restless German natural scientist longing for exotic alterity. The text begins with the scientist desiring a rare plant, erica janthina, but as the text progresses, it is revealed that this plant in fact symbolizes the true object of his yearnings: A Gypsy woman who entices him to leave his settled life. Transfixed by Erica's androgynous, racialized body, the professor murmurs her name in scientific language one night in his sleep, which she hears in her "natural language," drawing her to him. Upon falling in love with him, she leads him to the rare and beautiful moor-dwelling heather that he had been searching for. When they arrive to the spot where the heather grows, Erica is bitten by an adder and falls ill. The scientist recognizes that despite his knowledge, he remains powerless to heal her. She accepts her death—not because of the bite, but because of impossibilities of miscegenation. When he reasserts his love for her, to his astonishment, she heals herself by applying the antitheses of modern scientific orthodoxy—a wild, ecstatic, and unending dance, which mysteriously cures her. Although they then marry and live a settled life on the margin of German territory, she eventually leaves him—an expression of the spontaneous and uncontrollable Gypsy spirit. This spirit is still lusted after by some scientists today. While digital nomads fantasize similar spatiotemporal transgression, there are important differences to be mapped.

Jensen does not posit Gypsies as possessing magic or chiromancy, but rather as a foil to the lack of freedom in scientific knowledge. Gypsies are not a threat to German ascendency, he infers, rendering them as dying and non-reproductive. As his scientist discovers, because of their nomadic ways, Gypsies have developed hybrid characteristics, like a maladapted species variant. Saul suggests that "they are a diaspora paradoxically without a homeland, adapted neither to their alienation (the Occident) nor their homeland (the Orient). They therefore cannot transmit their inheritance" (2007, 117). In this sense, Jensen pathologizes Roma to make them both intriguing and unthreatening to the longevity of the German Empire. Unlike Jensen, digital nomads and global technoculture alike understand technoscience not lacking in freedom, but saturated in it. The language of innovation and disruption ooze out of intimate digital nomad meetups and packed TED talks. In these cases, nomadism is both intriguing to and constitutive of techno-imperialism.

Also distinct from their 19th-century predecessors, digital nomads and Gypsies have little reference for the human objects of their allegory. How many digital nomads know much about the racial dispossession that Roma culture bears? Not that Romantic Orientalists understood either, but there was at least a bit more geographic proximity. For instance, in Alexander Pushkin's famous 1824 Orientalist poem "Tsygany (The Gypsies)," a non-Roma outlaw, Aleko, falls for a Gypsy woman, Zemfira, and the freedom that she embodies. The narrative arc parallels Jensen's, as does its colonial influence. In his overlooked epilogue, Pushkin recounts that his inspirations to become Gypsy stemmed from his own brief encounters with Roma on the imperial frontier of newly acquired Moldovan lands. By cannoning and

cannibalizing Gypsy freedom, he charts imperial lust, racializing and sexualizing Roma. While Pushkin's interactions with Roma were minimal, they are likely still more concrete than those of most digital nomads today. Thus, while the imperial fantasy is reflected in the former, distance and abstraction have rendered particular shifts. Today, the nomad is not something that one lusts after and kills; it is something that one already is.

As a contradictory figure that both taunts settler desire yet remains fully irresolvable through the heterosexual, racialized logics of imperial reproduction, the Gypsy is repeatedly murdered within textual spaces—a death that represents the materiality of colonial landgrabs, but also the taboo of Gypsy-becoming. From the Gypsy's death, different ghosts materialize. Today these specters reverberate within techno-imperial ontologies of location and time independence. The crystal ball of fantasy mythoi, coupled with perspicacious gaze of the extrasensory Gypsy, has migrated along the perambulations of Romantic imaginary into the present.

Much as 19th-century writers allegorized imperial desires, digital nomads allegorize techno-imperialism. As Orientalist tales emerged from the heart of empire, so do those of today. In Kay's words, "Digital nomads are unintentional pawns in a new wave of economic imperialism" (2015). Yet it is not tech entrepreneurs today lusting after and aspiring to become the nomad; they have already achieved this form, or so they claim. In a sense, their "Gypsyism" is both ontological, and comes about through practice. Digital nomadism thus highlights new geographies of dislocation and blurriness.

Questions of Comparativity[6]

While nomadic fantasy is now being updated in the era of techno-imperialism, leading to contexts of racial technocapitalism in cities such as Cluj, gentrification scholarship often appears ill-equipped to map the upgrade. While, as a field, gentrification studies importantly charts contemporary dislocations and inequalities, it often fails to address the complex temporalities and fantasies upon with racial dispossession rests. Here I suggest that to map double dispossession and its routes, interdisciplinary approaches carves out new perspectives.

This is not to disregard gentrification studies and its wider field of urban studies altogether. While I advocate for a connected approach to understand Siliconization processes, there is much to be learnt from how questions of comparison have animated debates in the social sciences over the last two decades. In recent years, urban studies scholars have attempted to make sense of new interurban connections across an emerging "world of cities" (Robinson 2011). Meanwhile, postcolonial urbanists have made great headway in contesting historically Anglo-American geographies of theory (Bhan 2019; Roy 2017), which center certain Western European and US cities as the ground zero in comparative frameworks (Atkinson and Bridge 2005; Schafran 2014; Slater 2017). Informed by trends in postcolonial urban studies, new work has begun to center comparative work beyond a privileged constellation of "global cities" (Caldeira 2016; Hart 2006; Mbembe and Nuttall 2008), interrogating what Loretta Lees (2012) calls the "geography of gentrification."

Some of this work has begun to create nuanced accounts of how global flows

of capital come to matter through grounded histories and imaginaries, bolstering my own approach to theorizing Siliconization in postsocialist Cluj. Yet I remain attentive to a call made by Asher Ghertner that gentrification, as an analytic, may not pertain to "much of the world" experiencing racial dispossession and evictions (2015). This, he marks, is particularly true in the Global South and Global East, and in the in-between space of postsocialist Eastern Europe.

Thinking from Siliconizing Cluj, here I share Ghertner's concerns that the conceptual dominance of gentrification theory has caused it to become a "regulating fiction," one that overwrites local understandings of racial/spatial politics (Robinson 2002). As Silicon Valley imperialism and its nomadic avatars mold Cluj in novel ways, it is especially important to not only conceive of Siliconization through Western analytics and processes alone. There are deep histories of racism upon which contemporary forms of gentrification rest, locally but also transnationally. Ananya Roy suggests that "seeing from the South" does not mean producing knowledge from or about cities in the postcolonial world; instead, it means politicizing urban studies by continuously remaking it from its social and spatial margins, by studying "the crucible of racial capitalism on a global scale" (2018). Romania is not fully the South, but neither is it fully the North, East, or West. What does it mean to think from its interstitial geography, to see from it?

For one, seeing from Romania necessitates deep engagement with temporality and dispossession. Time and displacement have everything to do with peripherality, complex relationships to the West, and with what Roy describes as "racial banishment." Racial banishment, or processes in which subaltern people are pushed

to the far edges of urban life, invoke historically deep designations of racial disposability. It is upon these that contemporary neoliberalism rests, but that urban studies, as a field often is insufficient in understanding. Indeed, as recent work by Norbert Petrovici et al. argues, to understand anti-Roma racism in gentrifying cities such as Cluj, one must also attend to histories of Roma slavery (which lasted in Romania until 1856), subsequent 19th-century practices of serfdom and debt bondage, and modernization, industrialization, and agriculture – all of which fed earlier yet constitutive desires of Western capital (2019, 3-4). Roma labored and lived in pre-socialist Romania as doubly subjugated, racialized as surplus within a region read as exploitable by the West. The heterogeneous 20th-century project of state socialism in Romania in part sought to remedy this, and to combat the fascism of the mid-20th century which, in addition to Jewish people, sought to exterminate Roma (Achim 2004). While state socialism is now normatively read as pathologic, as a dark stain in Romania's quest for modernity, its demise led to revisionist histories of racialized pre-socialist land and labor configurations.

As Roy suggests, a framework of racial banishment is useful in understanding how evictions transpire, as well as how contemporary racial violence rests upon prior forms, from that of slavery to that of colonization (2017, A3). In her words, "If evictions are understood as an instantiation of racial banishment, then what is at stake is how the banished/dispossessed subject enacts a politics of property and how such struggles and claims inevitably entail a politics of personhood" (2017, A3). As such suggests, too often, housing struggles against dispossession enact what Libby Porter describes as "possessory politics," in which ''struggles against dispossession too

easily become struggles for possession" often through the assertion of rights (2014, 3). Rather than possessory politics, how might struggles against dispossession enact a decolonial relationship to land, Roy asks.

Racial banishment expels people to what Roy terms the "city's end," or a zone "constituted through mundane and individualized practices of property transactions and negotiations rather than spectacular processes of primitive accumulation" (2017, A3). By property transactions, she refers to the negotiations of space, ownership, and land that occur both on and off official registers. Roy's formulation here hints at the limits of Harvey's analytic of "accumulation by dispossession," and perhaps more broadly of traditional Marxist understandings of gentrification saturating today's urban studies. Instead, drawing upon scholars of racial capitalism, she invites other analytics that understand race and coloniality not as simply corollary with class, but as co-constitutive with it. For instance, once evicted to Pata Rât, residents are stigmatized not only as Roma, but also as literally living upon waste. This is a process of dispossession by the accumulation of racial property regimes.

Understanding accumulative dispossession aligns with a growing push to move away from urban studies work that privileges class over race and 1960s-based Western urban displacement theory more broadly (Bledsoe and Wright 2018; Byrd et al. 2018). It also points towards the need to move beyond urban study's disciplinary reliance upon sociology. Sociological traditions, while well-critiqued for positivism and the racist histories upon which they rest (Ferguson 2004), often maintain temporal myopias. These make it difficult to understand racial banishment as situated upon a thick palimpsest of racial capitalism. Clyde Woods, critical of social science

models that claim objectivity in their narrations of social death in US Black urban spaces, hopes that research might offer "new epistemologies, theories, methods, policies, programs, and plans" (2009, 448). For him, the social sciences are insufficient in theorizing communities impacted by urban neoliberalism, a phenomenon that sits upon a unique configuration of transatlantic slave trade and imperial legacies. What might new epistemologies look like in postsocialist Cluj, where deep local histories of anti-Roma racism collide with techno-imperial ones allegorized by the digital nomad? Instead of centering formal case studies and demographic statistics to determine what stage of gentrification an urban space might be in, what if instead one conducted an urban study from the city's end, reading the space of the discard and debris of post-1989 techno-capitalism and Romantic Orientalism alike? This is not to deny the importance of also studying globalizing processes in comparative urban studies. Nor is it to deny that comparative studies are important in analyzing how neoliberalism differently plays out in various postsocialist contexts (Rofel 2019; Rofel and Moodie forthcoming). But is to supplement comparative approaches with those of inter-connection, refusing false reductions and simple metaphors.

A connective rather than comparative approach helps theorize Silicon Valley imperialism, as well as what Matthew Hayes and Hila Zaban describe as transnational gentrification—or the gentrifying effects of "lifestyle migrations" (2019). While the gentrifying effects of digital nomadism in Cluj are real, they are discrepant within specific geographies, informed by inimitable contexts. Put otherwise, local contexts matter in scenarios of transnational gentrification. These are far from arbitrary,

having to do with prior property regimes, dispossessions, and technoscapes. Such historical contexts are connected to, yet distinct from, those of the West. Thus, a connected approach is aligned with work that studies technocultures from the South and East that interact with Silicon Valley fantasies and effects, but that remain irreducible to them (Amrute 2016; Chan 2013; Rai 2019; Švelch 2018). Unlike studies of globalization that track migration from the North to the South (Benson 2015; Hayes 2014) and East, here I follow the trend of studies of digital nomads entering the complex space of Eastern Europe. Aligned with work critical of 1990s and 2000s cosmopolitanism and the neoliberal multiculturalism upon which it relied (Calhoun 2002; Spivak 2003), here I more directly look at global technoculture.

Dispossession by Accumulation

While the deracinated digital nomad drags former colonial histories into the Siliconizing present, in Cluj, it lands upon a palimpsest of anti-Roma racism. The mass eviction on Coastei Street that landed residents in the garbage dump isn't the only case of IT and urban development being valorized at the expense of Cluj's Roma communities. Instances such as this continually racially banish Roma to the *maidane* of postsocialist urban development. From the array of evictions in Mărăști surrounding the "rehabilitation" of socialist-era factories, to the development surrounding the tech company Endava near the Iulius Mall, it is clear that the development of office buildings and new residential spaces is on the rise, as are evictions.

While displacement sometimes transpires so that new development can be

built, sometimes they are less direct—yet nevertheless real. For instance, there has been an ongoing eviction fight on Stephenson Street, right across from Liberty Technology Park, a space that brags about being "the first technological park in Romania, a park for creative ideas built in a revolutionary place designed to offer exceptional growth and quality environment for companies in the IT&C and R&D domains, all in one unique area both conceptually and architecturally" (Liberty 2018).

Hosting tech companies from the German SIEMANS to the Austrian Impact Hub (the latter a well-regarded coworking space for digital nomads), as well as Romania's own Spherik Accelerator, Liberty Technology Park galvanizes imaginaries of global IT success. Developed by the Swiss company Fribourg Development, the space champions innovation and entrepreneurship. Yet it is hardly new at all. Known as the Libertatea Furniture Factory during Communism, the building itself goes back much earlier, to 1870, when a Viennese craftsman had built pianos in the space. It was during Communism in the 1970s that residents moved in across the street, paying formal rents. Over time, the residents, mostly Roma, grew their families, and built informal structures.

All was going relatively smoothly until Libertatea became Liberty in 2013. Suddenly, neighbors began calling the police on the Roma families who had been living there for decades, complaining about the laundry that they were hanging on their clotheslines outside. Washed as they were, the hanging clothes were rendered too unsightly for technofuturity. Meanwhile, rumors arose that Liberty Technology Park would soon be building a parking lot where the Roma were living.[7] Clearly, differential understandings of mobility are wrapped up in postsocialist modernity in

Romania, where tech is given freedom of migration, but whereas Roma communities are forcibly pushed into the "exit zones of abandonment" (Tadiar 2007, 320).

To better understand this process, in 2016, members of Căși, myself included, set out to create an interactive digital story-map, *Dislocari: Rutele Evacuărilor spre strada Cantonului (1996-2016) / Dislocations: Eviction Routes to Cantonului Street (1996-2016)*. The map follows seven Roma residents, Ioanică, Leontina, Babi, Sandu, Ligia, Katalin and Gelu, all of whom have been multiply displaced, and who now reside in Pata Rât on Cantonului Street. There, in the *maidane*, 160 families live "fără număr," or without official addresses. In each location on the map, residents share horror stories of banishment and gentrification. Some of their former homes have been bulldozed and redeveloped into IT offices; some have been razed and are now filled with a messy array of vegetation. For them, Cantonului Street is the end point of a *longue durée* of dislocation.

In this section, I draw upon their stories to illustrate how racial banishment is haunted by former racial histories, such as the lack of post-1856 reparations. After slavery ended in Romania, numerous Roma migrated to Ukraine, Russia, Poland, and Western Europe (Achim 2013, 122-124). While many Westerners read them as a dark threat, others used them as inspiration for Orientalist tales of "Gypsy freedom." Yet for those who remained in Romania, national racism accumulated. By the dawn of the 20th century, most Roma still lacked property (Petrovici et al. 2019, 7). Positioned as "dangerous" for "the nation," they were soon targeted for extermination by the Antonescu-led fascist regime. During this time, "nomadic" Roma were targeted for elimination before sedentary people (Petcuţ 2004). Thus, nomadism itself became a

racial signifier.

Conversely, the Communist regime that afterwards came to power provided numerous Roma with labor-intensive jobs in heavy industry and agriculture, enabling upward social mobility (Petrovici et al. 2019, 7). Housing nationalization was part of a state effort to reduce housing inequality and under-occupied shelter. As many as 241,068 dwellings were nationalized via Decree 92 (Florea and Dumitriu 2017, 193). After 1965, a series of laws regulated landlord and tenant relations and housing construction, interpreting housing as a field of consumption rather than production (Vincze 2017). During the late 1970s and 1980s, numerous Roma were moved into poor-quality nationalized buildings in city centers (Lancione 2018, 4). Thus, although racism endured throughout socialism, at least housing was provided.

Everything changed after 1989. While laws enabled "sitting tenants" in buildings constructed during socialism to purchase their state-owned homes (Chelcea et al. 2015), things were quite different for tenants in nationalized properties, many of whom were Roma. A series of property restitution laws were written in the name of "transitional justice" (Law 112/1995 and its corrective Law 10/2001), which enabled the redistribution of nationalized homes to pre-socialist heirs. Incentivized by pre-and post-accession EU and Bretton Woods initiatives, restitution has been morally justified by reading socialism as a dark stain in national history. Over 202,000 court cases have been filed to date (Florea and Dumitriu 2017, 196).

During this transitional period, urban planning was transferred from the state to local municipalities, the latter not provided incentive for social housing development. While 30 percent of the country's housing stock was nationalized

during socialism, less than two percent of housing is public today (Vincze 2017). In Cluj, planning laws have changed at least sixteen times over the last thirty years, an urban planner described over coffee one 2018 summer afternoon after a new eviction in Mărăști. Often the city incorporates the private sector through the language of "participation," but this only incentivizes gentrification, he sighed. "The City Hall is just using Pata Rât as its social housing; there is no incentive to provide anything else." And, because the Antonia-owning mayor maintains a 70 percent approval rating, he can do as he pleases. Yet as Enikö Vincze—co-founder of Căși and co-producer of Dislocari—notes, it was the prior mayor, Gheorghe Funar, who "created a favourable space for capital accumulation in the hands of local entrepreneurs without completely excluding foreigners" (Vincze 2017, 41). Between 1990 and 2004, Funar averted regulations, preparing "the ground for the further development of Cluj – under neoliberal governance – as an entrepreneurial city or a 'competitive city'" (ibid., 42). City centers, once rendered derelict, have now become sites of IT development, creative capital, and digital nomads, much to the horror of those racially banished, as participants in Dislocari describe.

Ioanică, featured in Dislocari, lived on Turzii Street in the early 1990s, in a former state-owned building. Numerous Roma families were legally living there, most of whom were working in nearby factories, such as Clujana and Carbochim. Ioanică, now middle-aged, had been a streetcleaner. But his building was not maintained, and one day, he "woke up with the ceiling on the floor." Rather than repair the building, which today remains an empty lot, the city moved Ioanică and his family to Croitorilor Street. The new apartment was nice, but soon, a man living in a

different city claimed it through restitution and evicted them without compensation. Similarly, Ligia, also featured in Dislocari, received a restitution notice on Eroilor Street in 2011, although her contract was good until 2014. She had been paying rent on time, but the new owners wanted hundreds of euro a month, which she could not afford. “So, they threw us out on the streets – we had no other choice,” she explains. “I asked how is this possible, and they said it was because these were their houses, and they wanted them back.”

Not only was housing privatized; so too were nationalized factories. In 1999 and 2000, the PSAL II act and national privatization strategy were adopted, privatizing and outsourcing large state-owned companies, including computer factories (Vincze 2017). Unbeknownst to many who now equate technological modernity with the West, Romanian maintained a rich IT history of computation, informatics, and cybernetics throughout socialism. After socialism, firms such as IBM and Hewlett Packard rushed in, eager to take advantage of the specialized workforce. Soon it was determined the land upon which factories sat was worth more than the factories themselves. Numerous IT workers who I’ve spoken with lost their jobs, as did workers from other privatized factories and laborers in heavy industry and agriculture, many of whom were Roma.

As in post-industrial gentrifying Western cities (Zukin and Braslow 2011), former Romanian factories have become havens for creative capital. However, former residential units have also been transformed into offices. For instance, up the hill from Cantonului is a new Roma community, forced to Pata Rât in 2010 after the Finnish IT company Nokia speculated upon their Coastei Street homes to build an

office building. While Nokia soon after abandoned Cluj and migrated to China, where new tax breaks awaited their "nomadic" branch, the displaced residents remain, to date, stranded in the *maidane*. Meanwhile, the IT sector continues to be the largest driver of office development in Romania, most of which is foreign. IT generated 44 percent of all leasing activity in 2017, indexing 80 percent annual growth (Colliers International, 2018 18). While coworking spaces (preferred by digital nomads) only take up 1 percent of office stock, 10 percent growth is anticipated over the next five years (ibid., 18).

Ioanică's former home now functions as a pharmacy, and the rest of the area has been converted to IT buildings. As he questions:

> I have no idea why more office buildings are built for companies, and not apartments for people. Years have gone by, and now you wake up with so many offices for rich people. The authorities care about one thing—to evict people without legal documents so that they can reclaim buildings, pushing people to the outskirts of the city.

While the IT buildings that Ioanică speaks of are not necessarily for digital nomads alone, they do support the nomadism of Western tech companies to Cluj, a migration that often is accompanied by an influx of digital nomads and tourists (as I contextualize in the following section).

Ioanică's narrative is one of many critical of post-1989 socioeconomic shifts. Today, Romania maintains one of the EU's highest poverty rates, with 37 percent of

its declining population of 19.6 million people experiencing poverty or social exclusion (Eurostat 2017; World Bank 2018). According to the UN, between 2007 and 2015, after Syria, more people emigrated from Romania than any other nation (Alexe 2018). While the number of wage earners in formal and informal sectors decreased dramatically during socialism's decline, the trend continued for the decades after, mostly attributed to migration to the West. In Cluj, the number of employees in 2010 was 73 percent of what it had been in 1990 (Petrovici 2019, 41). Between 1991 and 2011, the ratio of those who remained versus those who emigrated was 13 percent for non-Roma, and 32 percent for Roma (ibid., 51), revealing racialized precarity within the city.

But these statistics do not reveal the entire picture; the language of percentages can never fully describe the day-to-day horrors of racial banishment. For instance, after being evicted from Croitorilor, Ioanică moved to "the NATO block." His building was smoky and derelict, and the ground floor was full of garbage and animals. "No one picked up the garbage because the people living here were Roma," he explains. "The children named this block NATO. It was back when our country got into NATO, and we said, okay, this is the NATO block." While entry into NATO and the EU has been heralded by anticommunists as progress, in the NATO block, residents lacked running water, electricity, and toilets. There, they formulated their own critiques of EU accession and its false promises, most prominently by naming the block NATO. "Instead of electricity, we used candles. We made fire with wood. It was very smoky. Some people had jobs, some people were picking up garbage, exactly as it is now," Ioanică laments, referencing the informal labor that many in

Pata Rât partake in. Recalling Christmas, he recollects looking out from glassless windows, enviously watching people in other buildings watch TV. "Some people had cassette players, we had food, and used candles for light. Or we connected a small bulb to the car battery." All of this in the burgeoning Silicon Valley of Europe.

Because NATO residents had no formal contracts, the military police began raiding the block. While many in Cluj presume that Roma reside in Pata Rât because of poverty, Ioanică argues that instead he landed there because the City Hall never offered his community guidance on how to apply for social housing. Today he remains in Pata Rât with his two adolescent daughters, crammed into a sixteen-square-meter barrack. Cantonului lacks a sewage system and only has two water hydrants. Many people don't have electricity. In 2015, the community was granted two portable toilets, but before that, people had to use the train tracks. Meanwhile, the City Hall refuses to pick up their garbage, citing technicalities. As Leontina, also featured in Dislocari, bemoans:

> They didn't bring us toilets, they didn't bring garbage containers, they didn't care about us. As if we were already dead, and they already put us under the ground, and that's it. We were put in the garbage dump and that's it. It's worse for us than it is for the rats.

For Leontina and others in the *maidane* of urban renewal, postsocialist transition and the influx of global capital has only meant heightened dispossession. That techno-imperialism and its avatars fetishize nomadism simply adds insult to injury.

Techno-imperialism

While neoliberalism preyed upon and destroyed socialist-era property and labor regimes, many middle-class Romanians nevertheless herald Western arrival, disavowing the socialist past. As the CEO of a software company articulated to me in the winter for 2017: Yes, 1989 was disastrous, but transition created new opportunities. "The multinationals, they really ended up saving us," he proffered, suggesting that foreign investment was necessary for future development. While the IT percentage of Romania's GDP is low today, the rate is steadily rising (Colliers International 2018, 7).

In recent years, Cluj's IT industry, not known to hire Roma, has upsized. According to a report by the Romanian IT recruitment agency, Brainspotting, the industry boasts over 20,000 companies, over 110,000 professionals, and up to 8,500 annual graduates (2018, 1). In Cluj, one in three employees is a professional, and IT is the second largest sector. Yet exploitation abounds, with over 100,000 people in outsourcing (AT Kearny 2018, 14). As of 2016, foreign-owned companies generated 40 percent of the country's GDP, with up to 90 percent of banking owned by foreign capital (Ban 2016). According to Softech, a Cluj-based software development agency that provides outsourcing, the US and the UK are the top IT outsourcing countries, followed by Germany, the Netherlands, Canada, Switzerland, and then France (2017). Of IT graduates in Cluj, Google is the top desired employer, followed by Emerson, Endava, Bosch, and Microsoft (Brainspotting 2018, 6).

As Cluj becomes Siliconized, its residential market has topped Bucharest's.

This process has been accompanied by an influx of Western tourists, some of whom identify as digital nomads, many of whom become imbricated in processes of gentrification. This correlates with Cócola-Gant's argument (2018) that gentrifying areas frequently become the objects of tourism consumption, so that gentrification and touristification become entwined in a cyclical loop. It further aligns with Gentile's observation (2015, 139) that in Eastern European cities, gentrification was induced first by the closing of functional gaps and then by the migration of wealthy expat populations. Indeed, prior to 2008, "gentrifiers" in Romanian cities were mostly tied to local scenarios; after, they became imbricated in international dynamics (Chelcea et al. 2015, 127). These entangle with former racialized property histories.

Digital nomads often find Romania attractive because of its technological prowess, Western firms, anticommunist values, English fluency, cheap housing, and exploitable labor. Citing Romania's fast internet alongside its emergent EU status, the Nomad Capital website brags, "Romania is one of the top countries in Europe to find outsourced labor on sites like Odesk, and you should be able to easily find relatively qualified technical gurus for as little as several hundred dollars a month" (Henderson, 2013). The Transylvania Hostel (2018) ranks the best wi-fi in coffee shops for digital nomads, describing Cluj as a "cheap destination for digital nomads who look for quiet places where they can sneak-in with their laptops and work on their revolutionary ideas."

Like fast wi-fi, digital nomads celebrate the availability of Airbnb accommodations and Uber transit. As one blogged, "The fact that we also landed a kick-ass Airbnb rental obviously helped us feel at home" (Backpack Me, 2017). Thus,

the more Romania Siliconizes, the more desirable it becomes for digital nomads. As has been observed in cities worldwide, the adoption of San Francisco startups Airbnb and Uber often sparks tourism gentrification. The tour guide Lonely Planet ranked Transylvania as the top "region" of 2016, promising: "Yes, horses and carts still rumble through the wooded countryside, but they'll soon share the roads with Uber cabs ferrying visitors to chic Airbnb lodgings" (2015).

In Romania, Uber usage not only enforces Siliconization, but also racism. As a French digital nomad developer blogs, "Before I arrived, I was told I would be chased by beggars and if I survived, all my belongings would be stolen by thiefs. The chief risk that you take by coming to Romania is to pay 5 times the real taxi fare. Before you learn how to spot a honest taxi, better use Uber" [sic] (Morin 2016). This fear of beggars and taxi drivers alike is rooted in classist and racist histories. Not only are many drivers Roma, but also, I've also heard countless tales of people losing their jobs after 1989, only to find refuge in taxi driving. For instance, Ion, trained to be an engineer during socialism. The industry shrunk after 1989 and he could not find work, igniting a deep depression. Today, Ion drives taxis by night, and watches pirated movies by day, barely able to afford food. Uber entered Bucharest in 2015, and Cluj in 2016. As of 2017, there were at least 250,000 users in the country (Romania Insider 2017). In 2018, it launched the food delivery service Uber Eats.

There have been numerous protests by taxi drivers in Bucharest and Cluj, and even lawsuits, as there have been worldwide, from Barcelona to San Francisco. Nevertheless, Uber, itself a digital nomad of sorts, continues to prey upon tourists and local aspirational culture of Western recognition. Meanwhile, Romania's own taxi

app, Clever Taxi, which allows users to hail taxis with smartphones, was acquired by a German company in 2017. When questioned, several digital nomads told me that they prefer Uber to Clever Taxi, particularly as one can order rides from airports without having to exchange currency. I've also heard Romanian developers laud its Western origins and integration with Google Maps. This falls in line with a longer postsocialist trajectory of using tourism and IT to affirm Western values. As Light observes (2001, 1057-1058), beginning in mid-1990s, Romania began disavowing its socialist past through tourism, "re-imaging" the country as "'reborn', 'free' and having shaken off its totalitarian past." As underground technoculture was also endemic to both late socialism and postsocialist transition and often pathologized by the West, the celebration of Western technological tourism reifies anticommunism within and beyond Romania.

Romania's portrayal as both safe and exotic, as freed from its aberrant past and yet not fully Western, appeals to nomadic fantasy. During the winter of 2018, I sat down in a fancy coffee shop with a German digital nomad, Fabian, who founded a geospatial data firm in 2007 in Cluj, which has since expanded to San Francisco, Detroit, Berlin, and China. As he sipped a green tea latte, he described Cluj's appeal. After college, he began dabbling in Berlin politics, but found it boring. He then realized that the one thing that would never bore him was entrepreneurship. Attracted to the "the wild east of Europe," he considered Romania, Bulgaria, and the Ukraine. It became a tossup between Cluj and Sofia, as he wanted to remain in the EU and as Bucharest was "too political." Cluj won because of its cheap Berlin flights. While his employees didn't earn much at first, now they make three times as much as doctors in

the region, competing within an international market. His international travels are nonstop, and he even owns an apartment in San Francisco that he rarely visits. It's a great life, but he's thinking of selling his share and starting something new soon, just for fun.

While Fabian's office sits in a new IT tower called The Office (formerly a textiles factory), other digital nomads prefer cafes or coworking spaces. In the latter, Western entrepreneurs often lead trainings on project acceleration and incubation, while Western firms sponsor events such as Tech Fest, Techsylvania, StartupTransilvania, TEDxCluj, sponsored by Western firms. There are at least twenty-one coworking spaces in Romania today, mostly in Bucharest and Cluj.

In the summer of 2016, I attempted to attend a "mingler" party in the coworking space, ClujHub, hoping to learn more. I already knew some of its nomads, such as Victor, who travels to Berlin weekly. He believes that IT is big in Romania because of foreign language skills, a sentiment often attributed to the influx of un-dubbed US television in the 1990s. As television was restricted to state channels during socialism (although people often pirated neighboring countries' stations), after 1989, numerous people become obsessed with suddenly available programming, he explained. There was also the IT manager Danny, who grew up in London and works for a London-based company. With Brexit, he imagines nomads migrating from UK to Silicon Valley companies. Andre, who works for a Cluj startup partnered with a German Microsoft-funded company, builds smart home security devices. It is gaining popularity in the West "with this new immigrant problem," he explained, failing to acknowledge that, especially since Romania's 2007 EU accession, many of these

immigrants are Romanian Roma.

My roommate, curious about ClujHub, decided to attend the event with me. But when we arrived, we were greeted by a 50 lei fee ($12 USD). While for Westerners, this isn't much, for my roommate, it was laughable. "On a normal Cluj salary, that's ridiculous. Most people could buy all the food that they needed for a week on that. It's extreme," she scoffed. Thus, we changed course for Fabrica de Pensule, a collective art space (once a paintbrush factory), which, over the last year, has been partly displaced by tech companies, aligned with classic gentrification teleology. Rather than a hefty fee, there we were greeted by a multimedia piece curated by Claudiu Lazăr, "?uropa'|'?urope." The piece highlighted the hostility that Eastern Europeans encounter when migrating west. This is only more extreme for Roma, as was the case during the 19th century. Yet, when Westerners migrate eastward, particularly digital nomads, they incite rather than face dispossession. This process is haunted by former imperial trajectories, aligned with other postsocialist technologies of installing Western dependence. Specifically, in times of postsocialist techno-imperialism, dispossession of home and identity are collapsed as Western nomads arrive.

As Lazăr's work evidences, when Eastern Europeans migrate to the West, they are treated as dangerous contaminants to Western purity, especially if they are Roma. But when Western Europeans migrate to the East, they enact new forms of transnational gentrification that then incites migration with dispossessive effects—effects that lead many Romanians, particularly Roma, to move abroad and send money back home. For instance, my friend Marian, Roma and fluent in over a dozen

languages but unable to find steady work in Bucharest due to racism, sat down with me one sweltering August summer in an air-conditioned McDonalds café to describe his recent visit to France. He had been traveling there often, not because he enjoys traveling and the freedom that Romania's EU accession offers, but because there are camps on the outskirts of Paris where he can work and make a bit of money, even though life there "is like hell," lacking toilets, food, everything. And, there, he describes, he encounters not only anti-Roma racism but also anti-Eastern Europeanness, together miring him a bricolage of subhumanity. Being Romani from Eastern Europe is in itself, he describes, "a double crime." But he went because he was able to take advantage of a racist French policy, whereby the government was giving Roma 100 euro if they would return East. He made the trip a few times that summer, but he was always relieved to return home. Although Roma, he, like hundreds of people with whom I've shared cheap European airplane flights to and from Bucharest, is far from a digital nomad or lifestyle migrant. Yet always scattered on these plane rides are also tourists, entrepreneurs, and digital nomads. Unlike Marian, they are driven by the mobility of IT capital rather than precarity, racism, and sheer survival.

Thinking from the *Maidane*

In his studies of "sekend-hend" Eastern Europe, Wlad Godzich argues that while Western imaginaries position the East as backwards, much of Western modernity is in fact based upon prior Eastern histories (2014). And yet, in Eastern Europe, the word "sekend-hend" is a distorted and imported term that when spoken

with Eastern European accents seems to ventriloquize foreign speech. However, “this voice does have authenticity, and the accent it proffers has primacy over the content of what it utters” (2014, 15). Otherwise put, Western Europe, and arguably also Silicon Valley, are second-hand projects, which sit upon Eastern European originary pasts. In the case of double dispossession, anti-Roma racism within 19th-century Romania led to numerous Roma residents migrating Western Europe. There, they encountered new forms of racism, including Gypsy fetishization. State socialism sought mitigate interwar fascism in the mid-20th century. The demise of state socialism has led to the reinterpretation of pre-socialist anti-Roma racism once more, justified in the name of transitional justice. Socialism’s demise has also incited the Western devouring of socialist-era IT infrastructure and techno-urban histories. Today, the arrival of the digital nomad in Cluj cannibalizes and enhances these histories in one fell swoop. Continuing, Godzich writes, “This may seem to be a meager consolation in a landscape of such desolation, but recycling requires that one wanders around dumps” (2014, 15). Disinterring the allegorical and material roots of digital nomadism from the dumps of the *maidane* sheds light on the constitution of double dispossession, as well as the formation of “sekend-hend” Europe.

Yet, as Clyde Woods argues, there is more to do than simply render autopsies of racialized and subjugated lifeworlds (2002). In the wastelands of Pata Rât, there is more at work than simply survival alone. By only recording stories of death and dispossession, one obviates other futures, other iterations of leftover time that threaten the dominant end-of-history order. From work being done by Căși Sociale Acum to the analysis being produced in Cantonului barracks, other futures being

dreamt, all aimed to produce housing justice. On one hand, these degentrify the normative accounts of postsocialist end-of-times as being inevitable. On the other, they point to the need for epistemologies crafted outside of traditional urban studies.

On the surface, it might appear that Cluj is indeed the new Silicon Valley of Europe, gentrifying much like its Western counterpart. While of course there are parallels, with rents rising and racialized evictions accumulating, there is more at work than simply replication. As the interconnected phenomena of racial banishment and appropriation reveals, racial histories haunt the materialities and allegories of techno-urban transformation. By reading across fields and narratives, and by thinking from the *maidane*, interconnection begins to crystalize. Digital nomadism is entwined with Orientalist onto-epistemologies built upon Roma slavery, failed reparations, and forced migration. Further, the Siliconization of Cluj rests upon prior techno-urban infrastructure and histories. Might it be a form of epistemological gentrification to only read Cluj as Silicon Valley, or to simply read material and allegorical dispossession as isolated phenomena? Rather, by reading across narratives, allegories, and routes of eviction and geoarbitrage alike, techno-imperialism and its Orientalist hauntings surface. These specters point to the need for a connected approach to theorizing material and allegorical dispossessions across time, space, and genre.

Chapter 2: Corrupting Techno-normativity in Postsocialist Romania: Queering Code and Computers

Everyone is watching. It's dark—it's always dark—and Black is trying to escape unnoticed from the repressive regime that is socialist Romania. Black, a nuts and bolts factory worker, has to deceive guards, smuggle goods, and manipulate people—all without getting caught in the cold, industrial never-ending dystopia. Lonely, Black, a video game character in the Bucharest-based, Japanese-backed Sand Sailor Studio's 2014 game *Black the Fall*, only has one friend—an abandoned robot. On screen, Black, a humanoid perhaps more machine than human himself, is hard to make out against rows of identical figures, either bicycling to power the machine that was state-socialism or listening to the censored Radio Free Europe. As he sneaks past a sea of coffins arranged in a half-collapsing building, an overseer blocks a forgotten room filled with old portraits, a vestige from the good old pre-socialist days when Bucharest was the "Little Paris of the East" (also a time of fascism). But to the game designers, writing code in postsocialist Romania—now known as the "Silicon Valley of Europe"—this aristocratic era is a fond historical memory, of a time when kings still meant something—a time before socialism and its aftermaths corrupted promises of Western enlightenment; a time before the country was run by corrupt parties politicians likened in popular media (and in the game) to socialist zombie-robots, refusing to vacate what should be the clean, capitalist, and Siliconized present. In this way, postsocialist techno-urban aspirations of "Siliconization," exemplified by the game, merge with those of pre-socialist "Parisization," erasing the fact that during socialism and the post-1989 transitional period, Romania was a rich space of

technological development—above and below ground. In this way, the anticommunist game, appealing to a postsocialist generation, mobilizes contemporary digital technology to disavow the "illiberalism" of socialist technology and its corrupt aftermaths. Like other technocapitalist creations of postsocialist Romania, the game thus attempts to redo the 1989 revolution, this time to get it right, this time to finally delete socialism and its corrupt ghosts once and for all.

Here I don't explicitly focus on robots or games per se in Romania, at least not in a traditional sense. Rather, here I am invested in the games that humans play with technology to differentially manifest anticommunist Siliconized futures on one hand, and corrupt futurity on the other. As I suggest, since 1989, Romania has experienced a growth of *Silicon Valley imperialism*, a postsocialist temporal structure in which post-Cold War Silicon Valley's futurity hinges upon the reproduction of Siliconized fantasies in intimate and global spaces alike. This has transformed techno-urban horizons drastically, which are now peppered with tall glass IT towers and co-working spaces replete with Google-like interiors, and Western sci-fi Astrofuturist imagery. Rents have gone up around tech centers, with corresponding racialized evictions, much like in California's Silicon Valley. Meanwhile, mass urban protests known as the Light Revolution, largely supported by tech corporations and workers, use Western technology to disavow the socialist past and gain Western recognition. These protests too featured at the end of *Black the Fall*, aligning the game with a ballooning Silicon aspirational movement.

However, there are technological pasts and presents that either do things unrecognizable to Silicon Valley imperialism, or that Silicon Valley imperialism

attempts to delete by coding them as illiberal and unproductive. Yet infrastructurally, as I go on to explore, Silicon Valley imperialism depends upon these corrupt materialities for its own reproduction. In Romania, Western firms today sit upon the ruins of socialist-era factories, many of which were part of socialism's own techno-futurism. Western-endorsed startups coopt local hackers and developers, taking advantage of the technological prowess and skills of those who came of age during the latter socialist period and its transitional aftermaths.

Socialist Romania after all excelled at hardware production, hacking Western computer models to manufacture the most third-generation computers in the Eastern bloc after the Soviet Union, along with an array of fourth-generation microprocessor computers in the 1980s. During this time, and continuing into the post-1989 transitional period, underground practices of cabling, software piracy, game creation, and hacking proliferated, as it did in other Eastern bloc spaces, such as Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, and Poland (Jakić 2014; Wasiak 2014). To game the Iron Curtain was to spatiotemporally corrupt it, to fragment normative temporal and spatial boundaries. Such cyber deviancy was only amplified after 1989, when hacking and bootlegging became more widespread than state-sanctioned practices (Alberts and Oldenziel 2014).

Generally this form of gaming espoused what is called *șmecherie* (cunningness or a sort of street-smart cleverness), along with a desire of gaming, hacking, and corrupting the spatiotemporality of Iron (now Silicon) Curtain (Fiscutean 2018; Švelch 2018). Often (but not only) associated with Roma *manele* (Roma popular music), *șmecherie* implies knowing how to work a space or situation

to one's benefit. While it might incite the accumulation of wealth (sometimes by corrupting the rules of the game), *șmecherie* is also a performative, playful coding act and a form of postsocialist excess, bestowing value unrecognizable to the state and to Silicon Valley imperialism alike. While Western IT firms pathologize "dark" *șmecher* practices, at the same time, they coopt them to expand.

In postsocialist Romania, Black's robot friend is coded as clumsy, tired, and dark, nothing like the Siliconized clean, light technology of today, manufactured upon the ghosts of socialist factories and infrastructure. In this way, Silicon Valley imperialism, an updated version of Radio Free Europe, reproduces its future through *techno-normativity*, straightening temporally corrupt, *șmecher* cyberculture, while deleting memory of it. Techno-normativity inculcates what Elizabeth Freeman describes as "chrono-normativity" (2010), or the temporality that capitalism inheres to reproduce its futurity. It also builds upon what Liviu Chelcea and Oana Druță articulate as "zombie socialism" (2016), an anticommunist genre of historicity that understands socialism to be simultaneously aberrant and abhorrent. As Shannon Woodcock suggests, "Just as the homosexual is born into his/her closet and needs to develop in order to 'come out' into the world of heterosexuals, the 'post-socialist' East exists in Western capitalist discourse in order for EUrope to benevolently bestow recognition on its other" (2011, 66). This framework of recognition understands that to escape its socialist-era ghosts, Eastern Europe must become techno-normative. This can be seen in the cooptation and erasure of socialist and transitional technology, as well as in contemporary mass anticorruption "Light Revolution" urban protests that have galvanized urban centers since 2017 in Romania. These, supported by

Western corporations from IT firms and McDonalds alike, utilize Western technology and light to disavow the socialist past and claim an enlightened space in the Western geopolitical body (Atanasoski and McElroy 2018). Techno-normativity thus indexes postsocialist aspirations of becoming Western in ways that also fuel the labor and resource needs of the West. Because technology informed the project of socialism and its collapse (Petrovzsky and Țichindeleanu 2011), it is worth examining in the postsocialist Siliconized present—techno-normative and otherwise.

While corruption in computer programming and data storage refers to processes in which errors and malware alike compromise data integrity and lead to system crashes, in postsocialist contexts, techno-normativity codes socialism and its remnants as corrupt. In this way, corruption and its divergent meanings can be understood as what Jaroslav Švelch describes as a "coding act," or a way of writing code that refuses "the rules or fictions of the games" and the "runtime behavior of a program" (2018, xli)? By foregrounding computer corruption and its *șmecher* coding acts, here I posture that it might be possible to queer and corrupt techno-normative fictions of corruption.[8] How might reading techno-fictions unrecognizable to Silicon Valley imperialism corrupt the techno-normativity it inheres?

To engage in such a queer reading practice, both ethnographic and speculative work is requisite. By speculative, I draw upon Aimee Bahng's theorization that while finance capitalism depends upon practices of extrapolation and fiction-writing, speculation can also be queered to create anti-capitalist futures. As she suggests, "Pursuing alternative technocultural origin myths also means rejecting the progress narrative that Enlightenment thought encourages" (2018, 11). Turning to postsocialist

contexts, one might ask, what other techno-futures might manifest if we are to take seriously the socialist robot of *Black the Fall*, along with its strange kinship to its humanoid friend? How might methods such as what Saidiya Hartman describes as "critical fabulation"—or the writing of speculative histories marked by violence and institutions on one hand, but also "desire and the want of something better"—remap postsocialist technoscapes (2018, 470)?

By queering, and aligned with queer theory, here I diverge from reading queerness as a simple identarian code or sexuality descriptive (Barad 2015), but rather as a field of inquiry and set of interpretative strategies that helps elucidate the relationality of socialist and transitional technoculture. Aligned with Bogdan Popa's theorization of queer postsocialist politics, queerness here "emerges from desires that constitute a surplus in relation to the normal circuit of exchange value" (2019, 30). In other words, queering illuminates the excess of cyber and computational coding acts that transpired outside official state histories and Cold War victory narratives. Queering thus means reading the socialist computers, robots, and cables that haunt the present, perverting techno-normative imaginaries of postsocialist "common time" of Silicon Valley (Starosta 2014, 2005). Neda Atanasoski and Kalindi Vora offer, "Postsocialism marks a queer temporality, one that does not reproduce its social order even as its revolutionary antithesis" (2018, 141). Continuing, "Resisting the revolutionary teleology of what was before, postsocialism creates space to work through ongoing legacies of socialisms in the present" (ibid., 141). Siliconization, like the common time of history's end, can thereby be read as a heteronormative event, one that reproduces teleological dreams of Western becoming in ways that fuel the

labor and resource needs of the West, and one that gentrifies socialist-era techno imaginaries and their corrupt postsocialist reverberations. As I question, how can queering refuse to engage in socialist nostalgics, while at the same time offer a much-needed lens through which one can understand techno-entanglements of the present?

In what follows, I queer postsocialist technoculture by scavenging through the corrupted past, digging out dismembered computer parts, salvaging discarded magazines, hacking together futures past and yet-to-come unrecognizable by, and yet intimate with, Silicon Valley imperialism. By way of beginning, I introduce a speculative future past written against that of *Black the Fall* techno-normativity. *Istorie (Nu) Se Repetă (History Will Not Repeat Itself)*, led by artists Veda Popovici and Mircea Nicolea, and implemented by dozens of collaborators, weaves together a future past from Romania's transitional period that imagines technocultural worlds that could have, and still may, transpire. I use this a point of departure in exploring socialist and postsocialist technology, drawing upon archival and ethnographic material, ushering them into a new possible future coded against Silicon Valley imperialism and its techno-normative means of reproduction.

Istorie (Nu) Se Repetă

There are about a dozen of us hovering around a table in the Macaz Bar Cooperative in downtown Bucharest on Moșilor Street, which over the last year has been marked by an array of evictions, mostly targeting Roma communities. Veda Popovici and Mircea Nicolae are convening one of several workshops in which we, as participants, are tasked with devising objects that can be used to depict a future past

from Romania's transitional period—one that could have happened, but that never did. As the artists describe their project:

> From darkness to light, from authoritarianism to freedom, from communism to capitalism—these form the greatest narrative of the recent period. This narrative casts collective experiences of solidarity and resistance in the footnote of history. The dreams and projections of the 1990s and 2000s, the post-revolutionary desires of a truly better world for all, remain buried under charity, minerals, and migration. In *Istorie (Nu) Se Repetă*, these are returning fragments and imperfections in the narrations of possible but lost worlds: feminist trade unions, radical movements, collaborative economic projects, information campaigns on dangers of the new capitalism (translated by author).

Those of us at the table are familiar with the counterfactual stories that Popovici and Nicolae have already crafted. For instance, there is the Coop Bank and public information campaign entitled "Money is Not Made Through Work." There is the Union of Women Workers of Romania, who occupied their Suveica factory who now own their own homes in Floarea Albă. There are the small shop owners at the Obor and Vitan Markets, unscathed by the "mallification" that marks 2018 gentrifying topographies. And the list goes on, filled with places and stories that could have been, but that never were. One of the tasks of this project is to imagine these pasts, and to dream them into different futures yet-to-come. As Alexis Lothian puts it in her

formulating of queer speculative futures, “The end of the world as we know it seems continually imminent. Yet we live in the debris of many ended worlds, whose inhabitants continue to live on” (2018, 2).

At the table, we are discussing what new objects we as participants might create to materialize these other worlds. A few of us are excited about one future past space in particular: the building on Calea Victoriei that in the mid-1990s headquartered both the Roma rights organization, Romania Criss, and the LGBT organization, Accept. Then, these two groups did indeed share space, forging what could have been rich and sustained space of queer of color critique, had liberal NGO-ization not severed them. But in Popovici and Nicolae’s future past, the two groups continue to grow together and stave off capitalism, building international solidarities and a Free School. At the workshop, we opt to draft a syllabus for the school. Amongst other topics, hacking should be included in the curriculum. As one participant offers, “Yes, we all learned computer programming during the 1990s, and before that during socialism. And everyone hacked or knew someone who did. What would have happened if hacking could have really kept Romania from getting swallowed up by global capital?” Indeed, how could hacking and *șmecher* cyber practices have prevented Silicon Valley from corrupting postsocialism? Why is it instead that socialist technology and its aftermaths are read as corrupt?

Socialism and its Computers

Technological development was a crucial part of the state socialist project in Romania, as it was in other Eastern bloc states. The figure of engineer itself was

understood as a cyborg of sorts, intended to propel the country into socialist modernity, while socialist projects of electrification and industrialization spread throughout the region. These projects did not inhere assimilatory drives into liberal democracy, but rather the sustenance of a dialectical post-Enlightenment future, one premised upon industrialization, urbanization, and centralization (Buck-Morss 2002). As with other industries, official computer development was techno-normative in relationship to the socialist state (which endeavored to use computers to centralize industry, agriculture, and informatics), yet deviant in relationship to the West. During this time, Romania successfully produced and exported numerous third and fourth generation computers, largely by hacking and altering Western models. Having spoken with computer scientists involved in these early endeavors today, nostalgia and wistfulness characterize their memories, as does a form of paternalism for having been the first or best at this or that. However, and more my focus here, less normative IT worlds coevolved with official ones, hiding in the closet of official state history.

Following World War II, Stalin led the Soviet Union and Eastern bloc in abstaining from Western trade, forming a socialist economic bloc, COMECON. Based on mass industrialization, its goal was to eliminate reliance upon capitalist machinery and products, and to limit economic dependence upon the West. Industrialization, it was theorized, would also help the East recover from war. Romania, then led by Gheorghiu-Dej, supported the plan, and as archives have since revealed, he even claimed authorship of it, indicative of a form of paternalism saturating national state history, technopolitical and otherwise (Dragomir 2012).

However, within a decade of the plan's implementations, tensions grew

between the two countries. Moscow had intended for different COMECON countries to have economic specialties, and Romania's was slated as agrarian per its longstanding peasant culture (Mureșan 2008). But with futurist visions of technological growth and collectivization as precondition for industrialization, Romania, rather than exist only as a food supplier to Soviet states, wanted to develop technology. Soon, people were moved into cities undergoing rapid development, while dormitories were built around new factories to house workers, the cyborgs of the socialist future.

Romania's first computers were part of an early socialist generation made both to further mathematical and scientific inquiry, and to and to improve techno-urban centralization. In Cluj, the first computers, robots of a different variety, were aimed at improving sugar beet harvesting and optimizing public transportation timetables (Farkas et al. 1963; Popoviciu 1969). Scientists at the Atomic Physics Institute built Romania's first computer in 1957, CIFA-1, making Romania the eleventh country to manufacture a computer. Having visited the Institute in Măgurele, a suburb outside of Bucharest—which today is in the process of creating Europe's largest laser, ELI (Extreme Light Infrastructure)—it is clear that pride of past technological advances runs deep. Similar immodesty is written on the walls of other computer and mathematical institutes and buildings throughout the country, particularly in Cluj and Timişoara. After the development of CIFA-1, an array of models erupted, from MARICA, DACICC, and CET in Cluj to MECIPT in Timişoara. Over twenty-five official computer models were crafted during socialism, as Romania became the second largest producer of electronic computing systems in

the Communist bloc after the Soviet Union, exporting machines to China, Czechoslovakia, Germany, Poland, Syria, Egypt, and Iran (Baltac 2015).

Vasile Baltac, one of the early makers of the MICEPT models, today is a professor at Bucharest's National School of Political Science and Public Administration, and the CEO/cofounder of two software companies, Softnet.ro and Novatech SRL. These are headquartered in the same building on Calea Floreasca that centralized national computer research during socialism. On one cold winter day in 2017, he met with me there, eager to share photographs and memories of times past, when he and his colleagues led some of the country's most valorized technological missions. Unlike software company headquarters in Silicon Valley, the building is old and cracked, worn but filled with technological futures past and present, entangled in concrete and cables.

It was in 1967, he recounted, that the government launched a program to promote computational industrial development and to introduce computers into the national economy, forming a Governmental Committee for Computers and Data Processing. Although third-generation computers were imported from the West, significantly, Romania successfully produced and exported its own. This was done by hacking and altering Western models. France offered Romania the license for its IRIS-50 medium-sized computers, a model that Romanians soon hacked, creating FELIX C-256. Baltac led the operation of creating an entire FELIX family, birthing numerous models and over 650 mainframes, including many HCs (home computers). While Ceaușescu determined HCs to contravene Party ideology, their manufacturing continued. While HCs such as PRAE and CoBra were manufactured as part of state

projects, others, as I go on to explore, were developed underground, largely based on cloning the Sinclair ZX Spectrum. These had to be plugged into TV monitors and used audio cassette tapes as external program memory.

Bogdan is a retro-computing expert now trying to create a computer museum in Cluj. One rainy afternoon, we sat down in an old bar, and he told me about how every Thursday midnight during socialism, the TV station would stop broadcasting normal programming and would instead emit code. It sounded like a fax machine, he grinned. Bogdan's brother would fight the family for use of the television during this time, so that he could record the code on one of his floppy disks plugged into his cloned computer. He would then spend the week decoding it. "It wasn't some fancy key to some government secret—nothing like that. Sometimes it was just information about the airport, sometimes an announcement from a big shop, sometimes games and free software. This how we began to learn BASIC programming," he smiled. His friends would come over to play the games, often meaning ten adolescents would hover around one computer, to the chagrin of his parents. "We were so bored with the limited TV station, and so this was something new and fun."

Despite extended support by the Communist regime for computer development, it was less enthusiastic about actual robots. At first, robotics development was supported, as it was thought that robots would abet rapid industrialization. Robotics workshops were established in universities, but after the Party leader, Nicolae Ceaușescu, visited one in Timișoara, he became worried that industrial robots might displace the working class. Soon after, the word "robot" was banished from the press (Kovacs 1991, 942). Nevertheless, the research continued,

supported by local authorities who decided to turn their heads. These researchers were just one of many dissident actors in the underground of a maverick state. Was the robot of *Black the Fall* an underground entity made despite the socialist state, and if so, what was its relationship with its friend, Black?

Perverting the Perverse

Donna Haraway suggests, “The main trouble with cyborgs, of course, is that they are the illegitimate offspring of militarism and patriarchal capitalism, not to mention state socialism. But illegitimate offspring are often exceedingly unfaithful to their origins. Their fathers, after all, are inessential” (1987, 293). Indeed, the cyborgs of state-socialism were informed by the conditions of the state, as well as the West, yet at the same time, they defied both. The state itself was read as deviant through Cold War optics, and even by the Soviet Union. But the state and the idea of the state were still there, relevant and yet at times, “inessential.” As I continue to explore, the most interesting human-non-human interactions during socialism and its aftermaths transpired beneath the surface of official state history, queering techno-normativity and paternalism together.

Tibi, who now lives in the US, where he works in a software company, grew up in Bucharest in the 1980s, where he learned programming from his cloned Spectrum. The ZX Spectrum was built in Britain in 1982, and soon copied and produced throughout Eastern Europe. The 8-bit HC ran a BASIC interpreter, making it relatively easy to use as long as you had a TV set and an audiocassette for storage. “If you pressed ‘i’ it would be ‘if,’ ‘e’ it would be ‘else,’ so you could type BASIC

pretty quickly," he recounts. Most people that he knew with computers had Spectrum clones. While the Party cloned the Spectrum to create the CoBra, these were enormously expensive and difficult to obtain, fomenting an underground of DIY hardware assemblage. University students in Bucharest's Polytechnic University soon began to clone Spectrums themselves, producing an array of machines, all unique and made from spare and smuggled parts. "We always joked that more CoBras were built in the dormitories than in the factory" a programmer friend joked.

While Tibi doesn't remember where his family bought their computer, he does recall it being an unusual purchase. At the time CoBras cost 35,000 lei, about half the price of a Dacia car. Black market clones were much cheaper (and therefore popular), sometimes going for 12,000 lei. Tibi does remember having to buy Russian audiocassette tapes so that he could store information and load programs, since the computer lacked storage. Underground markets emerged, with people trading cassettes and parts. Rather than playing games like his peers, Tibi used these to learn software and new programming languages. "I remember that at one point I was using my computer to read a very precise scale that was measuring the input of a drop of water to show how it evaporates – even with 32k of memory," he reminisced. Tibi joined his high school's computer club, unofficially organized by two professors who were into computers—a physics professor and a Russian language professor. There was one computer class taught in his school, but it was very simple, based on FORTRAN, a fast and efficient computer language developed by IBM in the 1950s. "You can still see traces of the past today," he explained, referencing how FORTRAN and BASIC are still used. Specters from Spectrum times.

Back in Bucharest, Polytechnic University students engendered all sorts of deviant computer practices. Mihai Moldovanu, cofounder and lead Linux developer of TFM Group Software, did. As part of the Polytechnic cloning world, he and other students leveraged resources to buy Cobra motherboards, and then began to build computers upon them, creating an entire supply chain. Sometimes parts were scrapped from other computers; sometimes they were flown in with the help of airline pilots. Dealers would come to campus with electronics, parts, LEDs, and resistors, selling them at bulk to the students. Often, they would meet at a nearby campus pub. There was even this guy they called "The American" who sold transistors right in front of legitimate electronics stores, somehow getting away with it. "He might sell you a bag of 100 LEDs and only three of them would work." Soon, everyone at the university had these *şmecher* homemade machines, each made with about 2,000 solder joints and a sea of wires.

While much of Mihai's knowledge was developed through practice, he also remembers watching a Bulgarian TV show that taught circuit building. He hacked it by using an analog antenna, often skipping school to do so. He would study everything aired, quickly taking notes since circuit schematics were only broadcast for a couple of seconds. Then he would close his eyes and draw based on memory. About 90 percent of the Romanian computer industry was built on reverse engineering, he explained. Mihai recalled that of the computers that they produced (probably more than were produced at the factory), no two were ever the same. Even their cases varied depending upon what was available on the black market. And the keyboards all contained keys polished one-at-a-time with a nail file, upon which

professional-looking paper letters and numbers were placed, thanks to a friend's paper business. The purpose was to learn and to have fun, *şmecherie*, never to capitalize.

Might these cloned computers, derived from British and Romanian parts alike, some stolen, some smuggled – also be some of the robots of the socialist period, thereby queering anticommunist narratives that see socialist robots simply as poor benign accomplices to *Black the Fall* dystopics? This Spectrum hybrid, a perversion to the West, was not produced by the West, nor by the socialist state. Its past is muddled and unattached to pure origin tales. Its futurity depended upon illicit connections, disassembled motherboards, and forbidden border crossings. And, further queering techno-normative reproduction tales, it gave rise to new postsocialist underground futures.

Casting Mimicry

Sitting around the table at the *Istorie (Nu) Se Repetă* workshop, participants began recounting stories of 1990s techno perversity. As some speculated, what if these could have staved off the dawn of post-1989 technocapitalism? "Can it still," someone asked. "Is it too late?" questioned another. After all, postsocialist neoliberalism dramatically disrupted Romanian technoculture, leading to the disintegration of state projects. Everyday life too was recast through transition, from media consumption practices to employment opportunities and lack thereof. In this way, transition led to new forms of techno-normativity but also techno-deviancy at the same time.

The December 1989 revolution which paved the way for neoliberalism in Romania, the first revolution televised, was crafted by technology, and materialized different technological effects. The Romanian national television station aired the revolution, which was then broadcast across the world with various interpretations. In the US, coverage focused on the horrors of Communism, highlighting images of a mass grave in Timișoara now believed to have been staged for the media using bodies from a local cemetery (Borcila 2009, 69). By representing Romania as a victim site, Western media mapped a future of salvific intervention. But while the US maintained that the grave was real, it suggested that the revolution was staged, led by a new generation of Communists, thereby doubly justifying future US intervention in the name of anti-corruption (Petrovszky and Ţichindeleanu 2011, 34). Meanwhile, some Romanians, glued to TVs airing the revolution and subsequent the execution of Ceaușescu, were imbued with a new political subjectivity of having participated in both. As a cooperative member of the Macaz Bar Coop, where Popovici and Nicolae are leading the *Istorie (Nu) Se Repetă* workshop, and who was only a child during the revolution explained, “There is still the trauma—we were all accomplices in murder. We all signed a social contract that there is no going back. Whatever came next, we had to embrace it, because we destroyed the past, or the legitimating element of it. The past crumbled.”

Ceaușescu’s execution wasn’t actually live; there was a 15-minute delay in its screening (Ujică 2010). A sense of delay became the dominant narrative that both the West and Romania subsumed about Romania. Western media inculcation was one purported antidote. When asked what she remembers most about transition, my

roommate described, “People just started watching TV. Western TV. Or Romanian TV modeled on Western programming. But either way, TV was the truth teller.” She recounts watching MTV with her parents throughout the 1990s for six hours a day.

Even though MTV has since “gone to shit,” her mother, now in her 60s, still watches it daily, and has a television in every room of her home. Meanwhile, her father, is obsessed with bootlegging. During the 1990s, he would go to the flea market to buy black market videos every weekend, which he would then arrange alphabetically in his home library. What is now the famous McDonalds in Piața Uniri (the first “Mac” to planted after socialism, in 1995) was once steeped in bootleg CD stands. Because many of the programs were un-subtitled, and because people were fascinated with the new world that had just opened up to them, viewers learned English quickly, and also some Spanish due to the abundance of telenovelas. In this way, the post-Cold War spectral encounter between the East and the West became an asymmetrical geographic interplay. McKenzie Wark observes, “The territory of the East was maintained as an image of the other within the map of the West; the map of the West was the other put into covert circulation in the territory of the East” (1994, 65). And yet, the circulation of the West in the East produced complex frictions and effects.

For instance, English proficiency, along with the abundance of socialist-trained informatics workers, became an inspiration for Western firms looking to launch a new Eastern European outsourcing market post-1989. This offered opportunities to some, but most people I’ve spoken with recount having lost rather than gained employment in the 1990s, or of having pieced together an array of

undignified gigs. For instance, Monica, who worked as a highly-trained engineer throughout the 80s, lost her job after transition. She found a new one as an accountant, but the salary was too small, pummeling her into a deep depression. And she is no exception. In 1988, computer production was valued at 10 billion lei, but in 1991, it sunk to 3 billion, with hardware production ceasing (Docaș 2015). Florin, founder of an IT company, recounts the number of IT workers dropping rapidly, and a Canadian firm extracting a whole team of 200 people. As factories crumbled, malls appeared. As small markets vanished, Mega Image and Carrefour hypermarkets manifested. Gambling venues too erupted in the 1990s, in chain venues such as MaxBet scattered throughout neighborhoods. Between 2003 and 2014, the number of slot machines quadrupled in Romania to 62,000. In 2016, it was estimated that of Romania's 20 million people, at least 98,000 are "problem gamblers," though experts suggest the number is really in the hundreds of thousands (Meseșan 2016). Today, no longer do people wait in queues, lines that many now recount as places of sociality; instead, they gamble earnings in the betting rooms, trying to win at a capitalist game rigged against them (O'Neill 2016).

Claudiu, who works for a multinational in Sema Park adjacent to the Polytechnic University, has a father who had studied cybernetics at the university. His father had a good job during socialism, which he lost after his position was made obsolete by Western firms. He began driving taxis and working odd jobs, and now feels as if his entire education has been made obsolete. Claudiu studied economics in the UK in the 2000s, and then managed to come back and get a job for Hewlett Packard. Now he does technical writing for a different firm in Sema Park. Unlike

Pipera, where computers were manufactured during socialism, Sema Park was an agricultural industrial center. But today it lives as a strange mixture of high-tech glass towers and old socialist-era warehouses. There are still canteens that serve the same traditional Romanian food that they served to socialist agricultural workers, but now they've rebranded their exteriors with brick and glass, having changed their names to hipster-sounding titles, like "Cactus." "They're just doing what they have to keep up," Claudiu tells me, pointing out a large empty lot behind one of them that reminds him of the spaciousness and heavy industrial ruins of the 1990s. "This is what everything was like in the 90s—I miss it." He used to come here in high school to go clubbing, back when it was cheap, and they didn't check IDs. There are also new food trucks that have come in, mostly selling burgers and coffee, and a fancy café inside the glass building where he works that oddly resembles a tropical botanical garden. There's also a sports center and bowling alley, IDM, with a logo mimicking IBM's. But it's been there for a while, and, having bowled there myself with Macaz members on a New Year's retreat, I can attest that is far from bourgeois inside.

Later that evening, back in my apartment having returned from Sema Park, I see a sticker attached to a closet placed by my roommate, reading, "When You Think You're *Adidas*, But You're Really Just *Adibas*." In Romanian, *adidas* simply means "sneakers," regardless of the brand. An anarchist, feminist theater company in Chișinău, Moldova, known as the Spălătorie ("Laundry"), crafted the *Adidas/Adibas* sticker. As I recalled being told at the Spălătorie when I first visited it in the midst of an earlier bone-chilling winter, there has always been a simultaneous adoration and abhorrence for Western brands. Their taboo during socialism created a fetish, but

now, in postsocialist times, members of Macaz and the Spălătorie alike understand Western capitalism as a colonial force, one that instigates forms of self-colonization by instantiating ongoing desires of Western recognition. IDM and Adibas will never be IBM nor Adidas, yet the desire of inversing that pesky, corrupt character lingers on.

Across the city from IDM is Pipera, the neighborhood of socialist-era computing and FELIX manufacturing. After 1989, FELIX found itself in a messy relationship with the actual IBM, erasing FELIX's own hardware production. And yet, IBM's strategy failed, at least at first, as they had to compete with a new underground market in which Romanians would assemble their own computers with uncertified IT parts from Hong Kong to Taiwan in small garages. Tibi recalls, "In the early 1990s, I was interested in building my own PC. It was cheaper. If you wanted to do an upgrade with some parts, it was cheaper to build your own. I was building for a couple of friends, even my brother." These were desktops, so it was easy, he explains.

Tibi also remembers one of the first commercials to be released on Romanian television after 1989. It was a FELIX computer commercial, one whose slogan went viral: "V-am prins, vrăjitoarelor! (I caught you, witches!)" It was everywhere," he remembers. "Everyone knew it." But what might it actually mean? People have different interpretations of the satiric commercial, which featured a man walking into a cave filled with witches preparing some potion for him. Were the witches FELIX makers crafting socialist-era machines now liberated by capitalism, or were they Americans now trapping corrupt Romanian computer-makers with their end-of-history alchemy? Then again, as witches are gendered and racialized in popular

imaginaries in Romania, often invoking anti-Roma racism, might socialism itself be coded as Roma-affiliated in this commercial, suggesting that FELIX was now on a new Western journey away from its corrupt past (although, unknowingly, it was in fact on a journey of predation by the West). But on the other hand, perhaps the commercial acted as a prescient satire from the future, aware that that despite the West's bests efforts, Romanian computer perversion would continue to flourish—though maybe in internet cafes and computer labs instead of caves.

Not even capitalism's best efforts could undo Romanian cyber deviancy. Of course, the West did try to erase Romania's technological proficiency, and according to its own narratives, it was victorious. It immediately crafted the narrative of a backwards Romania needing technological salvation, one that over time, people began to believe. Anna Tsing warns that speculative enterprises such as software companies must always sell possibility of economic growth to investors before actualization. "The more spectacular the conjuring, the more possible an investment frenzy," she suggests (2000, 118). Not only companies, but also regions must conjure themselves as spaces for future investment in order to attract investment, she writes. Utterances of Romania's claim to having "become" Europe's Silicon Valley are in this way conjuring acts built on mimicry speculation rather than reflections of reality.

For instance, in 1990, a *New York Times* article proclaimed Romania technologically backwards (Greenhouse 1990). According to a specialist based out of the Institute for Comparative Economic Studies in Vienna, Romania was exactly "20 years behind," as it still counted inventory and performed accounting manually (ibid.). In 1995, Malcolm Penn of the British thinktank, Future Horizons, gave a talk

in Romania, encouraging Romanians to embrace a new market opportunity, while also warning of some potential "Key Issues" in a PowerPoint slide, namely: "Lack Of Capitalist Culture/Work Ethic; and Jealousy Risk When Sense Of Envy—Overtakes Sense Of Entrepreneurialship" (1995, 11). In other words, Penn suggested that unless Romanians catch up to capitalist ontologies, failure will abound—failure linked to an infantile Communist ethos. As he continued in his PowerPoint: "Capitalism Is Not Perfect But, Like It Or Not, That Is The Way Of The World. The Challenge Is To Learn How To Exploit Its Benefits & Make It Work To Your Advantage. . . Just Like Everyone Else Has To!" (1995, 12). Thus, in one fell swoop, Penn erased the history of FELIX, positioning Romania as technologically behind due to its anti-capitalist history. In 2003, FELIX was privatized by special state order. Five days later, a board of directors with no computer background was established. The next year, roughly half of the factory's shares were auctioned and divided into joint stocks. Some went bankrupt in 2006, selling land and buildings to real estate speculators who determined the 20,000 square meters upon which the factory sat worth more than the *fabrica* itself.

Today, hackathons in coworking spaces still resemble Penn's slideshow, inculcating Romanian tech workers with ideas that to compete and become better entrepreneurs, they must adopt Western ways. I have sat in on countless of these sessions, and often after a while, the whole thing becomes dizzying. A German CyberGhost entrepreneur delivers talks on the benefits of "geoarbitrage" in Romania, thanks to its cheap living costs, outsourcing, and technological prowess (as I describe in Chapter 1). "My company could never have succeeded had I gone to Silicon

Valley," he exclaims. Romania is where it's at. Then Uber's Pierre-Dimitri Gore-Coty arrives to Romania for the first time and delivers a talk on the need to innovate old industries in Bucharest's TechHub to a room packed full of nicely dressed workers. "Bus stops are too analogue!" he excitingly exclaims, promoting Uber's new driverless cars. Pizza is delivered and free coffee aroma seeps through the air. Two days later, there's TechFest in Cluj and an array of talks on the Internet of Things (IoT).

One man from a small Cluj-Berlin startup markets their new security IoT device, one that he boasts is becoming especially popular in Western Europe with "this new immigrant problem." No one in the room seems to mind, or to consider that Romanians are often perceived by the West as part of this problem. He goes on about how the device can detect the gender of voices, so that if you are a woman and ask to watch a move, it will go through "chick-flick and rom-com" options first. Applause. But the security device, while produced in Romania, only recognizes English and German. More artisanal coffee. The code is not open source as they must run a business after all. I could be in San Francisco. But I'm in Cluj, in a new IT building, "The Office." Sitting upon the ruins of a socialist-era textiles factory, one would be hard pressed to imagine the former mode of production in the now glimmering glass building. Rents have gone up around it, and the food court and wine bar underneath boast prices comparable with Silicon Valley.

Yet, the salaries of "Office" IT workers are not comparable with those of Silicon Valley. But still, as Maria, an IT worker and self-described digital nomad from Brăila living in Cluj and working for a Florida startup, describes, "Sure, we're

paid less, but I'm still making more than any of my friends, and I can travel to these digital nomad meetups and work from home." But others are not so optimistic. Alexandra, who once was a programmer, now can't find a job nor achieve freelancer status. Instead, she bemoans that IT companies are so behind the West in understanding proper management. She is now looking to leave the country and find a job in Western Europe, "anywhere but here." Andrei, on the other hand likes the stability his job working for a Silicon Valley company while living in Bucharest with his friends, but he's forced to work night shifts answering calls, and finds his moods altered due to lack of sleep. Many people that I've spoken with in tech articulate aspirations of working for bigger and better Silicon Valley companies, either in or beyond Romania. As Megan Moodie writes, aspiration and imaginaries of upward mobility, when studied ethnographically, often reveal how particular groups of people weather "transition from an era of state-backed protections to an era of contract labor" (2015, 17). For instance, Oracle, now in Pipera, nearby FELIX's ghosts and witches, seems to be the end goal for those who wish to remain in Bucharest. And in Cluj, the objective is entrepreneurship, or maybe working for Endava, NTT Data, or one of the other large companies. Yet tech workers that I've spoken with in large companies articulate boredom at work, interpellating it just as only a job, attempting to sneak in YouTube videos on breaks between monotonous tasks.

Specters of Spectrum

But the story doesn't end here. Despite the best spells cast by capitalism, the specters of the Spectrum clone haunt the present. This endurance, bypassed in

Siliconized narrative structures, continues to bolster, touch, and pervert zombie socialist historiography. While IBM 2.0 was wreaking havoc in FELIX worlds, Tibi, Mihai, and others continued to produce machines underground. Meanwhile an array of computer magazines began circulating, all saturated with computer construction manuals, software installation guidelines, code, and instructions in how to set up satellites and LAN networks. From backtracking methods to articles on virtual reality, techno-skepticism, and the phenomena of the hacker, magazines such as *Open Tehnologia Informației* and *PC World Romania* flourished in the 1990s, fomenting new IT counterpublics.

Florentin, who now is part of an independent free and open source software and hardware project, Ceata, remembers learning to program and build computers from the magazine *Extreme PC*, which got big in the 2000s and had online chatrooms and support. Gabi, who learned how to code in school during a once-a-week, hour-long class, remembers learning more relevant coding in these chatrooms. "Some of the chatrooms are still active today," she told me, "and you can still buy the magazines online." Meanwhile, apartments began setting up "decoders" to steal HBO otherwise not available on their networks. "It was this funny little device that we all had on the back of our televisions," Alexandra remembers. If it broke, everyone knew someone who would come and set up another, she told me one day, as we were walking through a slightly overgrown park, headed back to the city center from a Jewish senior home on the outskirts of Bucharest where we had been volunteering. Other volunteers walking with us chimed in, remembering their decoders, unsuccessfully trying to recall when then appeared and disappeared.

In 2014, Romania's piracy rate was twice that of the EU at 60 percent, but in 1996 it was as high at 86 percent (Fiscutean 2014b). At the time, there was little legislation protecting intellectual property, and the software market developed accordingly. MS-DOS was the first pirated operating system in the 1990s, and then OS/2, and later Windows, via Russia. At first, pirated software was not sold for profit, which only began after inflation skyrocketed to 151 percent in 1997. Nevertheless, software piracy was understood as education, building collective knowledge about coding, algorithms, and open source products. Raj, from Râmnicu Vâlcea, or "Hackerville," remembers a zillion internet cafes springing up overnight. "It was hard to get into them because they were so crowded," he recalls. One of his neighbors invented a VPN to mask IP addresses, and soon everyone started paying him for VPNs so that they could hack from home. Raj remembers that often people would make money fast from some internet hack and then use the money to pay for personal *manele* concerts.

Counterpublics such as these soon began stringing internet throughout cities on telephone poles, building the backbones of what is now Europe's fastest connection. This wasn't the experimental project of state socialism intended to improve central planning and economics; it was more of an organic decentralized chaos intended to connect and share information, music, movies, tools, games, and software amongst neighbors. Because internet dial-up packages were expensive at first, and given the intense poverty that post-transition incited, generally, one person would buy internet and then share or sell it to people in their block, wiring cables haphazardly. As people had already been pirating satellite stations and were relatively

familiar with cabling, and as the magazines and chatrooms taught wiring techniques, stringing cables across apartments and blocks of flats "was really no big deal," I've been told. Today still, telephone poles, from Cluj to Bucharest, are adorned in a massive array of cables from the early 2000s era, some still working, some just there on because they are too woven in to detach. The first time I pointed these out to a friend visiting from the US, she asked if it was an art installation. And yet, as people are always quick to remind me, the cabling today is nothing compared to the early 2000s, when it became common place for telephone poles to crash with the weight of the cables, sometimes smashing cars parked beneath.

Alex helped set up one of the first networks in Bucharest in the 1990s. He had seen his friends get plugged in to an existent network, and for him, it felt like his entire life was about finding his way into one. His first time plugging in was like "Christmas on steroids." He had to purchase 40 meters of cable, which cost more than he thought he could afford. But he saved, bought the cables, and then he was in. Soon he started connecting neighbors. It was not uncommon to see cables of 70 to 80 meters and even 100, and such a distance, the cable weight became tricky. "It was important to tie the cables to something solid," he recounts, "like a radiator or firmer pipe." Everything was connected, and everything was precarious. Back then, "If your mother vacuumed your computer, it could destroy the entire block's network." By 2003, he and his neighborhood friends had 80 to 100 users, and the network itself had become "an organism that could not be controlled." There were too many interconnected nodes to know how many existed, or even where they were. "Anything could expand the network in any direction desired." Rareș, who was part

of the same network, recounts how their crew was well appreciated, with neighbors gifting them cakes, cookies, and drinks, and dinner invitations. In this way, their work wove together new analogue and digital communities, the latter often taking place on early social media such as Meet and hi5. Soon Rareș and Alex began trips to Regie, where Bucharest dorm students live, bringing empty hard drives. They would all sit down and trade things, mostly *manele* and porn, and then bring it back to their neighborhood to share. Alex recollects, "At that time, digital wealth was equivalent to material wealth in terms of *șmecherie*"

Bogdan, who is in the midst of establishing a computer museum in Cluj, also set up one of these networks in Cluj, connecting 24 people in his block. It was 2004, and he had no internet cable, but somehow managed to use TV cable. "We all had 486 computers then, the new generation," he told me. They had 16 kilobytes, used routers, and it took five minutes to transfer a picture. You could never shut down your computer once it was connected because you didn't want to be bumped off. Setting up this network was just one of his many DIY computer projects of the era. For him, it all began in grade school when he would cut class and hide in the attack. There, he discovered an old broken MII8B computer from the 1970s. Curious, he came back the next day with a screwdriver. It was the late 90s, and there was no Google or Yahoo to tell him how to fix it. But there were internet cafes in Mărăști filled with smoke where he could ask questions. So, he began. Two years later, he won a math competition and was awarded an old 486 computer that the National Television station was throwing out. Eventually, he saved up money from his job at the local newspaper to buy the parts to make it work and to install Windows. Hardware

became cheaper after 2002, he remembers, and it became easier to pirate the operating system. Soon began to visit the flea market at Oser every weekend to pick up older models being thrown out to fix them. Before long, his entire room was filled up with computers. It was then that he began to build his neighborhood network, eager to share and pirate new software for his growing computer collection.

But then, in 2010, the internet monolith RDS (Romania Data Systems) came in, promising better and faster services, fiber optics even. Threatened by independent networks and wanting to avoid competition, they began bribing people to sell their networks, Bogdan reminisces. Sometimes they would threaten building administrators, citing technical illegalities about the size or length of the wire. Sometimes they just cut cables. "Everything went to hell." Eventually, Bogdan's network came down, but still, there's one cable left that no one could remove. "No one says anything about it – I think people think it's part of a spy network!" he laughs. Today, Bogdan maintains a day job with Amazon, but spends most of his time finding discarded and broken computers, cleaning and repairing them, turning them into specters of their former selves. Some he finds in industrial waste yards, some in the dusty shelves and basements of academic institutions, some in Oser. Now hos whole house, as well as his mother's, is now filled with refurbished machines.

Despite the destructive power of the large network monopolies, Romania's fast internet exists today (the fastest in Europe) not because of Western salvation, but because of the queer palimpsest upon which Siliconization rests. Of course, capitalism absorbs all that it can, and these transitional networks were swallowed up, but their infrastructure is still there, weighting down telephone poles and bolstering

the wires now controlled by larger firms. Florentin from Ceata also remembers RDS sweeping in, in part because his own father worked from RomTelecom (now Telecom and connected to T-Mobile, based in Germany). RomTelecom and C-Zone were bought up by RDS while, UPC, another large corporation, bought up Astrid. Florentin got his first computer in 2000 before this consolidation, but he never got use an independent network because he lived in this part of Drumul Taberei in Bucharest where he couldn't seem to find one, maybe because everyone there was old. There was a really cool one in Crângași and even some neighborhood network wars around its control, he remembers. Florentin wanted to set one up too, but he had no money to buy cables. His father had some extra telephone cables, so he tried to stretch them and use them in a ramshackle way, but it never worked. He recollects how slow the dial-up was in his block between 10pm and 2am, as this was when all the downloading and uploading would begin. He had wanted to start assembling computers that could operate outside of Microsoft operating systems, but part of the problem was that to download other operating systems you needed a fast connection. Microsoft had also set up an update on his computer so that he couldn't download certain things—a techno-imperial move.

Maybe it was this that got Florentin thinking about the importance of moving away from Silicon Valley and private software. He began selling computers in 2004, but they still were still based on proprietary software. Now finally he's selling computers again with Ceata, but this time with free hardware and software. This allows the best kind of encryption, he told me. "It's really the only way that you can maintain security—to have the right hardware." Today, Florentin now creates new

machines from spare parts, much like he and others did a decade earlier. But his goal today is to ensure that the computers he makes aren't hacked by Silicon Valley-driven data colonization and spying. Yet on the other side of the world, post-Cold War Silicon Valley maintains fear of "dangerous" and "illiberal" Romanian, Russian, and Eastern European hackers and more broadly. And this imaginary becomes internalized in Romania, from *Black the Fall* to Light Revolution protests and beyond.

Romanian and other Eastern European hackers excelled at virus fabrication in the 1990s. In Bulgaria, Todor Todorov, who also went by Commander Tosh, designed the global Virus Exchange bulletin board so that virus geeks could trade information. In Romania, most viruses at first were written just to do something cool, something *şmecher*. Costin, who now runs Kaspersky Lab's Analyst Summit, recounts the days in which viruses that would simply show images or play songs. Some embedded secret messages and puzzles, for instance the Tequila virus, which simply revealed a Mandelbrot fractal on a user's screen. Sometimes virus writers would steel users' data, forcing users to win games to retrieve their data back. There was Vienna.648, and Cascade, the latter encrypted to disable reverse engineering. Some were more political, just as Jabber, which would make it so that if a user typed the name of Romania's president at the time, Iliescu, the word *jos* (down with) would follow (Fiscutean 2015). An early iteration of Dark the Fall, perhaps. But unlike today, "No malware was written for financial gain, unlike nowadays, when most of the malware is written for some kind of financial profit," Costin remembers.

For instance, there was Lari from the ED011 lab at the Polytechnic University,

who simply wanted to write a "+" character on the European Organization for Nuclear Research website address (Fiscutean 2018). He carefully wrote malware that could propagate on Unix operating systems without detection. The code itself would change after every replication, and after the job was done, the server would become irrelevant and the worm would completely erase itself. His hacking developed, and eventually hitting the US—first UCLA and then the Pentagon. His exploits were developed out of curiosity and not maliciousness, he recalls. Meanwhile, his colleagues, some known as "Ender," "Vampi," "Zombie," would stay up for nights in a row writing malware, fork bombs, and more. Eventually some hacked into NASA and executing commands on army.mil, accessing supercomputers from the US to Japan. As Costin remembers, back then, 99 percent of all hacks were just kids playing around and challenging each other. Today, it's just the opposite; 99 percent are executed by governments and corporations, he posits. Meanwhile, Costin's own work has been bought out by Microsoft, which attempts to pervert his perversion itself.

Countless former hackers have recounted the same story—antivirus firms buying up their work in order to capitalize upon it, much like RDS bought up Bogdan's cables. In these strange Silicon landscapes, one might wonder, who is the virus and who is the zombie? Who is the witch and who has been hexed? Might the witches themselves be embracing a form of *șmecherie*, one that corrupts Silicon Valley imperialism and its end-of-history coding acts? Postsocialist hackers and retrocomputing experts, from those who created viruses to those still profiting from antivirus technologies, are all part of or touching upon what Bogdan describes as the "X86 Generation"—a reference to Intel's microprocessor and the generation wedged

between Gen X and Millennials—those who were born predigital but who created the contexts for digital times to become what they are. Bogdan argues that it is these people who have created complex, entangled, and often contradictory Romanian technospaces. “Unlike what everyone thinks, it’s not Silicon Valley—it’s these people that are leading the current tech wave,” he told me firmly. Silicon Valley may, like RDS and antivirus tech firms, absorb existent infrastructure, from computer factories to wires to malware. But whether set up by the state or by underground tech networks, it wasn’t Silicon Valley that established these materialities. Thus, while Silicon Valley imperialism today rests upon, touches, and corrupts socialist era computing worlds, it remains bolstered by cyber undergrounds and their transitions. And yet, other than the relatively small amount of explicitly anti-capitalist tech projects, such as Ceata, computer hackers and programmers in Romania today seem to have become largely absorbed by Silicon Valley imperialism. How can counterfactual historiography and objects, such as the hacking courses designed by the Free School of *Istorie (Nu) Se Repetă*, corrupt and queer techno-normative means of reproduction?

Space Invaders

In *Black the Fall*, even after “the wall” comes down in what is understood to be 1989, blackness persists. According to game creator, Cristian Diaconescu, this is due to the dark specters of corrupt socialism. Thus if one makes it to the end of the game, a photo of Diaconescu’s design team at an anticorruption “Light Revolution” protest appears. In the spring of 2018, during one of these protests and also a far right

homophobic “Normality” demonstration, a third march crawled through Bucharest’s streets. For the first time, the annual LBGT pride parade was granted access to march through Bucharest’s city center, rather than being confined to urban outskirts. Also, for the second year in a row, IBM, Google, and Accenture pinkwashed the event, not unlike their pride pinkwashing in California’s Silicon Valley.

However, this year, a small group of anti-capitalist protestors, many of whom were part of the *Istorie (Nu) Se Repetă* workshop, were prepared. They came equipped with large banners against pinkwashing, racial capitalism, and fascism. “Fuck Off Google” stickers were brought from a solidarity action in Berlin, where at the time, Google was attempting to establish a campus. Activists replicated the messaging during the Cluj pride that took place a week later, along with a “LGBT and Space Invaders Against Gentrification” sign. Referencing the 1978 Cold War video game, the sign overtly corrupted the Cold War 2.0 to reclaim robotic space invaders.

Unsurprisingly, liberal technocapitalists chastised the queer dissidents in both cities, reminding them that Romania was now finally free from socialism. How dare they corrupt that! When a photo of one of the anti-pinkwashing banners began circling in a forum monitored by the LGBT NGO Accept, rather than defending it, the organization just deleted the image. It was “too far of a step to take, the anti-Google stuff,” someone from the organization later told me. A far step away from the speculative future woven by *Istorie (Nu) Se Repetă* participants, who imagined how Accept and Romani Criss worked together to corrupt Silicon Valley imperialism.

José Esteban Muñoz writes, “To want something else, to want beside and beyond the matrix of social controls that is our life in late Capitalism, is to participate

in this other form of desiring. Thus, the connection between queerness and utopia is most salient at this precise point–the desire for a new world despite an emotional/world situation that attempts to render such desiring impossible" (2009, 278). Queerness, as both perversion to capitalism and desire for something else, is not confined to spaces of explicitly queer activism alone. Postsocialist analytics themselves are a queering of techno-normative end-of-time imaginaries. But queering postsocialism and corrupting techno-normativity is not simply recasting socialist nostalgia either. Unattached to origin stories and their paternalisms, queer corruption looks to other utopias, futures past and present technologically entangled. Futures committed to speculative worlds beyond Silicon Valley imperialism and the zombie socialism that it techno-normatively reproduces. Futures that corrupt anticommunist fictions in order to code something new.

Chapter 3: The Light Revolution, Blood Gold, and the New Times of IKEA: Impossible Spaces of Dissent in the Dawn of Techno-fascism

This chapter examines postsocialism as an emerging theoretical concept to assess the contestations of liberalism in post-Cold War spaces of protest. Rather than fall into stereotypical invocations of Eastern Europe as a historical and geopolitical site from which to theorize the prefiguration of illiberalism and totalitarianism in a post-Brexit and post-Trump-era West, I instead ask, what can Eastern European postsocialist politics of protest, development, and renewal teach about the perils of liberalism? By attending to political action and imaginaries in postsocialist Romania, here I highlight how the reorganization of public and private space undergirds the conditions of forgetting that enable postsocialist disaster capitalism, which speaks not only about Eastern European specificity, but also more broadly about the contradictions of Euro-American liberalism made apparent in its recent crises. By disaster capitalism, I refer how neoliberal policy, privatization, austerity, and deregulation are differentially deployed in particular aftermaths, in this case the aftermath of state socialism (Klein 2007; Moodie and Rofel forthcoming).

In the wake of Trump, the West increasingly looks to the East for illiberal prefiguration, and at anti-corruption and anticommunist protests as a roadmap for taking down corrupt politicians. As I argue here, while the West might better find “darkness” in its own Silicon Valley backyard, there remains much to learn in the East about the violence that liberalism produces, particularly in the realms of public protest and private property. For instance, in 2013, the antimining Save Roșia

Montană protests emerged, in which tens of thousands of Romanians took to the streets in protest of extractive mineral technologies being enacted by a Canadian gold mining company—a controversy that I elaborate upon in detail in this chapter. As I show, the Canadian company, rather than lodge a counter-protest against the protestors, began justifying its presence as antidote to "dirty" and "backwards" socialist-era state mining practices. While initially anti-capitalist in nature, the protest movement became increasingly liberal and neoliberal, adopting what might be understood as an "all protestors matter" ethos, failing to attend to the raciality of the mining project and the racial technocapitalism upon which it rested. By racial technocapitalism, I refer to the modes in which global technology capital inheres raciality, as well as anticommunism. Racial technocapitalism, along with its twin concept of techno-imperialism, or the imperial desires and materialities undergirding Western technological growth, here allow me to think through the contours of the political within a particular postsocialism-liberalism nexus.

Over time, the Roșia Montană protests grew into the Light Revolution, Rezist, and Muie PSD protests of 2017 and 2018. These movements, largely lodged against remnants of socialism (interpreted as stymying Romania of Western recognition and promises), also draw upon liberal and anticommunist imaginaries of a return to the pre-socialist fascist "Golden Era." In invoking earlier understandings of space, these protests, the largest since the 1989 collapse of socialism, have become increasingly racist, classist, anticommunist, and heteromasculine in nature. In looking at this reinterpretation of the past, I introduce the idea of technofascism, or the endurance of fascist promises in the moment of postsocialist techno-imperialism. Might it be that

liberalism and fascism are twin concepts inextricably entwined in this postsocialist moment?

For instance, during the Light Revolution of early 2017, nearly one million Romanians took to the streets, demanding an end to political corruption. Likening the ruling political party to the "dark" socialist past, an ongoing postsocialist trope, protestors appealed to the West for salvation. Utilizing smart phone displays and lasers, protestors gained recognition for their technological prowess, understood now as a sign of Western becoming (despite that technology was also a rich part of socialism's official and underground histories). Demonstrators also adopted an explicitly heteronormative aesthetic, troubling post-Cold War framings of socialism as deviant and queer (Popa 2018). While these aspirational politics can be traced back to the Enlightenment, referencing peripheral subjectivities of being never quite techno-normative enough, protestors expressed a specifically postsocialist spatiotemporality, framing state socialism as a void, something to be finally overcome by returning to pre-socialism. In doing so, demonstrators effectively straightjacketed ideas of Communism upon those of fascism, forgetting that state socialism emerged as an antifascist project in Romania long before authoritarian rule emerged in the 1970s and 1980s. In this way, techno-normativity draws upon Elizabeth Freeman's "chrononormativity," or the use of time to meld human bodies into maximum productivity (2010). Techno-normativity however implies the use of technology to position "illiberal" geopolitical spaces and the people within them as desirous of becoming chrononormative. Techno-normativity hinges upon the promise that Silicon Valley and the West will save Romania from its dark, technologically backwards

socialist past that continues to haunt the present.

The Light Revolution, informed by Roșia Montană organizing and Western desires, is also deeply entangled with the Romanian architectural heritage movement. This movement seeks to preserve interwar era buildings and public space, going far enough as to produce Bucharest's second-largest political party, the Union to Save Romania (USR). Significantly, the creative capital values that this movement inheres are aligned with both anticommunist protests and restitution eviction politics. Heritage and restitution practices, deeply racialized, are steeped in anticommunist politics, and zombie socialism (Chelcea and Druță 2016). Zombie socialism, as I describe in the introduction, is a neoliberal postsocialist hegemonic form that interpolates Communism as a backward deadened void—one that threatens to return and consume the inevitability of liberal democracy, zombie like. In the case of the Light Revolution, Zombie socialism has laid the groundwork, promising to rid corruption with transparency, light, and techno-normativity.

In addition to studying anti-corruption protests and pushing forward the twin analytics of Zombie socialism and techno-normativity, in this chapter I also study forest restitutions and destruction by the Swedish IKEA corporation, particularly as they, like the mining company, destroy Romania's ecosystem. As with other forms of techno-imperialism, forest dispossession is coated as liberal progress under the veneer of anticommunist techno-urbanism, particularly as IKEA becomes involved in Bucharest information technology (IT) office development. Why is that so few people come out to defend the forests or protest IKEA, but hundreds of thousands continue to protest government corruption and communist ghosts? How does the fantasy of

intimacy with Western modernity incarcerate and obliterate real possibilities of dissent? How do postsocialist protests index the racist, capitalist, and fascist contours of liberalism and techno-imperialism, or techno-fascism? Postsocialist analytics, I argue, offer a unique lens into these questions and conjunctures.

Interestingly, on the "liberal side" of the Cold War 2.0's "Silicon Curtain," liberal and leftist media alike was quick to venerate the large-scale nature of Romanian protests, positing that if only Americans could learn from their Romanian compatriots, perhaps the fascistic Trump too can be taken down. From *Al Jazeera* to *The New York Times*, articles venerated the large crowds gathering outside of Romania's parliament. As such, two parallel fantasies exist, with the East and the West each differentially vying to become the other, each reifying a timeline in which liberal progress means overcoming fascism and corruption. But why does this also get written as overcoming Communism? What does this say about liberalism, postsocialist temporality, and the public space in which these demonstrations transpire?

Here I consider how in postsocialist contexts, liberalism, or in this case technoliberalism, can be understood as co-constitutive of racial technocapitalism, and in more extreme forms, technofascism. Neda Atanasoski and Kalindi Vora write that technoliberalism can be understood as "a reinvigoration of the historical imbrications of liberalism and fascism—the twin pillars of US economic, social, and geopolitical supremacy" (2019, 24). As they offer, "Rather than posit a break between the liberal and fascist logics of automation, we insist on their codependence." (ibid., 24). This, they suggest, can be tracked "through Cold War discourses of automation as

mediating the distinction between democratic liberalism and totalitarianism as the prehistory of contemporary discourses around robotics and white loss in the era of the Trump presidency" (ibid., 24). Here I map technofascism's enfolding with technoliberalism in postsocialist space, looking to the reinterpretation of Cold War anticommunist imaginaries.

In the three empirical sections that follow, I first study the Roșia Montană protests in more length, looking to the liberalism and racism inherent in both protests and extractive mining. I then turn to the Light Revolution protests, focusing upon the use of Western technology to index Western becoming, as well as the architectural heritage movement upon which the protests rest. The third section then looks at IKEA, as connected to both deforestation and urban renewal, questioning why there has been so little opposition to the Swedish megacompany amongst the left. But first, I explore why there has been a resurgence of the Cold War as a descriptor of present-day geopolitics in the West. In doing so, I remain critical of the explanatory logics of the Cold War as it positions Eastern European socialist histories and their remains as augurs of growing technofascist possibilities, eliding the violence that liberal democracy and disaster capitalism have wreaked in postsocialist contexts.

Postsocialism: Re-evaluating Liberalism and Authoritarianism and the Cold War 2.0

In their now canonical article, "Thinking Between the Posts: Post-colonialism, Postsocialism, and Ethnography after the Cold War," Sharad Chari and Katherine Verdery argue that "ethnography must … employ a critical lens on the global [and

epistemological] effects of Cold War thought throughout the twentieth century. It is time to liberate the Cold War from the ghetto of Soviet area studies and post-colonial thought from the ghetto of Third World and colonial studies. The liberatory path proposed here the jettisoning of these two posts in favor of a single overarching one: the post-Cold War" (2009, 29). Chari and Verdery understand the Cold War as an epistemological limit to how the world could be known in the second half of the 20th century.

While Chari and Verdery's interest is in the critique of area studies paradigms, one might also consider another epistemological impasse brought on by the Cold War paradigm—that is, the positing of liberalism and illiberalism (for instance, fascism, totalitarianism, and antidemocratic tendencies) as paradigmatic opposites in the political-ideological spectrum. This Cold War opposition mapped the free and unfree worlds—a cartography that remains intact today upon a palimpsestic atlas. However, through continued reliance upon geohistorical Cold War maps, one fails to understand how their dialectical contours enable fascism to grow uncharted, and how fascism and techno-imperialism become co-constitutive, informing technofascism. One also fails to theorize the messy post-Cold War techno-entanglements that manifest in spaces not often centered in Cold War antipodal geographies (Barad 2017; Hecht 2011; Masco 2006; Voyles 2015)—spaces such as Romania. Thus, by theorizing postsocialism as entangled with liberal and fascist conjunctures, imperial-technocapitalist forms can be understood in new ways.

Postsocialism marks not only a temporal but also a spatial orientation toward a possible politics in a post-Cold War world. Here, I think of spatiality not only in

terms of the maintenance of East/West imaginary antipodes, but also as it defines the locations, limits, and temporalities of revolutionary imaginaries. As such, post-Cold War framing is a useful conceptual lens with which one can track how public space works to avert (and erase) the crises in liberalism through the affirmation of concepts that bolster technocapitalist and techno-imperial proliferation (including transparency and anticorruption). As I observe, contested spaces are about an affirmation of Westernness or Europeanness that is dehistoricized and, therefore, uncritical of the politics of privatization and dispossession.

Postsocialism emerged as a term in academic writing in the 1990s after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the dissolution of the USSR. As Chari and Verdery note, unlike postcolonialism, which entered academic discourses years after the decolonization movements began and was even at its inception a theoretical concept, postsocialism, initially at least, was a descriptor of what came after the end of formal state socialism. It portrayed, Verdery argues, "reorganization on a cosmic scale," redefining and reordering "people's entire meaningful worlds" through processes of privatization, lustration, "democratization," and "transition" (two modes of liberal-democratic governance)—in other words, the remaking of persons from socialist to capitalist subjects (2005, 35). Initially, however, it was limited as a descriptor and applied mostly to Central and Eastern European nations, and at times, when modified, to China and Vietnam (Atanasoski and Vora 2018; Chari and Verdery 2009; Buck-Morss 2000; Rofel 2019; Zhang 2008). Thus, following the 1990s, postsocialism increasingly appeared less relevant to theorizations of social and cultural life within global capitalism. After all, if simply a depiction of economic, social, or

governmental transition, that transition had to reach an end at some point—a point from which one could ask, "What was postsocialism and what comes next?" Yet, as recent years have shown (particularly during Obama's presidency and now during Trump's), the Cold War seems to be alive and well as a revived framework for apprehending the world, at least in the US. From Russia's ban at the 2016 and 2018 Olympics, to accusations of spying and hacking attributed to both Russian and Romanian illiberals, the contemporary moment invites us to revisit the theoretical place of postsocialism. Amidst the so-called "cosmic ruptures" of today (Dunn 2017), postsocialism becomes an important theoretical concept with which to investigate not only formations of illiberalism as they are iterated by Cold War ghosts, but also liberalism, its purported antidote. Postsocialism becomes an analytic through which one can question why it is that the Cold War other maintains a position of enemy in the liberal imaginary, while Silicon Valley imperialism is rendered benign and salvific.

When not ghettoized within area studies, postsocialism (as related to but separate from the post-Cold War) is, as I assert, relevant as a theoretical concept suited for assessing the time and space of political action. It is particularly useful in moments when revolution either seems impossible or, when it happens, as inevitably ending in either in totalitarianism or liberal democracy (Buck-Morss 2002; Scott 2013). As Atanasoski and Vora have argued (2018), when apprehended as theoretical ground, postsocialism marks not the end of all socialisms, but the end of state socialism as a dominant discourse overdetermined by Cold War knowledge production about the world. Conceptually, then, postsocialism enables an exploration

of socialist legacies on multiple scales, expanding beyond state socialism and the Communist International, and how these have (or have not) remained constitutive of contemporary radical and decolonial imaginaries of collectivity and political action. Put otherwise, postsocialism facilitates an assessment of ongoing socialist legacies in new ethical collectivities and networks of dissent opposing state and technocapitalist military, economic, and cultural expansionism since the end of the Cold War.

Given the revival of the Cold War as a geopolitical frame, postsocialism also offers an important corrective to the dehistoricizing, decontextualizing, and limiting binary framing of democracy and authoritarianism as the only (and opposing) political forms. The so-called "Cold War 2.0" takes place in a moment when state socialism has receded into the past, but in which the model of antagonistic battle for imperial control of "satellite" states between the US and Russia seems alive and well, written as a contest between liberalism and illiberalism, and between democracy and authoritarianism (Lemon 2018). Sorin Cucu has questioned why the Cold War is the ghost that the contemporary conception of world history (or world politics) needs (2017). Taking on both the understanding that we are experiencing a resurgence of the Cold War, and the notion that the Cold War never ended, he argues instead that "Even if we accept that the continuity of the Cold War trumps the pattern of change experienced by the world in the last few decades, we still need to accept that the Cold War today has none of its former power and that, in spirit, it allows for contradictions in so far as these contradictions are enabling reconfigurations of its discursive make-up" (2017). In other words, Cold War discourse accommodates its own contradictions to create various geopolitical configurations and fantasies as historical inevitabilities.

The historical inevitability engendered by the framework of "Cold War 2.0" resuscitates the oppositional tension between terms like democracy and authoritarianism with no existing critique of capitalism. According to Alexei Yurchak, "the opposition of 'democracy' and 'authoritarianism,' … instead of providing analytical clarity, in fact, contributes to decoupling 'democracy' from 'capitalism' and thus concealing and depoliticizing the real conditions" (2017, 1). Yet capitalism and liberal democracy have been historically entangled, as has been the case in numerous postsocialist contexts. Together, they were violently injected in the aftermath of socialism in order to destroy its legacies and possibilities of endurance. For instance, in the case of Romania (as in many other formerly state socialist nations), the transition to liberal democracy meant privatizing, fragmenting, and restituting state-owned land, housing, technology, and factories, leading to rampant dispossession (often racialized), and a return of pre-socialist wealth (Florea 2016; Verdery 2003). At the same time, transition installed a regime of elites who transformed late-socialist power relations into new forms of crony capitalism backed by Western firms and interests, razing many of what had been successful and independent sectors (O'Neill 2016; Pusca 2016; Vincze 2017). Today, Romania remains an extractive space for Western capitalism, from Silicon Valley IT firms to Austrian lumber companies, maintaining the highest material and social deprivation rate in the EU (Eurostat 2017).

Yet on both sides of the former Iron Curtain, liberal democracy, rather than reflecting upon the destructive powers of its capitalist incarnation, makes its object of critique authoritarianism, which, in the era of the Cold War 2.0, is increasingly

conflated with Communism. Both the Light Revolution and Colorful Revolution protestors, rather than blaming global capital for post-1989 devastation, blame treasonous politicians who they render unpatriotic, un-European, and Communist. As Yurchak elaborates, the liberal reduction of the political field informs the resurgence of "'patriotism' versus 'treason' and of 'patriots' versus 'foreign agents'" (2017, 3). In the US, this discursive strategy divorces Trump's victory from US political contexts, which have everything to do with the endurance of neoliberal hegemony, technocapitalism, and white supremacy (Kelley 2016), instead impugning illiberal outsider interference. As such, "Real politics becomes displaced onto the stereotyped figures of 'foreign agents and patriots who oppose them'" (Yurchak 2017, 3).

Given the resurgence of the "Cold War" as a paradigm to assess geopolitics in media venues, and, given Cucu's and Yurchak's incisive critiques about this revival as a reductionist move, it seems that postsocialism may be more useful than the post-Cold War in allowing for a nuanced assessment of contested political terrains. These contested terrains often concretely have to do with struggles over place. Yet in Romania, mass demonstrations for such places enact liberal democracy and capitalism as the inevitable future, from the Light Revolution's anticommunism to Roșia Montană's demonstrations which increasingly displaced anti-capitalist politics. In this context, the recirculation of "Cold War" as a frame of reference for geopolitics rehearses the terms of Cold War liberalism in its binaristic logics to conflate capitalism with democracy, transparency, and accountability. Kristen Ghodsee writes, "Just as the popular stereotype of communism is rarely uncoupled from the state repression of the twentieth-century experience of it, today . . . the democratic ideal is

becoming inseparable from the social chaos neoliberal capitalism has wreaked in its name" (2016, xviii). However, here I push this further to question how "the democratic ideal" in fact necessitates the grotesque coupling of socialism with state repression.

Really since 1989, proponents of liberal democracy on both sides of the former Berlin Wall have read state socialism through an anticommunist lens, inhering, often with and through technology, what Konrad Petrovszky and Ovidiu Țichindeleanu describe as postsocialist colonial subjectivities amongst Eastern Europeans (2011). These subjectivities rely upon an asymmetrical interplay between the East and the West. The East was mapped as the "other" within the West, while the West was "put into covert circulation in the territory of the East" (Wark 1994, 65).

Thus, while the West imagines the Eastern other as a necessary yet backward figure within its own dialectical cosmology, postsocialist coloniality incites the East to entwine Western cosmological imaginaries with its own. This uneven interplay foments zombie socialism, dehistoricizing the past, thereby paving the way for a neoliberal future. For instance, in 2008, conservative Eastern European politicians and intellectuals signed the Prague Declaration, equating the victims of Communism with the victims of Nazi Germany, demanding justice from EU governing bodies. Here, Communism and fascism are interpreted as one and the same—the evil, fascistic monster that liberal democracy will save us from. Always lurking behind the curtain, zombie socialism threatens to turn people already presumed and subjectified as backward further back. Liberal democracy not only fears socialism's existence but also hinges upon its realness to justify its own.

According to Nikhil Pal Singh, "totalitarianism" was both the "primary explanatory terrain concerning the post-World War II division of Europe," and a reassertion of "racist and colonialist divisions of the world and its peoples that had allegedly been left behind in the U.S.-led break from the logics of fascism and empire" (2009, 68). As he elaborates, "the theory of totalitarianism became the hinge connecting the frame of U.S. global power to the teleological door of modernization that opened and closed on new nations according to a more deeply embedded set of norms and assumptions about obedience, deference, emotional 'maturity,' trustworthiness, rational capacity, and fitness for self-government" (ibid., 68). The binaristic opposition between democracy and totalitarianism, and between liberalism and fascism, marks the entanglement of these post-Enlightenment ideological formations. Democratic liberalism imagines fascism as its "monstrous Other," as its "doppelganger or double." This is why liberalism needs to maintain a fascist threat especially when its legitimacy is called into question.

Because postsocialism takes the demise of state socialism as the occasion to highlight the entanglement of capitalism with liberal democracy, it is as theoretical ground aligned with Singh's call to theorize liberalism as a violent, racial, colonial, and expansionist ideological form. Postsocialism calls attention to the violence of economic and political liberalization even as it asks to make legible other socialist legacies and new modes of envisioning politics. It also calls to attention new modes of entangling geographies of theory and spatiotemporal subjectivities, in which it is not only "the East" interpreting Western cosmologies and cosmic ruptures, but also now Western scholars gazing eastward for illiberal prefiguration.

In this sense, I take a slightly different approach to postsocialism from those who, since the election of Donald Trump, have begun to wonder whether "postsocialism," as theoretical ground, finally has something to offer the so-called "West" because it can theorize illiberalism. In an earlier moment, some scholars argued that because the postsocialist condition reified a homogenized idea of Europe and liberal capitalism to which post-state socialist nations (at least in Central and Eastern Europe) aspired, postsocialism had no critical insights to offer scholarship engaged with Marxist and decolonial thought (Lazarus 2010). Yet in a post-Brexit and post-Trump world, postsocialism finally seems to have something to offer that is new and not belated—a knowledge of a totalitarianism and illiberalism that has now arrived in the so-called West. These ideas often hinge upon zombie socialist media stories and popular hype. As Dace Dzenovska and Larisa Kurtović argue, "A quick overview of interventions made by or on behalf of (post)socialist subjects in the Western media at the moment reveal that there are at least four dimensions to the new-found public audibility of the (post)socialist subject: (1) knowledge of totalitarianism/authoritarianism; (2) knowledge of fascism/nationalism; (3) knowledge of Russia; and (4) prefiguration of the future of the West" (2016, 3). As they elaborate, it is precisely that which made the postsocialist subject irrelevant in the past to Western knowledge production that today makes the same subject relevant. Today, the postsocialist subject is finally able to elucidate something about the present in places like the US and the UK. However, as I suggest, it is not because the postsocialist subject understands the perils of fascism that makes postsocialism relevant in the current moment, whether in the media or in contemporary scholarship.

Rather, postsocialist critique is a rich space within which to theorize the perils of liberalism, and the fascism that it enables. If there is any future prefiguration to be done, liberalism rather than illiberalism might be the more politically salient object of critique. In what follows, I turn to liberal manifestations in Romania—not necessarily to prefigure the future of the West but rather to provincialize liberal geographies of theory and contemporary manifestations of the Cold War 2.0, zombie socialism, and techno-normativity.

Blood Gold

While there are many origin stories to the anti-corruption protests that have taken over the streets of Bucharest and Cluj in recent years, many people site the Save Roşia Montană (Salvați Roşia Montană) demonstrations of several years earlier as integral in building praxis of large-scale collective organizing in Romania. The demonstrations erupted in 2013, in response to an extractive gold mining project in the Apuşeni Mountains being conducted by a Canadian mining company, Gabriel Resources. Throughout the summer, each Sunday, thousands of Romanians took to the streets, mostly in Bucharest and Cluj, protesting Gabriel's exploitative and speculative practices, demanding that the state halt all joint business dealings. Unlike the Light Revolution protests, those of Roşia Montană were initially positioned against Western imperiality and global capital. But nevertheless, they too became absorbed by zombie socialism. Further, while they can be read as a widescale demonstration against capitalism and its Anthropocenic impacts, for the most part, the protests failed to address the raciality of capitalism, historically and

contemporaneously. By theorizing Save Roşia Montană through postsocialist analytics, the raciality of liberalism comes into focus—a structure that set the tone for the Light Revolution protests to follow.

From Save Roşia Montană to the Light Revolution, Romanian protests over the last decade have increasingly understood Western corporations as salvific, coming in to rescue Romania from its backwards socialist technology. Gabriel Resources, in its techno-imperial drive to absorb Romania's minerals, speculates upon future growth by pathologizing the darkness of socialist mining practices. While it demands Romania's gold, it also suggests that the loss of minerals to the state is insignificant, as rocks have "no soul" in the language of liberalism. Meanwhile the antimining movement, as it has become increasingly liberal as well, has banished space for anti-capitalist and antiracist alterity, thereby making dead the possibilities of revolutionary futures past. In this way, Roşia Montană has become a site of deadness and deadened resistance.

Roşia Montană (Red Mountain), long scarred and rendered "bloody" through extractive mining technologies going back to the Roman Empire, the mountain contains the largest gold deposit in the European continent. Since 1989, restitution and privatization have poised the mountain and much of the country as newly exploitable, often in the name of "cleaning up" the debris of socialist property nationalization and as well as industrialization. This of course has been supported by the projection of Europeanization, heralding post-1989 shifts to "cleaner, lighter" industry as liberation from the heavy industry and grey polluted landscapes of the Communist past (Pavlínek and Pickles 2000, 9; Vincze 2017). In November 2006,

when the European Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee voted on reports concerning EU enlargement, included was this statement: "Also, Romania should speed up the processing of claims relating to the restitution of properties confiscated by the communist regime and should make further efforts in protecting the environment, with special reference to the mining in Rosia Montana" (European Parliament 2006).

State socialism did indeed contribute to regional ecological devastation. The Communist regime took control of Roşia Montană in 1948, maintaining underground and open surface operations into the 1970s. During this time the Party sought to reduce debt and foreign dependency (such as copper imports from Poland and dependency upon the Soviet Union led Comecon economic assistance), and extractive mining was one of many means to this end. As many of the gold bearing veins had been exhausted by the 1970s, and as the regime tripled its debt between 1974 and 1979, the state turned to strip-mining, destroying two mountains, forever altering the landscape. Nearby is the abandoned village of Geamăna, a ghost town physically under red water. In 1977, 400 residents of Geamăna were displaced after the state discovered a massive copper deposit at Roşia Poieni, deciding to create an artificial catch-basin for the mine's contaminated cyanide sludge. This was one of countless rural-industrial spatial rearrangements accompanying the Communist project. It lingers to date, having subsumed the local houses, church, and cemetery, pooling toxic cyanide into domestic spaces and the graves of former miners. A church steeple still floats above the crimson waterline like a tall, thin sailboat upon the horizon, defying complete submergence.

But projects such as these pale in comparison to those speculated upon by Gabriel. Romania, once dubbed "the granary of Europe," has been discovered by technocapitalism hungry for a new type of grain. In 1998, Gabriel Resources Ltd., through a joint Romanian government venture, began exploration of the mountain. Despite ample evidence of dire contamination (Manske et al. 2006), its newly formed entity public-private enterprise (80 percent private), Rosia Montana Gold Corporation (RMGC), proposed opening four mines forty times the size of the state socialist operation, exacting billions of US dollars in profit. Since inception, it has worked to obtain permission to exploit 300 tons of gold and 1,600 tons of silver, and to destroy three villages and four mountains by annually employing 12,000 tons of cyanide to obtain precious metals. Sodium cyanide solutions are used to leach gold from ore, and it is extremely toxic. For instance, in 2000, 3.5 million cubic feet of cyanide was spilled after a tailings dam ruptured in the Romanian city of Baia Mare, killing 1,400 tons of fish and leading disastrous health and environmental impacts along the Danube and Tisza Rivers all of the way into Hungary for years (Beyerle and Olteanu 2016). In addition to jeopardizing public and environmental health, the proposed project at Roşia Montană would also lead to the destruction of ancient patrimonial monuments, much to the chagrin of heritage preservationists. Even the Ministry of Justice argued the project unjust, violating articles 44 and 136 of the Romanian Constitution on the right to private property and modalities of state expropriation. It was also observed that Romania would only benefit from six percent of the project's profits (Project RISE 2013).

As soon as Gabriel landed in Romania, local activists began fighting back. In

2000, village farmers formed the NGO Alburnus Maior to fight the company in court. Two years later they launched the campaign, Salvați Roşia Montană (Save Roşia Montană). Then in 2004, environmental activists began holding the annual summer Fân Fest festival in the mountain, building up collective ecological solidarity. So, when in September 2013, the Social Democratic Party (PSD) led government acceded to Gabriel Resources intense lobbying and permitted them the ability to begin mining, there was already a large base from which to build resistance.

A series of local and national protests took place in September 2013 under the banner of Salvați Roşia Montană and United We Save (Uniți Salvăm). These amounted to the largest series of protests since 1989 at the time (now trumped by Rezist). Each Sunday, thousands of protestors took to the streets, demanding that Romania sever all ties with Gabriel. Solidarity actions were held in numerous Western cities as well, from Brussels to Chicago. In October, over 5,000 residents and activists gathered in Câmpeni, Romania, presenting an eleven-point declaration, which included the prohibition of cyanide and hydraulic fracking, investigations into the funding activities of RMCC, declassification of government relations with Gabriel Resources, resignation and criminal investigations into supporters of the project, and inclusion of Roșia Montană on Romania's tentative list for UNESCO world heritage sites. They also alleged a media blackout, pointing to Gabriel Resources buying 5.4 million dollars in ads and campaigning (Forbes 2013). Meanwhile then PSD Prime Minister Victor Ponta accused those in the camp of extremist behavior. In return, protesters cited Ponta's corruption.

While one might imagine that RMGC would, in its campaigning, position

itself as against the antimining movement, instead it mostly denounced "dirty" socialist-era mining practices, using the language of "sustainable development," "environmental sustainability," and "corporate social responsibility." Corporate social responsibility, or CSR, has become a catchphrase amongst numerous multinational corporations in Romania, used to posit new "light" industry such as IT as salvific against the backdrop of socialist-era technology. Often CSR is used in bluewashing and pinkwashing campaigns alike, from McDonald's giving of coffee during Rezist to Google, IBM, Accenture, and IKEA's use of the Bucharest LGBT pride in 2018 for advertisement purposes. CSR, in Romania, is used to create an imaginary in which politicians are corrupt and backwards, but in which corporations are salvific and the way of the future.

While the early Save Roşia Montană campaign was led by anti-globalization activists attentive to the deadly effects of disaster capitalism, as the protests grew, they became increasingly liberal and nationalistic, inching away from the tenor of the 2008 anti-NATO protests and anti-austerity demonstrations of 2012. Today, the antifascist and anarchist community in Romania often traces their own consolidation, but also their being targeted, to the 2008 anti-NATO protests, even though only a few of those active today were part of the 2008 organizing. It was then that Between April 1st and 4th, 2008, a police regime was established in Bucharest in order to secure conditions for the NATO anniversary summit at the Palace of the Parliament. Police searches for anti-NATO activists in homes and residential buildings became routine. As Razvan put it in a 2009 retrospective documentary about the "Anti-NATO days" by Joanne Richardson and Nadia Len (that members of the original protests presented

in a ten-year anniversary in the basement of a punk bar in Bucharest in 2018 that I attended), “I was shocked by the atmosphere of the city . . . Flags everywhere, Romanian flags, NATO flags, flags of other NATO countries, and the streets deserted, empty of people, empty of cars. It was as if a theater play was being staged. It reminded me of Gorbachev’s last visit to Romania in 1987, when people weren’t allowed to stroll casually on the streets.” Or, in Rodica’s words, “The fear of being followed and spied on continued for many months. Those things we wanted to keep secret, we never said out loud. We whispered to each other even when we were alone in the room.” International solidarity against NATO was heavily thwarted by the Romanian government as well. For instance, on March 20th, six German activists were stopped at the border and held in secret service custody for fourteen hours. The only justification for this refusal was the possession of anti-war informational materials. According to the border police “anti-native and anti-violence brochures were found in their luggage” (Redacția 2013). In the end, dozens of Romanians and Germans, as well as a handful of other activists from other countries detained by the police. Some people had been severely injured by armed forces who attacked the factory warehouse building where they had been organizing. But the 60 or so people that were part of the anti-NATO dissent were able to engage in a series of discussions, workshops, and film screenings in a hall they had rented in order to offer “a critical alternative to the formal paradigm of NATO’s existence, mission, and expansion” (ibid. 2013).

Yet he organizing that took place to dissent NATO’s April 2008 presence in Romania lasted well after the initial dissent, in part leading to the formation of the

feminist, anarchist social center, Biblioteca Alternativă, in Bucharest. I first visited and stayed at the social center in 2011, after having returned from an international anarchist “Space Camp” in Moldova, where a few Romanian friends of mine studying at the Central European University in Budapest had convinced me to hitchhike with them to across Romania. After the space camp, we headed to the Biblioteca in Bucharest. The social center, nestled within a quiet residential neighborhood, was structurally falling apart a bit, yet warm and cozy on the inside, contained an actual library filled with zines and feminist-anarchist texts, some bedrooms and a kitchen, and a courtyard where events, meetings, and parties were held. Texts were organized in categories such as sociology/anthropology, anarchism/social movements/direct action, gender/sexuality/LGBTQ, colonialism/militarism, repression/political prisoners, literature, and art/photography.

The original Biblioteca Alternativă moved locations within Bucharest shortly after my stay there, and then, a couple years later, the second iteration experienced political infighting over matters of the merits of US feminist and antiracist theory, as well as due to conflict around Roma feminism in Romania. Those who strove to keep the Biblioteca Alternativă open after formed then formed Clacă, a similar social center that also housed the library, this time hidden in a large, abandoned factory building. As with the Bilblioteca, workshops, events, and clothing swaps took place there. During my first time there I led a workshop on mapping evictions and anti-eviction struggles in San Francisco, launching what would become an ongoing anti-eviction solidarity connection between the two locales. It was there too that the Frontul Comun pentru Dreptul la Locuire (the Common Front for the Right to

Housing / FCDL) was formed—the Bucharest-based anti-eviction group that I am a part of in Romania. Unfortunately, the space that housed Clacă was adjacent to the Colectiv Nightclub, which accidentally caught on fire in October 2015, leading to the deaths of 64 people (as well as massive street protests and the resignation of the Prime Minister, which I explain more later in this chapter). The entire area surrounding the fire on Tăbăcarilor in Sector 4 was left uninhabitable, and the wary and exhausted members of Clacă had to find yet another space.

Soon after, the Macaz Bar Coop was formed on Moșilor in the city-center, a collectively owned bar, social center, theatre space, and library known for its late-night parties, public events, and political theatre plays. As of 2019, the space, situated amongst a handful of buildings undergoing restitution evictions, is having to dissolve due to landlord pressures. The area, once the heart of the Jewish community before socialism, and which then was left abandoned and derelict during socialism, became an area filled with Roma families. Many, post-1989, are now squatting in their former homes without formal rental contracts from the state. In 2014, one building on Vulturilor Street filled with over 100 Roma people underwent a restitution eviction, leading to a massive street protest encampment that lasted over two years (Lancione 2018). Members of the FCDL heavily supported the Vulturilor encampment, in part informing their moving into the Moșilor spot to begin with. Today, due to the impacts of restitution in the Sector 3 neighborhood, the entire area is undergoing rapid gentrification. Nevertheless, the Macaz collective plans to open one to two parallel spaces on the other side of the city-center, one of which will also house other leftist activist collectives.

It was during the transition from the Biblioteca to Clacă that the initial Roșia Montană protests were taking shape. It was also during this time that the sister anarchist social/space, library was forming in Cluj, A-casă. Located in the heart of what it now the tech-led speculation and racial dispossession accumulating in the Mărăști neighborhood (that I describe in Chapter 1), A-casă too is now is facing impending displacement. But in 2013, before the contemporary displacements were envisioned, members of both the Bucharest-based Biblioteca and Cluj-based A-cacă joined forces in protesting Gabriel Resources. Since members of both groups had direct ties to the anti-NATO organizing of a few years prior, many saw Gabriel as the newest iteration of the capitalist globalization that they had initially organized to fight against. After all, the head of Gabriel, Frank Timis (an Australian-Romanian), was already known for his devastating iron ore mining operations in Sierra Leone. This had led to the displacement of local villagers, earning him the nickname, "Emperor of African Resources" (Beyerle and Oteanu 2016). For the anti-capitalist, anarchist organizers, Gabriel Resources stood in for a new technocapitalist imperial form—a techno-imperial one.

However, instead of being targeted by the police as these anarchists had grown accustomed, increasingly in the Roșia Montana organizing spaces, they were targeted by more liberal organizers. Increasingly, antifascist and anti-capitalist organizers were made marginal, as those with more liberal and "all-protestors-matter" rhetoric took the reins. One friend of mine, upon asking why it was suddenly okay for far-right nationalist groups to attend marches, was told by a lead organizer that it helps with the numbers. Naturally, when far-right protestors began attacking

antifascists, the latter retreated, thereby decreasing numbers. Another group of anti-capitalists were evicted from a Roșia Montană summer camp for espousing "too much 'Down with Capitalism' (Jos Capitalismul) messaging. When an antifascist organizer publicly confronted a protest leader about the increasingly cramped space from which to articulate anti-capitalist politics at the camp, she was told, "the beauty of the movement is that you'll see a homophobe holding hands with a homosexual." Put otherwise, the protests embraced a form of liberalism in which both homophobes and homosexuals "matter." Yet, while capitalists were welcomed, anti-capitalists were explicitly not—thereby revealing the limits of liberal notions of inclusivity.

Meanwhile, journalists such as Dan Tapalagă dismissed anti-capitalists in the movement as incomprehensible to the generation which overthrew the Communists (2013), while Marius Ghilezan blamed the parents of anti-capitalist youth for "failing to give their children a pro-capitalist view" (2013). One good friend of mine from the then Clacă space remembers being kicked of the summer camp. She now works in Macaz, and she is disgusted that some of the very people who kicked her out now try to hang out in the Macaz bar as if nothing happened.

In the 2018 documentary film Portavoce (Megaphone), directed by Ruxandra Gubernat, Marcel Schreiter, and Henry Rammelt, the Roșia Montană, Colectiv, and Rezist protests were positioned together to make sense of the political and collective ethos tethering them. Debuted in Romania's 2018 One World Romania film festival, the film is highly skewed. Of fourteen people interviewed, thirteen are men. Prior anti-capitalistic protests are ignored altogether, and instead interviewees are largely either DJs or musicians in rock and alternative bands such as Luna Amară and the

Amsterdams. Others are engaged in creative capital ventures such as Street Delivery.

Street Delivery, formed in Bucharest in 2006 by the Cărtureşti Foundation and the Romanian Architects Order, is a project aimed at "delivering" culture to the city's streets. Having had different iterations, such as Train Delivery and Rahova Delivery, gentrifying neighborhoods are often preferred. As Veda Popovici (the only female voice featured in Portavoce) critiques, "Artists, by making use of their symbolic and social capital, as well as their ability to translate the cultural phenomena of underprivileged groups for the middle class, are the first who can indicate to investors and the said middle class that areas such as Gara de Nord or Rahova have a certain something which can be converted into capital with very little investment" (2014).

While Rahova is a Roma working-class neighborhood now being redeveloped as the site of Rahova Business Center and AFI tech park, the area surrounding the train station at Gara de Nord is adjacent to Matache and the Berzei-Buzesti development. As Popovici argues, Train Delivery, funded by the state, Cărtureşti, and Sony, was part of a larger attempt to demolish homes "associated with poverty and provincialism and 'clean up' the area," establish tech offices, and then finally culture—classic gentrification teleology. Also delivered as part of the festival were a series of "workshops" —one organized by law enforcement on how to avoid being pickpocketed, and one by local heritage architects on Matache. Per Popovici, "The 'pickpockets' are symbolic representations of the local population: a poor one, plagued by lawlessness. The middle-class, led by its 'creative' avant-garde, 'the citizens,' will learn how to guard their possessions once they venture into the area" (2014).

Instructively, Portavoce posits organizers of events such as Street Delivery as the architects of Romania's more recent Rezist protests. As Gubernat suggests in an interview, the film effectively defines Romanian protest culture as "recreational activism" (Călinescu 2018). When comparing protests with those of the surrounding region and Western Europe, they find lower levels of commitment, increased flexibility in ideology, and less importance placed upon formal groups and organizing. Many of these recreational activists work for multinational corporations or are engaged in creative capitalism, and fully take on zombie socialist imaginaries. Many protestors desire to disaggregate their "patriotism" from Communist nationalism, wearing flags to represent themselves as the "new Romania." This new Romania maintains one common enemy, Gubernat says: that of corrupt Communist-era elites. Also important amongst protestors is the "concept of a scene," she explains, aligned with others who have described Salvați Roșia Monatană as the "protest of hipsters" (Ruse 2013). This analysis speaks to how mainstream the protests have become in Romania, a far cry from the events organized by the 60 anti-NATO protestors of 2008, as well as from the ongoing anti-eviction organizing taking place in Macaz and A-casă.

While the hipsters of these large protests, to their credit, have been effective in building powerful movements, importantly, critiques of capitalism and its racist underpinnings are displaced by zombie socialism. And yet, residents living in Gabriel's wake who have refused buyout offers to vacate their homes often enough look back to the days of Communism with nostalgia. As a local farmer Eugene described, "If they try to forcefully relocate me, I'll go to Ceausescu's grave, light a

candle, and say: 'Comrade Ceauşescu, you were a dictator, but I'm sorry we killed you. You were right and we were wrong'" (Kenarov 2012). Eugene speaks to RMGC's determination to not only destroy to valleys, but also to dispossess over 1,800 people living in 740 homes, and even exhume the dead. As an employee of the Catholic Church paid by RMGC to recruit locals to work for the corporation frustratingly explained of her job after being interrogated by local activists from Cluj in the dusty summer of 2013, "I toll the bells for the dead." Such sentiments destabilize anticommunist notions of anti-capitalism being the domain of aberrant urban youth, and of zombie socialism.

As Roşia Montană increasingly becomes ghostly, despite ongoing resistance from the Save Roşia Montană movement, not all people, and not all dead, are equally impacted. Disproportionately Roma people are faced with contaminants. Unlike other villagers in Roşia Montană, many Roma live in Gura Roşiei at the bottom of the valley. Many once worked for the state mine, but now live in abject conditions, unemployed, lacking sewage and running water. As an older woman from the region explained during a visit to Cluj, yes, the cyanide tailings from the dam outside her house, a result of socialist practices, are toxic, at least during socialism, she and other Roma there had jobs. While many Roma would work for RMGC in a heartbeat, institutional racism denies them jobs. Further, everyone around her is sick, or in Julie Sze's words, "technologically polluted" (2006). In 2012, a Roma man and former miner, Uasile Mocioiu, died after a ten-year battle with cancer, having had no access to employment since socialism. Not only are Roma foreclosed recognition as human by postsocialist racial technologies, but further they are rendered as contaminable by

global capital. For instance, RMGC wants to convert the nearby Corna Valley into a giant cyanide tailing pond, right above Gura Roşiei. Effectively, Gabriel is thus attempting to convert both ecological lifeworlds but also human lives into what Tracy Voyles describes as a wasteland, an undesirable space but also a "racial and spatial signifier that renders an environment and that bodies that inhabit pollutable" (2015, 9). In this sense, postsocialist technological projects have seen race and space become tethered in the social construction of whose lifeworlds are rendered contaminable, allocated to become the *maidane* (wastelands), and whose are not. This is another of technofascism's material effects.

Despite the Roșia Montană movement's increased liberalism and failures to address the deadly effects of racial capitalism entangled in the postsocialist neoliberalism, after months of protesting and successfully overcoming what was a media blackout, in the spring of 2014, public pressure worked. Thus, despite its problems, the protests did instigate change. Namely, Romania decided not to vote upon the law that would allow Gabriel to continue as planned. In return, the company threatened to take Romania to an international arbitration court. Represented by the global law firm White & Case, in 2015 Gabriel filed a complaint against Romania in the World Bank's International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes. In 2014, White & Case defended a different Canadian gold mining operation in Venezuela. This–coupled with the sheer fact that nearly half the cases settled by the World Bank champion corporations, and that nearly 95 percent of known awards go to companies with at least one billion USD in annual revenue or to individuals worth over 100 million USD in net worth (Ciobanu 2015; Corporate Europe 2017, 4)–paints

a grim forecast of Romania's ability to successfully combat global mining capital and its plantation logics.

By plantation logics, I refer to what Anna Tsing describes as ecological simplifications in which living things and lifeworlds are converted into assets, producing virulence along the way (2016). Her metaphor, used to describe uneven, patchy conditions in the age of the Anthropocene, is especially important to also theorize alongside Robinson's conceptual apparatus of racial capitalism (1983), which understands that from its origins, capitalism (plantation-like as it may be) has always depended upon the endurance of racism. Following Robinson as well as Wendy Chun's call to think race and/as technology (2012), here I argue that plantation logics are only possible through the application of racial technocapitalism. This applies to all contexts described as the age of the Anthropocene, from urban to rural contexts alike. Writing about plantation logics, its temporality, and its geographies in and beyond US contexts, Katherine McKittrick suggests:

> The plantation thesis uncovers the interlocking workings of modernity and blackness, which culminate in long-standing, uneven racial geographies while also centralizing that the idea of the plantation is migratory. Thus, in agriculture, banking, and mining, in trade and tourism, and across other colonial and postcolonial spaces—the prison, the city, the resort—a plantation logic characteristic of (but not identical to) slavery emerges in the present both ideologically and materially (2013, 3).

In postsocialist Romania, plantation logics invoke earlier slave histories and their racial geographies, along with current contexts of global exploitation and techno-imperialism.

The debates coming out of the International Geological Congress as to when the Anthropocene—the geological era in which humans have incited irreparable harm upon the earth, forever altering its course—is now determined to have begun in 1950 with the birth of the Cold War, nuclear testing, and plastics. Yet others have been arguing that the era began with the onset of Western colonialism, which destroyed Indigenous worlds irreparable, not to mention the planet's carbon dioxide levels. Karen Barad asks, "Is there a sense of temporality that could provide a different way of positioning these markers of history and understand 1492 as living inside 1945, for example, and even vice versa?" (2017, 57). I bring this question up here to suggest that a post-Cold War framing of the Anthropocene, or what Jason Moore describes as "the Capitalocene" (2015), needs to attend to the racial and colonial elements of postsocialist transition, which live inside 1945, but also 1989. In the case of Romania, the imposition of Western capital and liberal democracy in fact reinterprets pre-socialist understanding of space and race. Prior to socialism, Roșia Montană was mined by the Romans, the Germans, and the Austro-Hungarians. That it is now being mined by the imperiality of Canada, enabled by free trade mechanisms, should be of no surprise.

Roşia Montană protests largely died down after 2014, with many activists considering their work successful. Yet Alburnus Maior organizers knew that the struggle was not over, and soon they drafted a petition to include Roșia Montană in

the UNESCO World Heritage. This, they suggested, might help in ongoing World Bank-level disputes. While Victor Ponta ignored their petition, after he resigned following the Colectiv fire, the new government decided to back the UNESCO application. In February 2016, the Roșia Montană region was added to Romania's tentative list for new World Heritage sites, with support from the Union to Save Romania (Uniunea Salvaţi România/USR) heritage movement and Western Europe alike. However, in June 2018, news erupted that Romania had stymied heritage status allocation, arguing that inclusion might negatively impact the lawsuit against Gabriel. Small demonstrations ensued, with the objects of critique not the corporation and free trade, but rather corrupt politicians arbitrating on behalf of the state. While perhaps this is in part because protestors have now in their back pocket the knowledge that targeting politicians can be effective, nevertheless, their consolidating of a corrupt "Communist" enemy perpetuates zombie socialism.

Organizing against Gabriel has nonetheless proved effective in curtailing the Canadian speculative project from materializing. This is not something to be taken lightly as it is no easy feat to pressure a government into standing up against a Western mining company. However, in blockading a form of financial speculation endemic to postsocialist times without critically examining them as postsocialist, other speculative futures emerge. These reify Romania's backwardness and the need to exorcize all Communist specters from the aberration of socialist hauntology so that Western values can be finally be fulfilled. Protests are thereby more concerned with governmental corruption than the corruptive nature of racial technocapitalism, its plantation logics, and its largest beneficiaries—those of multinational zombie

socialist corporations and foreign investors. Indeed, postsocialist Romania is an apt space from which to theorize liberalism, late and otherwise.

The Light Revolution

In February 2017, Romania's streets and cities lit up as nearly one million protestors gathered for days at a time, demanding an end to political corruption. Bigger than but building upon Roșia Montană organizing, demonstrators affiliated the ruling Social Democrat Party (Partidul Social Democrat/PSD) to the Red Scare" of socialist endurance, protestors organized what quickly became the largest collective protest since those that dismantled state socialism in December 1989. Referred to as #Rezist, vernacularly dialoguing with anti-Trump #Resist protests concurrently transpiring in the US, demonstrations also became known as part of the "Light Revolution," referencing widespread utilization of digital, smart, and light-emitting technologies. For instance, hundreds of thousands of smartphones lit up Bucharest's Victoriei Square on February 6th, nationalistically choreographed to display the country's red, blue, and yellow flag. Lasers projected gimmicky GIFs on the government building, depicting the ruling party as old, dark, and corrupt, and its leader, Liviu Dragnea, as poor and full of bad teeth. Millennial technology could now Trump the backwards, "socialist" party still in power, it was suggested. As one protestor's sign read, in English, "FEAR OF THE DARK(nea)." Above him, EU and US flags waved in the air, flying above professionally printed signs appealing to the West for salvation from the Red Scare continuing to haunt the country. Signs with pictures of the EU flag and the English words "Save Us" and "Help Us" were held,

while hashtags circulated on social media such as #Rezist and #Worldagainstcorruption. Romania's technological prowess, protestors demonstrated, was light years ahead of the decrepit backwardness that still occupies the government. By expunging the last remaining Communist specters, Romania could finally catch up to the West.

Such aspirations of Western becoming can be traced back to the Enlightenment if not earlier in Romania, referencing peripheral subjectivities of never being quite modern, European, and technologically advanced enough. However, by framing Communism as a void, the Light Revolution expressed a specifically postsocialist temporality, one that understands history as written by Cold War victors. Telescoping zombie socialism, its mode of historiography flatly elides other readings of state socialism in Romania, a project that was far from monolithic, one that for many offered housing, health care, employment, and education for the first time in national history. For the country's racialized poor, these have provisions that have been blown to the wind with post-89 injections of shock capitalism, leading to new contexts of racial dispossession. This is not to glorify state socialism either, as of course, there were numerous horrors, especially in the 1980s as Nicolae Ceaușescu became more authoritarian, but it is to question how Communism gets repeatedly framed and internalized as backward. It is to ask why the socialist period gets written as fascistic and behind liberal progressivism, ignoring its explicitly antifascist and anti-capitalist underpinnings. Why does the consolidation of postsocialist historical time hinge upon the integration of the East into Western order, yet at the same time, maintain what Petrovszky and Țichindeleanu describe as an Eastern "ontological time

lapse behind the authentic present of the Free World"? The West needs the East to remain abnormal, and so thus begins, they write, "the long durée of 'transition,' the transition to 'normality'" (Petrovszky and Țichindeleanu 2011, 42).

Straightjacketing the horrors of Ceaușescu onto the Communist project, a Cold War narrative structure endures, imposing a continual need for Romanians to prove they have moved beyond their backward socialist past. In the case of the Light Revolution, by appealing to the West for salvation, and by utilizing new forms of technology, #Rezist protestors attempted to restage the death of Ceaușescu, imagining that this time, they could effectively lustrate their backwardness and thereby enter the global time of postsocialist neoliberalism. Yet this was not the first restaging of Ceaușescu's death in an attempt to reach the vanishing point of normality. In 2003, the artist Dumitru Gorzo famously stenciled images of Ceaușescu across Bucharest with the text, "VIN ÎN 5 MINUTE (Back in 5 Minutes)," inferring fear that the former leader would return despite his '89 execution (Pusca 2016, 32). In 2010, this phobia manifested in the Ceaușescus' bodies being unearthed for DNA testing, just to make sure that they were truly dead. As such, the Light Revolution can be read as part of longer lineage of anticommunist restaging.

However, unlike past reenactments, the Light Revolution brought young people into the physical spaces that their parents stood in 1989. As one man's placard in Piața Victoriei spelled out, also in English, "WE WILL STAND OUR GROUND LIKE OUR PARENTS DID IN '89." This mimicry, strongest amongst the young aspirational middle class, presumes that contemporary government corruption is linked to failed post-1989 lustration. This framing erases the role that the West has

played both in Romania's contemporary economic hardships vis-a-vis postsocialist disaster capitalism, and in the formation of Romanian middle-class aspirational subjectivities (Țichindeleanu 2017). It also undermines a rich history of post-1989 protests, from those against crony capitalism of the 1990s, the 2008 anti-NATO organizing, the 2012 anti-austerity protests (sparked by outrage against a healthcare reform), and the anti-globalization Roșia Montana demonstrations of 2013.

Anticorruption framing in Romania is important to theorize alongside that within other postsocialist countries, from Slovenia to Bosnia. While in some postsocialist contexts, anticorruption protests align with anti-authoritarian and anti-capitalist politics, in others, they have stymied movements by positing conservative regime change as solution. As Yurchak argues, narratives of corruption also have the power to divorce a country from its geopolitical contexts, "reducing it to a zone that is subjected to its own internal logic of authoritarianism" (2017, 3). The fascination with corruption is endemic to postsocialist Romania, where more politicians have been jailed for corruption over the past decade than in all of Eastern Europe combined, often rounded up by the Direcţia Naţională Anticorupţie (DNA), a body founded in 2005 by an EU directive. In fact, the Light Revolution erupted after Dragnea's government introduced a bill that would decriminalize bribes up to £38,865, a political move that sparked outrage among a corruption-obsessed population.

However, what is of interest here is less ongoing governmental corruption, but rather the obsession with cleansing the nation of corrupt politicians (rather than of multinational corporations) to collectively advance into the European body (imagined as anti-corrupt). As Alexander Clapp articulates,

> One of the great successes of the DNA has been its ability to use middle-class protests to control Europe's vision of Romania today. Those who join the street movements admire it out of a mixture of naivety and fear of what Romania has been. It is a generation whose memory of communism is that of the austerity decade into which they were born, and who were raised in the wild-turf capitalism of the 1990s. Not only has their prosperity come from the influx of multinationals, whose CEOs now take to the streets with them in protest; so have many of their progressive values (2017).

Yet while the DNA, supported by NATO, rounds up politicians in the name of European liberalism, its jurisdiction does not extend to multinational corporations, which arguably are most responsible for contexts of postsocialist economic devastation. As *CrimethInc* authors contextualize, "Anti-corruption discourse has served to rally people to coordinate their own colonization and exploitation by Western capitalists in the name of anti-communism" (Anonymous 2017).

Romanian protests of the last five years have witnessed not only an increased neoliberal fervor among participants, but also an increased anticorruption politic pivoted against the Red Plague of the PSD. This sentiment grew in 2015, when protests broke out after an accidental and deadly fire in the nightclub, Colectiv. Protestors blamed the government for dodging the regulating of permits and incited the resignation of then PSD Prime Minister Victor Ponta. Anti-PSD sentiment was further flamed in early 2017 after the party won the national election. While the PSD

is undoubtedly corrupt, mafiaistic, and neoliberal in its core, so is the rival party that many #Rezist protestors support—the National Liberal Party (Partidul Național Liberal/PNL). If anything, the main difference between these two dominant rival parties—the PSD the party of the current government, and the PNL that of the current president—is that the PSD enjoys most of its support from rural, poor, small-town, and senior populations, and the PNL from millennial urbanites. This is not to say that the PSD represents the poor—far from it—but at times, it has worked for a patriarchal system of redistribution that at least partially benefits them (Poenaru 2017). Meanwhile the PNL is understood as "more European," parading a president, Klaus Iohannis that many speculate won the election based upon his ethnic German heritage, supposedly signifying his "inherent Western superiority." While PSD supporters did organize counter demonstrations outside of the main stage of police-protected protestors, many of whom were likely paid, they nevertheless were met with violence by #Rezistors, who launched anticommunist virulence against them.

Yet #Rezistors were largely praised for their positivity in the media, also enjoying support from multinational corporations who gave their employees time off to attend. The Jandarmeria, Romania's military police, was made famous for holding heart-shaped balloons at the protests, and even the head of Raiffeisen Bank attended a demonstration in Cluj with his family. Meanwhile, McDonalds offered protestors free tea so that they could stay warm and rehydrate, and Iohannis himself participated in the demonstrations early on. At one point, a US state department representative described the protests as a "sea of humanity" to a cohort of US students new to Romania, praising that there was nothing anarchistic or antiglobal about them. As he

extoled, even though Piața Victoriei is surrounded by big banks, none of them had their windows smashed, and everyone respected the police.

Romania's Light Revolution, while creating a safe space for police, banks, nationalism, and even the president, did not create any semblance of safety for antifascist organizers, who have been increasingly marginalized in anticorruption demonstrations over the last five years. Often when antifascist and anti-capitalist groups attend contemporary these protests, they are scoffed at by more liberal protestors and told to take down their banners—a far leap from the anti-NATO and anti-austerity protests of years earlier. By barring antifascist and anti-capitalist protestors, the space of protest becomes safer not only for banks and police but also far right members of the Nouă Dreapta (New Right) and the homophobic Coaliția pentru Familie (Coalition for the Family). As such, arguably the liberalization and depoliticization of public space enable the growth of fascism and its homophobic/techno-normative ethos.

This trend is deeply connected to Romanian urban property history, one that preceded the Communist socialist era, yet that today is reinterpreted through zombie socialism liberalization of and shifting understandings of private and public space. It was during the interwar era that Bucharest saw the "golden age" of urban development, becoming known by many as the "Little Paris of the East." This was also the age of intensified fascism, marked by intense anti-Roma and anti-Semitic racism. The Communist regime arose to squash the fascist movement and the classism that backed it. Soon after, the party initiated an intensive urbanization project, including a housing nationalization policy. Mandating that owners of multiple

properties give up excess units, the state moved new residents in, including the racialized poor. Most of this occurred in older city centers, while new socialist modernist buildings were erected in the semiperipheries (Chelcea 2012). Decades later, after transition, EU-supported urban housing restitution policies were implemented to return formerly nationalized buildings to descendants of prior owners. Interpreting Communism socialism as aberration, retrocession laws have thereby facilitated the reclamation of former wealth. Significantly, this has incited a widespread trend of racial evictions in urban centers (Vincze 2017).

As postsocialist restitution signified a technofascist return to pre-socialist wealth and the valorization of private property, so did an emergent architectural heritage movement, one that initially rose against capitalist interests, but that soon became absorbed by them, as well as by veneration of fascist times. By glossing through the movement here, I specifically aim to highlight the modes in which it prefigures the liberalism of the Light Revolution. By the late 1990s, real estate speculators discovered Bucharest, wrecked by transition, as an easily exploitative space, and unofficial development became orchestrated outside of official city plans. As Ioana Florea finds, architects, planners, and proponents of urban beautification understood this orchestration as part of "derogatory urbanism," fearing that new development would destroy golden era architecture. Relatively small protests emerged in 2005 and 2006 to protect old buildings, led by architects and students, some of whom soon formed NGOs. Expressing pre-socialist nostalgia, these groups framed themselves as a cultural movement backed by expert knowledge. Soon conservative and nationalist groups desirous of reinstalling pre-socialist urban

identity joined in, and by 2008, the Association to Save Bucharest (Asociatia Salvaţi Bucureştiul/ASB) Party emerged. 2008 and 2009 saw frequent small protests outside of the parliament, which included mock funerals mourning the loss of historic buildings while mocking corrupt officials. However, rather, than mourn those being dispossessed from their homes through property restitution, this growing heritage movement was more concerned with pre-socialist buildings and symbolic capital. In 2015, the ASB grew into the Union to Save Romania (Uniunea Salvaţi România/USR), led by mathematician Nicușor Dan, an increasingly public figure. The party has established itself as one of the strongest in the administration, and now is the second most popular in Bucharest, after the PNL. Anti-corruption is one of its central tenets, and numerous USR supporters made up Light Revolution constituents.

The interests of this heritage movement grew visibility in 2010, when the City Hall obtained the right to construct a "North–South middle line" through Bucharest—a throughway project first conceived of in the 1930s intended to connect the Government at Victoriei to the Parliament further south, widening the streets along Buzești-Berzei. When implemented, this project led to the destruction of 98 buildings and the evacuation of 1,000 people in the Matache neighborhood, most of whom were Roma. While anti-eviction protests did transpire, most of the resistance to the project was instead led by the heritage movement, upset about the destruction of the 100-year-old Matache market.

For instance, in a film made Dragoș Lumpan to commemorate the loss, those displaced by the development project were only mentioned peripherally. Instead, most prominently featured were architects and planners bemoaning the corruption of

the former and corrupt major, Sorin Oprescu, who saw the project through. As several architectures argued, the problem is that Oprescu and the planners that implemented it are just “little Ceaușescus” who think that they can redevelop and cut through the city, however they like, destroying historical value. In a screening of the film, Lumpan made similar remarks, grieving the loss of the market while referring to those displaced with overtly anti-Roma, anti-queer, and anti-sex-worker language. In the words of Ann Stoler:

> There are resurrected ruins, like those . . . part of the World Bank–UNESCO cultural heritage projects designed to “harvest the economic value” and capitalize on the allure of partially restored people and things. Such restorations disperse and redistribute people, making their ways of being vital to national development and productive of new inequalities. Then there are those ruins that stirred Jamaica Kincaid’s derisive and angry view of Antigua, marked with buildings whose faded placards note “repairs pending” for decades, while damaged but “splendid old buildings from colonial times” are well maintained in carefully tended disrepair (2008, 198).

This aligns with Yukiko Koga’s understanding of “colonial inheritance” of Japanese imperialism in China, what she describes as the “capitalization of colonial remnants” such as architecture and factories (2016, 3). As Lumpan’s film well reveals, pre-socialist and socialist-era ruins are bestowed differential values, inferring different futures of inheritance.

The tension between pre-socialist aesthetic value and the livelihood of those dispossessed by postsocialist the installation of such value came to a head in 2012, when an old building in the city center, Carol 53, was bestowed historic value and granted both restitution and restoration. The heir, a famous architect and senior member of the heritage movement, evicted a large Roma family who had been squatting there for years. He then handed the building over to a collective of young artists and architects, who began a “cultural” co-living/working project, describing themselves as “squatters,” giving presentations and tours within and beyond Romania. Florea argues that Carol 53 perfectly represents the violence of the heritage movement: “With ‘Little Paris’ being negotiated as its identity symbol and its vision of what is valuable, the movement found itself in a process of excluding all those groups not fitting into or not adhering to this cultural value system—such as the poor, the Roma, the uneducated, the less educated, the less urbanized dwellers” (2016, 74). This cultural value system is often shared by those protesting the Red Scare in Piața Victoriei, a plaza incidentally now more connected to the Parliament, thanks to the Buzești-Berzei development, and more well known to the West, thanks to the sea of smartphones lights beaming outward.

Indeed, the Western liberal media received Light Revolution light-wave transmissions instantaneously. Uncritically, outlets ranging from *Al Jazeera* and *Democracy Now* to the *New York Times* reported on the sea of humanity bearing its face across Romania. Focusing on the massive show of force against the corrupt government, the media was not shy in implying that if Romanians could take to the streets in such strong numbers, surely US Trump dissenters could as well. If Rezist

was initially inspired by Resist, now Resistors should, it seemed, gain inspiration from Rezistors. This aspirational dialecticism marks an emerging paradox in liberal teleology, one endemic to its anticommunist condition. How, if postsocialist Romania has been conditioned by the West to be inherently behind, can its cultures of dissent be suddenly read as more progressive?

Of importance here is that both Rezist and Resist protests pin down a timeline that understands progress as a move from authoritarianism toward liberalism, per Singh's analysis. In the case of Romania, allegations of authoritarianism are used to directly scapegoat the Communist past as source of blame for current conditions of austerity, corruption, and "backwardness," rather than the violence and failures of disaster capitalism. To reverse this postsocialist retrograde, a return to Little Paris golden era is posited as one solution, while adaptation into the contemporary Western body is offered as another. Both of course ultimately link back to longstanding desires to become Europe. Meanwhile, in the US, liberal democrats blame Russian interference for Trump's victory, often borrowing Cold War grammars and projecting neo-McCarthyistic hysteria to pin down their case against illiberal hacking interference. Massive street protests backed by technological prowess in public space, proponents of liberal democracy allege, are one means of moving away from authoritarianism and toward liberal futurity. As Bruce O'Neill suggests, "But as those standing in the squares across Romania maintained, there is a deeper threat that can all too easily get lost amid the rhythm of everyday life: corruption kills. Rather than wait to be swept up in the collateral damage, those in the West would be wise to follow Romania's lead and demand rigorous accountability" (2018). Light

Revolutions, in other words, are part of a larger neoliberal arsenal determined to militate against postliberal possibilities by enticing post-Enlightenment dreams. Further, they entangle with pre-socialist, fascist "Golden Era" imaginaries, harkening to the postsocialist advent of technofascism.

The Timpuri Noi (New Times) of IKEA

In this last section, I delve into the liberal logics undergirding rural forest restitutions, teasing out how the zombie socialism that they rest upon is also tethered to urban renewal processes. I focus upon the role of the Swedish IKEA furniture company/real estate investor in rural and urban space alike. By disentangling its web of connections, and by reading the language of postsocialist restitution and renewal together, I question why Roma and Communist specters alike are interpreted as zombies by zombie socialist protest movements, while companies like IKEA are seen as means to Western modernity. Why is it that IKEA, while just as "corrupt" as Gabriel, and perhaps even more technocapitalist in both rural and urban spaces alike, it maintains the veneer of "progressive," "modern," and salvific in the popular imaginary? Why have protestors rushed to condemn Gabriel and the PSD, but IKEA, a techno-imperial monolith with fascist origins, is left alone? It seems that in postsocialist liberal times, the logics of technocapitalism, what is understood as a means to "development" remains "unprotestable." Romania contains two-thirds of Europe's virgin forests and the continent's largest brown bear, lynx, and grey wolf populations. In 1984, it was determined that Romania contained 400,000 hectares of old-growth trees; twenty years later, in 2004, there were only 218,500 remaining

(Veen et al., 2010). A major wave of destruction took place after 1995, and then another later, after 2005, correlating with the passing of restitution laws. As of 2009, up to 45 percent of previously national forests were restituted and therefore privatized, and it is predicted that soon two-thirds of all forests will be privatized (Abrudan et al. 2009; Ioras and Abrudan 2006).

As in urban spaces, Roma residents bear the brunt of rural restitution far more than non-Roma. Like mining and Siliconization alike, forest clearcutting too is a form of racial technocapitalism. Not only were Roma dispossessed from collectivized agricultural and industrial projects after 1989, but further, under the pretext of land shortage, many Roma were denied the half a hectare of land otherwise gifted to socialist collective farm employees (Stewart 2002, 135). In forested regions such as Dragomirești in Dâmbovița County, despite that Roma had been working in the forests for generations, including during socialism, they received neither agricultural nor forest land after 1989 as they had not owned the land beforehand (Sikor et al. 2009, 183). Thus in 2003, they began illegally cutting large timber (rather than simply gathering underbrush for broom making and firewood as they had been doing previously), selling it to wholesalers in southern Romania for profit. In response, new forest owners have mobilized anti-Roma racial stereotypes, declaring that Roma "should be killed since they are not good for anything else but stealing our forest" (quoted in Sikor et al. 2009, 184). Thus, as with urban restitution, the racist histories that preceded 1946 have been invoked after 1989 to pathologize Roma for never having been pre-socialist landowners – punishing and further racializing them for slavery and its after effects. While large lumber companies, the Orthodox Church,

and real estate mafia collectives benefit from privatization, buying up small plots from former owners, many of whom are poor, for profit, the Swedish IKEA furniture company profits most.

IKEA, one of the planet's largest furniture suppliers, is said to use one percent of global wood supply each year to produce roughly 100 million pieces "smart" furniture (Bojin et al. 2016). IKEA was founded by the then 17-year old Ingvar Kamprad in 1943. Kamprad passed away in early 2018 as one of the world's wealthiest people. The same year that he founded IKEA, naming it after his initials as well as his childhood farm (Elmtaryd) and village (Agunnaryd), he became Member No. 4,014 of the Swedish fascist party, Socialist Unity. There, he emerged as an enthusiastic Nazi sympathizer, contributing to party meetings even after World War II ended, recruiting and fundraising for it (Asbrink 2018). He also maintained ties with the Swedish fascist leader Per Engdahl, who he publicly supported even in 2011.[9]

Since its 1943 origins, IKEA has expanded across the globe, today owning and operates 415 stores in 49 countries. It also owns TaskRabbit, the San Francisco-based gig-economy platform known, like Uber, to exploit workers and deny them benefits. Aimed to "revolutionize the world's labor force," the company, a 2008 startup founded by a former IBM software engineer, not only exploits its own "Taskers," but further has been shown to racially discriminate against potential clients (Butler 2017). In this way, the roots of the company, laden in fascism, have laid the bedrock for its techno-imperial present. Like other tech companies, IKEA offshores its financing through complex networks, allegedly avoiding paying one billion euro in taxes between 2010 and 2016 (Chee 2016). In addition, it is part of entangled

property networks, some of which are also designed to maximize profit and exploit Romanian forests, which I elaborate upon here.

While IKEA sets the bar for chic modernist smart home décor, racial technocapitalism, and techno-imperial practices, Harvard University also stands in for US political and academic superiority, having produced eight US presidents. And somehow, both IKEA and Harvard became embroiled in Romanian courts for illegal forest restitution investments. The business dealings between the two mega entities are muddy and complex, endemic to the age of property financialization, but also to postsocialist restitution schemas and what Verdery describes as post-1989 "fuzzy property rights" (1999). While today blame is placed upon corrupt individuals involved in the dealings, here I argue that it is more productive to focus upon how restitutions are processes designed to benefit the West and Western aspirations while reinstating fascist relations, coded in the language of technoliberalism.

Investigative work by Daniel Bojin, Paul Radu, Hans Strandberg (2016) has found that Harvard and IKEA began their tryst in 2004, when Harvard designated a Romanian man from Sohodol, Dragoș Lipan, as its land purchasing business representative. On the same day that Harvard employed Lipan in Sohodol, a commercial company Oriolus Limited, came into being, established by four Swedes who authorized Lipan's first land purchase. In 2010, Harvard became the largest private owner of forests in Romania, managing over $100 million of Romanian investments through the Boston-based tax-exempt Phemus Corporation. Eventually, some of Lipan's dealings surfaced as illegal, and so to extricate itself, Harvard set up a new business scheme, funneling transactions through Delaware, Luxembourg,

Sweden, and Romania. Then, in 2015, after Lipan was sentenced for corruption, Harvard brusquely sold the majority of its property to IKEA in what became its largest transaction in raw forest, valued at $62.6 million (Bojin et al. 2016).[10] Today, IKEA owns 90 forests in 21 Romanian counties, totaling 33,000 hectares. The trees in these forests are now slated to become smart furniture, sold around the globe, including in Romania.

Bucharest is currently in the process of building its second IKEA store, and Timișoara already has one. But nevertheless, most of Romania's forests are not slated to be transformed into Romanian furniture, unlike during socialism when furniture production and sales largely remained domestic affairs. Bojin, Radu, and Strandberg attribute the Harvard-IKEA phenomenon to corruption, in which "crooked businessmen and dirty politicians seized the moment, forging documents and claiming forests that had never belonged to them or to their ancestors. In many cases, fake relatives armed with piles of forged paperwork claimed some of the last standing old-growth forests in Europe and quickly sold them to foreign companies who poured tens of millions of dollars into such deals hoping for great returns" (2016). However, arguably the Harvard-IKEA transactions are not so out of the ordinary and rather, as with Gabriel, indexical of techno-imperialism in postsocialist contexts.

However, even during socialism, IKEA and Romania maintained a complex relationship. Declassified files at the National College for Studying the Securitate Archives have shown that IKEA had made an agreement in 1981 with the Romanian state-run timber company, Tehnoforestexport, to be overcharged for products produced in Romania (Rosca 2014). The Securitate utilized a special foreign trade

company, ICE Dunarea, to skim capital from the transactions. A 1986 memo from the "Ministry of Interior, Department of State Security, Military Unit 0544," marked "Top Secret, sole copy," elaborates that the "Scandinavica currency collection operation" emerged "with the aim of receiving foreign currency through over-billing the payments made in the contract between ICE Tehnoforestexport with IKEA of Sweden, valued at 97m Swedish crowns (13.6m US dollars)." In addition, "IKEA transferred in our transitory account the sum of 163,005.201 Swedish crowns." Other documents show overseas payments made to a bank in East Berlin, where, during the Cold War, IKEA forced East German political prisoners to produce and assemble products (Connolly 2012). Allegedly, per Scandinavica, Operation Securitate would pay IKEA back, accruing large interest sums along the way. IKEA claims to have seen the transaction as a sort of commission (Rosca 2014), a practice today that Rezist protestors would rally against as corruption.

However, unlike resistance to Gabriel via Salvați Roșia Montană, there have been no massive urban street protests to challenge techno-imperial forestry and postsocialist rural restitutions. While Greenpeace is actively fighting back, as is the smaller activist-based Eco Ruralis Association in Cluj, and while investigative journalists from projects such as RISE are documenting forest corruption, there is no massive movement aimed against IKEA. Several environmental activists have told me that lack of widescale organizing around forest restitutions and land-grabbing more broadly can in part be attributed to a dominant narrative that understands restitutions as a means of postsocialist transitional justice, and in part to the large concentration of anti-capitalist activists in urban centers too removed from rural

contexts.

Others have described the love affair that Romania has with IKEA, in which the company's smart furniture is read as a means of urban modernity and technological savviness. While there was no natural affinity to Gabriel or its mineral products, IKEA is a different story, friends have described. Even if IKEA is not offering Romania reparations for stolen trees and consequential ecological devastation, IKEA still offers the aesthetic dream of Western modernity, now available online and in urban retail stores. Having spent days in IKEA's branch near the Bucharest airport observing transactions and talking to customers in the store's relatively affordable canteen, I've heard countless tales of people taking the long trip there on the 783 bus just to hang out and eat a meal, and maybe to buy something small downstairs. One middle-aged man told me that he loves going to IKEA because his family had no furniture options during socialism, and now he can transform his socialist-built flat into any interior style that he so chooses, as long as the components are in IKEA. Yet most people can't afford IKEA's furniture products, but still enjoy being in their proximity. "It's like going to the mall," several people mentioned, alluding to the array of malls that sprung up in Bucharest in the early 2000s. Filled with Western clothing stores, Starbucks coffee shops, Belgian-owned Mega Image grocery stores, and more, the malls themselves have become postsocialist and at times gentrifying spaces that people go to for proximity to unaffordable products and lifestyle fantasies. Many malls also have World Class gyms, also founded in Sweden, which have aggressively targeted the Eastern European market after socialism.

While IKEA's techno-imperialism in Romania's forests may be rendered non-

threatening through the company's urban aesthetic appeal, it has found more material ways of rendering itself as salvific in Bucharest's postsocialist urban renewal. Beginning in 2008, Interprime Properties the investment fund, which is part of IKEA, fixed its eyes on socialist-era industrial sites that it hoped to redevelop into high-end office buildings, mostly for tech. In 2010, the 53,000 square meter plot that was once the Timpuri Noi (New Times, also New Age) Industrial Platform and Metal Works, was purchased by Interprime Properties for 34.6 million euro. First established during the second half of the 19th century, the Timpuri Noi factory was an industrial stronghold during socialism, producing compressors, pumps, plant materials, and the country's only small and medium capacity compressors (Moga and David, 2010). To facilitate worker transport, Bucharest's first metro line opened in 1979 to connect Timpuri Noi with Semănătoarea (now rebranded as Petrache Poenaru), then the city's industrial agricultural hub. Today, Semănătoarea mostly functions as Sema Park, an IT office complex. Like Semănătoarea factories, Timpuri Noi Metal Works struggled to survive post-1989. There were 2,700 employees working for the company in 1990; in 2011, there were only 130 remaining (Cojocar 2011; Moga and David 2010). Withering, in 2010, it relocated to Jilava, 40 kilometers outside of Bucharest, placing the land and crumbling buildings on the market.

Like with forest restitutions, the financial mechanisms behind IKEA's urban redevelopment are complex and entangled, characteristic of global capital technologies of ownership. Interprime Properties, owned by the Inter-IKEA Group and the Inter-IKEA Property Division, was founded Kamprad in 1989. Since then it has been conducting real estate transactions in Europe, in both postsocialist and

Western countries, offshoring capital in the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, Switzerland, Curaçao, the Virgin Islands, and Cyprus (The Local 2011). In 2014, Interprime became Vastint Romania S.R.L., a subsidiary of Vastint Holding B.V., the latter the holding company of the holding company of the Inter IKEA Property Division. "Vastint" is technically an abbreviation for "Vastgoed Internationaal," which means "International Real Estate" in Dutch. The Swiss Interogo Foundation now owns both Vastint and the IKEA group, which Kamprad secretly created in 1989 to hold his company's assets (The Local 2011).

Today, what was once the Timpuri Noi Industrial Platform has been demolished and redeveloped into Timpuri Noi Square, flashing the Vastint logo on one of its tall glass towers. Everything took a bit longer than planned in part because three buildings from Timpuri Noi Metalworks could not be demolished due their heritage status (Chelcea 2015, 194). Soon enough though, the heritage buildings vanished, presumably "collapsing in on themselves" as is often the case in such scenarios. Two of the site's three buildings were inaugurated in 2017, and by 2018, they had reached a 90 percent occupancy rating. Mostly rented by IT companies, financial services, and professional services, companies include Go Pro, Sephora, VWR International, Phoenix Contact, Kruk, Kiss FM, Fratelli, Impact Hub, DCS Plus, Netcentric, Tremend and Zitec. Roughly 3,000 IT specialists now work there, and more will join soon after the third office building is completed. Meanwhile, Vastint has launched two other development projects in the city—the Bucharest Business Garden and a new site in Şişeşti.

Having lived nearby the Timpuri Noi complex for over two years during my

fieldwork in Romania, I saw it transform dramatically. Numerous residential buildings have been modernized in the otherwise working-class neighborhood between Timpuri Noi and Vitan. Seemingly overnight, in 2018, numerous food trucks began showing up during lunch offering sushi, burgers, and more. It is not working-class factory workers queuing up for expensive truck food as with the surrounding canteens of the former Metalworks. Meanwhile rents have gone up in the neighborhood, while the lawn across Timpuri Noi Square maintains a manicured aesthetic otherwise out-of-joint in the region.

Even though there is ample evidence of IKEA's "corruption" in Romania, both pre and post-1989, in both rural and urban spaces alike, protests and cultures of dissent have been minimal at best. The heritage buildings that collapsed were not the site of heritage preservation protests, and the forest dealings between IKEA, Harvard, and the state are largely under the radar. Outside of a handful of housing and environmental justice activists, I've never heard any critique of IKEA, its history, or its involvement in urban restructuring and gentrification. Why is it that Roșia Montană protests arose to mobilize the urban masses, and why did those same people not rise up in the name of forest defense? Why are Rezistors targeting corrupt PSD politicians but not techno-imperialism, which depletes the country's resources leading to economic contexts in which corruption becomes one of many responses? Singing of corruption in Nigeria, the artist Falz (Folarin Falana) suggests, "We operate a predatory, neo-colonial capitalist system, which is founded on fraud and exploitation. And therefore, we are bound to have corruption institutionalized" (qtd. in Ogundoro 2018). As much as this holds true in Nigeria, so does it in Romania. And arguably, so

does it in the United States. However, when looking to cultures of protest and "Rezistance," it is important to theorize the ways in which liberalism and zombie socialism operate to keep revolution a distant fantasy, one increasingly incomprehensible in Piața Victoriei and beyond where anti-capitalist sentiment is read as retrograde in Romania's modernizing project.

Stoler suggests, "Globalization may account for the dumping of toxic waste on the Ivory Coast but not the trajectory of its movement and the history that made west Africa a suitable and available site. Again, there are ruins of empire that are called 'ruins' as well as those that are not" (2008, 204). What are the ruins of postsocialist disaster capitalism as it entangles with Western techno-imperialism? Why is it that Romania has been slated as a place of extraction for the West, and why is it that Western fantasies keep possibilities of dissent at bay? Unlike Gabriel, IKEA after all is transforming Romania's techno-urban landscapes along with rural ones.

And yet, IKEA has also entangled with people's domestic spaces and imaginaries in aspirational forms, engendering new forms of intimacy with the West. While Timpuri Noi Square, the alleged new heart of Bucharest, is undoubtedly connected to contexts of urban racial technocapitalism, instantiating new forms of gentrification, racial banishment, and socialist-era technological dispossession, zombie socialism holds the transformation in place, promising techno-utopic futures and new forms of what we might understand as a form of intimacy with the West. By this I mean promises of proximity through technological forms and fantasies, from pilgrimages to IKEA's store to the placement of its products, many of which are made of Romanian lumber vis-à-vis IKEA's own techno-imperialism, in one's home,

dreams and materialities run deep. These fantasies and furniture worlds obviate the violence that the company produces, locally and globally.

Impossible Spaces

During the summer of 2018, a new wave of Rezist protests began to percolate in hot Bucharest streets. These, while supported by Rezistors, also became known as the Diaspora protests, or the Muie PSD. Provoked by ongoing PSD policies and laws deemed corrupt, these protests embraced Western values and Western technology even more so than the original Light Revolution protests of a year earlier. They were in part incited when a Romanian living in Sweden, Razvan Stefanescu, drove his Swedish-registered Audi to Bucharest with a license plate reading Muie PSD, slang for PSD cocksuckers. Muie technically comes from Romani, meaning mouth or to deceive, but non-Roma Romanians have been using it for decades as a perversion, often deracinated from its Roma origins. I've seen graffiti on numerous trains spell out Muie țiganilor, or "Gypsy cocksuckers," racist, racially appropriative, and homophobic all at once.

Upon arriving in Romania, Stefanescu was pulled over by the police, who confiscated his license plates claiming their invalidity. As they were valid throughout the EU, according to Sweden, this sparked an outrage, and a new resentment towards the police amongst the aspiring middle-class. The Diaspora protest, also marked by light shows and laser displays, took place on August 10, 2018, organized as an invitation for Romanians living abroad to return to Bucharest and demonstrate their dismay at the country's corruption and more specifically, at the Muie PSD. The

protest of what was estimated to be roughly 70,000 people began non-violently, though I counted dozens and dozens of people with signs in Piața Victoriei depicting protestors raping the government, all hypermasculine and heteronormative. Others waved flags from their new countries, from the UK to the US. Others denounced the Red Plague, and someone even held a poster showing an evolution of socialists from Marx to Lenin to Dragnea. The only anti-police banner that I saw framed the police as corrupt for having confiscated Stefanescu's license plate. Meanwhile, as in other Rezist protests, images circulated of Dragnea and PSD members in white and black striped jail suits, reveling in carceral aesthetics.

The *jandarmerie* (military police) did begin spraying tear gas and protesters early into the night, and by 10pm, tensions erupted with the riot police throwing canisters into the masses, injuring up to 450 people. The internet subsequently exploded, mostly with people chiding the now violent PSD. *En masse*, people flooded the Gendarmerie's Facebook page, giving it one-star ratings, displaying their disapproval. However, other observers were sure that the violence was an inside job orchestrated by the PNL or even USR to take down the PSD, as in the past the PSD had always supported protests such as the Diaspora. Regardless of conspiracy theories, what is significant here is that the protestors, framed as good Romanians working abroad, were again portrayed as technologically advanced, while the PSD was framed as backwards, homosexual, and corrupt. Images erupted of smartphone displays spelling out Muie PSD to mark the technological prowess of Romanians. Another image circulated on Facebook of screenshot of Google's Waze mapping application, in which somehow the tile of the web-map itself had been hacked to read

Muie PSD outside of Iași. The caption read, in Romanian, "So I'm discussing with the Taxify taxi driver about tomorrow's protests outside of the government, and he invites me to look up Carrefour in Iași with Waze. I zoomed in upon the map. Priceless. Here's how Romanians are good at IT." Techno-normativity is expressed in numerous ways.

While Muie PSD/Diaspora is the latest incantation of Rezist in Bucharest, there have been other eruptions in other Romanian cities since the first Light Revolution protests of early 2017. And repeatedly, these brush up against antiracist and anti-capitalist organizing, at times working against it. In December 2017, for instance, a small group of anti-eviction organizers gathered in Cluj to mark the seven-year anniversary of a mass eviction that displaced over 300 Roma residents from the city center and forcibly relocated them to the local garbage dump outside of town.

Gathering outside of Piața Unirii, the 75 or so protesters, many of whom had made their way back to the city from the waste site to advocate for antiracist social housing policies, were swallowed up in a mass of 3,000 Rezistors, still chanting against thievery, corruption, and Communism. While the housing justice protestors endured, eventually crawling out from the "sea of humanity" encompassing them, questions emerge as to what futures public space may hold when absorbed postsocialist neoliberalism. If liberal-oriented public square demonstrations have now become absorbed by light, colorful versions of zombie socialism, Western aspirational politics, and dissent against politicians rather than global capital, what liberatory future does public space still hold, if any? Unlike the public square that captured radical hopes a decade earlier across the globe, from the Indignados

movement to Tahrir Square, the contemporary postsocialist square has become one not of emancipatory politics but of neoliberal futurity. While Francis Fukuyama's "end of history" never arrived after the collapse of the Berlin Wall—due to the proliferation of anti-capitalist alterities that have refused the time and space of post-Cold War neoliberal globality—it seems that, just as capitalism endeavors to absorb all that it can, public space protests now are fighting to finally materialize Fukuyama's post-Cold War vision.

In the Western left, public space, or the commons, is still largely understood as an anti-capitalist geography worth fighting for. Theorized as a symbolic and material remnant of pre-capitalism, occupying and maintaining the commons is understood as a radical and necessary gesture in resisting the gentrification of urban space and the forces of privatization. But what happens when these very forces occupy the public square, protesting socialism's endurance rather than heeding to calls made by those dispossessed by the ravages of postsocialist neoliberalism? As has been evidenced in Eastern Europe, particularly in Romania, both the public square and the mass protest have increasingly become coopted by Western aspirational fantasies of privatization and pre-socialist "golden eras" rather than those of anti-capitalist and antifascist futures. It is this that paves the way for fascism to take hold. If the West is to look toward the East for illiberal prefiguration, it is imperative to look at the conditions than enable fascism rather than fall into the ahistorical trap that understands fascism as endemic to socialist/postsocialist Eastern Europe. And in Eastern Europe, if the liberal fantasy of public space and mass protest liberates nothing except global capital and fascism, perhaps it is time to imagine

dissent outside of the impossible space of the commons, refraining from dreams of transparency and enlightenment and instead embracing more covert, obscure, and commonist tactics.

Chapter 4: Postsocialism, Technofascism, and the Tech Boom 2.0: From Technologies of Racial/spatial Dispossession to the Dark Enlightenment

It was in the midst of what in retrospect has been described as the "Battle of Berkeley," or intensified conflicts between fascists and antifascists in Berkeley, California, in 2017, that the San Francisco Bay Area became a central spot on the map of growing right-wing organizing in the US. Following the presidential electoral victory of real estate mogul Donald J. Trump in 2016, numerous far-right, "alt-right," "alt-light," and other fascistic groups stockpiled white supremacist momentum far and wide. Berkeley, but also other Bay Area cities such as San Francisco and Oakland, emerged as key nodes in a growing constellation of far-right organizing but also antifascist resistance. Just as many people in the US, particularly those espousing more liberal politics, never expected Trump to actually win the election given the overt racism and sexism that he spewed throughout most of his campaign, very few people anticipated that the post-Cold War Bay Area would become a hub of fascist organizing. After all, while conflicts are nothing new in the region, particularly in the midst of the contemporary tech boom and the contexts of heightened racial dispossession that it incites, the region remains an area largely dominated by one liberal political party, where skirmishes between liberals and the radical left are presumed more likely than those between fascists and antifascists.

Rather than spectacularize the unexpectedness of the Bay Area upon an ever-shifting map of right-wing centralities here, rather I theorize the Bay Area, as post-Cold War Silicon Valley's urban backyard, as in fact constitutive of the rise of racial

technocapitalism and technofascism. By these, I refer to the ways in which racism and fascism materialize Silicon Valley technocapitalist urbanity. Here I accord with Mark Forman's analysis that "The capital-F Fascism of authoritarian government is possible because of the lower case-f fascism that thrives in everyday life under capitalism" (2017). By this, he points to state-centered bureaucracy manufactured to produce obedience. But also, as he suggests, "Fascists march to war down roads that were paved by centuries of European colonialism and imperialism. The fascist discourse of national greatness is nothing more than a continuation of the nationalism of the imagined community constructed by the bourgeoisie." Yet with imperialism now alive and well in the heart of post-Cold War Silicon Valley (Silicon Valley imperialism) and its landscapes of racial technocapitalism, fascism is being reconstituted in novel ways. Further, as Chris Wright observes (2017), in the 1930s, it was the power of labor organizing that kept the New Deal US from taking a fascist turn. Corporate-ruled governance gives way to new fascist possibilities, he warns.

Such warnings of intimate futures between capitalism, imperialism, and fascism are important to take heed of in contexts of Silicon Valley imperialism, a condition in which Post-Cold War Silicon Valley's growth is necessitated by its ongoing penetration into geographically global and intimate spaces alike. In post-Cold War and now seemingly "postliberal" times, Silicon Valley imperialism strategically masks the racial dispossession and violence that it inheres under the veil of liberalism. At the same time, technofascism appropriates liberal and leftist language in order to galvanize power and space, invoking what Jodi Byrd, Alyosha Goldstein, Jodi Melamed, and Chandan Reddy describe as "propriation" (2019, 3).

By this, they refer to the inextricability of both expropriation and appropriation. Through propriation, fascist and racist collectives uniquely recycle Cold War enemies in order to maintain Silicon Valley's imperiality, locally and globally.

While other chapters in this dissertation specifically study Silicon Valley imperiality and its recoding of racial and fascist imperatives in formerly socialist space, here I am more interested in how it functions "at home." At home, in the midst of the Bay Area's ongoing crisis of racial dispossession most recently aggravated by the current tech boom, or the Tech Boom 2.0, and amplified with Trumpian technofascism, understandings of liberalism, fascism, socialism, and imperialism entangle in novel ways. This process in part invokes with what Neda Atanasoski and Kalinda Vora describe as technoliberalism. Technoliberalism, they suggest, points to contemporary reinterpretations of liberalism and fascism—twin pillars of US supremacy (2019, 24). The foundational fantasy of technoliberalism hinges upon postracial imaginaries, they observe, and can be traced through Cold War and now post-Cold War trajectories. As socialism emerged in order to combat fascism in Europe, as the Cold War hinged upon reifying illiberal socialist threat, and as the post-Cold War common time of Silicon Valley imperialism depends upon the supremacy of liberalism now suddenly threatened in the dawn of postliberal Trump, it makes sense that these concepts would be stirred up today. Here I look to how reinvigorations liberalism and fascism, as well as racism and imperialism, entangle in the post-Cold War Silicon moment. In particular, I assess how these entanglements inform the ongoing development of techno-urban space.

This chapter centers upon the postsocialist spatiotemporality of Bay Area

gentrification, postracial liberalism, techno-utopics, technofascism, and antifascist dissent in the post-Cold War Bay Area. Postsocialist temporality here envelops the Tech 2.0 period, which follows the racial booms and busts of the late-1990s Dot Com Boom and the 2008 subprime mortgage crisis. The Cold War and its cessation, I argue, are key events in understanding the Bay Area's tech booms. At the same time, Bay Area Siliconized geography is an apt spatiotemporality from which to theorize postsocialism. In this way, I read postsocialism as a heterogeneous and global condition, as well as an analytic entry point for understanding contemporary political rearrangements, continuities, and discontinuities that inform whiteness and liberalism in the Bay Area. Sharad Chari and Katherine Verdery offer, "A central task of ethnographies of imperialism and neo-colonialism today lies in apprehending the traces of the past as they emerge, not as hostage to the overarching power of 'capitalism,' 'colonialism,' or 'socialism' qua fixed entities, but as signs of the tenuous re-workings of twentieth-century capitalist empires and their twenty-first-century successors" (2009, 30). In reading contemporary Bay Area techno-urban transformations ethnographically, it becomes clear that regional racial, fascist, and liberal imaginaries today are not only haunted by, but also co-constitutive of, Cold War ghosts, posts, and updates.

Racial dispossession in the Bay Area, popularly described as gentrification, has in large part ushered in by proponents of liberalism (McElroy and Szeto 2018). Yet new iterations of technofascism in the Tech 2.0 wake of Trump—from alt right websites and rallies for "free speech," to fascist ideologies such as neoreaction (NRx) and the Dark Enlightenment—have shocked leftists and liberals alike. While the rise

in racist violence following Trump's victory is real, here I am interested here in how liberal imaginaries position growing formations of fascism as equivalent to McCarthyistic constructions of illiberalism. Put otherwise, within liberal imaginaries, this moment of heightened fascist organizing in the heart of the techno-imperial free world collapses the imagined indestructability of Francis Fukuyama's "end of history" following the disintegration of state socialism (2006). In the wake of Trump, Cold War battles for liberalism's triumph are conjured anew, as has been particularly evidence by the liberal fears of Russia and Eastern European illiberalism emergent from liberal media and technocapitalist cyber security firms alike (Lemon 2018). Yet what is rarely acknowledged is that racial capitalism and fascism, while foundational to far-right onto-epistemologies and Cold War contexts alike, have dominated Bay Area landscapes long before the "Trumpocalypse" and the post-Cold War temporality that shelters it (Chung 2016; Maharawal and McElroy 2017; Ramirez 2017; Self 2003). How can one trace these continuities and discontinuities through the Cold War and into its various posts? How is gentrification, as a mainstream descriptive of techno-urban change in the Bay Area inadequate in understanding this uncanny spatiotemporal conjuncture?

Judith Butler suggests that the "new fascism" of the US marks a novel technology of liberal and leftist discursive appropriation by the right (2019). Indeed, from the 1960s free speech movement coopted by the alt-right on the University of California Berkeley's campus to the language of antiracist housing justice struggles now vernacularly appropriated by the Bay Area's racist pro-luxury development YIMBY (Yes in My Backyard) movement (funded by tech), there have been distinct

cannibalizations of Bay Area liberal and leftist Cold War discourse by proponents of white supremacy. While these appropriations transpire in parallel with broader Cold War national trends of absorbing antiracist politics into what Jodi Melamed describes as racial liberalism (2006), there are distinct cultural and geographic processes that inform their movements locally. As I argue, this is intimately wrapped in the unique space that the Bay Area and Silicon Valley have played throughout the Cold War and its liberal aftermaths.

This chapter proceeds to frame Bay Area technologies of racial dispossession and resistance through postsocialist analytics, studying Silicon Valley Cold War techno-urban histories, as well as the impact of postsocialist transition upon the spatiotemporality of technocapitalist and anti-capitalist futures alike. By way of beginning, I introduce the landscape of Bay Area Tech Boom 2.0 techno-urban change, suggesting that postsocialist analytics offer a well-needed antidote to the myopic lens that gentrification theory often maintains. Then, commencing with the Cold War, I chronologically traverse through the Dot Com Boom and the postsocialist present, paying attention to how the cessation of the Cold War impacted Silicon Valley temporal and spatial reconfigurations. In addition, I study how technoliberalism is deployed by racial technocapitalism and technofascism, particularly in the case of YIMBY and alt-right technofascist ideology. How does this discursive appropriation mask the raciality of technocapitalism and Silicon Valley imperialism in post-Cold War times? I conclude by theorizing struggles against Silicon Valley imperialism and racial technocapitalism through postsocialist analytics, looking to spatiotemporal paralysis in the wake of technoliberalism and

fascism alike. But first, I begin by theorizing how postsocialism, as an analytic, offers key insights into the conceptualizing of what is otherwise today described as Bay Area gentrification.

Gentrifying Postsocialism Studies or Postsocializing Gentrification Studies

I could barely see the punches being thrown in front of me. The backyard of the East Bay Rats motorcycle club arena was beyond its saturation point with eager witnesses of the 'Nihilists vs. Marxists" boxing match slowly unfolding, a complementary event to the annual East Bay Anarchist Book Fair. Another Saturday evening in West Oakland, emblazoned with rickety spotlights, tattered ropes, sweat, black leather, and cigarettes. Some moaned and others cheered as opponents were knocked to the ground in repetitive blows, indicating the ideological rise or fall of some semblance of an anti-capitalist future, of some mutation of an older logic intended to encapsulate and make sense of the contradictions, struggles, and sinkholes of a landscape entangled in broad strokes of disinvestment, reinvestment, deterritorialization, and reterritorialization, popularly discoursed today as "gentrification," but also bearing other names and analytics (McElroy and Werth 2019; Ramírez 2009). In this section, I ask how postsocialism, as an analytic, might supplement gentrification studies in order to assess techno-urban transformation in the midst of Bay Area Silicon Valley imperialism.

It was just months before the boxing match, in late 2013, that an outburst of actions erupted intended to highlight the violence of Silicon Valley Tech Boom-induced dispossession. Famously, many in boxing match crowd, but also many

others, set to task the blockading of tech buses (colloquially known as "Google Buses") in San Francisco and Oakland—private shuttles from multiple tech corporations viscerally understood as agential in eviction and rental increases (Maharawal and McElroy 2018). While Silicon Valley impacted San Francisco's urban landscape during the Dot Com Boom that followed the collapse of the Cold War and tech companies shifting from full reliance from the government to more consumerist-based models, it has been with the new era of the Tech Boom 2.0 that technocapitalist forces have found ways to penetrate Silicon Valley techno-urban peripheries in novel ways. While not conflating Bay Area urban centers with each other (McElroy and Werth 2019), and while not eliding the deeper and uneven histories of racial disposability upon which contemporary gentrification rests (Roy 2017), it is worth noting that there have been novel shifts in Silicon Valley's reach into both cities, with Google buses one of many technologies of infiltration.

Disproportionately, young white men ride these buses, contributing to contexts of racial dispossession in Silicon Valley's urban outposts. This spatial strategy is emblematic of Silicon Valley imperialism and its twin concept of racial technocapitalism alike. As I question here, why is it towards the post-Cold War Bay Area—a space that Richard Walker describes as home to a combination of "many of the largest and richest corporations astride the globe," some of the leading political and cultural movements, and "a host of persistent problems, such as wildly gyrating growth, shamefully unaffordable housing, [and] ghastly homelessness" (2018, 1-2)—that we must turn our analysis in order to understand the contemporary contours of white supremacy and its bizarre techno-entanglement with liberalism? Why is this

shift in purview especially important in the wake of what scholars of postsocialism are marking as the renewed "crisis of liberalism" (Dzenovska and Kurtović 2017), or a post-Cold War moment in which liberalism's supposed immorality is thrown into question? And why might both Marxist and neo-Marxist accounts alike of gentrification fail to illuminate the raciality of the current moment, as well as the raciality upon which it rests?

Postsocialist analytics allow for new conceptualizations of the Bay Area present, facilitating a particular unearthing of spatial, racial, and temporal technologies of dispossession in modes that traditional Marxist and neoliberal scholarship alike on gentrification rarely does, especially not outside of formerly state-socialist space. Such a utilization of postsocialist analytics, in the words of Atanasoski and Vora, must "dehomogenize the 'socialism' in postsocialism,' while concurrently unmooring '(post)socialism from a particular geographic location" (2018, p. 5). This call aligns with Chari and Verdery's provocation to consider how post-Cold War ethnographic practices might help make sense of myriad shifts in race and empire following the cessation of the Cold War on both sides of the former Iron Curtain (2009). As Shu-mei Shih argues, the Cold War and its collapse led to a remapping of the entire world and the formation of the Global North and South from the prior tripartite cartography, and thus postsocialism, as a condition, needs to be thought of as a condition affecting the entire globe (2012). Applying postsocialist analytics in theorizing dispossession and resistance in the Cold War and post-Cold War Bay Area unmoors techno-urban mutations from increasingly well-rehearsed gentrification studies debates (c.f. Bernt 2016; Werth and Marienthal 2016), offering

supplementary temporal and spatial frameworks.

Ananya Roy suggests that current conversations on gentrification in urban studies often elide deeper histories of racism and raciality upon which contemporary transformations rest, or what she describes as racial banishment. As an antidote to this elision, Roy advocates for practices of "seeing from the South" (2018). This does not simply mean producing knowledge from or about cities in the South; rather, it means politicizing urban studies by continuously remaking it from its social and spatial margins. In this way, "the South is not a location," but instead "a structural relation of space, power, and knowledge produced and maintained in the crucible of racial capitalism on a global scale" (2018). She writes of how, when beginning to critically engage with the field of urban studies as an undergraduate student at Mills College in East Oakland, it quickly became clear that the liberal and later neo-Marxist theories that she encountered in were unable to grasp both her native India, but also the impoverished Black and Latinx neighborhoods just beyond the campus. "The south was, I realized, never just Kolkata," she writes. Instead, "It was all of those places that the canon of theory could not make sense of except in quite dystopian ways" (Roy and Bhan 2013). Inspired by her re-spatialization of the South in order to understand racial banishment in Oakland, here I remap postsocialism in order to understand techno-imperialism and racial technocapitalism in the Bay Area.

This is aligned with ongoing explorations that I have conducted with Alex Werth (McElroy and Werth 2019) in order to consider how gentrification theory deracinates deeper histories of racial disposability in Oakland, as does transposing San Francisco-based understandings of housing injustice upon terrain from "the other

side" of the Bay. While we find postcolonial urban studies to offer important frameworks for rethinking the spatiality of contemporary Oakland and the palimpsest of racial capitalism upon which urban change rests (often deracinated by Silicon Valley descriptives), here I want to consider how postsocialist theory might be useful in framing the Bay Area and Silicon Valley more broadly. Postsocialism here is not a geographic descriptive and stand-in for examinations of transformations in formerly socialist space, just as postcolonial theory is not a substitute for theory emergent in the formerly colonized Global South. Work emergent from postsocialist urban studies is of course often confined to Eastern Europe and East Asia, and frequently worries about the epistemological impasse imposed by transposing Western and even postcolonial understandings of spatial transformations imposes upon the Global East (Ouředníček 2016; Shin 2016). But here in decentering the normative cartography of postsocialism, I want to push these concerns one step further. Why should postsocialist urban studies be confined to formerly socialist space if postsocialism is a global temporal event? How has the postsocialist temporal disjuncture in global history transformed urban space across the planet, from Bucharest to Berkeley?

To read the spatial, racial, and temporal transformations constitutive of (and constituting) the Tech Boom 2.0 through a postsocialist lens begets focus upon the material impact of the Cold War and postsocialist transition as they have inhered Silicon Valley imperialism and racial technocapitalism. It was during the Cold War that Silicon Valley was birthed as a military/educational hybridity designed to engineer the "free world." As it attempted to craft the ideal scientific hero of the pastoral suburbs, it positioned the Valley landscape as antithetical to that of San

Francisco and Oakland, the latter home to anti-capitalist dissent, racialized urban immigration, and grey, industrial density. It was following socialism's collapse that the Dot Com Boom began, and that the suburban geography of the Valley techno-hero shifted towards urban peripheries. It was then that IT began catering towards consumer use, inciting new forms of labor and liberalism, as well as mobility. The bleeding of Silicon Valley into postsocialist urbanity cemented conditions of contemporary tech-driven racialized dispossession. Urban sublation was thus a laboratory practice for global spatial incorporation, producing what J.A. English-Lueck (2002) nominates as "silicon places."

This is not to say that all "silicon places" are even or equal. While there have been pushes to make West Oakland, a historically Black and working-class neighborhood the new frontier of Silicon Valley, West Oakland is not nor never will be Silicon Valley. Neither will it ever be San Francisco, which has been more enfolded into the Valley during the Dot Com Boom and now the Tech Boom 2.0. To render flat comparisons and simple metaphors, I argue, deracinates deeper and non-fungible histories of racial dispossession. This is not to say that Oakland was free from technological impact during the Cold War and its subsequent tech booms. On the contrary, it was experimented on by Cold War technologies of curbing dissent, such as the "anti-poverty" Gray Area program.

Urban studies, and gentrification studies in particular, runs the risk of rendering flat and ahistorical comparisons in studying cities and urban change, often divorced from non-fungible histories of race and coloniality (Roy 2017). For too long, it has also focused so much on space that temporality itself left a footnote.

Postsocialist analytics, along with critical races studies and postcolonial studies, can supplement gentrification studies in generative ways. They help illuminate, for instance, that Silicon Valley imperialism is only made possible through emergent postsocialist technologies of time. These proliferate techno-utopic fantasies of eliminating of both space and time, enabling its real-time global reach.

At the same time, dissent against Silicon Valley imperialism too is of a particular postsocialist temporality. These protests call for alternative futures, some past, some yet-to-come, as well as differential frameworks with which to conceptualize the present. By framing the Nihilist and Marxist boxers sunken into the drunken, dirty backyard stage through postsocialist analytics points to them being, as in David Scott's words, stranded in the present, bereft of future hope amidst a "melancholic silence" and paralysis, yet also clinging on to something, some futures past, worth fighting for (2013, 116). Accordingly, we might consider their punches as responsive to the dominance of neo/liberal horizons routed into what Scott describes as the postsocialist "ruin of time and the accompanying loss of futures" (2013, 125). Haunting their punches are "ghosts chained to ghosts" (Derrida 1994, 3) refusing to be vanquished, dwelling in the spaces of riot, rot, and irreverence. And these two conditions—that of nihilistic despair and that of being haunted with some semblance of hope for revolutionary futures past – when compounded upon local and global theaters of racial technocapitalism, fashion something new. And this, I suggest, has everything to do with postsocialist temporality.

Silicon Valley and the Cold War

Haunting postsocialist temporality in the Bay Area is Cold War Silicon Valley. Silicon Valley imperialism bears well-established roots in local Cold War technological infrastructure. In this section, I trace the Valley's Cold War constitution and its techno-urban effects, many of which inform Tech 2.0 racial technocapitalism. Following the Second World War, the US set to task employing scientists and psychologists to study possibilities of global dissemination of the democratic mind, merging science and politics to script new notions of a universal humanism. For instance, MIT mathematician Norbert Wiener, theorist of human–machine interaction who coined the term cybernetics, and Columbia professor Lyman Bryson, a champion of what he described as a "scientific humanism," argued that democratic nations must utilize science and technology to construct social spaces in which individuals could obtain maximum freedom (Turner 2013, 159–160). This would assure global peace by "containing" Communism. In the words of N. Katherine Hayles, "Deeply connected to the military, bound to high technology for its very existence and a virtual icon for capitalism, the cyborg was contaminated to the core, making it exquisitely appropriate as a provocation" (2006, 159). While cyborgs are not my focus here, the same assemblage of force that gave birth to the cyborg gave rise to early Silicon Valley technologies, along with the romanticized techno-human of whom such modernization both reflected (and to whom it benefited). It is this assemblage that I focus upon in this section.

Although relationships between the science and military developed during World War II, it was as the Cold War came into fruition presaged by the 1947 National Security Act, along with the actual US wars in Korea and Vietnam intended

to prevent Communist growth, that US science gained increased federal funding and freedom, strengthening relationships between higher education, military defense, and scientific research. While the Cold War demanded a strong state to fight the structural enemy, American political traditions demanded a weak one. To reconcile such contradictions, universities and scientific industries were effectively empowered as federal agents, redefined to engineer national and economic security. While East Coast universities such as MIT could make short lobbying trips to Washington, DC, geographically distant Stanford University realized that setting up a DC office would be expeditious, and so they did; Stanford's own geographic distance incited its governmental centrality (O'Mara 2015, 27).

During this time, US pro-development urban planners began advocating to decentralize post-industrial urbanities, denigrating the social unrest accompanying what planner Tracey Augur pathologized as "near-slum environments" (1948, 312). In San Francisco, these ideas were intimately linked to the racialization of Filipinx and Black migration, facilitating "white flight" to suburban spaces like Silicon Valley while redlining segregated landscapes (Hartman 2002).[11] In San Francisco, for instance, the redevelopment of the predominantly Black neighborhoods of the Fillmore and Western Addition between the 1940s and 1970s saw thousands of the city's Black community become displaced, as the city became a testing ground for "urban renewal." This coincided with President Harry Truman's post-World War II notion of "slum clearance," aimed to weaponize racist development. In 1945, the San Francisco Chronicle published an op-ed, proclaiming, "bluntly, nothing can be done to improve housing conditions here until a lot of people clear out" (qtd. in Thompson

2016). That same year, the California Community Redevelopment Act of 1945 was implemented as a technology of urban renewal, benefitting developers. Just a couple of years later, the Planning Commission submitted a proposal to raze and rebuild a 36-block zone in the largely Black neighborhood of the Western Addition. In the end, over 30,000 people were displaced. A Planning Commission report justified redevelopment on the basis of public health and "safety." Officials admitted that people would be displaced and that many would be unable to afford new rents in the region, eliding that due to earlier redlining histories, many had already been precluded from receiving loans that would have enabled them to buy their buildings.

SoMa, Chinatown, and Japantown were also targeted by redevelopment, often through overly racist language of blight. The redevelopment of the SoMa, according to the city, required the displacement of 4,000 residents and over 700 small businesses (Rubin 2002). This was not met without protest. In 1969, local residents created the Tenants and Owners in Opposition to Redevelopment, filing lawsuits that helped delay development. Meanwhile, the Mission Coalition Organization (MCO) formed in 1968 for similar reasons, refusing to see their neighborhood befall a similar fate as that of Western Addition. Mayor Alioto had hoped to utilize Lyndon B. Johnson's racist "War on Poverty" Model Cities program to raze the neighborhood, but the MCO successfully pushed back. In this way, urban racial dispossession is nothing new in Bay Area. Nor are community-driven fights against it. And yet, redevelopment continued throughout San Francisco elsewhere, spanning the tenures of five mayors (Hartman 1984, 22).

During this Cold War time, the federal government worried that large urban

centers would become easy Soviet targets. Thus, ideas of dispersal became popular, and led to renewed development in the suburbs. As Brian Chung argues, these contexts led to the heightened status of the scientist as the ideal suburban resident of the public imaginary, one welcomed by Stanford (2011). The US Army erected prefabricated housing for this new ideal resident, crafting new spaces for white scientific flight to land. Thus, it was both Bay Area racialized geographies and Cold War spatial imaginaries that impelled millions of dollars to be funneled into military defense research on sub-urban high-tech firms (Chung 2011, 39). Valorizing this new Cold War hero, Stanford University built its campus-adjacent research park, solidifying the "iron triangle," or the triangular partnership between the Pentagon, top rank research universities, and defense industries (Adams 1982). Government support for scientific freedom and the 'Cold War multiversity' only bolstered post-Sputnik as the Eisenhower administration endeavored to not fall behind in the great space race.

Silicon Valley, which after the Gold Rush had emerged as the orchard capital of California, or "The Valley of Heart's Delight," mutated with the settlement of technology companies. In 1956, inventor William Shockley established the first semiconductor laboratory in Mountain View, and the next year, Lockheed Missile and Space moved to Sunnyvale. Shockley, Professor Emeritus in electrical engineering at Stanford, and Nobel prize winner in physics for his creation of the transistor, was also a known proponent of scientific racism. A supporter of the idea of "retrogressive evolution," he believed Black people to be less intelligent than White people. A eugenicist, he went as far as to advocate for sterilization of the "genetically disadvantaged" (Saxon 1989). As I go on to explore later in this chapter, Shockley's

racial technoscientific vision has been reinterpreted in Silicon Valley today.

As Shockley was developing a name for himself at Stanford, companies such as IBM and FMC, along with other Cold War military defense industries. In 1971, the Valley of Heart's Delight was reconstituted as Silicon Valley, referencing the mineral relied upon by semiconductor companies. Stanford's first dean of engineering, Frederick Terman, or the "Father of Silicon Valley," pushed to transform the research behemoth into a regional high-tech corporate magnet. For instance, he convinced his former students William Hewlett and David Parker to start their own company (Leslie 2000; Rosenberg 2002, 15). This saw the emergence of what Nick Dyer-Witheford describes as "futuristic accumulation," or "the commodification of publicly created scientific knowledge, which via copyright and patent, becomes privatized as intellectual property for the extraction of monopolistic technological rents" (2010, 487–88). Otherwise put, iron triangle formation utilized extractive mechanisms of technological rent to speculate upon the future.

While the Valley of Hearts Delight relied upon immigrant labor to build racialized geographies, these became further transformed as silicon chips replaced prune trees. New high-tech companies heralded an imaginary of a cleaner, lighter, post-agricultural utopia—racialized, classed, and gendered. Stanford's Board of Trustees heralded the emergence of a post-Fordist "light industry of a non-nuisance type" that would "create a demand for technical employees of a high salary class that will be in a financial position to live in this area," or in other words, "a better class of workers" (qtd. in Findlay 1992, 132). "Anti-factory" pastoral parks and residential worlds became poised against San Francisco and Oakland and their antiracist

social/political movements, such as the Black Panther Party, the Brown Berets, La Raza Unida, and the San Francisco State strike of 1968.

During this time, Oakland became the first of six sites tested by the Ford Foundation's Grey Areas program. Aimed to disrupt social unrest, the program discursively replaced "race" with "poverty" to mitigate "juvenile delinquency," gang violence, and "human problems in the city" through assimilatory projects of "human engineering" (Roy, Schrader, and Crane 2015, 294). Domestic pacification, the program proffered, was a means of what Robert McNamara would later describe to the World Bank as "defensive modernization" (Ayres 1983). What such grammar elided was that social unrest was quelling in Oakland not because of juvenile delinquency, but because white homeowners were anxious about the rise of Black homeownership.

Also woven into histories of race and racism within the Valley are also those of Cold War-driven assimilation. For instance, Cold War conditions inspired the region's white communities to win the hearts and minds of Cold War Asia. This led to the sublation of some Asian American collectives into white geographies differentially than for others (Cavin 2012). During this time, the Cold War suburb mutated into what Chung describes as a "trans-Pacific hub of Chinese high-tech business," in which it is commonly ridiculed that "'Silicon Valley is built on ICs'—not integrated circuits but Indian and Chinese engineers" (2011, 4, 45). Of course, this obviates differential experiences of heterogeneous Asian collectives impacted by varying racist, colonial, socialist, and national contexts. Nevertheless, it has been upon a backdrop of Cold War geopolitics that Silicon Valley Asian American

subjectivities have differentially crystallized.

Such contexts of Cold War subjectivity helped fuel myths of Silicon Valley culture as one of meritocracy, multiculturalism, and postraciality towards the end of the Cold War and into the postsocialist era. As Apple's former CEO and visionary Steve Jobs suggested in 1997, racial difference does not matter in Silicon Valley, "what matters is how smart you are" (qtd. in Reinhardt 1997). In 1997, Business Week asserted that Silicon Valley was the "immigrant gateway," or "the quintessence of the American Dream," where "any good idea in a garage can turn into a gold mine" with "no pedigree required" (Reinhardt 1997). Of course, such imaginaries endured in myth form only throughout the Cold War and its aftermath. When Iron Curtain disintegration led to job cuts at defense divisions of tech firms, regional press suggested that with layoffs of white suburbanites, Asian domination "doomed" the future. Articles titled "No More Mr. White Guy" and "War Surplus Job-Market Misfits" index such fears, pointing to conditions of postsocialist racialization in the Valley (Chung 2011, 31). Silicon Valley Cold War-era racial liberalism therefore can be read as constitutive of, yet distinct from, the era that followed.

Postsocialism Spatiality

With defense cutbacks following 1989, questions arose as to the direction Silicon Valley would take in the now postsocialist era. When the Internet developed in 1993, proceeded by the creation of the Web, it became clear that their commercialization by consumer-based technology companies would impel Silicon Valley forward. Companies such as Netscape, Cisco, Hewlett-Packard, 3Com, and

Intel exploded software job growth, leading to the Dot Com Boom (Hughes and Cosier 2001). This is the era from which Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri wrote their seminal Empire (2000), describing the replacement of local territorial rule with global flows, decentering and deterritorializing, effacing the tripartite geography of second and third world divisions. The Web and Silicon Valley were theorized as intricately part of this new social order, constituting the US's "soft power," led by the internet business sphere—the offspring of Cold War informatics. The internet was supposed to be, as William Mitchell suggested, "anti-spatial," comprised of a "negative geometry" (1996). However, as evidenced in the spatial/racial infrastructural transformations that accompanied postsocialist technologic growth, utopian dreams of immateriality themselves dematerialize. During the last quarter of the 20th century, the Valley's housing prices rose more rapidly than anywhere else in the US, totaling a 936% increase (Cavin 2012, 12). Thus, in this section, I study how post-Cold War Silicon Valley transformed its urban peripheries in novel ways.

The financialization of the technology realm excited real estate developers upon the Valley's urban borders as well, inciting what Stephen Graham and Simon Guy describe as the '"dot-com invasion" of IT entrepreneurs and internet industries to downtown San Francisco," an invasion clearly classed and racialized (2002, 372). As Richard Walker chronicled: "Obscure little South Park (near the foot of the Bay Bridge), once a refuge for a small black residential block, is now a popular eating spot for the denizens of Virtual valley, the new hot spot for multimedia electronics and computer magazine publishers" (1995, 39). During this time, evictions grew by 400 percent, and as Nancy Mirabal suggests, displacement was linked to the

preservation of whiteness (2009). Graham and Guy further offer, "renewal" was also gendered: "Ideologically driven and utopian discourses of corporeal, territorial and urban transcendence, based on the fantasy of perfect IT systems, can thus be understood as a series of (largely masculinized) "omnipotence fantasies"' (2002, 369).

Yet, it was pre-1989 that these omnipotence fantasies first coalesced. For instance, it was during the Cold War that Steve Jobs first visited the Soviet Union, desirous of breaking through the Iron Curtain. Along these lines, a caption below a 1977 photojournalistic piece on Intel, the world's largest producer of semiconductor computer chips, reads, "The Sun Never Sets on Intel," indexing early Silicon imperial desire (qtd. in Marez 2013, 87). Yet, these early imperial fantasies proved difficult to realize until after the Cold War, when cluster-cloning Silicon Valley became viable,[12] and increasingly normalized (Rosenberg 2002). Today there are "little" Silicon Valleys throughout the globe, from India to Romania and beyond. Yet none of these places, saturated as they are with aspirational desires of recognition, are Silicon Valley.

Post-Cold War Silicon Valley imperialism has been an era in which neoliberalism, or what David Scott describes as "smugly confident liberalism," has accumulated momentum by "re-territorializing power to roll back what was now perceived as the 'moral evil' of communism" (2013, 4). While early liberal conceptions of the internet growing out of non-consumer-based networks imagined the internet as a freedom vehicle to those from repressive regimes, Communist or otherwise, this imaginary became muddied through Dot Com corporatization. These

liberal imaginaries were often Cold War figments themselves, tethered to one conception of freedom while eliding others. For instance, early Romanian hacking culture fantasized technological freedom from Silicon Valley imperialism, as I explore in other chapters of this dissertation.

The Dot Com Boom busted shortly after it began due to overconfident investment. While the ensuing crash led a decrease in rental and home prices in the Bay Area, it also impelled the restructuring of surviving companies into more robust capitalist machines, constituting the emergence of mega-tech companies such as Apple, Cisco, and Intel. These laid the foundation for the sharing economy and app-based industries that constitute the Tech Boom 2.0, in which racialized spatial and temporal IT materializations are haunted by those of the Dot Com Boom era. Today, heralding the imaginary of clean, light industry, and imbricated in the grammar of liberal democracy, Silicon Valley corporations now penetrate the former Second World, often exploiting a technologically inclined labor force and cheaper rental and production costs. While Silicon Valley corporations promulgate their new forms of knowledge production and artificial intelligence, often obscured is the outsourcing that they still rely upon. I have numerous friends working the nightshift for Silicon Valley company call centers in Romania, for instance, where fantasies of landing jobs in actual Silicon Valley, along with the economic impacts of disaster capitalism, glue people to their extractive jobs. Silicon Valley imperialism therefore does not only penetrate Bay Area urbanities through new technologies of transit, but also former socialist landscapes. This signals new imperial spatiality endemic to the age of Silicon Valley imperialism. The phenomenon of producing Silicon space beyond

Valley confines is thus one of postsocialist spatiality, mobility, and global liquidity. This is not simply because prestidigitation has outgrown Silicon Valley space; postsocialist relations inhere imperial spatiality.

While numerous technology companies themselves have existed in San Francisco since the Dot Com Boom (and new ones have landing their headquarters in the City with the Tech 2.0, for instance Uber, Twitter, and Airbnb)—it has only been during the 2.0 era in which Valley companies have facilitated urban dwelling for suburban campus workers. Not only have Google buses appropriated public bus stops, leading to delays in public buses and even elementary school children getting to school. But also, evictions percolate in proximity to these bus stops. As work by the Anti-Eviction Mapping Project – a critical cartography, data analysis, and digital humanities project that I cofounded in 2013 to document dispossession and resistance struggles in the wake of Tech 2.0—has shown, 69 percent of San Francisco's evictions have occurred within four blocks of tech bus stops, as speculators capitalize on property that can be advertised as adjacent, thereby increasing value (Maharawal and McElroy 2018). Further, Black populations, along with Black and Latinx household income levels, have been shrinking in both San Francisco and Oakland, demographics underrepresented in Silicon Valley technology corporations outside of service worker positions (Stehlin 2015).

Disproportionately, this workforce composed of young, white men, colloquially reified as "tech bros." In 2014, real estate speculator Jennifer Rosdail mapped this newly venerated human as a "quadster," or those "under forty [who] like to hang in the sun with their friends," and prefer to live in "The Quad" —an emergent

real estate geometry covering much of San Francisco's Mission District. Allegedly, quadsters "work very hard—mostly in high tech—and make a lot of money" (Rosdail 2014). While the labor performed by this new techno-human is imagined as existing immaterially, spatial/racial effects materialize. Further, the appropriation of the Mission neighborhood into the quad, the appropriation of public bus stops into Google ones, is emblematic of post-Cold War toponymic practices of renaming space, meanwhile appropriating leftist and liberal language alike.

This toponymical incursion not gone without protest. Denigrating Silicon Valley imperialism and racial technocapitalism alike, there have been numerous protests against the incursion of quadsters and Google luxury transportation (Maharawal 2017; Stanley 2018). Some protestors have weaponized vomit upon tech buses in repugnance, while others offered tales of their past, present, and future eviction struggles. As one banner outside an early bus blockade read, "Capitalism is the driver; Gentrification is the Vehicle; Techies on the Bus." Meanwhile, members of the anarchist collective Defend the Bay pleaded for "all Bay Area residents to take action against the tech takeover's many manifestations: increased rents, exclusive access to transportation, and the intensified police repression that accompanies gentrification, which is literally killing Black and brown residents in their own neighborhoods" (qtd. in Tiku, 2014). Increased police violence has been further linked to imbrications between technocapitalist companies with military surveillance partnerships bearing global impact, from Google's military robotics contract with Boston Dynamics, to Facebook's facial recognition software and artificial intelligence utilized by Oakland's Domain Awareness Center to suppress illiberal "threat."

While Google does contribute to military robotics designed to kill racialized collectives of people "elsewhere," it is also now working to "cure death" for others, celebrating a transhumanist acceleration into cyborgian immortality. As Google's former CEO Eric Schmidt triumphantly proclaimed in 2010, Google's actual goal is to engineer the "age of augmented humanity" (Gannes 2010). Facebook, while developing tools used for racial profiling, now also aims to cure all disease, emblematic in the rebranding of the public San Francisco General Hospital into "The Zuckerberg" (McElroy 2019). Thus, in the postsocialist era, racial technocapitalist and Silicon Valley imperial interests hide beneath the language of liberalism in novel ways.

For instance, tech conferences such as "Wisdom 2.0" occur around the clock, often featuring Orientalist panels led by entrepreneurs on how to "become one" with technocapitalist growth. After interrupting Google's panel during a 2015 version of Wisdom 2.0 with a banner that read "Eviction Free San Francisco," activists, myself included, were pushed offstage and our banner snatched. Google higher-ups leading the event then ushered the crowd into a silent meditation in order to assess how they felt about the tension that they had just witnessed. This meditation elided the tension that the company imposes on a daily basis, in the realms not only of local racial dispossession, but also the data colonialism, racial surveillance, and military robotics (Crampton and Miller 2017; Thatcher, O'Sullivan, and Mahmoudi 2016). This process, emblematic of technoliberalism, can be understood, per Atanasoski and Vora, as a "political alibi of present-day racial capitalism that posits humanity as an aspirational figuration in a relation to technological transformation, obscuring the

uneven racial and gendered relations of labor, power, and social relations that underlie the contemporary conditions of capitalist production" (2019, 4). By "applifying" liberalism, the most gentrifying of technology companies and processes in the Bay Area today hide beneath a shiny (and often Orientalist) veneer of techno-salvifics.

Postsocialist Temporality

The logics of post-Cold War Silicon Valley constitute and are constituted by accelerated logics of mobility, techno-utopics, and freedom, but also a solidification of postsocialist temporality. As Silicon Valley itself temporally changed form and consciousness after 1989, postsocialist temporal analysis is requisite. The Cold War's collapse solidified a new global order of time in which, in the words of Susan Buck-Morss, '"we'… may have nothing more nor less in common than sharing this time" (2002, 68). As Buck-Morss illuminates, while the capitalist project has long been one in which land has been acquired and exploited as quickly as possible, the socialist one aspired to accelerate time in contained space per a Marxian evolutionism.

Extrapolating upon this logic, two ratios simultaneously emerge: capitalist space/time, and socialist time/space.[13] With the disintegration of the Cold War came the imposition of time/space into the triumphalism the of space/time, forging the figment of a new, in the words of Anita Starosta, "common time" (2014). This incorporation required translation, or "a process of never-finished synchronization among multiple temporalities—and by the same token, the process of forging the only possible authentic 'we'" (2014, 205). Silicon Valley Time, having abdicated that of

Greenwich, was first made possible with Dot Com Boom. Now, in the time of Tech 2.0, it has even more robustly centralized itself, governing the virtual and material means through which information is absorbed. Returning to time and space ratios, if postsocialist time/space indeed has been incorporated into capitalist space/time (in other words, space/time over time/space), all that remains are capitalism squared.

Time has been reduced to nothing, so that accumulation of space and/through capital can transpire in absolutely no time at all. This new postsocialist Silicon Valley temporality and its fantasies of immaterial temporality augment under the rubric of technoliberalism. Technoliberalism disseminates the imaginary that digital technology can and will remedy the world's maladies, spread real-time freedom of information to all, and telescope the "backwards" and "uninformed" parts of the globe into techno-utopic futurity. For instance, in 2014, a lengthy article in Time featured a story detailing Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg's new project, Internet.org, designed to supply even the most 'remote' spaces of the planet with internet. The cover image depicted a tall, white Zuckerberg surrounded by grave-looking children from the rural town of Chandauli, India. The cover, along with the project's mission, was critiqued for its overt coloniality, and as Kentaro Toyama chastised, "Internet.org is a form of colonialism that whitewashes Facebook's techno-imperialism under a cloak of doing good" (2014). As a form and extension of capitalism, technoliberalism protracts both race and racism into new domains in the name of future freedom. Reliant upon the racial and the spatial, it disseminates the imaginary of spatial difference now antiquated and immaterial. Its capitalist logics celebrate on-demand mobility over private property, so long as mobility is paired

with access to capital and space.

For instance, both Eastern European and Bay Area urban landscapes are now peppered with digital nomads, avatars of Silicon Valley imperialism, as I describe in Chapter 1. Consequently, the mobility of capital and information, fiber-optically transmitted in real time, facilitates and is facilitated by the proliferation of highly paid Valley technology workers into global space. For instance, anytime an Airbnb host or guest interfaces with Airbnb in any of its 190 operable countries, the startup gains capital. Yet, Airbnb is one of the leading causes of evictions in both San Francisco and Oakland, as long-time tenants are displaced to create more profitable short-term housing. Thus, as technoliberalism superficially dissolves longstanding Lockean intimacies of freedom with private property and the heteronormative household, it still relies upon capitalist systems of value, facilitating real displacement. But through the logics of Tech 2.0, value is rendered abstract in novel ways. Despite fantasies of omnipotence in which spatial difference disintegrates in real time, space still exists, unevenly penetrated by postsocialist technologies. And despite the post-1989 absorption of formerly unobtainable spaces into Silicon Valley (from Eastern European to Bay Area cities), there also remain, in Starosta's words, "perverse tongues" that defy the logics of universality in unlikely places, sometimes in backyard Marxist/Nihilist boxing rings, sometimes elsewhere (2014). These perverse tongues cry out against the spatial and temporal magnetism of Silicon Valley across the globe, and against its authorial place in the creation of local cartographies. Repudiating the authority of postsocialist Silicon Valley Time, their obdurate voices call for futures other than those being rendered by technoliberalism, while also

demanding other analytics with which to theorize the present.

Yet, it is liberalism and the politics of rights that are dominantly galvanized in the Bay Area as antidote to conditions of gentrification, particularly by non-profit and reform-based visionaries under the rubric of "housing is a human right." Upholding the inclusive genre of the rights deserving human, these formations understand rights as universally applicable given the collapse of the Iron Curtain. However, as Sylvia Wynter's work teaches us, throughout modernity, the mono-humanist universal Man of humankind has claimed universality while utilizing race to script the elision of the racialized into the domains of the non-human, or not-quite human (Wynter and McKittrick 2015). This pattern makes suspect human rights-based calls for universal application. While the mono-humanist Man attempts to absorb everything possible into his domain, asserting that those not recognizable as him assimilate, there remain cultural and political formations outside of his world, offering alternative versions of humanity, whether this is theorized as Wynter's "demonic grounds" (1994), the perversion of tongues, or vomit-splattered tech buses. As Alexander Weheliye questions, "What different modalities of the human come to light if we not take the liberal humanist figure of Man as the master-subject but focus on how humanity has been imagined and lived by those subjects excluded from this domain?" (2014, 8).

The rancor of Marxist vs. Nihilist boxing match therefore emerges as one of countless responses to such a question. On one hand, this match indexes a desire for futures other than those ascribed by both the invisible hand of global capital doing its thing and reifications rights-based universalisms. On the other, it calls for differential epistemologies with which to theorize dispossessions of the present. In the words of

Atanasoski and Vora, "The dominance of present-day liberal politics, which collapse political notions of freedom with the unrestricted spread of free markets, and justice with liberal rights-based outcomes, beg for an extended exploration of the aftermaths of the social, political, and cultural disappearance and subsequent reconfiguration of a socialist political imaginary" (2017, 14). Such explorations, through a postsocialist theoretical approach, are needed to disinter the spatial/racial/temporal ramifications of technoliberalism as it subsumes the political. While technoliberalism extends Man's domain locally and globally, it also protracts libertarian ontologies that understand tech corporations as more effective than lethargic government. Accordingly, technoliberalism seeks to vaccinate against the sluggishness of regulatory liberal democracy, creating a new system of smart city governance.

For instance, San Francisco's former mayor Edwin Lee's election campaign was bankrolled by Silicon Valley venture capitalist Ron Conway, one of the primary investors of numerous tech companies, from Google to Airbnb. It was Lee who established the Twitter Tax Break Zone in 2011 to encourage tech to relocate from the Valley to San Francisco tax-free, fomenting heightened eviction rates. Meanwhile, Conway's public-private hybrid companies such as sf.citi attempt to override public decision-making bodies to benefit tech and tech-friendly politicians, privileging anti-regulatory legislation. This structure invokes what Paul Carr describes as a "cult of disruption," or the disruption of non-Silicon Valley space/time with techno-utopics (2012). As a 2016 signage campaign by the San Francisco datacenter Digital Reality promulgated in Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) trains, "Your Next Stop, West Oakland Station. The New Edge of Silicon Valley: Disrupt

Your Industry from our Data Center." Below its text was a streamline map of the Bay Area, pointing out West Oakland's proximity to both San Francisco and the Valley. In response, stickers manifested upon signs, proclaiming, "Keep Hoods Yours: By Any Means Necessary," invoking Cold War-era Panther resistances to racialized technologies of dispossession. Nevertheless, the datacenter was erected, now visible from the BART train in West Oakland, appropriatively adorned with its new motto: "Hella connected."

The disruptive cult of Silicon Valley has been made famous through events such as Disrupt SF, in which startups compete for the Disrupt Cup and the $50,000 accompanying cash prize. The 2014 champion of Disrupt SF went to the makers of Alfred, a sharing economy application that manages other on-demand apps, and further, comes equipped with a human being—one's very own Alfred—who delivers products and laundered clothing, and who even cleans houses, performing duties such as replenishing paper towel on paper towel holders, all for $99/month. The idea is not only "to cut into the 30 average hours/week that people spend on household chores, but to relieve some of the mental strain of dealing with multiple apps and services . . . coordinating them together" (Crook 2014). Alfred serves as an allegory for the contradictions between techno-utopic fantasy and racialized/gendered materiality constitutive of Silicon Valley disruptions. Who becomes an Alfred, conscripted to exploitative service labor, and who wins $50,000, or has the luxury of enjoying the surplus labor that Alfred performs? This was what organizers, me included, questioned in 2014 as we held a protest outside of Alfred's ceremonious awarding in San Francisco. But before we could disrupt the event for long, we were shoved out by

a private security firm determined that the event was “undisruptable.” In a global economy in which time remains valuable, yet in which capital circulates timelessly, some lack the time to perform the drudgery of service labor, or to be disrupted by protest for that matter. Yet others have no option but to replace paper towel rolls upon a sharpened backdrop of increased rental prices and income disparity, draped in the smokescreen of “hella connected.”

“All Housing Matters”

In the post-Cold War Tech 2.0 era, technoliberalism masks the raciality of capitalism as well as urban planning. Techno-urban development projects, particularly those supported by YIMBYism (Yes In My Backyard-ism), appropriate the language of the commons, social good, and even housing justice in order to expand racial technocapitalism. As I explore here, this exploitation of the social is endemic to the post-Cold War times of Silicon Valley imperialism, although it rests upon older Cold War planning histories. In this way, Silicon Valley imperialism maintains its imperiality both by masking its racial effects with liberalism, while also by appropriating what once emerged from socialist organizing within the Bay Area.

The primary assertion of YIMBYism is that slow growth reduces available housing stock, thereby driving up property values. Yet, when it comes to development, YIMBYism advocates “all housing matters,” and that the unencumbered neoliberal market will take care of the housing crisis. Creating a strawman to amplify their luxury development desires, YIMBYs liken their opposition with racist, wealthy NIMBY (No In My Backyard neighborhood)

preservationists—generally white homeowners. As a phenomenon, NIMBYism emerged during the Cold War in order to preserve pre-Cold War redlined racial geographies. YIMBY advocates promote a discursive strategy that conflates wealthy white NIMBY property owners determined to maintain the "traditional character and culture of their backyards" with housing justice advocates fighting against luxury and development in poor and working-class neighborhoods. Much like tech companies have appropriated public space and liberal language to mask their racial impacts, the YIMBY movement has usurped antiracism to push for their liberal "right" to build luxury housing. In this way, despite YIMBYism's framing of housing justice activists as NIMBY, both YIMBYism and NIMBYism support racist urban planning. What I want to work through here though is how this appropriation of leftist discourse is a uniquely post-Cold War imperial technology.

While those weathering racial dispossession in San Francisco know that building luxury condos does nothing to mitigate lack of available housing (a fact verified by San Francisco's General Plan), YIMBYs frame their opposition as uneducated (Marti 2019; Meronek and Szeto 2017; Redmond 2017). For instance, during a San Francisco Planning Commission hearing on the deceptively titled Affordable Housing Density Bonus program, a YIMBY initiative to push for a citywide up-zoning measure for more market-rate development, YIMBY Policy Director, Brian Hanlon argued that without development, he would be "complicit in displacing even more vulnerable populations . . . When I move to East Oakland, I will most likely be replacing someone who does not look like me." Hanlon's ultimatum to poor communities of color is thus to accept luxury housing construction or else be

displaced by this white YIMBY man. This echoes the paternalism of pro-development forces during the post-Cold War Dot Com Boom.

While tensions between pro-development, anti-development, and slow-development movements are nothing new to the region, it is not random that the Bay Area is the birth place of the YIMBY movement. Largely evolving from the smaller San Francisco Bay Area Renters Federation (BARF), which was founded in 2014 by Sonja Trauss, it now encompasses numerous housing groups, holds nationwide conferences, and has the support of pro-development politicians. From its beginnings, it has disproportionately enjoyed support from Silicon Valley workers and funders including Yelp's CEO, as well as from developers, politicians, and pro-growth urban thinktanks. Trauss, who pretends to be a housing justice activist, is well-known for her racism. From writing a blog post in which she wrote that low-income public housing tenants "usually can't read or write," to a 2016 tweet in which she claimed that gentrification is "the revaluation of black land to its correct price," her words repeatedly anger those being dispossessed in the context of techno-urban transformation. She has also publicly likened herself to Machiavelli in order to justify capitalist interests. In a Google slideshow that she sent out to BARF members in early 2014, her main objectives were to: "Connect pro-density, pro-building individuals to each other; Continue to testify in favor of large projects; Disrupt the alliance between rent-control advocates and affordable housing advocates" (IndyBay 2015). And yet Trauss frames herself as an anti-eviction activist.

The neoliberal analytics embraced by YIMBY and NIMBY groups alike have precursors in the Bay Area Cold War and post-Cold War geographies. It was during

the white flight of urban centers that the “spatial fix” of the Bay Area suburban “white noose” concretized (Self 2003; Walker 2004). As Richard Walker and Alex Schafran suggest, “The Bay Area’s liberal reputation belies the degree to which blacks lived in segregated neighborhoods, especially during the first wave of postwar suburbanization” (2015, 24). It was against this racialized spatiality that San Francisco’s slow-and anti-growth movements emerged. Yet with the Dot Com Boom, cities too began to be invested in by technocapitalist interests. This led to new enactments of racialized exurbanization, pushing poor and working-class communities of color into the suburbs through racialized practices of subprime lending and foreclosure (Schafran 2013; Wyly et al. 2012). Since the 1980s, of all US cities, San Francisco has experienced the fastest declining Black population with neighborhoods such as Western Addition decimated in the name of urban renewal (Brahinsky 2012).

San Francisco saw large protests against racial technocapitalist planning of the 1990s and 2000s, particularly against the development of lofts and towers. Housing activists for instance successfully opposed the Planning Department’s decision to develop Trinity Plaza apartments, which would have led to the eviction of 360 rent-controlled tenants for the construction of 1,400 market-rate condominiums (Corburn and Bhatia 2007, 329). As the anti-and slow-growth movements illuminate have emphasized, while it is one thing to oppose all development, it is quite another to oppose the development of luxury housing for the rich, particularly when development induces racial dispossession. And this is precisely where the NIMBY/YIMBY dialectic falters. Instead of embracing a NIMBY politic, housing

justice advocates fighting to curb evictions and the construction of luxury development organize against racial capitalism. Yet YIMBYs construct a NIMBY antagonist who equates public and affordable housing with luxury condos. But this antagonist simply does not exist; it has never existed (McElroy and Szeto 2018).

Beyond reliance on enmity fictions, pro-growth supply and demand formulas fall short in their ameliorative attempts. Walker suggests that to understand contemporary drivers of the housing market, rather than buying into the Economics 101 myth that development will solve gentrification, we need to study capitalism and credit, boom and busts, and elite special preferences (2016). It was, after all, mortgages and financial institutions and incited the country's most overheated mortgage markets during the housing bubble. These have yet to be sufficiently reformed. For instance, with companies such as Uber, Lyft, Slack, Postmates, Pinterest, and Airbnb about to enter public markets and a "coming I.P.O.-palooza" as of 2019, real estate speculators have predicted that there will be ten thousand new millionaires within the year (Bowles 2019). Thus, the real estate industry is recommending that people considering selling their homes wait until this IPO (initial public offering) transformation, as properties will sell for more. When Google went public, millionaires erupted throughout the Bay Area, it is estimated that this new wave will particularly hit San Francisco. Already within the city, where an average one-bedroom costs $3,690, fifty percent of home sales are going to software engineers. Unlike the Dot Com Boom, which busted, this boom is showing no sign of breakdown. In part this is because Tech 2.0 has found a new way to appropriate of the public, via IPOs, in order to bolster security.

IPO publics do nothing to solve the lack of affordable housing in the Bay Area. Instead, they raze room for YIMBY development. One of YIMBYism's primary arguments is that increased development, regardless of the type, will ameliorate the lack of Bay Area housing, and thus mitigate displacement pressures. However, building 50 percent affordable housing will only ever keep the ratio of affordable to unaffordable what it currently is, and this presumes that affordable housing is not continually lost to evictions—which is not the case. For instance, between 2016 and 2017, 4,697 units were removed from protected affordable status due to condo conversion, evictions, buy-outs, and demolitions (San Francisco Planning Department 2017; Redmond 2017). San Francisco's own General Plan calls for 60 percent affordable development to maintain an equitable housing climate, but on average, the city only builds 21 percent (Redmond 2017). According to the Planning Department, by the third quarter of 2016, the City had approved 181 percent of projected market-rate housing for 2022 (San Francisco Planning Department 2017). Yet, the City only rubberstamped 16 percent of its low-income requirements (San Francisco Planning Department 2016). Even between 2007 and 2014, the City authorized 109 percent of requisite market-rate housing, yet only met 27 percent of its low-income requirements (Welch 2017a). In this way, new market-rate construction creates more of a demand for affordable housing than the market supplies, thereby worsening the crisis. While YIMBYs maintain that high-density development produces cheaper rents as more units can be built per acre, as of 2017, the city's neighborhoods with the highest rents are also the neighborhoods with the most high-rise, high-density buildings. Unlike YIMBYism's "all housing matters" rhetoric, the

type of new construction does matter.

As research conducted by the University of California, Berkeley's Urban Displacement Project (UDP) has determined when analyzing impacts of market and subsidized housing developed in the 1990s on displacement during the 2000s, there is no evidence that market-rate development is effective mitigation (Zuk and Chappel 2016, 3). Further, the project found subsidized housing to be twice as effective as market-rate development regionally (2016, 10). Proponents of market-rate development are determined that a process known as filtering leads to older market-rate buildings becoming affordable as new units are constructed. But as the UDP shows, while filtering may work in some cases, it takes generations. Filtering, as a stand-in for "trickle down," remains in Calvin Welch's words a "Reagan-era supply-side fiction" (2017b). Further, Miriam Zuk and Karen Chappel of the UDP offer, "in many strong-market cities, changes in housing preferences have increased the desirability of older, architecturally significant property, essentially disrupting the filtering process" (2016, 3).

Indeed, filtering would only work if areas such as the quad or those surrounding tech bus stops were not desirable to those with deep pockets. Perhaps this is why, as investigative research by Darwin BondGraham and Tim Redmond has revealed, 39 percent of 5,212 condos in 23 buildings primarily built after 2000 have been purchased by absentee owners (2015). In come condos, absentee ownership is over 60 percent, with primary residences concentrated in Silicon Valley suburbs such as Los Altos Hills, Sausalito, and Lafayette. Further, new units were listed on Airbnb for as much as $6,000 per night, clearly doing little to ameliorate dispossession.

Meanwhile, SRO (single residency occupancy units), which throughout the Cold War housed the region's most precarious tenants, are now being converted into tech dorms. Real estate speculators Danny Haber and Alon Gutman, the latter a Google software developer, have evicted SRO tenants from both San Francisco and Oakland in order to create cohousing for those in tech. After migrating away from Airbnb to list now-evicted units, they developed an online "property tech" interface, OWow, in order to match technologist roommates based upon users' Facebook profiles. These spaces, favorites amongst YIMBYs, are exclusionary forms that, like Airbnb, mobilize the grammar of "sharing" and "community" in order to advance technocapitalist interest, as explored in Chapter 1. Yet these are just some of many examples of public space and social good being extracted and transformed by Silicon Valley imperialism. The Anti-Eviction Mapping Project has, for instance, mapped over twenty examples of such occurrences in San Francisco alone, which encompass playgrounds, streets, parking lots, and even City Hall (2016).

By engaging in a YIMBY verses NIMBY geographic understanding, it is easy to miss that same logics of racial capitalism constitute each. To think beyond the fictive NIMBY/YIMBY binary is also to think beyond liberal understandings of freedom. YIMBYism, as a phenomenon, reminds us that the violence of racial capitalism has always been obscured under the liberal banners of "progress," sometimes coded as "renewal" or "redevelopment." This language continually fails to reckon with the racial dispossession required for growth, but also with the deep history of racial liberalism fueling discursive appropriation. Freeing the market will never lead to housing for all; racially dispossessive logics will always haunt the

present, despite the proliferation of postracial neoliberal imaginaries.

Both NIMBYism and YIMBYism live within the same liberal tradition of racialized/spatialized appropriation. This technique is unique to post-Cold War times in that the interests of empire, in this case Silicon Valley imperialism, appropriate the language of antiracism and housing justice in order to accumulate space. Silicon Valley imperialism, as a post-Cold War phenomenon, relies upon encroaching into the space and language of anticapitalism in order to expand. Public space, once an output of anti-capitalist organizing for the public, has been territorialized in the name progress. YIMBYism, an epistemology of Silicon Valley techno-urbanism, is abetted by the absorption of the public, from IPOs to SROs.

Free Speech and the Battle of Berkeley

Racial technocapitalist urban planning in times of post-Cold War Silicon Valley imperialism has only been aggravated in the Trump era. As Melissa Valle argues, with the rise of right-wing populisms in the US and beyond pushing agendas of ethnic and racial cleansing, there is no such thing as race-neutral urban development and planning (2017). It was because of this that the national Right to the City movement contextualized the new president as the "Gentrifier In Chief," a man who has made no hesitation about pushing a white real estate agenda on the national platform. After all, the supremacy of white inheritance enabled Trump to grow into the real estate mogul and luxury golf course owner that he is today (Maharawal and McElroy 2017; Stein 2019). Not only has he accrued his capital through real estate, but also, he quickly appointed key positions to people like white supremacist Steve

Bannon, anti-public housing doctor Ben Carson, "foreclosure king" of California Steve Mnunchin, and slumlord Jared Kushner.

It was this desire to accumulate property through whiteness (a foundational fantasy of US settler colonialism and empire) that also led to an August 2017 far-right "No to Marxism in America" rally in Berkeley. In response, a counter-march erupted in San Francisco. Crawling through the city which itself seemed quiet in anticipation of potential racist violence, demonstrators made clear that racist violence was nothing new to their cultural and political lives. As the march edged towards the Mission District, one of its leaders, Ben Bac Sierra, recited a story to protestors of the whitening of the Mission over the last decade in the wake of the Tech Boom. Decrying that while city officials are finally censuring the rise of Nazism, many of these same officials have been largely silent about racialized dispossession and police violence for years now. Not coincidentally, the march stopped at 16th and Mission Streets, where a market-rate development project, "The Monster in the Mission" was slated for construction. This project has been pushed the YIMBY movement and explicitly racist, anti-homeless coalitions, such as Clean Up the Plaza Coalition. In this way, YIMBY and fascist-leaning forces have aligned to reproduce racial technocapitalist spatiality. But these forces also align in their appropriation of liberal and leftist language, a phenomenon that Judith Butler marks as unique to these times (2019). This has been particularly evident on the University of California Berkeley's campus (UCB), during what became known as the 2017 "Battle of Berkeley" protests. It is this that I focus upon in this section, attentive to how discursive appropriation indexes postsocialist temporality.

It was during Trump's campaign trail that new iterations of far-right populism began to appear across the US, as well as antifascist counter-protests. California was not immune, from a Ku Klux Klan rally in Anaheim to scuffles outside of the California Republican Party's convention in Burlingame in 2016. During this time, a new fascist youth organization, Identify Evropa, held its first demonstration at UCB. As the group claimed, their objective was to create a "safe space" for white nationalism on the campus. The following month, a large anti-Trump demonstration in San Jose took place, largely led by young South Bay people of color, upon which far-right activists vowed vengeance. In response, neo-Nazi groups stabbed antifascist counter-demonstrators in Sacramento, which then led to new moves amongst Bay Area antiracist and antifascist collectives to join forces in self-defense. The evening of Trump's electoral victory, thousands of demonstrators flashed throughout Oakland in outrage, haunted by fears of what might follow. Molotov cocktails were thrown at banks, tear gas filled the air, and fires broke out outside the impending Uber office building downtown—a glaring symbol of Bay Area racial technocapitalism.

In response to growing antifascist organizing, Milo Yiannopoulos, former senior tech writer at right-wing Breitbart News, began his "Dangerous Faggot Tour." As newfound leader of the supposedly more moderate "alt-lite," yet schooled by Nazi-sympathizer Steven Bannon at Breitbart, Yiannopoulos followed Identity Evropa's lead in targeting liberal university spaces. Although the tour began at the University of Washington, during which a Trump supporter shot an antifascist activist in the stomach, the tour arrived at UCB a week later.

UCB first emerged on national cartographies in the 1960s for far-left political

activism championing civil rights. In 1964, it birthed the Free Speech Movement (FSM) and waves of antiracist and anti-Vietnam War civil disobedience in the midst of the Cold War (DeGroot 1995; Nguyen-Vo and Hong 2018). Concentrated in Sproul Plaza, the movement conducted teach-ins and demonstrations, some of which police and the National Guard attacked. Despite these radical roots, as soon as the FSM became part of official campus geography in 1960s, it was faced with attempts of pacification and neutralization (Mitchell 1992, 159-161). Yet very few could have anticipated in 2000 the bizarre ways that the FSM would become appropriated not by the neoliberal university, but by the far-right.

Yiannopoulos's speech organized by Berkeley College Republicans and supported by the Proud Boys—a new "Western Chauvinist" fraternal organization of the alt-lite—was scheduled for February of 2017. Fear seeped through the air as reliable sources had gone public that the tech reporter was planning to out numerus undocumented university students during his speech (Oppenheim 2017). As tensions rose, counter-demonstrators gathered, soon reaching 3,000 people. But it wasn't until a smaller anarchist troupe of 150 people engaged in civil disobedience that the event was canceled. While these organizers had enacted what the larger group could not, nevertheless, liberal and fascist media alike denounced the anarchists and defended Yiannopoulos's free speech, from UC Berkeley professor Robert Reich (and former Secretary of Labor under Clinton) to Trump. Even the American Civil Liberty Union filed a lawsuit on Yiannopoulos's behalf, much to the benefit of technofascist power. As authors of CrimethInc contextualized, "From organizing 'white safe spaces' to pretending to represent a new free speech movement, the ascendant fascists

understood that the hollow rhetoric of liberalism utilized by hacks like Reich could be weaponized against anyone opposed to white supremacy and patriarchy" (Anonymous 2018). In this way, by chiding antifascist direct action, liberals in fact supported the alt-right. This left antifascists with the burden of countering technofascism on their own.

This liberal defense of the First Amendment reflects what Lisa Lowe has accurately described as the economy of "affirmation and forgetting" that accompanies enfranchisement (2015, 3). When assimilating into whiteness, or from oppression to freedom from violence, particular forms of forgetting may transpire. But some differences are unassimilable, leading to what Chandan Reddy describes as "the pre-mature 'burial' of the racialized and undifferentiated deaths," for instance, those undocumented (2012, 277). Those who stood in defense of Yiannopoulos's First Amendment right may have once been targeted by racism. But having achieved security and freedom from violence, they seem to have forgotten the political urgency of fighting violence and assaultive speech. As Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor observed, "It is only with the Right that this idea of unchecked free speech arises. . . For everyone else on campus, speech is regulated, monitored and surveilled. This is core to the myth of the liberal campus. It does not exist" (quoted in Luu 2018). As much as free speech has benefited Leftist movements, it has also been used by the Right to benefit its own, right within the heart of the liberal university.

Following the UCB event, a long series of protests endured throughout the spring and summer in Berkeley. During these, members of numerous far-right and fascist groups continually joined forces to take over public space, and antifascist

organizers rose to meet them. Largely the fascist groups had never organized in person together, having only known each other through internet platforms such as 4chan. Many had US Army training, and they were often led by a series of hetero-masculine men with internet celebrity status. For instance, Kyle Chapman, known as "Based Stick Man," became a neo-Nazi hero at the Berkeley protests, forming what he called the "Fraternal Order of the Alt Knights." Some of these knights wore pro-Pinochet shirts and chanted about dropping antifascists from helicopters. Others brought bagels to fling in anti-Semitic expression. Queers were doxed, and Black-owned spaces such as the Alchemy Collective Café were vandalized.

At one point, while being assaulted by bagels, a friend turned to me and asked the fascists could have possibly come from. Some Antifa began yelling at the Nazis to, "Go back to Europe." Yet contrary to popular belief, many of these fascists hadn't travelled far to attend the protests at all. In a mapping project conducted by the Southern Poverty Law Center of Hate Groups, of 954 within the US in 2018, 75 are located in California. Of the 71 groups labeled "racist skinhead" in the US, 11 are located in California alone (Southern Poverty Law Center 2018). Hate crimes committed by these groups became more frequent and emboldened in the wake of Trump's victory, with 867 cases reported the first ten days of his presidency (Petulla, Kupperman, and Schneider 2016). The Bay Area was not immune (America's Voice 2018). Lowe cautions that free speech is part the "modern liberal project," one that promises rights, emancipation, and more, but yet which upholds global divisions and asymmetries (2015, 3). Modern liberalism, stemming from Western European political philosophy, understands political emancipation as achieved through state

citizenship. In the case of first amendment rights, liberalism upholds freedom of speech for all citizens, including Nazis, but not for non-citizens, such as those who Yiannopoulos was planning to out. The playing field, while premised upon liberal notions of equality, is not equal. As Lowe puts it, “In the very claim to define humanity, as a species or as a condition,” liberal universalism’s “gestures of definition divide the human and the nonhuman, to classify the normative and pathologize deviance” (ibid., 5).

In order to fight the violence of liberal universalism, struggles cannot be premised upon assimilatory aspirations and fictive equalities, but rather upon antiracist politics that understand the modern racism and liberalism to be co-constitutive. This is particularly true when considering the paradigmatic sea change in racial epistemologies and politics that occurred after the Second World War, not coincidentally during the height of the Free Speech movement and the beginning of the Cold War when US state racism changed in novel ways. During this time, anticolonial and antiracist movements gained momentum, highlighting US racial contradictions, both on US soil but also in Vietnam and other imperial sites. To manage these contradictions, antiracism became absorbed into US governmentality. Melamed describes this as racial liberalism, in which, “in contrast to white supremacy, the liberal race paradigm recognizes racial inequality as a problem, and it secures a liberal symbolic framework for race reform centered in abstract equality, market individualism, and inclusive civic nationalism” (2006, 2). Official antiracism became sutured to US liberal freedom, welcoming some people into the realm of the human, but not all. Melamed charts that since the 1990s, racial liberalism mutated

into the post-Cold War neoliberal multiculturalism, which affixes official antiracism to state policy while deracializing "racial reference into a series of rhetorical gestures of ethical right and certainty" (2006, 16). This new racist form recycles the liberal multicultural hype of the 1980s and 1990s of freedom and diversity—shibboleths for global capitalism.

Yet neoliberal multiculturalism, while alive and well under Obama, fails to completely explain how white supremacist capitalism has shifted under the plutocratic Trump. Both eras rely upon the logics of racial technocapitalism, but something has shifted. Byrd, Goldstein, Melamed, and Reddy offer, "As dominant racializing and colonizing procedures shift between Obama-era reformism, upwardly redistributive neoliberal multiculturalism, and the taking and abuse of land in the name of austerity, on the one hand, and Trumpist repertoires of criminalization, renewals of the wages of whiteness, crony capitalism, and white settler 'blood and soil' claims to place and land exploitation" (2019, 4). On the other hand, "the logic of propriation itself remains naturalized, while the renewal of white supremacy's relevance to capitalism reveals the thinness of capitalist civil rights (cum property rights), thoroughly shaped by and shaping propriation since the 1970s" (ibid., 4). By propriation, they study the racially dispossessive expropriations and appropriations that technologies of liberalism, colonialism, and capitalism espouse.

By adding free speech into the domain of propriation, it becomes clear that the appropriation of free speech functions to embolden white supremacist expropriative violence. In the fight for their freedom of hate speech, the alt-right fought for the space of the liberal university and the streets and parks surrounding Berkeley. But

also, they have fought to instate the blood and soil genre of racial technocapitalism and all the dispossession that it inheres. In other words, if capitalism can absorb everything in its wake in the name of liberal freedom, from SROs to IPOS, it should be no surprise that fascists can as well. This mode of propriation is of a particular post-Cold War moment, in which, per Chari and Verdery, "Forms of biopolitical debris of capitalism, colonialism, and nationalism . . . become key sites of struggle" (2009, 28). This becomes particularly evident when looking towards Bay Area racial dispossession struggles amidst the ascension of technofascism.

The Dark Enlightenment

Just as both the alt-right and YIMBYism have recycled prior liberal and leftist forms for their own purposes, post-Cold War temporality has seen US national tendencies make consistent efforts to recycle the Cold War inimical. It was after 1989 that new hunts for the enemy began to replace the hole left behind by "the Cold War Communist" and thereby maintain semblance of Cold War identity. In understanding the contours of this hunt, it is important to think through post-Cold shifts in race and geopolitics. On one hand, as Chari and Verdery presage, "The Cold War is not yet over" (2009, 30). How else do we understand the perpetual US "casting about for new enemies, new sites of danger, to take 'Communism's' place" (ibid., 28). But on the other, as they also note, in post-Cold War times, colonialism, socialism, and their various aftermaths employ novels forms of racial technologies to affix life and death in unique ways. Here I focus upon the construction of the inimical in the heart of racial technocapitalism.

Following Trump's victory, liberal pundits and media outlets alike were quick to blame outsiders rather than homegrown white supremacy and the failings of the Democratic Party. These included poor people, millennials, to the most infamous of them all—the "dangerous Russians hackers who hijacked American democracy." In other words, rather than attending to the longevity of racism that US white inheritance reproduces (and is constituted by), and rather than acknowledging that increased neoliberalism within the Democratic Party had in fact repelled leftists from it, the Party appropriated Cold War grammars to Russophobically scapegoat Russian hackers. These figments have supplanted the bomb in the longevity of Cold War nuclear culture (Masco 2011), with Eastern Europe reproduced as the Cold War illiberal. Yet it has mostly been liberals and not conservatives recycling Cold War McCarthyism, indexing a strange discursive rearrangement emblematic of post-Cold War times. Today, as Alexei Yurchak writes, "Western liberalism rejects 'islamophobia' but embraces 'russophobia'" (2017, 3). In this way, liberalism, he suggests, frames Trump supporters as "a motley cast of Euroskeptics, Islamophobes, Russophiles, and neo-Nazis" (ibid., 3). Post-Cold War times thus reinvigorates the "temporarily forgotten, figure of 'Red under the bed'" (ibid., 10), but crosses the wires slightly.

Despite this, in March 2018, a news story broke that in part shattered the geography of liberal-illiberal geopolitics. It was revealed that a British stealth political technology firm, Cambridge Analytica, had in part rigged the elections, maybe more so than the elusive antipodal Russian hackers. An undercover investigation by the UK's Channel 4 depicted Analytica executives scheming how to

effectively inject propaganda into the internet's bloodstream. As was revealed, the firm was partly owned by Steve Bannon, and had previously worked on Republican Ted Cruz's 2016 campaign before Trump's. Cambridge Analytica alleged possession of 230 million American voters' profiles based upon 5,000 detailed data points largely obtained from Silicon Valley's Facebook, with Facebook's consent (Kroll 2018). Of course, much of this data is available to anyone through processes of what Jim Thatcher, David O'Sullivan, and Dillon Mahmoudi refer to as "data colonialism through accumulation" (2016). Promises of "'big data' within the utopian imaginaries of digital frontierism" inhere new forms of unfettered racial technocapitalism (2016, 990). Yet Cambridge developed unique micro-targeting techniques to pair consumer information with psychological data extracted from social-media platforms. This was used by the Trump campaign to target people with custom images, messages, ads, mailers, and even in-person interactions – a recipe that the company's CEO, Alexander Nix, called the "secret sauce" (quoted in Kroll 2018). Chris Wylie, who helped start the company, described how they the company was built to harvest millions of people's Facebook profiles "and built models to exploit what we knew about them and target their inner demons" (ibid.) In 1992, Nigel Oakes, who crafted the psychological laboratory that would eventually grow into Cambridge Analtyica, explained, "We use the same techniques as Aristotle and Hitler" (ibid).

While Cambridge Analytica harvested Facebook's data through new methods, it has been Facebook that has extracted data on its 1.65 billion users, comprising the largest biometric database in the world (Dishaw 2015). This database is used by local police officers upon their discretion (Coleman 2016), particularly to track protestors

and threats to democracy. As has been uncovered, of 63 police departments interrogated in California, 20, including those in Oakland and San Jose, have acquired social media surveillance software (Wong 2016). Thus, when any of Facebook's users upload and tag a photograph, users assist its facial recognition algorithm and its DeepFace monitoring program, as well as local police departments (Rosenblatt 2016). As of 2016, the company has estimated that it can accurately identify a tagged person 98 percent of the time, better than the FBI's own Generation Identification software, which only boasts a 50 to 85 percent accuracy rating (LaChance 2016).

While big databases such as Facebook's ignite techno-utopic fantasies for some, facial recognition "datafies" the human into profitable parts, dissecting, extracting, quantifying, and selling others' digital selves. These violent mechanisms of data participate in modes of what Jeremy Crampton and Andrea Miller define as "algorithmic governance" (2017). This refers to "the manifold ways that algorithms and code/space enable practices of governance that ascribes risk, suspicion and positive value in geographic contexts." Algorithmic practices, derived from psychological data-mining to biometric surveillance, often replace human decision-making processes with machine-based learning, pretending to be objective through their techniques of distancing. And yet, these technologies have been constituted through human-made fantasies and prejudices, coded and spatialized to produce desired results, protocols, predictions, and borders. Further, they have been designed by humans deeply enmeshed with older racist onto-epistemologies, from settler colonialism to Cold War Silicon Valley informatics.

The Cambridge Analytica scandal erupted broke while I was in Bucharest.

While many people there didn't seem to notice, others heaved sighs of relief, hoping that finally the US might stop stoking Cold War flames and instead look at its own Silicon underbelly where technofascism is alive and well. For instance, Peter Thiel, Facebook investor and PayPal co-founder, became part of Trump's transition team shortly after his election, and Uber's former CEO, Travis Kalanick, entered but then shortly exited Trump's advisory council, inciting protesters to barricade Uber's San Francisco headquarters amidst January inauguration protests. During Trump's inauguration, the DeploraBall (attended by far-right activists and Thiel) was organized by software investor and former Stanford Review editor, Jeff Giesea, who also once worked for Thiel Capital Management. As was later revealed, Giesea had partnered with far-right blogger Mike Cernovich on MAGA3X in 2016 to wage meme warfare for Trump. Together, they worked with former BuzzFeed employee Anthime Gionet, "Baked Alaska," and the right-wing troll Jack Posobiec, disseminating Breitbart memes (Harkinson 2017).

Thiel, Giesea and other technocapitalists are responsible for coding a technofascist ideology and onto-epistemology that some call the Dark Enlightenment. Inspired by the philosopher and science fiction writer, Nick Land, the Dark Enlightenment and its subsects of neo-reactionary (NRx) and right-accelerationist philosophies, "leads us to the fever swamp of alt-right culture wars and the anti-democratic urban imaginaries of billionaire libertarian investors in technology in the USA" (Burrows 2018, 1-2). One of NRx's primary concepts is that democracy does not work, and that nations should be fragmented and broken into tiny CEO-ruled states. It promotes gated off-world communities, as well as eugenicist hyperracism,

not so different from Silicon Valley's William Shockley's "retrogressive evolution" of years past. NRx also espouses the aesthetic vision Post-Anathema, based upon a technofuturist, hyper-masculine visual culture saturated with soldiers, guns, cathedrals, tanks, spaceships, smart cities, and Greek gods (Gray 2017).

Land's "philosophy-fiction" long-form text, *The Dark Enlightenment*, was written in 2012, and is regarded as the NRx bible (MacDougald 2015). It features the work of a Bay Area blogger, Curtis Yarvin, founder NRx (Haider 2017). Funded by Thiel and an inspiration to Bannon, Yarvin writes on race and history, and has gone from questioning, "What's so bad about the Nazis?," to aligning himself with the Scottish philosopher Thomas Carlyle's defense of slavery (Burrows 2018, 10; Gray 2017). Yarvin also believes that the Soviet Union in fact won the Cold War because the US is now "a communist country" (2016). Extrapolating upon Yarvin's entwining of libertarianism and Victorian Social Darwinism, Land embraces the work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, opening NRx up to many who might not otherwise engage in technofascism.

NRx enthusiasts also point to the 1991 Dot Com Boom technolibertarian manifesto, *The Sovereign Individual: How to Survive and Thrive During the Collapse of the Welfare State*, as a source of inspiration. Thiel cites this text as his greatest textual inspiration, as do Silicon Valley figures such as Netscape founder and venture capitalist Marc Andreessen, as well as entrepreneur Balaji Srinivasan, known for pushing for Silicon Valley's US secession (O'Connell 2018). The 400-page book portrays a post-democratic future analogous to the medieval collapse of feudal power. The book eerily predicts certain strains of the Tech Boom 2.0's landscape, for

instance the rise of the internet, the birth of cryptocurrencies, and the emergence of a new class of "cognitive elite" more powerful than nation-states. These allegedly will triumph in the wreckage of democracy's collapse.

In preparation for the wreckage, in 2011, Thiel purchased 477 acres of land in New Zealand. In 2016, the famous Silicon Valley entrepreneur Sam Altman announced that "he had an arrangement with Thiel to retreat together on a private jet together to New Zealand in the eventuality "of some kind of systemic collapse scenario–synthetic virus breakout, rampaging AI, resource war between nuclear-armed states," and so forth (O'Conner 2018). The following year, a scandal broke out when Facebook's Mark Zuckerberg purchased 700,000 acres in Kauai, Hawaii, potentially displacing Native Hawaiians of their Indigenous claim to that same land. And then in 2018, a group of blockchain and cryptocurrency entrepreneurs bought an "eternal boy playground" in Puerto Rico, their own private crypto utopia playground upon the deadly and life shattering wreckage of the 2017 Hurricane Maria. These technofascist utopias index the settler colonial and Silicon Valley imperial logics that shelter the techno present and future. And, as they suggest, the differences between speculative fiction and the present have always been fictive.

NRx has been widely supported by the alt-right, notably having been featured in a Breitbart article in which Yiannopoulos and Allum Bokhari identified NRx as the intellectual vanguard of the movement (2016). As they observed, NRx appeared quite accidentally at first, on a debate on LessWrong.com, a site dedicated to the "advancement of rationality" overseen by Eliezer Yudkowsky. For years, Yudkowsky, cofounder of the Machine Intelligence Research Institute, worked

alongside Michael Anissimov, a strong believer in Ray Kurzweil's concept of singularity (the merging of AI and humans through biotechnology) and accelerationism (the speeding up of computer technology and capitalism in order to automate singularity). Anissimov is also an avid reader of Julius Evola, the Italian fascist philosopher also found on Bannon's bookshelf (Beckett 2017). Many also cite Nicholas Wade's bestseller A Troublesome Inheritance, which makes the case that IQ differentials are based upon race.

LessWrong and Anissimov's now defunct MoreRight sit amongst a constellation of sites, from the alt-right 4chan to the neo-Nazi Daily Stormer. Together, they have been used by the alt-right in organizing. These sites are, as Angela Nagle writes, the product of the "creative energy" of the alt-right, in which "amoral libertine Internet culture" congeals with white, male resentment (2017)—an affect and demographic not uncommon in Silicon Valley. And notably, the Daily Stormer, while existent, enjoyed the largest percentage of its traffic from Silicon Valley. This group maintain heroes like Yiannopoulos, along with the neo-Nazi hacker Andrew Auernheimer, or "Weev," a tech support worker for Daily Stormer and The Right Stuff. They also love the video gaming vlogger Felix Arvid Ulf Kjellberg, who maintains a "Pewdiepie" YouTube channel with 54 million subscribers, featuring Nazi-themed jokes. In an investigative piece on alt-techies,

Josh Harkinson (2017) found that many are quick to explain the dominance of white men in the tech industry (main actors in Bay Area gentrification) through overtly biological racism and sexism. As computer chip designer in Berkeley who goes by the screenname of "White Morpheus" on the Daily Stormer writes, The

history of nearly every field of science and engineering was driven by white Europeans . . . Nobody will say their real feelings [about the alt-right] because a mob of fat blue-hair complainers will drive you away from your career forever. Peter Thiel coming out [for Trump] was a joy to us all, because he could show his support for the Trump train where we could not (qtd. in Harkinson 2017). White Morpheus chastises South Asian immigrants working on H-IB visas in Silicon Valley, as do many of his peers. As Roger Burrows cautions, "In a world where Silicon Valley (white male) billionaires attracted to the ideologies of Ayn Rand curate the rise of the alt-right, the new populism, and the mainstreaming of, inter alia, misogynist, racist and fascist discourses, those interested in urban futures" should take the rise of NRx seriously (2018, 13).

Bay Area techno-urbanism, supported by technofascist visions, does make it appear that the NRx future has already arrived. "Whatever the analytic worth(lessness) of NRx philosophy," Burrows suggests, "it is important to recognise its ideological function and the powerful actors supporting its propagation; not least those investing in myriad technologies in Silicon Valley who have seemingly been convinced by Land's idea of hyperstition – the creation of fictional entities that can make themselves real" (2018, 4). Similarly, Shuja Haider, in an expose on the Dark Enlightenment, ventures, "If the builders of technology are transmitting their values into machinery this makes the culture of Silicon Valley a matter of more widespread consequence" (2017). In other words, in NRx is already being written into urban technologies and smart cities, not to mention practices of data colonialism and algorithmic governance, we cannot simply ignore it. Hyperstition, it turns out, may be

nonfiction that theorizes fiction becoming realty.

While the cessation of the Cold War arguably led to the birth of the Dot Com Boom and the consumer-oriented liberalism of Steve Jobs, Bill Gates, and more. California ideology of the 1990s was characterized by a dialectic of New Left utopianism and Ayn Randian individualism (Barbrook and Cameron 1996). But this has given way to a new California ideology, a technological authoritarianism marked by figures like Thiel and Elon Musk. As Haider observes, "If Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher had served up an all-you-can-eat shit buffet in the 1980s, promoting the free market at the expense of the majority of their citizens, [Land] responded by taking laissez-faire economics to a perverse extreme" (2017). Racial technocapitalism has become the protagonist history, with humans simply cogs in the machine. As he elaborates, "Forget time-traveling killer robots or ancient beasts. NRx has simply exposed the operations of the capitalist machine in the present. Mainstream apologists for neoliberalism have a decision to make: whether to embrace the pseudo-science of Silicon Valley hyperracism, or to reject the vast economic inequalities generated by market society" (2017).

Technofascism is nothing new in the Bay Area. It has long been constitutive of Silicon Valley technoscapes, from the dawn of the Cold War to its contemporary post-. The rise of the alt-tech exposes this longevity. Yet technofascism, as Haider notes, defended by neoliberal economics and liberal politics. As liberalism enters a period of crisis, saturated by apocalyptic visions and the potential collapse of "the free world," rather than supporting antifascist organizers, its proponents often defend the tradition of free speech—one now appropriated by the coders of fascist futures.

Meanwhile, there are designers of luxury urban futures espousing the identity of "housing justice." Yet, these YIMBYs might be more aligned with those modeling off-world techno-utopias in outer space (or Puerto Rico for that matter) than those fighting for shelter on earth. Postsocialism, as an analytic, is a helpful tool in theorizing these continuities, discontinuities, and propriations. But postsocialist theory is also useful in analyzing resistance. How else can we make sense of emergent Bay Area news articles entitled "Anti-homeless robot covered in barbecue sauce, given well-deserved ass-kicking" (Worgaftik 2017)?

Nihilisms

Protests enacted outside of the Alfred Disrupt Cup, Google buses, and anti-homeless robots (that do indeed exist) are frequently critiqued as neo-Luddite, "anti-tech," and out-of-joint. However, such disapprobation assumes that postsocialist racial technocapitalism and fascism alike are both the unavoidable future, and that they are entirely new. Not only are Silicon Valley disruptions dependent upon Cold War spatial/racial/temporal logics and their postsocialist turn, but beyond that, they hinge upon capitalism, itself an older technology predicated upon reducing every "thing" into the spectral abstraction known as money, dissolving diverse ontologies into value form. As was once written in the *Communist Manifesto*, "All that is solid melts into air" (Marx and Engels 1967, 3). It would thus be an unjust assertion that anti-tech demonstrations have been simply directed towards the novelty of new technologies abdicating older ones, for instance, in the case of Alfred, servitude. Rather, protests pivot against a moment in which all that is assumed to be air, to be

immaterial, calcifies into solidity, into the shrapnel and debris left in the wake of a new iteration of racial techno capitalism on steroids, or technofascism. Weaponized vomit and boxing ring punches can instead be read as perverse tongues calling for something other than the presumed common time of post-Cold War Silicon Valley imperialism, yet they are paralyzed by the gravity of its dispossessive weight. These tongues critique racialized forms of eviction, surveil-lance, and consciousness that have newly drawn Silicon Valley into urban and global space.

This contradictory despair and hope, mired within the sinkholes of the leading global industry, can be understood as both reflective and productive of a postsocialist condition. Silicon Valley renegotiations of space are only made possible through post-Cold War circuits of capital, knowledge, and fantasy. Silicon Valley globality can be theorized as a world-historical conjuncture which, in Gary Wilder's words, produces a "politicotemporal paralysis" whereby imaginaries of freedom have been collapsed with those of markets, diffused across a global space in which alternatives to liberal capitalist democracy appear foreclosed (2015, 196). And this collapse has been abetted by the very technologies that it creates. In this way, postsocialism, as an analytic, is useful in indexing not only epistemologies surrounding the phenomenon today discoursed as Tech Boom-induced gentrification and its global condition, but also, of the social worlds emerging to combat it. For it is those social worlds, those bodies ensconced within boxing rings, bruised in supernova, perhaps bloody, perhaps not, that the hegemony of Francis Fukuyama's celebrated telos of liberal progress falls short, becoming "only gospel" (Derrida 1994, 56). Postsocialist analytics help explain this strange spatiotemporal conjuncture in ways that gentrification does not.

Throughout the summer of 2014, the San Francisco Mime Troupe toured the Bay Area region with its satirical musical comedy, “Ripple Effect,” written by Eugenie Chan, Tanya Shaffer, and Michael Gene Sullivan. The performance stewed with familiar tensions upon the Bay Area tech-driven gentrifying landscape, allegorizing a world in which revolutionary potential is swallowed by Silicon Valley surveillance infrastructures, inciting economies of gentrification and loss. But during its enactment, something else transpired too. Much of the Mime Troupe’s performance takes place aboard a small vessel called the Distant Horizon, traversing the waters surrounding San Francisco. The captain/tour guide, Deborah, played by Velina Brown, enacts recursive paranoia, illuminating that she does not trust anything invented before 1988, the year before the end of the Cold War that, she makes clear, also witnessed the birth of both Prozac and cell phones. Onboard her ship sits two passengers. Jeanine (Lisa Hori-Garcia) is an app developer from Nebraska working for a tech giant, Octopus. Anxious and over-stimulated, Jeanine explains that she has trouble focusing when beyond the confines of her office cubicle. And then there is Sunny (Keiko Shimosato Carreiro), a Vietnamese immigrant and defender of the American dream, yet simultaneously traumatized by the US invasion of Vietnam, now overprotectively raising her daughter and running a beauty salon in the predominantly Black neighborhood Bayview. As it turns out, Sunny is monitoring her daughter with a surveillance app invented by the uneasy Jeanine, who had originally conceived of the technology to oversee her disabled grandmother who was prone to wandering. Further, Sunny is facing eviction because Jeanine’s company is acquiring new office space in the gentrifying neighborhood. But the plot does not end here.

As the story unfolds, we learn that the distrustful captain Deborah had been an active member of the Black Panther Party, and that since the 1960s, she has been searching for a lost partner disappeared by COINTELPRO operations. Seamlessly, it unravels that her partner was not actually disappeared, but instead went underground, only to reemerge as the CEO of Octopus, Jeanine's boss, now a staunch defender of capitalism. The play reaches its apex as the women realize that the only way to dismantle the Octopus and its various tentacles surveilling all intimate space while controlling information flows, is for all three women to collaborate, dismantling Octopus's technology through a backdoor that Jeanine had coded into the surveillance app. At first Jeanine is reticent, complaining to the adamant Deborah that she is not political, and that she does not know how to fight the new technocratic empire. To this, Deborah dramatically retorts, "There is no such thing as not political!" much to the crowd's delight. In other moments, Deborah undoes Sunny's identification as being middle-class, vehemently shouting, "There is no middle-class; there is only the working-class!", and the rich. As Sullivan later explained, the performance intentionally hinted that the conjoining of different working classes is integral to fight a common enemy: that of the gentrifying tech giant empire (qtd. in Schiffman 2014). The performance concluded with the women acknowledging that together, though direct street action, they can keep Sunny and her daughter housed.

Months before the performance, I was asked by the Mime Troupe to participate in their 2014 debut in Dolores Park in San Francisco by rallying the audience after the protest. Just a block away from the performance was the site of a seven-unit household fighting an eviction notice issued by Google's then head of e-

Security. The Mime Troupe had envisioned that following the uplifting performance and rallying cry, that audience members would be inspired to join tenants and march to their home in an act of solidarity. But following the performance, upon the park sprinkled with artisanal picnics, few people joined our picket as we crawled up Dolores Street.

While larger and more successful anti-eviction protests have occurred since then, the inability to rally even a dozen people in a crowd over 500 seemed indicative of postsocialist despair. Is the Distant Horizon approaching a new working-class collectivity in which the defeat of the high-tech empire and its global penetrations is possible? Or, does it harken to something else, some other horizon haunted by, to conjure Scott's work, "a wound that will not heal," a wound that takes over, disrupting the linearity of historical time (2014, 13)? A wound scarred upon global imaginaries following the supposed evacuation of socialist alterity. A wound that suggests, by the anonymous author of the anarchist text Desert, "the world will not be 'saved'" (2011, 6). If not more than a dozen people would take fifteen minutes to walk up the street to help a neighbor fight an eviction being implemented by a Google employee, and if liberals censure antifascists for disrupting technofascist free speech acts, then what future might endure outside of the post-Cold War rearrangement of liberalism, fascism, and anti-capitalist alterity?

In the wake of technofascism and its racially dispossessive propriations, it seems imperative to break from post-Cold War time in order to configure "unappropriable" futures. After all, the revolutionary time of protest, of romance, is of the same making as global capitalism—ideologies of universality conscripted

through Marxist-Hegelian timelines of global overcoming. Fighting a universal, that of postsocialist Silicon Valley imperialism and its attendant forms of racial/spatial dispossession, will only result in failure if another universal is applied to dismantle it, leading to recurrent catastrophes and paralysis. In the case of such universal application, perhaps failure, following the work of Jack Halberstam, is revolutionary. To disrupt racial technocapitalism and its propriations, we do not need one perversion of tongue to triumph; neither the Nihilists nor Marxists need emerge victorious. To disrupt the disruption, it would take the endurance of multiple and incongruous perversions, visceralities, and failures. It would take revolutionary imaginaries uncoded through liberal teleologies, unbound by the common time of Silicon Valley imperialism, yet irrevocably tethered to a postsocialist condition. As such, it seems that postsocialism is one of many necessary analytics needed to theorize the present, the past, and the heterogeneity of futures both already here, and yet-to-come.

Chapter 5: Hacking the Inimical of Post-Cold War Time: Mr. Robot, the Dark Army, and the Doomsday Machine

This chapter continues to theorize postsocialism as an analytic to make sense of growing entanglements between Silicon Valley imperialism, racial technocapitalism, and fascism. By reading Sam Esmail's American television series, *Mr. Robot*, and by ethnographically engaging in hacking practices in Romania, my mapping of the US and Romania as postsocialist continues. During the first season of Mr. Robot, the anti-capitalist hacking collective, F Society, succeeds in taking down the world's largest megacorporation, E Corp. Nominated as Evil Corp and resembling a hybridity of Enron, Bank of America, and Google, the conglomerate owns 70 percent of the global consumer credit industry, stored in its database. After a season of scheming, F Society initiates what's called in hacking as a DDoS attack, inciting a financial revolution and an era subsequently referred to as post-5/9, collectively referencing date of the hack, the 2008 financial collapse, and the post-9/11 era.

To celebrate the hack's success, F Society holds what they describe as an "End of the World" party, advertised by posters mirroring the original theatrical bill of Stanley Kubrick's 1964 *Dr. Strangelove: Or How I Stopped Worrying and Learned to Love the Bomb*. Kubrick's Cold War film, a satire on American and Soviet politics in the nuclear age, culminates in the detonation of the Doomsday Machine, a mechanism that once set in place destroys all of humankind despite government attempts to thwart it. Mimicking the red, black, and white color schema and composition of the original poster, F Society hacks the original text, replacing it with, "No Bomb, Just the End of the World." For the hacktivists, a celebration of what is

known in computing as “zero day,” or the exploitation of a computer software vulnerability that upon detonation is unstoppable (doomsday), is both haunted and constituted by Cold War ghosts.

Today, the world is as divided as it was throughout the Cold War, but the divisions are differently striated, the “dystoptics” newly arranged. While the composition of Kubrick’s *Dr. Strangelove* poster detailed a Soviet hammer and sickle on one side, and the US flag on the other, F Society’s party announcement displaces Soviet imagery with E Corp’s logo, as for them it is corporations rather than governments that need to be destroyed. And conversely, for contemporary technocapitalism and the US imperialism that enables it, or techno-imperialism, anti-corporate hacktavists pose bomb-like threat. From the F Society to Anonymous (the latter a model for the former, also famous for their DDoS attacks), to hackers such as Guccifer and Guccifer 2.0 (known for having hacked Democratic Party emails, now pathologized by liberal media and pundits as “dangerous Romanians” and “Russian bears”), cybersecurity threats have reached the level of the bomb in US security discourse. As Joseph Masco observes, this landscape remains mired in “Cold War nuclear culture” tethered to “deep structural investment in the atomic bomb” (2014, 18), framed upon a “utopian-apocalyptic circuit” (2016, 312). Reflecting upon these troubling times, Karen Barad offers, “With fascism on the rise around the globe and the threat of an accelerated nuclear arms race at hand, tied to a perverse sense of the usability of nuclear weapons, the false security of global strategic deterrence based on MAD (the military doctrine of Mutually Assured Destruction) left exposed and undone by madness, compulsiveness, and hubris, the 20th century is anything but

past/passed" (2017, 57). Aligned with her call to consider the entanglement of 20th-century temporal forms with those of today, here I specifically focus upon hacking culture. Entanglement calls into question presumed geometric understandings of scale and topology, and instead foregrounds connectivity and boundary as more analytically salient (Barad 2007).

While assessing Cold War ghosts entangled in Western interpretations of Eastern illiberal technoculture, here I also read hacking imaginaries from the other side the updated Iron Curtain. There, hacking culture remains embedded in a different circuit, one nevertheless entangled with the West. Developed through an accumulation of socialist informatics histories and technoscience, it is also informed by the impacts of the disaster capitalism let loose in the aftermath of 1989. Romania, once a center of socialist-era computing, is today a hotbed of hacking, malware development, fast internet, and attempts to scam techno-imperialism. While defiant to the West, it also becomes absorbed into Cold War 2.0 geopolitical imaginaries, the latter determined to maintain the "common time" of liberal democracy against all technological threats. Just as Eastern Europe technoculture becomes recoded as inimical in the Cold War 2.0, so does anti-capitalist cyber deviance within the borders of the West, updating McCarthyistic hysteria. In this way, groups such as F Society, based in the West, are still read as the Cold War 2.0 enemy in liberal imaginaries. By conflating the enemy as anti-democratic, illiberal, authoritarian, and even fascist, liberal politics here script anti-capitalist technologies within the West as threats to global liberal democracy. In this way, liberal politics are ill equipped to map actual fascism and its postsocialist resurgence.

To understand this inimical entanglement, it helpful to engage what Ovidiu Ţichindeleanu describes as a decolonial approach to postsocialism (2010), attentive to the homogenizing subject effects of the Western Cold War dystoptics as they render both state socialism and anti-capitalist projects of the present as an illiberal aberration. Hacking culture (at least the kind unrecognizable in now normalized technocapitalist "hackathons") becomes coded as backwards in this process, with liberal grammars interpreting it against the interests of Western liberal democracy (Coleman 2013). In this process, an array of cybercultural forms from diverse locales become conflated as the technological enemy. This sloppy politic elides the violence that liberal techno-imperialism produces, much of which is racial and reliant upon racial technocapitalism. It also obscures the ways in which Western imperialism and technologies embolden new connections between technocapitalism and fascism, or technofascism. In this way, liberalism, by pointing its finger to the illiberal Cold War 2.0 enemy, enables racial and at times fascistic violence to grow in novel ways.

Postsocialist analytics are helpful in understanding this mechanism, particular when freed from their oft assumed geographic, epistemological, and temporal boundaries. As Neda Atanasoski argues, postsocialism itself can be read as "a global condition that produces a social, economic and cultural ethic that builds on and disavows previous racial and imperial formations" (2013, 23). Also helpful in assessing techno inimical forms in postsocialist times is Sharad Chari and Katherine Verdery's provocation to produce post-Cold War ethnographies that connect past and present imperial forms (2009). Post-Cold War ethnographic methods foreground imperial connections and discontinuities before and after socialism, especially when it

comes to racial technologies. For instance, and as I explore here, Western techno-imperiality was alive and well on both sides of the former Iron Curtain before socialism, engineering the attempted annihilation of Roma and Jews. What does it mean that it has been updated today? What does this update do to understandings of race, technology, and the future?

In this chapter, I focus upon postsocialist temporality, postsocialist technoculture, and the crisis of liberalism, particularly as the latter reinterprets racial, fascist, and imperial configurations. Reading hacking imaginaries from both sides of the Iron Curtain 2.0, I question how understandings of enemy and temporality have become, and continue to be, hacked anew. By this, I ask if hacking the inimical within the utopian-apocalyptic circuit board can do anything but reinterpret an older inimical form, and if instead, hacking time might offer a way out of the post-Cold War tendency to reproduce the enemy. In what follows, I supplement ethnographic work conducted in Romania with readings of fiction and politics, particularly as the lines between them continue to blur. As David Scott suggests, fiction offers insight into different modes of and relationships to time, be out-of-joint or apocalyptic, successive cyclical, orienting us towards conjunctures of temporal crises (2013, 68). By bringing together fiction with archival and ethnographic work conducted in Romania, I wire together a postsocialist analysis of techno-imperialism and technofascism, of disjunctures and cyberghosts, of aftermaths and circuit boards.

Postliberalism, Technofascism, and the post-Cold War Imaginary

In *Mr. Robot*, an FBI agent chases poster images for the End of the World

Party to find the now terrorist "F Society." At one point, in both desperation and loneliness, she asks her Amazon Echo AI, Alexa, "Alexa, when is the end of the world?" To this her robotic machine dispassionately replies with an anthropocenic forecast of portended planetary destruction, unless something else destroys the world first. Will the "End of the World" be caused by the anti-capitalist F Society, the monopolist E Corp, or impending planetary destruction? Whose dystopia will prevail? Alaina Lemon observes that during the Cold War, technology was used to feed superstitions on both sides of the Iron Curtain in two ways. First, "both superpowers cast enemies alternatively as manufacturers of ideological robots or as slaves to suspicion superstition" (2018, xvii). Second, both sides launched enormous efforts to use technology to shape imaginaries, opinions, and everyday life. What technological continuities and discontinuities must be excavated to understand the post-Cold War condition in which hacks replace bombs as technological threat, and in which paranoia lingers on and accumulates? What other rearrangements must be examined, particularly amidst contexts that scholars of postsocialism are marking as the rearticulated crisis of liberalism?

By this, I refer to what Dace Dzenovska and Larisa Kurtović (2017) describe as a global crisis in which what had been presumed to be the unilateral Western liberal endpoint of history following the collapse of Eastern European state socialism has been called into question with Trump's electoral success. This era, what many liberals have glossed as the "Trumpocalypse," unravels post-Cold War presumptions that the United States, the so-called "leader of the Free World," would lead liberal internationalism into Fukuyama's "end of history" (2006). While Trump espouses

neoliberalism like his predecessors, he does so by performing what Nikhil Pal Singh marks as a form of "racial nationalism," restoring "native 'American capitalism' to its place in the sun" (2017, 33, 170). Invoking what theorists have warned as the rise of an "inverted totalitarianism" (Wolin 2008), or the renewal of "imperialism beyond the liberal variant" (Mazower 2008), Trump's victory materially threatens immigrants, people of color, anarchists, women, queers, socialists, and more, as well as common time.

As liberalism's mortality is thrown into question, Cold War battles for its triumph are newly conjured. Revolution has long been a founding structure for organizing modern political time, tethering old endings to new beginnings, futures past, and futures still being dreamt, while sparking arrays of aftermaths haunted by past political possibilities (Scott 2013). As the Cold War is bookmarked by revolutions, beginning with those of antifascism and ending with those of liberal democracy, the dawn of "postliberalism" is haunted by an entanglement of antifascist, socialist, fascist, and neoliberal fantasies. As the Cold War was also marked by techno revolutions, from the bomb to cybernetics, techno-utopics and dystopics are also conjured anew.

To understand the recoding of liberalism in the technological present, Atanasoski and Vora offer the analytic of technoliberalism, or the reanimation of liberalism and fascism (2019, 28). These, they mark, are codependent twin pillars of US imperialism, rooted in Cold War discourses of automation and robotics, mediating the tension between totalitarianism and democratic liberalism. In the wake of Trump and the white loss that his presidency organizes against, Cold War fears of socialist

robotics are summoned. And yet, automation, as practiced within techno-imperial geographies, espouses racial capitalism and technofascism.

Here I am particularly interested in how racial technocapitalism functions to Orientalize and pathologize Eastern European postsocialist technoculture. In this way, Romania—as geographically a part of but not quite a part of Europe—is read, as Maria Todorova elaborates, as Europe's "incomplete self," perpetually awaiting enlightenment (1997, 18). Post-Cold War readings of Romania, and of Eastern European hackers more broadly, hinges upon prior Orientalist forms which both fetishize and disparage Eastern European racialized illiberalism. Orientalism, while alive and well before and during state socialism, has shifted in unique ways in postsocialist times. Technoliberalism masks the raciality of this process today, as well as a resurgence of fascism valorizing pre-socialist techno-urban imaginaries.

Technofascism can thus be understood as a postsocialist politic and fantasy garbed in technoliberal forms that updates pre-socialist racial values. Judith Butler argues that in these strange times, there has been a novel trend in which fascism appropriates leftist language and identity (2019). Here, I suggest that in parallel, fascist tendencies become sheltered by liberalism to pathologize anticapitalism. While hacktivist groups such as F Society rearrange both Cold War and communist technological imagery, racial technocapitalism's own fiction writers continue to mobilize Cold War apocalyptic visions, as without the existence of a Cold War inimical, their own teleology remains unhinged. However, in actual US Cold War contexts, these enemies were largely framed by rightwing McCarthyism and Reaganism; today, liberals have taken up the charge, conflating Communist, Eastern

European, and hacker as the illiberal harbinger of liberalism's potential collapse (as I go one to show in this chapter). Meanwhile the far right continues to pathologize all who aren't male, white, and capitalist, much as it always has done. How do we understand this rearrangement, one in which Cold War optics have become technologically scrambled in new ways upon Masco's utopian-apocalyptic circuit board? Decoding this encryption is essential in order to theorize the technological crises of liberalism and fascism in postsocialist temporalities.

Postsocialist methods are helpful tools in doing so, particularly as they facilitate examination of allegorical breaks and continuities, as well as what Scott describes as "the temporality of the aftermaths of political catastrophe, the temporal disjunctures involved in living on in the wake of past political time, amid the ruins, specifically, of postsocialist and postcolonial futures past" (2013, 2). In techno-imperial contexts, aftermaths of political catastrophe are haunted by Cold War ghosts, now transforming bombs and anti-capitalist hackers into terroristic communists. Of course, individuals hack into private email and bank accounts regularly to extract and exploit information-capital with no attached political manifesto, but nevertheless hackers remain divided in the liberal post-Cold War imaginary as either good (organizing hackathons funded by or benefiting entrepreneurs, startups, and governments), or as malignant (illiberally coordinating attacks against capitalist interests, whether explicitly political or not) (Coleman 2013). But there is more at work than simply the reconfiguration of the weaponry and enemy, as their transformation specifically coincides with a postsocialist rearrangement of race, class, and geopolitics.

Speculative Fictions of Zombie Socialism and Cybersecurity

Just months after the release of *Mr. Robot's* second season featuring the FBI's search for F Society, a new End of the World imaginary began circulating the liberal imaginary. Rather than the 5/9 or 9/11-era, this one became known as that of the 11/9, that of the Trumpocalypse. Largely ignored was that Trump's rival, Hillary Clinton, also ran a campaign built on Wall Street ties (Walsh 2016), and that throughout her political career, she has detonated apocalyptic conditions upon countless people within and beyond the US (Shulte 2016), in turn severing her from much of the left.

Although Esmail was a Clinton supporter, F Society is positioned against the corporate Wall Street ties that both the Democratic and Republic Parties have amassed. For instance, they cut off the brass testicles of the Wall Street bull during what is portrayed as Obama's presidency, dropping the severed metal detachment through the skylight of the Capitol dome during session. Yet while E Corp is run by CEO Phillip Price, who denigrates Trump (the latter depicted as running for office in Seasons 2 and 3), much of E Corp's architecture was intentionally modeled on New York's Trump Tower. Further, Esmail contextualized that he had Trump in mind during the first season's epic opening monologue about the top one percent of the one percent, or "the guys that play God without permission." Here Elliot, F Society's leader whose split personality is also Mr. Robot, chastises not just the Prices/Trumps of the world, but the very technological infrastructure constituted by (and constituting) liberalism. As he spews to his therapist upon being asked, "And what is it about society that disappoints you so much?":

> Oh, I don't know. Is it that we collectively thought Steve Jobs was a great man even when we knew he made billions off the backs of children? Or maybe it's that it feels like all our heroes are counterfeit. The world itself is just one big hoax. Spamming each other with our burning commentary bullshit masquerading as insight. Our social media faking as intimacy. Or is it that we voted for this. Not with our rigged elections but with our things, our property, our money. I'm not saying anything new, we all know we do this, not because "Hunger Games" books make us happy, but because we want to be sedated. Because it's painful not to pretend, because we're cowards. . . Fuck society.

It is thus fair to venture that F Society opposes the Trumps, Prices, and Clintons of the world, along with their attendant landscapes—geographies that while discursively and materially different, are nevertheless constituted by veneration of similar things, property, and money, sewn together through technologies of fake intimacy and exploitation. Such worlds have been grown out of the premise of post-Cold War era in which the triumph and inevitability of neoliberalism endures. And, until recently, it had been presumed that this globality would continue to signal its reign with the flag of democratic liberalism.

After Clinton's defeat, the Democratic Party began blaming outsiders rather than its own failings, from poor white Americans to social media, from the hacker Julian Assange to "the Russians" who hacked Democratic Party emails, revealing a Democratic Party plot to undermine the Party's populist socialist candidate, Bernie

Sanders. The hack was claimed by moniker Guccifer 2.0, who asserted Romanian origin. The original Guccifer, the 1.0 so to speak, was the Romanian Marcel Lehel Lazăr, fashioning his portmanteau to conjure "the style of Gucci and the light of Lucifer." He first made headlines in 2013, after hacking into the accounts of nearly 100 American politicians and celebrities, including that of Clinton's former advisor, revealing that Clinton had been illegally using her private email server while in office. Guccifer was caught and extradited to the US. Since then, he has admitted to having executed his hacks in Romania while using proxy servers in Russia.

But Lazăr was not behind the 2016 hacks; this time it was "Guccifer 2.0," who claimed Romanian origin, but who cybersecurity firms, contracted by the Democratic Party, found to be Russian. Based on flimsy evidence and brazen clues written in Cyrillic referencing the Soviet secret police, the cybersecurity firms connected Guccifer to Russian hacking groups named by the firms as Fancy Bear and Cozy Bear—bears being Russophobic stereotypes.[14] While more evidence has subsequently been produced, what I note here is the speculative nature of original allegations mobilized Cold War grammars. For instance, the CIA described the cyberattacks as cutting into "to the heart of our free society" (McCain et al., 2017), projecting what WikiLeaks described as neo-McCarthyite hysteria (Feliks 2017).

Regardless of the veracity of Russian coordination, what interests me here are the anticommunist fictions saturating the "Case Against Russia." For instance, cybersecurity firm ThreatConnect, who also analyzed the hack, concluded their investigative report by invoking George Lucas's *Star Wars'* prequel, "Episode III: Revenge of the Sith," another Cold War speculative fiction (ThreatConnect 2017).

First released in 1977, the space opera chronicles the struggles between good and evil, the former epitomized by the enlightened Jedi knights, the latter by the Empire, its Death Star, and the dark figures of Darth Vader and the Emperor Palpatine. ThreatConnect focuses on Palpatine, an evil Sith lord disguised as a "good" politician who attempts to influence Senate members, highlighting his proclamation that all remaining Jedi will be hunted down and defeated. Embedding an image of a Star Wars poster in their analysis, ThreatConnect mobilizes against "Dark Side" propaganda, conflating Putin with Palpatine and his Death Star.

Not only has Star Wars been argued to reference Cold War space battles, but also growing racism within Silicon Valley, today's heart of cybersecurity. As Curtis Marez observes, Lucas was influenced by his childhood landscape which, at the time, was being mobilized by a Latinx farmworker socialist movement largely led by Cesar Chavez (2013). Cold War rhetoric and ongoing McCarthyism read this and other nearby social justice movements from the Black Panthers to the Brown Berets as threats to US liberalism and to the white pastoral landscape of Silicon Valley (Chung 2016). By studying Lucas's influences and oeuvre, Marez argues that Darth Vader can be read as demonological rendering of Chavez himself, attempting to lead a socialist rebellion within the heart of a growing technoculture. In the telescoping of the galactic tale into the present, ThreatConnect positions their enemy as the dark socialist other.

And yet Putin, like Trump, is a white capitalist man, squashing social justice movements left and right. Similarly, as Lemon observes, during the Cold War, both the US and the Soviet Union "pressed for dismantling colonial orders that had

produced slavery, resource extraction, and white nationalism." Yet both superpowers "continued to build upon colonial institutions and imperial infrastructures" (2018, xvii). Arguably, this reliance and construction has endured into the current post-Cold War moment. But then, how is it that Putin/Palpatine becomes read as a racialized socialist, and why is it that Russian/Romanian cyber threats are still racialized as "bears" by the West, much as they were centuries ago?

Alexei Yurchack suggests that "if Trump's win is reduced simply to his alleged collusion with a foreign power, real politics become displaced onto the stereotyped figures of foreign agents and patriots who oppose them" (2017, 3). These stereotyped and upturned figures become central characters in the scrambling of anticommunist fiction upon the circuit board of the postsocialist present. They rely upon reading socialism from the side of the post-Cold War victors, so that, in the words of Konrad Petrovszky and Ovidiu Țichindeleanu, the 1989 "revolutions" are read as "the conclusion of a natural process that brought about the demise of the second pathological ideology of the 20th century (communism, following fascism)," with the postsocialist era written "as the beginning of a global transition towards 'normality'" (2011, 40). This liberal mode of historiography effectively straightjackets socialist upon fascism, positioning both as antithetical to neoliberal normality, deleting historic and contemporary entanglements of antifascist and socialist politics. As Liviu Chelcea and Oana Druță suggest, "Socialism—as a zombie and ghost—is important in the production of neoliberal monoglossia and guilt by association for those who challenge the dominant wisdom of trickle-down economics, thus supporting the worldview and, ultimately, the interests of the winners of post-

1990 transition" (2016, 522). This anticommunism, or "zombie socialism," not only positions socialist projects (and their endurance) as a void, but also obscures the violence of capitalist injections into former socialist spaces.

Ethnographic practices are helpful in thinking beyond the reproducing and scrambling of zombie socialist stereotypes upon the utopic-apocalyptic circuit board. In the words of Chari and Verdery, "As important as post-Cold War ethnographies are to perceiving continuities, they also help us understand discontinuities in the making of post-Cold War enemies" (2009, 26). These ethnographies help interrogate how, in the aftermath of state socialism (as well as numerous colonialisms), the enemy is reconfigured through the employment of "racial technologies and expertise to differentiate spaces and populations through their contrasting propensities to life and death" (2009, 27). By reading the allegorical tactics of liberalism's defenders ethnographically, it becomes clear that both new and old modes of racializing threat entwine, facilitating the pathologization of Eastern European hackers.

The zombie socialism employed by cybersecurity firms like ThreatConnect illuminates the racial technologies and expertise they rescramble to ultimately sell products and knowledge that will somehow save liberal US democracy from. These scrambled imaginaries, informed by the Cold War allegorical, embed older fictions into new scripts. For instance, in 2015, Norton Security, a Silicon Valley firm most known for their Symantec security product, released an 18-minute documentary titled "The Most Dangerous Town on the Internet," directed by Sean Dunne. The film, embedded on their site, focuses on cybercrimes emergent from Râmnicu Vâlcea, the Romanian city infamously known as "Hackerville" by the West (Bhattacharjee 2011).

Featuring an interview with Guccifer 1.0 conducted in a Romanian prison prior to extradition, the film is set in dark, grey frames, summoning Cold War imaginaries of dystopic Communist Romania, aligning Communist-era materialities into pathologic landscapes (Fehérváry 2013). Also featured is hacker Tinkode (Răzvan Manole Cernăianu), ill-famed for having hacked the Pentagon, the US Army, YouTube, SUN Microsystems, Google, NASA, Facebook, and more. While Guccifer stands by his cyber activity, driven by anti-US imperial and anti-corporate politics, Tinkode, after being apprehended was offered a plea bargain to work for the "other side"—cybersecurity experts.

The film, shot in the cold, stark winter, and stylized to sensationalize the bleakness of Romanian cyber-criminality in postsocialist Râmnicu Vâlcea, appeals to US Cold War sketchy and illiberal dystoptics. Some characters are filmed against crumbling Communist-era buildings and icy ground, wearing hoodies that obscure their identities—something akin to Cold War ruinous ghosts, both materially and virtually haunting the "free world." Yet viewers are offered redemptive liberal hope by Kevin Haley, a "global expert in the fight against cybercrime." Haley advertises Norton's own Symantec Global Intelligence Network. Viewers can easily navigate to Norton's page from the video, thereby ensuring that their digital life will never be hacked by a Romanian cybercriminal from "the most dangerous town on the internet." In this sense, the Silicon Valley security firm both creates a Cold War narrative and product-based remedy—the ultimate technocapitalist plot.

Hacking Transition

To pathologize underground Râmnicu Vâlcea hacking culture without critically examining the deployment of zombie socialism is to replay and scramble Western Cold War ghost stories. It is also to, like a zombie, feed off the living dreams of anti-capitalist alterity with the deadness of capitalist omnipotence. After all, capitalist injections upon the local Râmnicu Vâlcea economy have been largely disastrous, with former state-owned factories such as Râmnicu Vâlcea Chemical Works collapsing, leading to widespread unemployment and hacking evolving as one of many means of postsocialist survival. But also, informatics and hacking have a long history in Romania, ones instructive to gloss through here in understanding the IT present.

It was during socialism that desires of technological modernity were in part what drove Romania to partially separate from Moscow's bloc trade agreement. Rather than producing food for the bloc, Romania wanted to develop heavy industry and technology, landing it a dissident status that would only grow after Ceaușescu took over. Determined to excel in informatics, polytechnics, and cybernetics, he developed research centers throughout the state. These specialized in hacking Western products and licenses, so that by the time of the regime's collapse, Romania was exporting the most computers in the Eastern bloc. However, after transition, the previously state-owned Felix computer factory was divided into joint stock companies and sold, much like Râmnicu Vâlcea Chemical Works, and real estate speculators determined that the land that the factory sat upon was worth more than the factory itself. Buildings and land were sold, and Felix became a ghost, haunted by

futures past. Meanwhile, Western companies came in to take advantage of the new market, and IBM absorbed Felix workers, meanwhile delivering messages to Romanian managers about the technological merits of capitalism and the backwardness of socialism.

And yet, despite these early attempts to draw Romania into the global time of neoliberalism, resistances and refusals ensued, some more intentional than others. For instance, despite IBM's early imperatives on Felix and its attempts to build a market, it failed and was forced to retreat at first because Romanians preferred to assemble their own computers from imported parts. As I've learned through dozens of conversations, this practice of hacking hardware and soon software too became everyday practice. People would collect Romanian computer magazines that instructed readers on how to backtrack, develop DIY radio, pirate software, theses on virtual reality and techno-skepticism, and even "the phenomenon of the hacker." In 1996, according to the Business Software Alliance, 86 percent of Romania's software had been pirated, given that there was little legislation protecting intellectual property (Fiscutean 2014b). At first, pirated software was not sold for profit, a phenomenon that only began after inflation skyrocketed in the late 1990s. Still today, Romania's piracy rate is twice that of the EU, and ideas of paying for films, music, and software is considered relatively ludicrous amongst the public. As one hacker contextualized while telling me of her own forays into hacking in the 1990s, "We were just downloading things because we couldn't afford anything. In the US, you pay $15 for a CD. No big deal. But here, that's more than lots of people in the 90s were making in one day alone. It's not like CDS are less expensive here. It's the same." This is also

the case with software, books, and games, he told me.

By the time the internet emerged, DIY practices grew even stronger. Inspired by television sharing practices of the prior decades, many Romanians bought internet packages from state companies, and then set up independent networks in their blocs to sell to neighbors. Because internet dial-up packages were expensive at first, and given the intense poverty that post-transition incited, generally one person would buy internet and then share or sell it to people in their block, wiring cables haphazardly. As people had already been pirating satellite stations from bordering countries during Communism, defying the Communist Party's restrictive one (and briefly two) national television channels, and as the magazines taught wiring techniques. Stringing cables across apartments and blocks of flats "was really not so fancy," I've been told. LAN networks and soon fiber optics came in to remedy the slowness of dialup (which would get even slower every night when the downloading would begin *en masse*), again strung haphazardly. Today still, telephone poles, from Cluj to Bucharest, and adorned in a massive array of cables, mostly fiber optics, invoking a sort of organic chaos.

Writing of *jugaad*, or hacking practices in India that exist outside of the organized sectors in India, Amit Rai theorizes hacking and DIY infrastructure creation as "an everyday practice that potentializes relations that are external to their terms, opening different domains of action and power to experimentation sometimes resulting an easily valorized workaround, sometimes producing space-times that momentarily exit from the debilitating regimes of universal capital" (2019, 6). These practices become part of urban metabolic processes that permit certain bypasses,

patches, and workarounds. Over time, they become stabilized into the official network, yet their existence remains obscured and only known to those initiated into the system. DIY wiring in Romania performed a similar function, although unlike in India, today most wires have become absorbed into corporate networks, or left hanging abandoned.

In 2018, Bucharest-based playwright David Schwartz debuted *Portofele Virtuale: Proiect Generația Y (Virtual Wallet: Generation Y Project)* in Râmnicu Vâlcea, based upon hacking accounts of the city's youth during the transition period. Several acts entangle, in which it becomes clear that hacking in the most dangerous town on the internet was derived through malice, but rather through play and attempts to profit despite techno-imperialism. Most people that the Western world might label "hackers" are just those trying to survive in a faltering economy, who engage in scams and schemes devised in internet cafes and bedrooms alike. As David told me over coffee one evening after the play's first debut, he was amazed at how many of hackers he interviewed were just kids whose parents worked abroad, and who were able to use their foreign language skills to deceive Westerners online.

For instance, the opening act of the play (funded by and performed in Râmnicu Vâlcea's National Theater), "Primul Jaguar (The First Jaguar)," begins in 2004, and features two then ten-year-old friends, Ștefan and Cătă, from a quiet neighborhood known as Tic Tac. Ștefan's mom works at the TricoTextil factory, owned by an Italian firm. His dad is a bodyguard at the Coca-Cola factory. Meanwhile, Cătă's father works on a construction site, and his mother is living in Italy, sporadically sending money back home to her poor family. It was during that

period that internet cafes began popping up in Tic Tac. Then, overnight, hordes of fancy cars, from Jaguars to BMWs, manifested. The audience that I was viewing the play with were mostly high school students on a Tuesday evening class trip. As Ștefan and Cătă offered detailed explanations of Tic Tac, the youth surrounding me began laughing hysterically, perhaps somewhat familiar with the accounts that the young actors were offering.

As kids, Ștefan and Cătă were excited about the prospect of playing internet games such as Counterstrike in the cafés, and so they sheepishly began to hang out in them. They also romanticized the expensive vehicles sprouting up out of the streets, especially the Jaguar that appeared one day, owned by Ștefan's upstairs neighbor, Viorel. Soon, Viorel began asking Ștefan to translate for him online in the internet café. Ștefan barely knew how to, but called upon another friend, who helped him get the job done. Before long, Ștefan was making more money than he ever had seen in his life. Yet, as Ștefan notes, he had no idea what a hacker even was. "I know the word, in English, but what is a hacker?" he questions.

The play then fast-forwards to seven years later, as Ștefan recounts drinking a Radler beer one summer evening in Tic Tac. The neighborhood had fallen apart, despite the presence of scattered Mustang cars and mega-luxury possessions. And all of a sudden that evening, police swarmed into the neighborhood, looking for Viorel. Ștefan felt like he was in a really bad videogame, filled with machine guns and masked officers. After Viorel had been jailed, Ștefan discovered that his upstairs neighbor had been one of the first hackers in the city. Somehow, through an online scam that Ștefan had unknowingly assisted in, Viorel had profited from the sales of

two million helicopter without having ever really ever sold one.

One of my friends, Vlad, a former "hacker" and currently unemployed, remembers this transitional period well. Soon, he recounts, people began moving out of internet cafés and into their own home networks. "It was super easy," he explained to me one evening, sitting in our friend's cooperative underground anarchist bar in Bucharest where we met a couple of years before and where David also works. "And it was really good internet. You would just string the cables, and voila." Also, because the networks were local and small, it was easy to share music, games, software, and more. Numerous people have recounted this era to me, often with slight grins on their faces. There were also tons of internet cafes. "Before internet cafes, in the 1990s, Bucharest was a pretty dangerous place to just be walking around," he remembered. "It was sketchy. But then the internet cafes popped up, and suddenly the hooligans who were roaming the streets jumped into the internet cafes to play games and hack." It was because of cafes that he recounts the streets becoming less sketchy. Maybe he himself was sketchy too though, he laughed. "And then eventually everyone got internet in their homes, and the internet cafés dwindled. But a lot of hacking in the 1990s and early 2000s took place in them," he reminisced, as a local DJ friend began amplifying queer techno music in the back of bar.

Vlad and his friends did their hacking through a home network and not in the internet cafés. They discovered a burgeoning market, he explained, talking above the beats. Video chatting. While today video chatting is a huge source of employment in Romania and the Ukraine, in 2000s, Vlad and his friends, after much studying, had found a way to hack porn video chat services in the US. "The porn industry is divided

between the US, Germany, and Japan," he explained matter-of-factly. "They have the monopoly. US porn watchers don't know anything about German or Japanese porn models as those worlds are contained and separated." And so, he and his friends found clips of a German porn model, broke the clips into various segments. They then pretended to be a Romanian video chat sex worker for in US chat room, where they would play clips of the German model and pretend to be her. "Back then, a lot of people didn't have microphones in their computers, so it was possible to just tell a client that the mic was broken and only use the text chat function. So, we could really pretend to be the model." Vlad didn't text himself, but rather was in charge of making fake ID cards for the operation on Photoshop. "I'm really good at this," he laughed.

His friends would text with US clients, often suggesting that the client might want to see them do a certain thing, and then they would play the clip of the German model doing just that. But of course, they weren't her. "See, hacking isn't so much about technology," he told me. "It's about deception. Guccifer only made it to 8th grade, after all," he recounted, grinning. One of Vlad's buddies was really into US basketball, and so sometimes he would talk about basketball with the clients, who were always so impressed that a Romanian woman knew so much about the subject. "He'd get paid to type about basketball for hours," Vlad smiled. They would get caught a lot, because there was this "screenshot thing" that would monitor the chat room sites to see if the same images were used repeatedly. But then they'd make a new IDs and do it again. They made a ton of money. In fact, the US was forced to change laws around video chatting because of what they did, he explained. "I think the US was obsessed with us because they're obsessed with vampires. They think

we're sucking the blood out of their businesses." Eventually, Vlad and his friends were forced to stop hacking, in part because people have stopped typing in video chats, and they couldn't find a way to adapt their technique.

That was not the only technological development that impeded Vlad's brief hacking career. Soon enough, the independent networks became seen as an extractable commodity for larger networks. Seemingly overnight, larger firms started bribing everyone into selling their networks, Vlad remembers. He was the last one in his neighborhood to resist. Sometimes RDS, the large firm that bought the smaller networks, would work with building administrators to threaten people that if they didn't take down their cables, they would get in trouble, citing small technicalities regarding the size or length of the wiring. Sometimes they would just cut cables. The buying up and consolidation of smaller networks, like the extraction of the Felix computer factory, points to the tenor of postsocialist IT exploitation. But specifically, it reveals that techno-imperialism in Romania is not the establishing of new IT infrastructure from scratch, but rather parasiting on what was already there.

Following IBM and RDS, an array of Western firms swept into Romania to appropriate all that they could, from language to labor, from infrastructure to knowledge. While counter technopublics persist, today, it is more common when discussing IT with someone to hear tales of their exploitative labor working for multinational firms, and sometimes dreams of entrepreneurship. Despite that Romania maintains Europe's fastest internet—an effect of the proliferation of wiring, most networks have now been bought up by larger firms, and most people still feel technologically behind. As a friend who worked for a small Romanian tech company

for four years told me, everyone in her office fantasized of one day working for Oracle, which has a branch in Bucharest's Pipera neighborhood, haunted by the specter of Felix. But as another friend told me, after landing a job at Oracle herself, labor there is numbing, and all she does is answer calls and emails, managing to sneak in YouTube videos on ten-minute breaks in which her brain can't do anything else. Another colleague explained that he is "no more than a slave" in his IT company, and that all the industry has ever been is a culture of masters and slaves.

The country won't even allow him to obtain freelancer status, so now he dreams of landing a job in the West. But is landing an IT job in the West really all that liberating? For instance, after Elliot obtains a position working for Evil Corp by day (while by night his alter-ego Mr. Robot tries to destroy the company), he describes his daily routine:

> Blend in. Look bored, broken. Get a blank office stare on my face. This is how they do it, isn't it? How they're able to watch the world fall apart around them? Because to them, this is normal. It's all they know. Maybe I can learn from them. I wish I could see myself through your eyes. Don't you wish you could see yourself through mine?

If aspirations of becoming technologically Western mean becoming bored and zombie-like, perhaps illiberal hacking plots reveal a decolonial politic aimed to crash the system and engender a runtime error. Perhaps this is what F Society and anti-capitalist hackers are trying to do – crash the system. Elliot suggests that runtime

errors sometimes occur due to corrupted memory. If those dreaming of working for Western IT firms could see Elliot's life through their own eyes, perhaps their aspirations would shatter, corrupting memory programmed by zombie socialism and its unidirectional optics. In this way, anti-capitalist hackers might be understood as those who attempt to corrupt the newly configured memory of neoliberalism's inevitability and globality, uncovering other memories still lurking beneath.

Hacking Orientalism

As Romanian scammers attempting to make some quick cash, are, in many ways, hacking transition and techno-imperialism, they also, at times, play the West's ongoing Orientalizing of the East. Turning back to Schwartz's play, we encounter two bored British IT workers, Paul and Dennis, who work out of a firm in England. In their five-minute break between monotonous tasks, they turn to eBay. Paul, excitedly landing upon a shirt for sale, asks Dennis if he's ever heard of an "I-E." When Paul explains that it's a handmade traditional shirt from Romania, Dennis replies, "From Romania? I thought they only exported scroungers and cheap labor." Paul protests, to which Dennis laughs, "What? Oh, I forgot I'm with Mr. Liberal at the office." Paul goes on to explain that his girlfriend's friend just came back from a Romanian business trip, where she picked up a lovely handmade blouse with red and blue flowers stitched around the neckline. It is this type of shirt that, in the play, two Romanian scammers, Roxana and Marius, are trying to sell on eBay. While one can buy a traditional Romanian blouse for less than a few euro in Romania (although handmade ones are indeed expensive), Roxana and Marius began selling them online

for 49 euro, noting that the organic objects are handmade from a tiny, traditional village, and that the pattern around the neck marks "the walk of life." Enthusiastically, Paul exclaims, "Wow look at this, it's proper fancy. I am telling you Dior has a collection inspired from these 'yiaaahs.' They say it's from a northern village in 'Mermoores' . . . 'Mairmures.' They say this area of Romania, the Carpathians, benefits from one of the most powerful energetic shields of the planet." Continuing, "Mate, I'm not joking. Apparently, there are places that have this kind of energetic charge, places where the earth vibrates." Elated, Dennis then asks if Paul can buy ten, since they're so cheap. By playing into the Western racialization of the East, Roxana and Marius are able to hack Orientalism and techno-imperialism alike to make some quick cash. Stories like these abound in Romania, as in many ways, hacking technoculture grew in order to resist the economic devastation that postsocialist transition sparked. Of course, hacking was alive and well before 1989, but it was really after 1989 that it flourished.

Techno-imperialism today parasites upon the remnants of socialist technoculture and infrastructure. Or, if following Marxist critique, techno-imperialism sucks the blood of dead socialist economics. After all, in Capital, Marx employs the allegory of the vampire to describe the violence of capitalist economics. "Capital is dead labour which, vampire-like, lives only by sucking living labour, and lives the more, the more labour it sucks," he writes (1976, 342). In this way, US capital is financed by the "capitalized blood of children" (ibid., 920). Comparing exploitation in the factory system with that of prior peasant appropriation by landowners, Marx looks to Romania for exemplification: "For Moldavia the

regulations are even stricter. ‘The 12 corvée days of the Règlement organique,’ cried a boyar, drunk with victory, ‘amount to 365 days in the year’” (ibid., 348).

Interestingly, the “Wallachian boyar” in this text happens to be none other than 15th-century Vlad the Țepeș, otherwise known as Vlad the Impaler and Count Dracula (Neocleous 2003, 670). But what does this mean for blood-sucking US capitalism to be modeled on an infamous Romanian aristocrat, even before Bram Stoker’s 1897 gothic horror novel, the latter of which interpreted Vlad Dracul through British imperial tropes fearful of Eastern contamination? How does one make sense of the simultaneous Orientalism of the East by the West, as in the case of Dennis and Paul’s blouse fetish, and the racialization of it as illiberal and seeping with threat to US democracy?

Although Western capitalism did not originate in Romania, it did emerge through colonial practices that both extracted from and racialized Eastern Europe, among many other places (Mark and Slobodian 2018). But that a Romanian medieval count is used to allegorize the violence of capitalism for Marx speaks to the West’s longstanding exoticization, paranoia, and squeamishness of the East (Lemon 2018; Wolff 1994), even in Marxist analysis. After all, per Marx’s own metaphors, we might understand technologies of extraction as employed in postsocialist Romania as vampiric. And yet, arguably, the very concept of “vampiric” is vampiric in and of itself, appropriating an already appropriated figure to articulate the violence of extraction. But perhaps this double figuration is helpful in understanding the appropriation of underground technoculture more fully, as well as the longue durée of Orientalist interpretations of the East. These, I find, are uniquely rearranged and

reprogrammed in postsocialist times.

Although early DIY Romanian technoculture and infrastructure defied techno-imperial imperatives after 1989, techno-imperialism did not give up so easily. In the 2000s, Western firms began sweeping into outsource socialist IT knowledge and prowess, galvanizing upon legacies of informatics and cybernetics. Also preyed upon was Romania's high English proficiency—a talent that many people attribute to the widespread dissemination of 1990s US television (subtitled and un-subtitled alike). Even hacking, which emerged to defy early postsocialist neoliberal impositions, and which built upon socialist-era technological prowess, is now fetishized by technocapitalism and its technologies of labor extraction, epitomized in corporate-sponsored hacking parties, tech hub meetups, and the like.

While many hackers such as Tinkode have become absorbed into capitalism and its zombie socialist interpretations, others have refused sublation. These, as a post-Cold War phenomenon, are now the Cold War enemy by the Cold War victors. This figure is said to suck the blood of liberal democracy, threatening invasion at any time, from my friend Vlad, to more infamous figures such as Guccifer. These figures are now rendered as parallel figures to Stoker's Dracula, which was informed by British imperial literary invasion motifs. In these, the dangerous and contaminated Eastern European other might at any moment penetrate and destroy the purity of mainland England (Atanasoski 2013). As Vlad suggested, the US may be so obsessed with Romanian hackers because the West remains so transfixed with vampires.

Yet at the same time, Dracula also represents capitalist accumulation, vis-à-vis Marx. As Franco Moretti suggests, "like capital, Dracula is impelled towards a

continuous growth, an unlimited expansion of his domain: accumulation is inherent in his nature" (1988, 94). This interpretation has informed an array of scholars, including Donna Haraway, who writes: "The vampire is . . . the marauding figure of unnaturally breeding capital, which penetrates every whole being and sucks it dry in the lusty production and vastly unequal accumulation of wealth" (1997, 215). In this way, the threat of the vampire, which gained influence in the West through Orientalist literary motifs, is combined with the threat of capital, vis-à-vis Marx. But in the case of postsocialist Romania, source of the originary vampire, it is capital threatening to destroy techno-imperial defiance. We can thereby see how much Orientalism, as a racial concept, has become rearranged in postsocialist times. Today, Orientalism saturates both capitalist manifestations of liberal democracy (which thereby pathologize the illiberal hacker), and in anti-capitalist readings of capitalism's extractive and appropriative technologies. As Haraway suggests, as an undead figment, the vampire violates classifications and taxonomies, enabling categories to travel (1997, 214). This, she suggests, is particularly salient in thinking theorizing race, blood, and contamination.

The contradiction of the vampire illuminates that in post-Cold War contexts, it is not enough to maintain an anti-capitalist approach in assessing the violence of techno-imperialism. One needs an anti-capitalistic approach that understands capitalism's historic and ongoing reliance upon racism, as scholars of racial capitalism have well argued. In Robin D. G. Kelley's words, from its origins, capitalism "was 'racial' not because of some conspiracy to divide workers or justify slavery and dispossession, but because racialism had already permeated Western

feudal society" (2017). As Cedric Robinson puts it, inter-European racialization was a colonial process, one that involved settlement, invasion, expropriation, and racial hierarchy (1983). The original European proletarians were racial subjects, and included Irish, Jews, Roma, and Slavs. These "were victims of dispossession (enclosure), colonialism, and slavery within Europe" (Kelley 2017). This has fomented the racialization of Eastern European people by the West, but also the double racialization that racialized people such as Roma within Romania experience. This raciality has long been enfolded into Orientalizing processes that can be traced by to Enlightenment contexts, if not earlier (Mark and Slobodian 2018; Todorova 1997; Wolff 1994).

The figure of the vampire and its contradictory roles in modern history is useful in theorizing an array of interpretations, all racial, of postsocialist Romanian technoculture. The contradiction points to the need of delinking understandings of socialism from Marxist interpretation alone, or at least from a form of Marxism that prioritizes class over race. While other chapters in this dissertation project study the ramifications of Marxist humanism and class-centric analyses upon Romanian Roma communities, here I point out that today, techno-imperialism functions by racializing Romanian technoculture. This is another form of racial technocapitalism. While vampirically exploiting all that might be absorbed by Silicon Valley, it also continues to exoticize Romania while also pathologizing its deviance. This travels beyond formerly state-socialist space, informing neo-McCarthyistic portrayals of anti-capitalist hacking collectives within the heart of techno-imperialism, such as F Society.

IBM and Technofascism

It was in 2011 that Ken Jennings and Brad Rutter, two of the game show Jeopardy's most successful players, lost to IBM's Watson AI supercomputer in a San Francisco tournament. Jennings had been showing momentum, but then, a question was asked pertaining to an author inspired by William Wilkinson's "An Account of the Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia." While all three players correctly guessed Bram Stoker, Watson AI wagered more money, enabling its victory and galvanizing its fame. Watson AI, named after IBM founder Thomas J. Watson, runs on a supercomputer powered by 2,880 IBM Power750 cores, or computing brains, and 15 terabytes of memory. It relies upon DeepQA, a software architecture that merges natural language with its own structured information. This is a huge improvement from IBM's 1997 Deep Blue, which famously beat the chess master Garry Kasparov through mathematical calculations. Prior to the Jeopardy match, it had been developing its skills to assist in online healthcare services and banking with Citigroup, so that fraud and identify theft can be detected. As was joked after jeopardy, Watson may be on a path towards "HAL," the computer of Stanley Kubrick's other film, the 1968 2001: A Space Odyssey (Takahashi 2011). As many have since noted, it was no coincidence that HAL's initials were just one letter in front of IBM's. But how did Watson know about Romania and Stoker's Orientalist novel?

While Stoker wrote Dracula without ever having traveled to Romania, as it turns out, Watson had made the journey. As I suggest here, it wasn't just financial

calculations that enabled this post-Cold War robotic AI to win at jeopardy; IBM has a deep history in Romania, one constitutive of both pre-and postsocialist technological worlds. So do histories of cybernetics and robotics, ones worth thinking through to assess how pre-socialist technological pasts are being updated in the postsocialist technofascist present. While IBM rushed into Romania after socialism ended in 1989, absorbing Romania's technological workforce and its national Felix computer factory, leading to the factory's disintegration, this was not its first visit.

In Romania, the word "computer" has traditionally been *calculator* (although now people often just say computer). Thus when going through archives at Bucharest's National Archives, I was surprised to find mention of *calculatoare* (computers) that predated normative narratives of Romania's first computer, the CIFA-1, built by Victor Toma in 1957 in the National Physics Institute outside of Bucharest in Măgurele (today the Institute is home to the world's largest nuclear laser project, ELI—Extreme Light Infrastructure, largely financed by the European Regional Development Fund, while provided parts from France). How could it be that there were calculatoare being used in 1938, I wondered? Were there other hidden firsts in the archives yet to be uncovered?

Technically, the *calculatoare* that I found were written as *mașini electrice* and *electrocontabila*, what we might refer to as simple calculators. I would have assumed that they were just simple counting machines, but what confused me was that in 1938 and 1941, they were being shipped to Romania's National Institute of Statistics by the Compania Electrocontabila Watson S.A.R. headquartered at the International Business Machines Corporation at 590 Madison Avenue in New York – the

headquarters of yes, IBM. I found these records in the archives of Sabin Manuilă, who had been leading the National Statistics Institute in the interwar era, in creating a national census with which the fascist regime could target Jews and Roma. As a former student of the eugenicist Iului Moldovan, Manuilă claimed that Jews were "not a racial, but an economic problem," but also a "sentimental" one (1934, 12-13). Meanwhile, he asserted that Roma, "Romania's racial issue," people who he described as subversive and dysgenic, should be forcibly sterilized (Bucur 2005, 333; Thorne 2011, 185-187; Turda and Gillette 2014, 229). Meanwhile, wary of miscegenation, he supported Jewish segregation laws, and even proposed creating a "Superior Council for the Protection of the Race" (Turda 2007, 438). He worked for the criminalization of sex work, creating surveys to push his agenda. But how to implement his white heteronormative future? As he determined, a census was needed to determine where racialized bodies were, so that plans could be made accordingly. The 1930 census had showed 756,930 Jewish people in Romania, but in 1941, Germany claimed that half of Romania's Jews were eliminated, but that still two million remained (Black 2001, 382). A new census was needed to verify how many Jew and Roma remained, but how? As it turns out, IBM was instantly ready to assist him.

Creating machines for census counting is in fact part of IBM's own "origin" story. In the late 19th century, US census employee Herman Hollerith came up with the idea of punch cards to be used to create reliable demographic census data. It was the German Deutsche Hollerith Maschinen Gesellschaft corporation, or Dehomag that created a license for such a tool, which it sold to the US industrialist Charles Flint,

cementing the Computing-Tabulating-Recording Company, headed up Thomas Watson (Black 2001, 33). Soon Watson took over the company, rebranding it International Business Machines (IBM), and making Dehomag as subsidiary (ibid., 44). After Hitler rose to power in 1933, Watson was quick to establish a business relationship with him and the Nazi enthusiastic Dehomag, creating technology that could count Roma, Jews, queers, Communists, and more to help with fascist purification. Watson himself began what would be biannual excursions to Germany in 1933, financing the country's first IBM factory in the midst of increasing racial violence. In 1937, he even received a medal from Hitler (ibid., 243). As Edwin Black tracks in his book on IBM and Nazism (2001), Watson saw Nazi Germany as a business opportunity, and granted Dehomag powers in other Nazified countries.

When IBM expanded to Poland as World War II started, its sole purpose was to provide Nazis with extermination technology and eliminate calculator competition (ibid., 107). Not only were IBM's punch card machines used for censuses, but as Black reveals, also tracking and coordinating freight train routes to concentration camps, using up to 200 million punch cards in the process (ibid., 270). Archives reveal that IBM's subsidiary, Compania Electrocontabila Watson, was established in Bucharest in 1938, claiming $240,000 in equipment, leasable machines, and punch cards. The subsidiary primarily worked with the Communications Ministry, statistical offices, census bureaus, and railroads. IBM Europe fulfilled Romania's orders, with IBM New York closely monitoring all developments. Meanwhile, the Compania Electrocontabila Watson's facility in Bucharest, with its own Swift Press, printed over twenty million punch cards annually (Black 2001, 387). In 1941, Manuilă began

his lofty new census project, which spanned ten days and employed 29,000 census takers, resulting in a complete inventory or all people, property, assets, and even animals in Romania. IBM designed questions and hired specially trained enumerators to specifically determine if someone was Jewish even if they were not overtly "Jewish-seeming." Further, one report specifies that if someone perceived as Roma declined to admit Roma ancestry, the census taker should write "Țigan" (ibid., 384). This data was then used by the fascist Marshal Antonescu, who, right before Romania joined the war in 1941, demanded lists of all Jews, Communists, and sympathizers throughout the country.

He also called for the shipping of all Jews between the Siret and Prut rivers to concentration camps on trains already scheduled, working with his Second Section intelligence unit and three statistical offices to monitor racial groups (ibid., 385).

Continued census practices, or "the science of the state" (Foucault 2004), resulted in the deaths of at least 270,000 Jews and 10,000 Roma in Romania (Kelso 2013). After the war, blame was placed entirely on Germany, obviating the role that Romanians played, but also that of the US IT company. Meanwhile, IBM filed compensation claims for machine damage. Obviated was the role that IBM played in Romania's own sociotechnical imaginaries. As Sheila Jasanoff observes, while individuals and small groups may harbor sociotechnical visions, when the vision spreads, it becomes an imaginary, encoding "not only visions of what is attainable through science and technology but also of how life ought, or ought not, to be lived; in this respect they express a society's shared understandings of good and evil" (2015, 4). In this way, sociotechnical imaginaries are mobilized through technology to inhere

specific futures, in this case that of eugenics. By using human and non-human data collection, IBM and the racist state enumerated “commodification and dispossession through accounting” (McKittrick and Weheliye 2017, 32).

One of the men working for the National Statistics Institute during Manuilă and IBM’s census was Sterian Pompiliu, who today, at the age of 100, is considered the oldest blogger in Romania (Matzal 2018). Mostly he writes about what is happening at the Moses Rosen senior center, a home for Jewish elders on the far edges of Bucharest (named after Bucharest’s chief rabbi during socialism). I’ve had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Pompiliu at the center, where today seniors collaborate with the Macaz Theatre Coop, making political plays about political futures past and those yet to come. Most members of the coop identify as antifascist and either anarchist or socialist, as do the Moses Rosen seniors with whom they collaborate.

Pompiliu’s own politics grow out of his experiences growing up in 1920s Bucharest, when he enjoyed working on Abascus calculators in school. After, he enrolled ASE, but he was expelled after the banning of all Jewish students from university courses. Soon after, laws were passed to expropriate Jewish property, and Pompiliu, homeless, was forced to sleep on a straw bed in a make-shift lean-to. It was during this time that he began working at the National Statistics Institute on the 1940’s census. But, unlike others working there, because he was Jewish, he wasn’t paid, his labor exploited. Little did he know that the Institute was part of an endeavor that was decimating his own community.

Today, there are thousands of Romanians whose cheap labor is exploited by Western firms in the name of offshoring, many of whom are paid just fractions of

their Western counterparts, and many of whom have little idea about material effects of the technologies and companies of which their surplus labor enforces, from that of racialized surveillance to that of war. After all, as during the Cold War, in post-Cold War contexts, the US's own imperialism accumulates power by entangling with IT, creating increasingly violent and racist machines. From Google's contracts with Boston Dynamics and Project Maven, Apple's with the Flexible Hybrid Institute, and Amazon's with the CIA, the list of techno militarism is long. In the case of IBM, post-Cold War, the company has been issued 29 US military contracts, totaling $866,190,707 (Military Industrial Complex 2016). Also, in post-Cold War contexts, companies such as these have increasingly offshored their labor, in which, as the previous chapter revealed, Romania has become an offshoring antipode.

However, Silicon Valley imperialism in Romania is not only a postsocialist phenomenon, as its template is pre-socialist fascism. Just as postsocialist property relations reamplify those of pre-socialist times in the name of property restitution (as I explored in previous chapters), so do they in the realm of post-1989 technological production and materiality. Why is it though that Siliconized narratives obscure the racial technocapitalist histories upon which they rest, not to mention those that they constitute in the present? Today, IBM boasts its Watson AI, a deep learning business artificial intelligence aimed at improving business efficiency worldwide. But where did this deep learning come from? Is its algorithm informed by what Watson himself learned in fascist Europe, a space that he found primed for economic growth? How much of this deep learning informs the company's own calculi to offshore labor, including in Bucharest or Brașov, where it is not just artificial intelligence but actual

human labor filing the company's techno-imperial coffers? These questions all point to the fact that in Romania's postsocialist technological present (an era in part designed by IBM as it rushed in to capitalize upon socialist-era computing and the Felix computer factory), cannot be understood without understanding the ways in which postsocialist techno-imperialism updates a pre-socialist technofascist form.

Watson AI might appear the updated Cold War HAL of 2001: A Space Odyssey. But it is not just that. Its materiality builds upon that of the interwar electronic counting machines and the attempted fascist imperiality that they mapped and calculated. Might it make sense, in assessing post-Cold War fears of the Trumpocalypse, to look towards the pre-socialist technofascist past (which did indeed attempt to annihilate entire populations) rather than that of socialism?

Hacking Doomsday Time

In *Mr. Robot*, F Society's great opposition comes from Trump-like E Corp CEO, Phillip Price, a man who has always desired to be "the most powerful person in the room." Elucidating his fantasy in monologue, while lounging in his Trump tower as protesters gather below, Price is framed by a satirical wall map of Europe. Drawn by Karl Lehmann-Dumont in Dresden in 1914, this cartography, "Humoristische Karte von Europa im Jahre 1914" (Humorous Map of Europe 1914), anthropomorphically displaces nations with twisted figures, elucidated in its footnotes. A propaganda piece made from the perspective of German nationalists, the map features a German soldier holding France by the throat while beating a Russian bear, the latter also being stung by a swarm of German bees. In Price's office nearby

hangs a newspaper article of the same period, announcing the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, the event that sparked World War I and that instigated the demise of some empires and rise of others. These propaganda pieces articulate Price's alignment with pre-War Germany/Austria, the hotbed of growing imperial strength and racial eugenics strong enough to displace prior imperial forms while attempting to wipe out entire populations. "The End of the World" as it had been known.

Continuing his monologue, Price wryly suggests that while he has almost succeeded in becoming the most important person in every room, one or maybe two people still stand in his way. Although he doesn't name his rival, viewers deduce that he is referring to China's Minister of State Security, Zhang. Throughout the show, Zhang and Price battle for security powers and influence, but unbeknownst to Price, Zhang plays another key role on the show as well: Whiterose. Whiterose, a transgender hacker obsessed with time, leads a Chinese hacking collective, the Dark Army, in collaborating with F Society to take down Evil Corp. Always carrying a timepiece, which she uses to track the short amount of time she allocates to anyone she meets, Whiterose claims that her time is too valuable to be wasted. Meanwhile her Zhang persona is also obsessed with time, keeping a room in his home full of clocks. When the FBI agent who had been tracking the End of the World Party poster accidentally wanders into the room, Zhang politely approaches her, explaining that the clocks are kept as a ticking reminder of mortality. But also, he enticingly questions:

Have you ever wondered how the world would look if the 5/9 Hack had never happened? In fact, some believe there are alternate realities playing out that very

scenario, with other lives we're leading, and other people that we've become. The contemplation moves me very deeply. Of course, Whiterose/Zhang live two different lives, one as a government official with ties to E Corp, one as anti-corporate hacker. But Whiterose's obsession with time and alternative realities, a contemplation that moves her deeply, instructs a particular reading of postsocialist temporality.

The ticking reminder of mortality that Whiterose is obsessed with points not to the inevitable end of one person's life, but of entire worlds' inexorable demise—a condition bound to both socialist and postsocialist contexts. As she tells Elliot/Mr. Robot, who frequently hacks into people's personal accounts, "You hack people, I hack time." To Whiterose, hacking means not simply rearranging one person's life, but rather the beginnings and ends of eras and revolutions, rearranging entire worlds. Both socialist and postsocialist temporalities are marked by such ends and beginnings. Just as mid-20th century fascism was hacked by anti-capitalist and antifascist movements, leading to the dawn of the Communist era, state socialist temporality was hacked by Western liberal democracy, precipitating postsocialism. Today, it seems as though this liberal era is on the verge of becoming postliberal as fascist forces grow.

In this postliberal moment, both people and time are being hacked. One can hack people, much like Elliot/Mr. Robot, who lives two different lives and understands two different timelines (one the self-destructive Elliot who hacks into people's personal accounts to hold them accountable for abusive acts, the other, the bold leader of F Society endeavoring to destroy Evil Corp). One can even hack the inimical, rearranging enemy configuration. But also, one can hack time, much like

Whiterose, rearranging pasts, futures, beginnings, and ends. What happens when, as in Mr. Robot, these different genres of hacking occur simultaneously? What does this simultaneity say about postsocialism?

It was at the beginning of the Cold War, in 1949, that global scientific standard of time materialized. The atomic clock, created by the US National Bureau of Standards, lead to the International Standard of Units establishing global criterions for the length of a second: 9,192,631,770 cycles of radiation correlative with the transition between two energy levels of the caesium-133 atom. In Mr. Robot, the same calculus of radiation used to measure each passing tick on Whiterose's watch was used to gauge clocks on both sides of the Iron Curtain during socialism. Susan Buck-Morss has argued that Soviet modernity, as a twin project (even if failed) of Western modernity, is just as rooted post-Enlightenment taxonomies and temporalities as Western liberal democracy. As she writes, "Against the often-repeated story of the West's winning the Cold War and capitalism's historical triumph over socialism, the historical experiment of socialism was so deeply rooted in the Western modernizing tradition that its defeat cannot but place the whole Western narrative into question" (2002, xii). For instance, both sides of the Cold War shared similar understandings of the second, of each atomic measurement of passing time.

From the space race to competition between informatics and intelligence projects, technology was at heart of this antagonism, bifurcated around culture, politics, and economics, yet cohered around a similar understanding of progress. While Buck-Morss traces this back to the Enlightenment, materially it can also be traced to the cohesion of the second—a formation that transpired at the very

beginning of the Cold War.

And yet, despite state socialism's post-Enlightenment similarities with Western colonial modernity, socialist societies were differently organized around socialist understandings of techno-urbanism, community, equality, and public access, as well as legacies of antifascist and anti-capitalist organizing (Boatcă 2012; Țichindeleanu 2013). These solidified "intractable spaces, discontinuous histories, and resistant geographies that interrupted the flows of global capital as well as the continuity of West-European colonial orders of governance" (Karkov and Valiavicharska 2018, 25). In this way, despite the forward ticking of each second, the worlds that each second organized were different. Could it be that post-Cold War specters can't escape this atomic-level tension – a tautness held in place by similar measurements of atomic time that upheld different, parallel, and nevertheless entangled worlds?

We may not be able to escape the materiality of the atomic clock that, since 1949, has been binding contradictory time globally. However, we may be able to experience different timelines simultaneously, as Whiterose mused, thereby engendering a runtime error. The possibility of this error holds different potentialities and imaginaries – from the apocalyptic to the utopic. Within this atomic era, there is a persistent revising of antecedent time, pulled by both inescapable atomic magnetism and repulsion. In Mr. Robot, Price, the embodiment of *homo economicus*, but also fascism, is kept in check by F Society/Dark Army's hack, one that threatens to take down global capitalism. Sitting his Trump tower with his German nationalistic map behind him, Price invokes the eugenic logics of Nazi Germany and US white

nationalism. And, so does the actual doctor of Dr. Strangelove—the film that F Society's End of the World Party poster is based. In the film, Doctor Strangelove is called upon by the US president to explain the impending zero day of "the Doomsday Machine." The doctor, who has an uncontrollable tick that forces him to involuntarily enact what appears to be a Nazi-solute, suggests that for humanity to avert nuclear holocaust, able-bodied American citizens, along with male military and political leaders, should migrate underground with young women to breed a master race.

The doctor's ticking, along with the Doomsday Machine of which he utilizes to justify eugenic desire, stands in allegorically for a clock, one both real and symbolic at once. The Doomsday Clock was founded by University of Chicago scientists (who had developed the first atomic weapons of the Manhattan Project). After creating the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists, in 1947, the scientists fabricated a nonmechanical ticking machine to warn of impending nuclear apocalypse. To countdown impending planetary doom due to nuclear threats and heightened US/USSR tensions, the minute-hand was set to seven-minutes-until-midnight/Doomsday. Since then, the position of the hand is annually evaluated by the Bulletin's Science and Security Board. The shortest countdown was recorded in the height of the Cold War in 1984. Much to Bulletin readers' reliefs, the Doomsday Clock was reset in 1991 after the Cold War ended and US/Russia nuclear arsenal budgets were cut. Miraculous, the world was then 17-minutes-until-midnight. But then, the minute marker began moving towards doomsday once more. At first this was due to ongoing nuclear threats, this time not only between the US and Russia.

Fourteen minutes, nine minutes, seven, five, six, and five minutes again. And

then, something shifted. In 2015, the Doomsday Clock returned to its 1984 position of three-minutes-until-midnight. This was due not only due to nuclear threats; climate change and anthropecenic disaster where also now being taken into consideration. The next year, the Bulletin described "advances in biotechnology, in artificial intelligence, and the cyber realm" to also be a factor (Mecklin 2017). In other words, temporal analysis of the post-Cold War end-of-time must also take into consideration the digital, which has now achieved a level of apocalyptic power on par with that of the Cold War nuclear. Barad offers:

> Doomsday Clock time doesn't simply progress on its own, moving forward without fail, and it isn't synchronized to one particular physical phenomenon, but rather to global politics and technological progress. A nonlinear device that is reset once each year, the Doomsday device clocks sociopolitical, technoscientific events, and its measure is marked by the distance from the endpoint – midnight, the apocalypse – rather than some origin point. Time is synchronised to a future of No Future (2017, 58).

Thus, in the "post-atomic age," present time is holding its breath for the apocalypse-to-come, still wired into Masco's post-Cold War utopian-apocalyptic circuit board. Future No Future.

In *Dr. Strangelove*, the greatest tension transpires when viewers learn that the future will either be one in which no one survives, or in which only the white master race does. While the apocalyptic motions are put into place by the materialization of

the Cold War inimical, in the end, possibilities for survival still hinge on Nazi fantasies. Today, in the era in which the hack has replaced the bomb in liberal imaginaries, and in which, at the same time, white supremacist movements grow at alarming rates, rather than remain stuck in atomic time and its many hacked rearrangements, perhaps it makes more sense to hack time itself. Doing so might illuminate that in postsocialist/post-Cold War/postliberal/post-atomic times, perhaps the greatest threat remains one that predates the Cold War—fascism.

What might it mean to find the enemy in fascism and its various endurances rather than in anti-capitalist imaginaries? After all, cybersecurity threats rendered by anti-capitalist hacking collectives, while positioned against the presumed globalizing futurity of capitalism, are not imparting planetary Doomsday. The doom that they impart may disrupt corporate practices, but not all humanity. Yet the growing power of neoliberal Man, consolidated into Trump towers and inspired by older eugenic histories yet threatened by anti-capitalists and antifascists alike, endeavors the doom of all not absorbable into the white master race. On a material level, the hack is not the bomb as it does not attempt to wipe out entire populations. White supremacy and techno-imperialism, on the other hand, does. Thus, the question becomes, how, in addition to fighting fascism as socialists and antifascists have long been doing, can we also hack the liberalism undergirding zombie socialism that reads socialism as threat? How can we hack Cold War atomic time so that we cease scrambling inimical formations within it, and instead consolidate efforts against those who strive to eliminate entire populations—a problem that socialism endeavored to solve? By merely fixating on that which threatens to destroy capitalism and US imperialism,

liberalism aligns itself with fascist goals, masking white supremacist threat with the anti-capitalist hacker.

In 1942-Nazi Germany, an intellectual resistance group known as the White Rose formed out of the University of Munich, led by students and professors. Printing thousands of leaflets and engaging in graffiti campaigns, members of the White Rose sought to inspire local resistance to growing Nazism. The students had been subjected to German youth movements growing up, to what activist Inge Scholl described as "the closed ranks of marching youth with banners waving, eyes fixed straight ahead, keeping time to drumbeat and song" (Scholl 1993). It was this temporal march of fascism and eugenics that the students diverted from, instead devising an antifascist struggle. Several of the core activists were medical students, having had been conscripted to serve time in the Wehrmacht medical corps on the Eastern Front, where they witnessed the horrors of anti-Semitic persecution. This led them to develop anti-Nazi politics and an imperative to act. In 1942, the White Rose produced four leaflet editions, which they hid in telephone books and public phone booths and mailed for distribution (Wittenstein 1997). They produced a fifth in 1943, utilizing a hand-operated duplicating machine to produce 6,000 to 9,000 copies, which were carried to numerous German cities, appealing to Germans to resist "national socialist subhumanism," and imperialism "for all time" (White Rose 1943). Although the members of the White Rose were eventually caught, tortured, and killed, their aspirations to hack a fascist and violent system has lived on, with antifascist movements today inspired by early antifascist organizing in the heart of Nazi Germany.

Can learning from the White Rose of fascism's mid-20th century zenith help us to stop scrambling the inimical to realize that white supremacy has long been the apocalyptic threat, from the first colonial projects and ghettos onwards? The Trumpocalypse does not invoke new substantial formations, but perhaps instead reflects a speeding up of fascist time. If liberalism simply relies upon remixing Cold War era enemies, hacking people rather than time, it merely twists allegorical structures that fail to articulate the real threat. If, as the hacker Whiterose speculates, there are simultaneous realities playing themselves out, rather than detaining these possibilities within an all-consuming logic by recycling the Cold War inimical, perhaps we are better served by studying the concurrent continuities and discontinuities as they reaffirm a heterogeneity of futures past, constituting alternative futures to-come.

In the words of Barad, "In these troubling times, the urgency to trouble time, to shake it to its core, and to produce collective imaginaries that undo pervasive conceptions of temporality that take progress as inevitable and the past as something that has passed and is no longer with us is something so tangible, so visceral, that it can be felt in our individual and collective bodies" (2017, 57). Hacking time is one of many ways to respond to the urgency of troubling time. To hack time can mean dislodging liberal progress narratives that conflate socialism with illiberalism, and to instead pivot attention to materiality of fascist specters conjured anew in postliberal times. Hacking time can also decenter liberal accounts of postsocialist technological illiberalism. When read through a post-Cold War ethnographic lens, postsocialist hacking worlds appear as responsive to post-1989 techno-imperialism and

Orientalism rather than as vampiric threats to all of humanity. Yet liberal portrayals of illiberal hackers liken people such as Vlad, Viorel, and Guccifer as potential harbingers of doomsday. Yet in reality, they only threaten the longevity of techno-imperialism and its liberal logics, meanwhile pointing to other technological futures illegible to Silicon Valley. Meanwhile, techno-imperialism and the racial technocapitalism upon which it relies consolidates pre-socialist imaginaries, updating fascist anew. In this way, by rendering the illiberal hacker as the threat to liberal democracy, technofascism is able to grow unhindered. But this pre-socialist update is only visible by hacking Cold War 2.0 circuit boards and dislodging its circular logics.

In both the liberal case against Russia, now saturating US geopolitical imaginaries, and in the fictive world of Mr. Robot and the concurrent struggles to hack techno-imperialism—there is a deep need to hack time. By hacking Cold War temporality, the teleological logics of *homo oeconomicus* explode into nothingness, surpassing the allegorical strategies of zombie socialism and the dialectics of the vampiric. Instead what surfaces is new entanglements of techno-imperialism, racial technocapitalism, and technofascism—all updated Cold War versions of pre-socialist violence. But hacking these updates will only result in a runtime error unless attention is placed upon the very constitution of Cold War ghosts as they have been coded to replicate with each tick of the atomic clock, subsumed by the circular logics of the utopian-apocalyptic circuit board.

Chapter 6. Non-Alignment in Outer Space: From the Ruins of Postsocialist Astrofuturism

"Before 1989, there were two visions about the possible end of the co-existing histories of communism and capitalism which could not possibly fit into the same world. One imagined a global deflagration, a post-apocalyptical world of Mad Max. The other focused on the conquest on space, which was a third neutral space where the two great superpowers and peoples could finally find peace. And maybe an ideal mode of co-existing. Twenty-eight years later, in places like this one here, of these two contemporary visions, memory retains only the apocalyptical vision. Yet it is very difficult to grasp, in what ruins are we here? What ruins are these? The ruins of which civilization? Of which historical period?"

These words spoken in Romanian by Ovidiu Țichindeleanu, a philosopher of postsocialist decolonization, reverberate throughout the halls of what was once a socialist youth center in Chişinău, Moldova. Dark pink glass from now shattered windows, along with the deep forest green pines peaking in from outside, create a rich palette in an otherwise abandoned concrete building. As part of a video-based media piece by Romanian artists Mona Vătămanu and Florin Tudor, *Gagarin's Tree,* Țichindeleanu's words and slowly-panned footage of the former youth center weave together the ruins of two futures past, that of socialism and that of transition. Today, they are materially crumbling together in the former youth center named after the Soviet cosmonaut, Yuri Gagarin, the first human being who set foot into outer space. Once adorned with rainbowed mosaics dedicated to cosmological visions, the building is now a pile of broken cement and echoes. As Țichindeleanu suggests, not

only is the current state of ruination reflective of the material and imaginative destruction imposed by postsocialist transition, but also the destruction of the first wave of transition—itself now an aftermath in a new and more advanced phase of postsocialism. During that first wave, “the apocalyptic future from the Mad Max movies became the actual present in most of the neighborhoods and industrial cities from the former socialist bloc. The ruins that we are seeing here are not only the ruins of the communist dream. The signboard was put on the frontispiece of this building during the postcommunist transition, which was also the moment when the Gagarin Center was destroyed, when a new order and other forces became dominant and left their names on the building.” But even this first wave of transition could not last or sustain itself, and now lies in the wreckage of postsocialist disaster capitalism.

As many friends in Romania and Moldova have articulated of early post-1989/91 transition, the promises of Western liberalism were just mirages and mimicry; there was no infrastructure established in which the newly imposed consumerist culture could sustainably grow. This era is exemplified, for instance, in David Schwartz’s theater play, *’90*, which weaves together stories of these false promises of the era, such as “anticommunist ‘moral purity,’ entrepreneurial enthusiasm and disappointment. . . illusions of freedom . . . the closure of mines in Jiu valley . . . the legal restitution of houses once taken by communists to the more ‘correct’ people . . . the degradation of the lives of workers and state employees . . . lives played at caritas [the Ponzi scheme that took over Romanian lives between 1992 and 1994 before going bankrupt and that led to US $450 million in debt], CAR [Casă de Ajutor Reciproc, the mutual aid assistance program of the socialist era that served

as a type of non-bank financial institution that lost its power with socialism's collapse], pawnshops" (Miciu 2017). This era, crafted by empty promises and a certain genre of capitalist dreams, now is also mapped by rumbles and sarcasm.

I first wandered upon Vătămanu and Tudor's piece, *Gagarin's Tree*, in a 2016 exhibit in the Future Museum, an open platform catering towards uncharted futures and theories, organized in Bucharest's Czech Center. The film engages themes of socialist space exploration, and socialist imaginaries in a postsocialist moment framed by protagonist Ţichindeleanu as one of liberal colonization. Ţichindeleanu is able to sort through ghostly messianisms in order to think through spatiotemporal "elsewhere" from the palimpsestic deserted space of the youth center. Glass tiles falling off a mosaic by Aurel David, featuring a socialist figure ploughing the universe, drop into Ţichindeleanu's hand as he caresses a future past. As he nostalgically describes of the moment in which the mosaic was crafted: "An entirely different history of the world was about to be written. The feeling and the memory of this divergence is still active and alive, and it is awakened in connection with those utopias that actually became daily life and are now the history of the people who grew up in the tradition of real socialism. But if the post-communist transition meant a colonisation, and if real socialism was partially an attempt to write a history divergent from that of Western modernity, then what is left of that, what is alive?" What do we make of a moment in which "the peaceful conquest of the future," one more aligned with Marxist humanism that capitalist spatial accumulation, was destroyed?

By colonization, here Ţichindeleanu aligns himself with other decolonial

scholars of postsocialism who understand transition to not simply be metaphoric, but also material, installing new institutions, technologies, dreamworlds, and understandings of time and space (Boatcă 2006; Rodríguez, Boatcă, and Costa 2016; Țichindeleanu 2017; Tlostanova 2017). Indeed, the former youth center, once an experiment in communist social production, has been dramatically altered. The center had opened in 1972, built by money earned by Komsomol members on days of volunteer-based unpaid labor following the October Revolution, known as *subbotniks* and *voskresniks*. Its first stone was laid by Gagarin himself, who resided in in Chişinău in October 1966, when he also famously toured a local wine cellar, promising to fill it will metals from the moon (Nastja 2017; Stevens 2017). The center, an autonomous space of sorts, held a hall for political and cultural that could seat 800 people, a concert hall that could hold 400, a café-bar, a restaurant, and rooms for sports, meetings, and youth arts collectives. Its library archived 12,000 books.

Everything was affordable for everyone, apparently, until the building was privatized following the collapse of socialism. It then became the "MALS" disco-tech, housing concerts and fashion shows until 2000, when the ownership changed again. Since then, it has sat idle, weathering Moldova's cold winters and hot summers alike. "Today, even the signboard placed in the 1990s is a ruin. And this is the ruin of the postcommunist transition of a second historical time, which is usually bypassed when we try to understand the collective past that made us what we are," Țichindeleanu serenely offers.

The setting of *Gagarin's Tree* fits well within the ambit of what Ann Stoler describes "imperial debris," the subsisting remains of protracted imperial processes

saturating “the subsoil of people’s lives” (2008, 192). In this case, it postsocialist neo/liberalism that decolonial scholars understand as an imperial form, one that evasively endures, vitally binding people to pasts and presences. Its various technologies might be understood a facet Western techno-imperialism, or the modes through which Western technology and technological imaginaries devour people’s intimate lives and even outer space imaginaries alike, nested within what Jodi Kim describes as the protracted imperial afterlives of the Cold War (2010, 4). Occupying multiple historical tenses, Silicon Valley imperial effects refigure uncertain futures and the conditional subjunctive, swallowing up, destroying, and abandoning unrecognizable technofutures past. Yet, as Stoler suggests, there is a useful analytic tension between the figurative effects of ruination and the violence of decay. “Making connections where they are hard to trace is not designed to settle scores but rather to recognize that these are unfinished histories,” she writes, “not of victimized pasts but consequential histories that open to differential futures” (2008, 195). While many today might sit in socialist ruins and construct anticommunist narratives focused upon state socialism’s violences, Ţichindeleanu, in the ruins, offers a romantic reading. Refusing to be victimized by it, he hopes that by recovering socialist futures past, a way out of post-Cold War neoliberal violence might be imagined.

While today, imperial debris is often considered a remnant of Western coloniality in the former Third World, what if we were to think of the Cold War tripartite separation of worlds as an active ruin in and of itself? As Shu-mei Shih suggests, “postsocialism ought to be considered as a condition affecting the entire world” (2012, 28). What if, then, we think of imperial ruins in post-Cold War

frameworks, as Sharad Chari and Katherine Verdery suggest (2009), while also thinking decolonization through an aligned (rather than unaligned) geopolitical purview? Projects of decolonization and nonalignment might then be read as nonaligned with the "first world," but aligned with other second and third worlds spaces, now the Global East and South. If these non/alignments were in part organized in response to Cold War geographies, how might we also read, in the words of Jini Kim Watson and Gary Wilder, "the complexity of our postcolonial present as simultaneously configured by Cold War imaginaries and aftermaths" (2018, 21)? Or, how might we consider the vitality of Cold War and socialist ruination as informative of the project of contemporary decolonization? This framing might help pivot away from a more rehearsed move in postsocialist decolonial theory that seeks to borrow Latin Americanist decolonial scholarship and Wallersteinian world systems analysis in order to frame the coloniality of postsocialist transition (cf. Gagyi 2016; Kalnačs 2016; Tlostanova 2012; Tlostanova and Mignolo 2009). Rather, decoloniality can be understood as deeply enfolded within socialist and postsocialist imaginaries. In this way, the project of decolonization can be mapped within spaces of vital socialist ruination.

Reading from socialist ruins and their endurance, here I assess new modes of decolonizing the future. But also, I question why socialist astrofuturist and utopian projects were ruined to begin with. In particular, I am interested in the actuarial power of speculation. Speculation, as constitutive of astrofuturist imaginaries but also finance capital and techno-imperialism, bears multiple genealogies. In her brilliant project of decolonizing speculation, Aimee Bahng critiques, "The financial

colonization of the future builds on preexisting disparities of wealth held over from earlier histories of empire and neocolonial enterprises that break at the fault line of what has been the Global North and South" (2017, 5). As she suggests, those outside of Europe have long been left in the waiting room of the future. Yet, what would it mean to read the very formation of the Global North and South as an effect of the Cold War? And what would it mean to read the Cold War as a speculative future project antithetical to that of state socialism, even if both bear post-Enlightenment genealogies (Buck-Morss 2002)? Could decolonizing Global North/South cartographies open new possibilities in which other speculative dreams and alliances gain actuarial power? Bahng suggests, "Pursuing alternative technocultural origin myths also means rejecting the progress narrative that Enlightenment thought encourages" (ibid., 11).

While committed to alternative technocultural origin myths of the socialist bloc, in this chapter, I also suggest that socialist astrofuturism's ruination is in part due to the post-Enlightenment thought that it could never fully shake. While on one hand, socialist utopianism was based upon friendships with other second and third worlds peoples, as a project, state socialism never managed to fully resolve Eastern Europe's own internal racism. Through a close reading of "Gagarin's Tree," I question, what might have happened if socialist astrofuturism could have learned from the rich work of Afrofuturist speculation? How might this friendship have been able to stymie the imperiality of racial technocapitalism, or the raciality that technocapitalist futurity inheres? What might such counterfactual and speculative historical alliances teach about decolonization in a particular postsocialist moment of

ruination?

Socialist Endurance

Gazing beyond the framing of the screen amidst the ruination portrayed in "Gagarin's Tree," Țichindeleanu seems to see a future past not yet dead. Sitting there, gently tugging at old mosaic stones now loose in the wall, is wearing the same black leather jacket that he often does when I've spent time with him in person, in cities such as Chişinău, Cluj, and Bucharest. For a couple of summers in a row, I've also attended a decolonial camp that he co-organizes with other decolonial scholars and rural cultural workers in the small Transylvanian village of Telciu. There, housing justice activists, queer theorists, antiracist organizers, performance artists, and more, have been gathering for several summers to think through futures past and present unrecognizable to Western coloniality. Slowly, he is helping develop a new consciousness amongst the left of the need to decolonize the future. Part of this, he suggests, revolves around understanding the socialist past and its utopian visions of antifascism and with nonaligned solidarity with other colonized peoples.

During my first summer in Telciu, in 2017 (when Schwartz also first debuted *'90*), Țichindeleanu took a small group of us into the county of Maramureș to visit the ruins of a sculpture built by Géza Vida. Géza, an antifascist Romanian–Hungarian sculptor, industrial worker, and communist militant, had "illegally" fought in the Spanish French civil war while engaging in antifascist work in Romania. He then got into socialist realism sculpting, mostly with support from the state (Bodea 1980). We had travelled to Maramureș in order to view one of his outdoor sculptures,

“Monumentul Eroilor de la Moisei” (“The Hero’s Monument of Moses”), situated up a hill and hidden away in the forest. The monument commemorates 29 Romanian antifascists killed by Hungarian *horthyşti* fascists in 1944. After asking a number of local villagers for the location, we eventually found the path to the sculpture, and solemnly made our way to the forest clearing, as if we were reaching a sacred object, or perhaps a space ship. The piece was originally designed as a soft of Stonehenge-like circle made of twelve sessile oaks, each in the form of a god-like figure. It has since been reconstructed with stone, with the giant figures circling a large basin of water, aesthetically aligned with socialist modernist aesthetics. But also, the sculpture enfolds pre-historical imaginaries with a sort of outer space ceremonial setting—something akin to “indigenous” Dacian cosmology (without the nationalism) meets antifascist outer space. While these stones aren’t ruins today, they are largely forgotten, as is the rich history of socialist antifascists that helped engineer and aestheticize state socialism.

Similarly, within the frame of “Gagarin’s Tree,” cosmological embellishments decorate the youth center. This is the case with countless socialist-era buildings constructed across the region, which often mix agricultural imagery with that of the socialist worker and cosmonaut. Even the emblem of the former Communist Party contained grains, trees, and industrial tower, and a sun. Today, many of these socialist structures have changed meaning, symbolically but also in use value. I always laugh when I come across the Crişul Shopping Center in Oradea, Romania, once a center of socialist commerce. It opened in 1979, with flower-like cosmological figures engravened into the columns of its concrete façade. Today, the building is home to a

number of new businesses and offices, mostly from the West. It also houses a McDonalds, or “Mac,” which obscures the agro/astrofuturist with its red umbrellas and banner, seemingly in obscene perversion. And yet, like many idiosyncratic spaces of postsocialist transition, socialist imaginaries endure, peaking out beyond the cheapness of McDonaldization. Etched into concrete, the flowers remain. In fact, the juxtaposition, if anything, points to the obscenity of the West.

Or, take the numerous resorts erected along the Romania’s Black Sea coast, largely all divided into towns named after planets, constellations, and astral wonders. There had already been resorts along the coast before socialism, but they were largely for the bourgeoise. This changed in the 1950s when the Communist Party expropriated them. The idea was that every worker and their family deserved an annual trip to the seaside and/or to the mountains. Former resorts transformed and new ones were built, in towns that became known as Saturn, Neptun, Jupiter, Olimp (Olympus), Luna, Uranus, and Cap Aurora (Aurora’s Head) were formed. Some of the resorts shut down after socialism due to austerity, and to the erasure of guaranteed vacations. Yet others still function. Sculptures of Neptune, Venus, and Saturn’s rings are scattered throughout them, pointing to concrete futures past.

These futures are of a particular socialist agro/astro-imaginary. As Ţichindeleanu ruminates, “In Moldova, not even the dream of space conquest managed to distance itself too much from notions of plowing and sowing.” Pointing to the mosaic, he suggests that the ploughman’s territory was space, represented as a rainbow, a common motif. A friend of mine, Zsuzsa, has showed me the piles children’s books that her family still keeps in their home, filled with such imagery.

Țichindeleanu goes on, "The ploughman is thus directly connected to the land, but also to space. However, the dream is not situated in a spaceship, or within a space station from another planet – this new dream is about space itself, which is the territory on which the ploughman writes its history." The communist dream, he suggests, was anchored by Gagarin's cosmological journey. This was not because Gagarin was able to enter space before the US, but rather, because he was able to bring communist visions with him into it. There, legends say, he launched the project of cultivating communist utopianism in order to bring it back to earth.

People surrounding the Gagarin's Youth Center, during socialism and after, took the project of cultivating communist utopia very seriously. This in part was aligned with the project of Marxist humanism, the branch of Marx's early thought that theorized alienation. More popular in the former Yugoslavia than in socialist Eastern Europe, which was more apt to engage in Marxist-Leninism and Stalinism, Marxist humanism did manage to find its way to spaces such as Romania and Moldova. There, it seeped with astral imaginaries. This is why, Țichindeleanu suggests, there are spaceship sculptures in the now abandoned children's playground outside. But it is also why, throughout Chişinău, legends endure about "Gagarin's Tree." This tree, either planted or seeded by Gagarin himself, was evidently the offspring of an acorn flown into outer space on Gagarin's mission. People in the city have told me that there are many of these acorns that visited the cosmos, and that now they've grown into tall oak trees throughout the former socialist world. While it's true that after returning from space, Yuri planted a tree near the Cosmonaut Hotel in Baikonur, home of the Cosmodrome spaceport in southern Kazakhstan (that was then

the Soviet Union's and that today is leased to Russia). The first satellite, Sputnik 1, was launched from the Cosmodrome in 1957. A few years after, Yuri was propelled into the galaxy. Since his return and his planting of the first "Gagarin Tree," cosmonauts have carried on the tradition of tree planting, mostly before their Soyuz departures in the now "Cosmonaut Grove." There, Gagarin's first tree stands the tallest (Kluger 2016).

While there, it is quite clear which is Gagarin's tree, it is less clear where the Chişinău version grows, where Gagarin also allegedly planted a tree during his famous visit. As Ţichindeleanu muses in the film, "Nobody knows exactly which tree it is. There are multiple versions of it, depending upon who you ask." This is true, and rumors abound, even beyond Chişinău in other parts of Moldova. In the small village of Păuleşti, in Călăraşi County, Alexander Filip claims to have planted one of the acorns. But not everyone in the village believes this to be possible. Valery Demidetsky has reported in the local news, "I don't believe in the history of acorns because of the conditions of the flight" (qtd. in Vladimirskaya 2018). For instance, Gagarin's flight having abandoned the emergency rescue systems at the start, the ship's soft landing, the removal of the duplicate brake installation, and other restrictions. "I also cannot imagine that in the first flight, which lasted only 1 hour and 48 minutes, that Gagarin managed to find time for fun with acorns," she censures. Indeed, Yuri's Vostok 1 trip only completed one orbit around the earth, which he described as fast and somewhat chaotic: "Everything was spinning. One moment I see Africa—it happened over Africa—another the horizon, another the sky" (1961, 10). While there were problems with his re-entry, he safely made it back into the

atmosphere and parachuted to earth, gently touching "the soft surface of freshly plowed dirt in an open field not far from the town of Engels" (Zak 2019). Demidetsky finds it absurd that he would have been able to recover acorns. "Yes, the experiments with seeds and plants in space were set as part of long-term flights . . . There was even a program in the USA in which tree seeds flown around the moon and then were planted. Maybe I'm wrong, but it seems that this is how legends are born!" (qtd. in Vladimirskaya 2018).

Legends are born, yet Mr. Filip is adamant that his nearly sixty-year-old oak tree is beyond fiction. He planted it in a courtyard when he was employed by a local school, he says. "I was then working as a school director, I went to the department of education, and Mr. Timothy Chebrucha gave me a pot with a seedling. He brought it from Moscow. They planted roses there on the 100th anniversary of Lenin, and then they were given these acorns, which Gagarin had taken to space" (qtd. Noi 2018). Everyone knows where Filip's contested outer space tree grows, including the mayor who sees it as a tourist attraction. But back in Chişinău, the location of Gagarin's tree remains a mystery.

Over half a century after Gagarin supposedly cultivated acorns with cosmological utopian futures, they enchantedly grow on, enveloped in speculative imaginings. In this way, socialist-era speculative futures can be read as vital, as still entangling cosmological visions with life on earth. This shatters the widespread fiction that socialism failed (cf. Ssorin-Chaikov 2016). Indeed, as Michał Murawski suggests, the narrative of "socialism failed" has become an overdetermined, "ingrained discursive form" (2018, 908). Amongst the ruins of Gagarin's Youth

Center, birds melodically chirp outside, perhaps unaware of any failure. The Center, the trees, and the spaceship in the playground are, after all, still there. And the privatization that came after, the transforming of the complex into a disco-tech, was only short-lived. Géza Vida's cosmological stones still stand tall back in Romania, reaching towards outer space, surrounded by old oak trees. And so, whose ruins are these? As Murawski suggests, "One hundred years after the 1917 October Revolution, in an era of unprecedented urban privation and inequality, we may, in fact, have a lot of to learn from the still-existing achievements and enduring legacies of built socialism" (2018, 910). Many of these exist within ethereal spaces of speculation and dreamworlds. For scholars of postsocialism to step beyond normative and recursive Cold War narratives mobilized around the liberal democracy's victory and socialism's failures, scholarship ought to be, Murawski suggests, "driven by the emic imperative to understand state socialist (or still-socialist) cities (or societies) on their own terms" (ibid., 912). This arguably needs to occur in the level of speculation as well.

Chimeras

Chimeras are biological phenomena in which single organisms are composed of cells with distinct genotypes. Chimeras can result from a number of factors, including an unborn twin sibling's cells having fused and living on in one's body, or the grafting of one plant onto another. Chimeras have been the makings of legends for millennia, described by Homer in The Iliad as a monstrous immortal hybrid roaming Lycia in Asia Minor (Lattimore 1951). Ancient Dacians too had chimeras in

Romania, the now nationalist symbol of Dracian Draco, a dragon-dog with several metal tongues. While not interested in the mythical or biological chimeras here, I am curious if state socialism and liberal democracy might be read as chimerical inverses of post-Enlightenment modernity. In particular, I am curious what this might tell us about divergent and entangled (or not) astrofuturisms.

Susan Buck-Morss argues that during the Cold War, both the US notion of unlimited individual freedom and the Soviet dream of a classless community shared a genealogy of post-Enlightenment Western modernity (2002). Vasile Ernu, in writing of growing up in the Soviet Union, recalls the ways in which the two systems were dependent upon each other to be the dialectic enemy, while also maintaining strange simultaneous affinities for the other (2006). This chimerical entanglement has been well-mapped in the realm of astrofuturism and speculation.

Even before the Cold War, desire for contact led to the transposing of science fiction across antipodal divides. Translators Cyrillicized Western science fiction works by Edward Bellamy, Jules Verne, H. G. Wells (who also wrote of chimeras in his The Island of Doctor Moreau), and more (Buck-Morss 2002, 45). These Western fictions narrated growing fascinations with Anglo-American outer space colonization. As critical race studies and postcolonial studies scholars have noted, as of 1893, the West had been conquered, and so new space was need to saturate colonial thirst. De Witt Douglas Kilgore writes, US "Astrofuturism posits the space frontier as a site of renewal, a place where we can resolve the domestic and global battles that have paralyzed our progress on earth" (2003, 2). In this way, it "mirrors and codifies the tensions that characterized America's dream of its future" (ibid., 2). The Manifest

Destiny of California had been obtained; what new futures might exist beyond?

Colonial science fiction blossomed in the 1950s as the Cold War began, with some writers leading more towards the neocolonial, and others more critical of the dangers of imperial expansion. Meanwhile, the space race saturated US political and cultural imaginaries, with Alan Shepard reading the cosmos shortly after Gagarin. Then came the US's Apollo missions to the moon. Today, these moon trips are being looked back upon nostalgically in the US as the Trump administration prepares to fund the US space program like it hasn't been since the Cold War, in part to protect US spatial and technological superiority from growing competition with China. As has been noted, outer space has become a US vulnerability, as so much of its infrastructure relies upon satellites and GPS (Bachman and Titten 2019).

Leading up to state socialism on what would become the other side of the Iron Curtain, outer space also captured imaginations. Some of this was no doubt influenced by the West, but not all. Airplanes and bombers were named after Russian fairytale characters, and writers such as Aleksandr Bogdanov anticipated a Marxist Communist society on Mars. Nikolai Fedorov imagined a "moral universe transformed through social-utopian applications of science (cloud-seeding, solar heat, travel by electromagnetic energy" (Buck-Morss 2002, 45). Imaginaries such as these bore material futures. For instance, Konstantin Tsiolkovskii, the founding scientist of Soviet rocketry, was one of Fedorov's greatest fans. Artist Vladimir Tatlin claimed that "events of 1917 in the social field were already brought about in our art in 1914, when material, volume, and construction were laid as its basis" (qtd. in Chilvers 2017). Some of this material was more whimsical than other texts. Some was more

Marxist-Leninist, and some more enwrapped in anarchism and Marxist humanism alike.

For instance, in 1921, the anarchist-socialist Romanian Iuliu Neagu-Negulescu scribed his utopian *Arimania sau Țara Buneiînțelegeri* (*Arimania, Land of the Goodwill*) while in prison in Brăila. He had been working to organize trade unions, but with little success, and had been imprisoned by the new Communists. In Arimania, Neagu-Negulescu imagines a future in which property is socialized based upon cooperative models, and in which air, water, earth, and sun are worshipped as public spaces. No one can work for more than five hours a day, and everyone receives a month-long vacation. This is especially important for Arimanians, who love nature and who only use sustainable energy. Patriarchy does not exist in this sex-positive feminist society, nor does the bourgeois family, as people are supported by community. Children learn in communal schools, and he in particular recommends cinema as a technology of education. While Neagu-Negulescu was less popular than other speculative futurists of the time, his imaginary does reflect a growing anti-capitalist planetary sentiment that was embraced by the socialist futurists, even though the early Communist Party was not his biggest fan.

Indeed, astrofuturism and speculative utopianism came to play a large part of technological imagining throughout state socialism in the Soviet Union and Eastern bloc. Several years after Gagarin's cosmological trip in 1961, the Romanian Adrian Rogoz wrote his science fiction *Omul și Năluca* (*The Man and the Phantasm*), which depicted a society of human-plants growing on Venus. A visitor to the planet falls in love with one of these chimeras, and then goes about creating a fanciful new tongue

in order to communicate, to connect beyond terrestrial borders of human/non-human. Other texts abounded throughout the country, depicting various utopias and boundary crossings in outer space. Ion Cârje wrote *Irene sau Planeta cea mai Apropiata* (*Irene or the Nearest Planet*) about a social utopia in space, and Gheorghe Săsărman scribed his *Cuadratura Cercului* (*Squaring the Circle: A Pseudotreatise of Urbogony*) about twenty-seven urban utopias organized around a metaphysical axis.

It was during the time that these plant-planet fantasies were being crafted that autonomous theoretical debates in the Eastern bloc began problematizing intensive growth—a Communist Party ideal. An idea began to circulate that the most developed socialist countries (Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Union, the German Democratic Republic, Hungary, and Poland) had reached certain limits of human and natural exploitation, and that it might be impossible to reach the cosmological year of 2000 if the current course was maintained (Țichindeleanu 2017). People began looking to development strategies in Third World spaces as possible ways out. In 1977, East German philosopher, Rudolf Bahro, proposed an alternative to state socialism, which would embrace a "cultural revolution" that would merge the socialist idea of social justice with indigenous visions that understood connections with nature. In 1975, Francisc Păcurariu introduced the term "cosmovision" into Romanian literature, inspired by Latin-Americanist cosmologies and understandings of social justice.

In the Soviet Union, perhaps this eco/extraterrestrial speculative connection came to full expression in Andrei Tarkovsky's famous 1972 film Solaris. Based upon Stanisław Lem's 1961 novel, the film rotates around an interstellar journey to an old

science space station in order to study the fictive planet, Solaris. The planet, much to the surprise of the cosmonauts, exudes consciousness, and an ability to read the mind of the orbiting humans. The planet can somehow materialize their grief and loss, so much so that the cosmonauts come to believe that the planet is smarter than they are. The film's last frame features a small houseplant that a cosmonaut had transported from Earth into space. Somehow, the plant can communicate with the planet in a way that the cosmonauts never could, causing Solaris's gaseous materials to mutate into earthlike substances and colors. As Alaina Lemon writes, "Some viewers interpret these last scenes as occurring within the protagonist's broken mind; others see real planetary changes imperfectly catalyzed by human memories of home. But what if it is the plant who finally establishes a channel with the planetary mind?" (2018, x).

Lemon notes that unlike a lot of other science fiction of the era that emerged as a late-imperial genre, texts that warned of the dangerous alien other, this little houseplant offers alternative visions. These are of cross-border and posthumanist friendships, relationships that "sprout and thrive across borders, but that look like untidy weeds to the paranoid perspective" (ibid., xi). She suggests that Cold War imaginaries that speculate upon the danger of contact with others bear 19th-century imperial and xenophobic genealogies. Amidst the post-World War II pressures to dismantle colonial orders, the US and the USSR each continued to build imperial infrastructures, extending prisons and military practices into new terrains, shaping a carceral and bordered planet. How might the fusing of plants and planets in outer space point to certain utopian visions of decolonizing this imperial history and its Cold War accumulations? If plants and planets could become chimeras to the other,

what else was possible?

This is not to deny that despite these utopic extraterrestrial visions of inter-terrestrial connection, both Cold War superpowers concocted laboratories of paranoia. Enemies were cast, as Lemon suggests, "alternatively as manufacturers of ideological robots or as slaves to suspicion and superstition" (2018, xvii). Yet, these paranoias were differently crafted. It might be, Lemon suggests, that American paranoia blossomed over imagined blind spots, while Russian phobias were transfixed upon details. This differentially led each superpower to heavily invest in "technologies for intuition," which included channeling information from the other side and even engaging in paranormal techniques, for instance astral projection (ibid., 2). While Lemon's project is far more concerned about the nuances of such contact and communication between the two worlds, here I am specifically interested in how and why outer space imaginaries evolved on both sides of the former Iron Curtain, and what their astral speculations index of socialist and postsocialist materialities. How could carrying acorns and houseplants into outer space help intuit contact and break free of imperial repetitions?

As tension and paranoia came to a head within the Cold War US, Afrofuturistic speculative fiction began to offer other ideas, speculating upon spatial futures beyond those of imperiality. These futures, fashioned by speculative Afrofuturists such as Octavia Butler, open up paths for theorizing racial technocapitalism, but also emancipatory futures in and with space. The cosmos emerged as a place in which the violence of anti-Blackness could be unpacked, but also in which antiracist possibilities could be cultivated. Alondra Nelson defines

Afrofuturism as African American narratives of “culture, technology, and things to come” (2002, 9). Building upon this, Reynaldo Anderson and Charles E. Jones have set to task describing Astro-Blackness, or “an Afrofuturistic concept in which a person’s black state of consciousness, released from the confining and crippling slave or colonial mentality, becomes aware of the multitude and varied possibilities and probabilities within the universe” (2016, vii). Astro-Blackness, they suggest, understands space and global technocultural assemblages as ripe for the emergence of Black identity.

While Afrofuturist critique has assessed the racial violence of Cold War colonial science fiction, and while postsocialist and Cold War studies have explored many of the differences between US and Soviet outer space programs, here I follow Țichindeleanu’s line of decolonial inquiry in assessing socialist astrofuturism. While he agrees with Buck-Morss that both state socialism and democratic liberalism were chimerical inverses of each other throughout the Cold War, each bearing the same root of post-Enlightenment modernism (2016), he also points to differences between state socialist astrofuturist imaginaries and those of its Western counterpart. This, he suggests throughout the film, has everything to do with communist visions of collectivity, which socialist speculative futurists imagined as being at its most utopian in outer space. While this merged with Western colonial imaginaries, it nevertheless produced something new.

Unlike their Cold War colonial counterparts, socialist astrofuturists sat on the edge of the future, imagining that, as Țichindeleanu puts it, “an entirely different history of the world was about to be written.” This divergence and its revolutionary

potentials, he suggests, is still active and alive, particularly amongst those who grew up in the tradition of real socialism. After all, it became etched into daily life, even into concrete. As Stephen Collier notes, what was remarkable during this time was not the state's ability "to create 'ideal cities of the future' but its utterly pathological inability to do anything else" (2011, 112). This utopic project projected speculative futurist imaginaries into youth centers and mosaics. In material form, these endure after socialism's putative death, into the era in which the post-Cold War US continues to protract its imperial ambitions into the farthest reaches of space. Today, former utopian relics are now being grown over with plants, some of which may be, as in Solaris, still teleporting socialist visions into outer space. Whether we seem them as annoying weeds or as Gagarin's Tree, chimerically growing on in the wake of the Cold War space race 2.0, is entirely up to us. But the question nevertheless remains, what can speculative futures past tell us about why are these dreams are now in ruin?

Non/alignment

Reflecting upon its paradoxes, Ţichindeleanu muses that the socialist space dream "was actually a sort of engine that brought together the most different commitments, from the dream of an ecological communism to that of the most aberrant industrialization." Today, what lives on is the "power of that dream to bring people together and to create another history. This history remains to be written." During socialism, he reminds us, a notion of multiculturalism arose within Romania and Moldova quite different from that of the Western world. While Western multiculturalism of the time, what Jodi Melamed has described as racial liberalism

and neoliberal multiculturalism (2011), uses difference in order to further capitalism's scope, the socialist concept of *prietenia între popoare* (friendship amongst the peoples) was dissimilar. In other words, through neoliberalism, multiculturalism and racial liberalism grew in particular directions in the West; multiculturalism developed much differently in socialist contexts.

In 1957, for instance, the Romanian internationalist magazine *Orizonturi* (*Horizons*), edited by philosopher Mihai Şora, collaborated with the *Présence Africaine* magazine to publish articles and poems by founders of Negritude. The Senegalese historian of African pre-colonial culture, Cheikh Anta Diop, was featured in particular. Much of the text revolved around themes of militant resistance for Third World liberation. Romania was not alone in these early socialist friendships. The Soviet bloc had begun hosting South African dissidents as early as 1951. As James Mark and Quinn Slobodian proffer of the era, "Both the Iron Curtain and the borders of the Black Atlantic were more porous than often assumed, offering contact zones for interconnection between the Eastern Bloc and the Global South" (2018, 15).

Chişinău's Casa Naţionalităţilor (House of Nationalities), which also briefly enters the frame in "Gagarin's Tree," once was dedicated to struggles against slavery and its aftermaths in other countries, Ţichindeleanu remembers. For instance, independence struggles in Angola and Mozambique were supported by Eastern Europe (Popescu 2014, 91-109). In 2007, when Romania entered the EU, the country by default left the United Nations "Group of 77" of non-aligned developing countries, Ţichindeleanu bemoans. These were "neither aligned with the Western order, Anglo-Franco-German-American, nor to the Soviet order. A sort of descendent of the

Bandung Conference of the late 1950s. A friendship amongst peoples was the concept that framed most of the efforts identified as efforts for world peace." In fact, when Romania joined the G-77 nations in 1976, it unexpectedly went as far, under the leadership of Ceaușescu, to declare itself a Latin American nation, defying normative geopolitical boundaries (Mark and Slobodian 2018, 6). Yet today, nearly thirty years into postsocialism, there is no building nor institution that defends regional interests—only spaces of alliance mediated by imperial powers. As Florin Poenaru writes, the West has become "the norm par excellence, the only path to follow, the East being on the verge of starting a 'new (blank) page' of its history" (2010). The Western civilizing mission enforced a tabula rasa, with all friendships before "inevitably perverted or unusable." Anticommunism filled and created this void, along with new forms of nationalism and a galaxy of "liberal colonial enlargement" (Țichindeleanu 2017). Not only were future past alliances delated, but even alliances between other Eastern bloc spaces were stifled. But how did this come to be?

Unbeknownst to many, the very term "decolonization" was first utilized in the English language in the 1930s in order to prefigure the independence already achieved in Eastern Europe for that which might be gained in Africa and Asia (Ward 2016, 237-240). It was during this time that Western imperial leaders analogized Eastern European geographies with those of other colonized places, a trend that had been building since the Enlightenment and its various instantiations of internal Orientalism (Todorova 1997; Wolff 1994). For instance, in the late 1930s, the British considered offering Nazis authority over Central African territory in exchange for curbing their imperial ambitions in Eastern Europe (Pedersen 2015 343–345).

Nevertheless, the Communists that came to power after Second World War rarely used the word, as they saw it as too Western and paternalistic (Mark and Apor 2016, 853). Instead, the language of "common struggle" was favored, a struggle that would unite the so-called Second and Third World struggles, from Accra to Havana, from Hanoi to Bucharest (Gildea et al. 2011; Mark and Slobodian 2018, 2).

Despite the early intentions of the Communists to censure Western imperialism, many organizers from Third World struggles were wary of forming alliances with Eastern Europe, and for good reason. During the Paris Conference of 1919, for instance, Czechoslovakian politicians had lobbied for land in West Africa and Kamchatka (Mark and Slobodian 2018, 4). Leaders of popular Polish Maritime and Colonial League also argued for colonies, claiming that it was their European right, much to the admonishment of Nigerian soon-to-be president, Nnamdi Azikiwe (Pulchalski 2017). But then, after fascism began to grow across Europe, things slowly shifted. Trinidadian anti-colonial political force, George Padmore, censured Germany's invasion of Czechoslovakia, offering alliance (Mark and Slobodian 2018, 4). Soon, so did anticolonial intellectuals such as Cyril Briggs, Jawaharlal Nehru, and Rabindranath Tagore, all of whom supported the sovereignty of Eastern European nations (Minkah 2011, 38; Nehru 1948, 273-274). Meanwhile, as Communist governments came to power in the Soviet Union and Eastern bloc, socialist economists became excited about the expansion of socialism into the Third World, reifying a Marxist teleological approach to futurity (Engerman 2013, 232).

Nevertheless, many in the Third World continued to be suspicious of the Soviet Union as replicating Western imperial models, a fear that drove the Sino-

Soviet split in the 1960s. As Chari and Verdery have asked, "What, if not accumulation by dispossession, were the nationalization and collectivizations the Soviets imposed on their satellites?" (2009, 14). While many have critiqued Soviet imperialism (Grant 1995; Hirsch 2005; Martin 2001; Slezkine 1994), it is important to remember that not all Eastern European socialist spaces were even. Yugoslavia, which had broken from Moscow in 1948, was also accorded a special position in imaginaries of international solidarity, and it soon became one of the main architects of the Non-Aligned Movement (Byrne 2015, 923–927; Niebuhr 2011, 146–179). This is not to flatten the differences between the purported second and third worlds. As Mark and Slobodian write, analogies between postcolonial and postsocialist experiences (as well as socialist and colonials experiences for that matter), have "often distorted as much as they revealed" (2018, 3). Yet also, in the words of Nikolay Karkov and Zhivka Valiavicharska, "the political and economic developments in postsocialist Eastern Europe from the last nearly thirty years—the unchallenged privatization of public infrastructure, the rise or escalation of neo-fascism, nationalism, and ethnophobia, and the re-entrenchment of patriarchal relations—should also be seen in light of the decline of the anti-capitalist, anti-colonial, feminist, antiracist politics that the socialist countries helped forge in the global sphere during the twentieth century" (2018, 19-20). State socialism was, after all, an incoherent and contradictory spatiotemporality "fractured by the universalist, colonial, and ethnocentric paradigms of hegemonic humanism and the evolutionary developmentalism of socialist frameworks of modernization, social progress, and liberation" (ibid., 21). This history casts a complex specter on today's understandings

of socialism, refusing monolithic narratives.

Romania was not as assertive as Yugoslavia in its distancing from the Soviet Union, but it did reject the Comecon trade agreement, which had mandated that each socialist state maintain an economic specialty. Romania had been slated to be agrarian due to its longstanding peasant culture. But Gheorghiu-Dej's Communist Party, transfixed with Marxist-Leninist understandings of Communist futurity, wanted to develop industry and technology, which it did. Romania adopted a firmer anti-Soviet position in 1968, the same year that Tito enacted his final split from Moscow. It also became a special ally to China, exchanging architectural idea, technology, and even computers. Meanwhile, Romania demonstrated solidarity with the anticolonial and liberation struggles in African nations such as Angola, Zambia, Mozambique, Ethiopia, Capo Verde, and Burkina Faso, while also actively supporting the abolition of Apartheid (Țichindeleanu 2017). Peripherally involved in Middle East peace processes, particularly in Libya, Romania maintained strong ties with Syria and other Middle Eastern countries as well. But these international solidarities have been forgotten, Țichindeleanu laments in "Gagarin's Tree." What would have happened if Romanians could have learned from the violence of the World Bank, the IMF, and Structural Adjustment Programs in 1970s and 1980s West Africa? What might have happened if, armored with this knowledge, there could have been more resistance to the same policies as they were unleashed in Eastern Europe in the 1990s? What then might have materialized of socialist astrofuturisms?

A good friend's parents, Radu and Gigi, had both been engineers during socialism in Timișoara. Radu, now unemployed and depressed as his job was

effectively eliminated after 1989 and his future thwarted, loves to regale me in stories of socialist-era internationalism. He himself comes from Serbian heritage, as many people do in the West, closer to the Serbian border. One morning, sitting at their kitchen table while he was attempting to get me drunk on țuică (brandy) before breakfast, he decided to tell me the story of "the lion." It was in the early 1980s, and he and a bunch of fellow engineer students were on assignment in the city. They were an international bunch, as Romania was a top university destination for many engineers in the Third World. One of them was from the Congo. It had been a warm summer evening, and they were all sitting around playing cards, with the window slightly ajar. Suddenly, their comrade from the Congo jumped up, yelling that he had just heard a lion outside. Radu laughed at the man, as did everyone else there, "as we don't have lions in Romania." And yet, the Congolese friend was unrelenting. "He said that he grew up with lions, and he knows a lion when he hears a lion," my friend's father, Radu, continued. They all shut the window and went on with their card game, laughing at their international friend. Then, the next morning, when they turned on the radio, the Romanians were shocked. A lion had indeed escaped from a local zoo and had been roaming the city over night. "We thought we knew about all the cats in this city, but it turns out we didn't know a thing!" he exclaims. As Radu was cracking himself up, Gigi entered the kitchen, laughing at him, to tell me that they are still in touch with some of their former classmates from African countries. A friend from Burkina Faso will be visiting them soon for a big class reunion, she notes. "I wonder how it was for them, back then, here. There aren't as many people from Africa in town these days, just tourists really. Maybe still a few students, here and

there," she ponders.

Gigi and Radu blame the Romanian Communist Party (and the Soviets, in the case of Moldova), as well as Western imperialism, for the crumbling of this past "friendship amongst the peoples." Indeed, the Romanian Communist Party became increasingly isolationist and authoritarian, as has been well critiqued and as is now the dominant memory of state socialism in and beyond Romania. During this latter part of state socialism, Romania pursued extractivist politics, despite ongoing influences from Third World friends. Perhaps, Gigi ponders, the problem was the socialist embracing of the Marxist-Leninist teleological narrative. This codified progress within the terms of post-Enlightenment modernity. Such a temporal vision pathologized local "indigenous" understandings of time within Romania, but also the temporalities of other Indigenous and colonized peoples across the globe.

In addition, despite its policies of housing nationalization, public education, guaranteed work, and even guaranteed vacations, the Communist Party never really addressed ongoing anti-Roma racism. Nor was Romania's brutal history of anti-Semitism adequately tackled, as many have told me. Also, during this time, African students in Eastern Europe, many of whom had grown accustomed to freedom of debate and ideas in African countries, found Soviet-style socialism stifling. For instance, in 1963, between 350 and 500 African students fled Bulgaria after finding East European disregard for pan-Africanism (Slobodian 2018, 654). Some saw the Soviet project as too similar to the Western one. As a Nigerian student explained in Moscow, "Africans did not wish to replace western imperialism with eastern imperialism, no matter how well camouflaged it might be with seeming sympathy for

African nationalism" (qtd. in Kret 2013, 248).

Of course, antiracist and antifascist organizing contoured early socialist organizing in Romania and beyond. Many of the early socialists were Jewish, for instance Ana Pauker, a Stalinist, and the world's first female foreign minister, who served Romania in the 1940s and 50s. But Pauker was scapegoated by Gheorghiu-Dej as early as 1952 in the name of de-Stalinization in a move that many consider anti-Semitic and sexist (Levy 2001). After Stalin's 1953 death, new socialist imaginaries began to take hold across Eastern Europe, for instance Marxist Humanism. Yet in Romania, the 1970s, there was a strange return to Marxist-Leninism, what some called neo-Stalinism (Verdery 1991). This began with the 1971 *Tezele din iulie* (*July Theses*), issued by Ceaușescu in the name of "social humanism." While the *Theses* were inspired by Ceaușescu's visit to the People's Republic of China, North Korea, North Vietnam, and Mongolia, they resulted in increased authoritarianism rather than transnational friendship. Yet opposition to Soviet acquiescence was sustained, which allowed a positive position in the eyes of those critical of Soviet imperialism. After 1989, across the former Eastern bloc, the idea of friendship amongst the people was effectively displaced by NATO and EU understandings of alliance.

Although Marxist-Leninism and Marxist humanism were the dominant discourses in socialist Eastern Europe throughout socialism, it seems that there is a need to make space for more nuanced and contradictory understandings of these philosophies. Karkov and Valiavicharska suggest that these nuances point to how, even within socialist Eastern Europe, the Marxist humanist project of Enlightenment led to a stark elision of the project's "constitutive 'dark underside'" (2018, 18). Thus,

“by the time of the collapse of the state socialist governments (and even a little earlier), the internalization of the logic of imperial difference and its epigonal aspiration to true Europeanness” would incite internal racial violence (ibid., 18). Despite its liberatory potentials, they suggest, Marxist humanism never fully freed itself form colonial grounds. It remained too entangled with its chimerical other.

Yet Shu-mei Shih suggests that perhaps another kind of Marxist humanism could have “offered the possibility of conjoining the two terms socialism and humanism productively into a compound term, with consequences for both postsocialism and posthumanism” (2012, 31). This branch of thought would link with Fanon’s “new humanism,” which critiques Enlightenment humanism’s complicity with racial and colonial violence. Had this form of humanism, one since taken up by Sylvia Wynter, been sustained, it could have, she submits, offered a viable alternative to “totalitarian socialism” and the “neoliberal humanism” that has wreaked havoc across both sides of the former Iron Curtain. This form of humanism would accord that posthumanist outer space imaginaries cannot be obtained if not all people are considered human. Put otherwise, posthumanism and its astral imaginaries are only liberatory if grounded in antiracist, antifascist, and decolonial struggles. In sum, “our current displacement of postsocialism and relegation of posthumanism to cybernetics, as well as the apparent disjunction between postsocialism and posthumanism, indicate the elision of a global history of Marxist humanism since the 1950s that has cut across the first, second, and third worlds” (ibid., 30). Might outer space imaginaries have been more fruitful amongst the socialists if “friendship amongst the peoples” was stronger, and if antiracism had been better battled within socialist countries?

What might have happened if, instead of embracing post-Enlightenment temporal narratives during state socialism (Western liberalism's chimerical other), another timeline was constructed altogether? Instead of speculating a way out through industrialization alone, what if local cosmologies grounded in difference were fused into astral future-making? Perhaps this is some of what Gagarin's acorn, Solaris's houseplants, and before that, the world of Arimania, had hinted it. This trans/posthuman friendship between local cosmologies and outer space utopias, between plants, planets, and humans might have been able to code more revolutionary friendship amongst the peoples than those fashioned by the Communist Party. While intrigued by these possibilities, most of all, I am curious as to what kinds of counterfactual histories might be written in which socialist astrofuturists might have been inspired not by their chimerical other, but rather by Afrofuturists also trying to imagine a way out from the confines of racial technocapitalism and its transnationality. What kinds of speculative worlds might have opened up in which the raciality of capitalism could be deconstructed and dismantled within both sides of post-Enlightenment modernity?

Mapping Futures

During my first visit to Telciu, to Țichindeleanu's decolonial summer camp, I came across a workshop that two friends were leading with village youth. For two months, Lolo and Silvana had been working with local youth to collect stories, which would eventually be geolocated and released on an app that decolonial summer school participants could use to better understand the village. "App Telciul Copilor

(The App of the Telciu Children)" was used to geolocate the multiple stories, and it was made available to all of the village locals and summer school participants. While many of us had trouble accessing it, as the 3G and 2G networks were spotty, a far leap from the 4G highspeed internet of Romanian cities (Europe's fastest), it nevertheless attempted to render a techno-future illegible to Romania's newfound Silicon Valley status. There was the story of an eleven-year-old boy who regularly makes his way to an orchard to contemplate the meaning of life. We all visited his favorite fruit trees to hear the story in its referenced location, although he wasn't there as he was working in the fields that day. There were stories of the local cemetery, a forgotten river, and other local mysteries.

Lolo later told me that not all of the sites and stories that the youth recorded were embedded within the map, as some decided that they didn't want tourists or outsiders going near their favorite places. Now, two years later, they're thinking of taking everything offline, as they don't want the narratives accessible to outsiders at all. During the process of recording and mapping their stories, the youth buried letters in the ground near the sites of their stories to their future selves. This is more important, Lolo explained over beers one freezing, winter night back in Cluj, in an abandoned synagogue and current cultural center, Tranzit. Maybe maps were a bad idea to begin with, Lolo muses. They are, after all, he suggests, the ultimate colonial tool. Global Positioning System (GPS) is a Cold War military technology, derived from the US Navy's NAVSTAR technology. As Ruth Oldenziel studies, during the Cold War, the US colonized new islands in order to set up GPS satellite nodes across the world, mostly on islands, to extend its imperiality. "Again and again, these large

Cold War technical networks were grounded in colonized islands in an era of decolonization," she writes (2015, 29).

How does one, amongst socialist, postsocialist, and even, as in the case of the synagogue that Lolo and I are sitting it, pre-socialist ruins—spaces all made ruins through the entangled deployment of techno-imperialism and racial technocapitalism—map new technologies for the future? How can one theorize technological, speculative, and cartographic justice as a field of inquiry amongst such a complex and contradictory history of technological, speculative, and cartographic injustice? What archives can be read from the space of ruins, and what archives can still be crafted? Elizabeth Povinelli, writing of a GPS augmented reality mapping app that she and colleagues have been constructing in Australia in order to create a postcolonial digital archive. Rather than simply digitize and map for the sake of making existing information digitally representable, the postcolonial digital archive should, she suggests, "create new forms of storage and preservation and new archival spaces of time, in which a social otherwise can endure and thus change existing social formations of power" (2016, 150). Further, a postcolonial digital archive has to grapple with new questions of digital access, mediating who does and does not have access to intimate stories and cartographies contained within an online space—similar predicaments to those emergent from the App Telciul Copilor. In addition, she suggests that this postcolonial digital archive has to contend with the materiality of the not-so-rare earth comprising the hardware used to access, much of which has been mined and produced in ways that directly dispossess the mapping community. As she questions, how can one create new technologies and applications from this cramped

space in ways that refuse absorption back into the "enormous smelter" of capitalism (2015, 167).

While Povinelli is concerned with crafting a postcolonial digital archive, here I question what a decolonial postsocialist digital archive might be. How could it look to socialist technofutures past and present, meanwhile recognizing some of the past's failures, particularly when it comes to race? While the smelters of Western techno-imperialism and racial technocapitalism can surely be blamed for astrofuturist ruins, perhaps it is too easy to blame the West alone. Perhaps a connected rather than comparative approach to theorizing astrofuturism, racial technocapitalism, and techno-imperialism across both sides of the former Iron Curtain can help map past violence, but in order to clear the way for new genres of "friendship"—ones in which antiracist, antifascist, and anti-capitalist futures can be cultivated together, whether in outer space or not.

Epilogue: Blackface on the Nightshift, Proptech AI, and the Posthuman Landlord

I had been to “The Office” in Cluj before. Formerly a textiles factory, the new shiny glass building on Bulevardul 21 Decembrie 1989 was erected in 2012. Now, replete with numerous tech companies, fancy restaurants, banks, and cafes, it is hard to imagine what the space might have been like in its former socialist iteration. I had attended a couple of tech meetups and corporate hackathons there over the years, hoping to gain some insight into the workings of this new Siliconized moment in Cluj. However, it wasn’t until meeting up with an old friend in Cluj that I became aware of one of the offices in “The Office” that now I can’t stop thinking about.

My friend Caro had recently moved back to Cluj to be closer to her family, while in the midst of finishing her own dissertation on feminist labor histories in Romania’s interwar period. Struggling to pay her expenses, she had managed to land a job in a call center in The Office. There, she began working for Invitation Homes, the US’s largest landlord and a subsidiary of the half-a-trillion-dollar multinational company, the Blackstone Group. It was in the midst of the subprime foreclosure crisis of 2008 that Blackstone began to acquire single-family homes for cheap prices in the US, Spain, and numerous other countries, profiting from the racial technocapitalism that designed and implemented the mortgage crisis (Chakravartty and Silva 2012).

Invitation Homes was launched by Blackstone in 2012 to serve as their “rental wing.” In 2017, several Wall Street landlords, including Colony Starwood Homes and Waypoint merged with Invitation Homes, the latter suddenly tasked with managing 82,000 single-family homes. Colony had been owned by California Billionaire, and

close associate with Donald Trump, Thomas Barrack, whose company is notorious for evictions and poor tenant conditions (Glantz 2017). After a 2017 initial public offering (IPO), the Invitation Homes began trading on the New York Stock Exchange, accumulating wealth by the millisecond. The company's evictions also occur across the clock, often with the assistance of automated platforms and artificial intelligence (AI). Welcome to the age of the automatic Wall Street landlord.

Caro had no intention of working for Invitation Homes, and really just needed a nightshift job in which she could make enough to pay her living expenses. Invitation Homes, she explained over coffee on her day off, maintains two call centers—one in Dallas, Texas, and one here in Cluj. She works in the sales and billing department, in a building adjacent to but not nearly as fancy as the Invitation Homes offices of The Office. They could at least have good lighting as it's the night shift, she complains. Her shift begins at 5:30pm. It ends at 2am. It's not so bad, but it does "mess her up a bit." Others have to start later and work all night, which would be worse. She has Tuesdays and Wednesdays off, which enables her to have "less of a life" and therefore more time to write. She only found the job because she had friend working there. There was a "bring your buddy to work day" that she attended, and she was offered the job that day. The only requirement was English fluency. Unlike other tech jobs in the city, Caro doesn't see much middle-class aspirational technoculture at the call center. "Lots of students just trying to get by," she tells me.

The job is far from enjoyable though. Just the other day, a woman called from California whose son was dying. The woman was tired of Invitation Homes denying her Section 8 housing. Caro tried to sound compassionate to the caller, but the woman

saw through all of her boiler plate responses. Frustrated, the caller hung up, muttering, “Have a nice life—my son is dying!” “It’s hard to just smile and go on to the next call after things like that,” Caro sighed. Other people profile Caro and her colleagues for their Eastern European accents. Callers have no idea that they’re dialing someone in Romania until they hear the accents. “They really have no idea that their home is even owned by Invitation Homes,” she explained. Normally all that they’re aware of is that there’s a property management company, and that they have to call it to find a rental, or to order certain repairs. But they have no idea who the landlord is.

The job is frustrating, but what aggravates Caro most is the racism of some of her coworkers. “We get calls from people trying to get Section 8 housing in California,” she began. “This one guy, he racially profiles the callers, and if someone is calling because they need certain repairs done, he decides that they’re unworthy and doesn’t log the complaint. So, they get no service.” Yet another coworker performs Blackface when he profiles a caller as Black, and he chooses a “Black-sounding” name for himself, just to have fun, she recounts, lividly. “And what’s bizarre, is that we’re just supposed to be robots for this bigger company that is built upon racial violence in the US!” she exclaims. Yet through new routes of racial technocapitalism and Silicon Valley imperialism alike, anti-Black racism in Invitation Homes call center in Cluj is impacting tenant experiences back in California.

Technically, Caro doesn’t even work for Invitation Homes, at least not officially. In another weird post-2008 subprime phenomenon, she is working for what is considered a property technology company, Yardi System Incorporated. Invitation

Homes is one of Yardi's top clients. "It's all confusing," she tells me. "I don't know, do I work for Invitation, for Yardi, for the clients? Maybe if Invitation Homes is Yardi's client, then I work for the clients of the client?" she rhetorically questions.

The "proptech" company, Yardi, was established in Santa Barbara in 1984 by Anant Yardi, and has since expanded to manage properties for large Wall Street landlords. Technically, it maintains over 5,000 employees working in thirty offices across several continents, managing property managers and landlords. These clients own single and multi-family housing, military housing, ports, condos, public housing, and more, like Invitation Homes. Yardi also provides software for property management, of which they have over 20,000 clients, largely businesses and governments. Yardi Breeze is for smaller property managers, and Yardi Voyager for larger ones, such as Invitation Homes. Yardi also offers online platforms to mediate landlord-tenant relations, such as RENT Café and COMMERCIAL Café. They also offer residential screening technologies so that landlords can profile prospective tenants.

"Yardi Romania" is the Yardi's third largest office worldwide. There, it contracts with Invitation Homes, as well as PropertyShark, a real estate database used by speculators across the US, which it purchased in 2010. It maintains space in The Office for fancier IT related jobs. But the Call Center, or Center Point, is a bit down the street, above Lidl Mărăști. The call center opened in 2013, and as of 2017, there were 480 employees working there. It had emerged as a laboratory experiment alongside a call center in Irving, Texas. Yardi wanted to see which location was more advantageous, and Cluj seems to have won. Today, they provide 24/7 support in

English and in Spanish. "We all know English from TV and school, and then most of us know Spanish from the telenovelas we were glued to in the 90s," Caro laughs. They are all trained in "Basics of Telephone Etiquette," and "Hold Procedures—Putting the Customer on Hold the P.R.E.T.T.Y way." Rolling her eyes, Caro pulls out some papers in her backpack to prove that these trainings are real.

As one of Caro's colleagues, Loredana, illuminated weeks later in an interview, she and her fellow nightshift workers in the maintenance department have become experts in US domestic culture. While she hasn't observed racism in maintenance, she does get frustrated often. She doesn't understand how people in the US could possible think that a broken clothing dryer or air conditioner is an emergency. "Here in Romania, we don't really have either of those things, dryers or air conditioners, and when something does break, we just fix it ourselves." But their US clients find emergencies in everything. "They also have no idea when they're calling with one of these emergencies that they have a corporate landlord," she confirms. But this is the way that property works now—there's no going back, she thinks. People do often think that she's a robot on the phone, which infuriates her to no end. "I start talking, and then they start yelling commands and pressing buttons, as if I'm a robot. If Yardi or Invitation Homes does get robots to replace us, well the clients, they'll be making complaints about that too!" Loredana is in the midst of finishing her undergraduate degree in European Studies, and she doesn't know what she'll do after graduating. She had been shy before working for Yardi/Invitation Homes, and she appreciates that she's gained better "people skills" through the job. She thinks that she wants to become a police officer like her father, but she worries

that she’s too short. Maybe she’ll just stay at the call center, as long as she doesn’t become replaced by a robot, she laughed as it began raining on us at an outdoor café.

The last several years have seen a proliferation of digital platforms and proptech (also called “realtech”) companies reshaping multiple domains of urban life, including the provision, consumption, and management of rental housing. These platforms apply different forms of AI and machine learning in order to benefit property owners, many of whom are now Wall Street entities. Proptech platforms facilitate the management, consumption, and investment of particular properties, and also regulates landlord and tenant relationships (Shaw 2018). By incorporating artificial intelligence and machine-based learning, proptech targets tenants and automates evictions, forming figures that Desiree Fields has termed the “automatic landlord” (2019). This automated landlord is what might also be called a superhuman landlord, a posthuman figure that embodies the knowledge of who should and should not be living in particular housing, neighborhoods, and cities. Today, there are platforms that allow landlords to evict tenants through “click notices,” and also applications used to allow neighbors to “snitch” on other neighbors for what are described as nuisances (McElroy and Werth 2019).

By obscuring human decision-making processes and calculi, proptech automation and its superhuman landlord proliferates postracial imaginaries, pretending that race does not matter in these calculations. However, as in the case of other forms of AI, automation only recodes racism, with both “intelligence” and racism transmitted from machine makers to AI materiality and usage (Atanasoski and Vora 2019). This is not to deny the realness of digital worlds and futures, but it is to

find spaces of temporal entanglement between prior conceptions of the human and the superhuman landlord of today. The human of the posthuman landlord, in other words, is still human. This imaginatively posthuman owner/manager depends upon the transiting of race and racism across the Silicon Curtain. Yet unlike the digital nomad, the avatar of Silicon Valley imperialism, who lands in Romania and doubly dispossesses Roma people materially and allegorically—this posthuman landlord preys upon the lifeworlds and data of Section 8 tenants and renters within the heart of Silicon Valley imperialism. Yet at the same time, the posthuman landlord drags US renter data and futures into Romania, where new frictions transpire, indexed by strange transits of anti-Black racism and anti-Eastern European racism alike. In the Silicon Valley of Europe, this configuration sits upon the ruins of other technological futures past—infrastructurally, epistemologically, and imaginatively.

Through postsocialist analytics and a connected approach to mapping difference and entanglements, it becomes possible to begin understanding historic forms of race and raciality now being updated in the artificial present. While it is understood that histories of settler colonial histories and transatlantic slavery inform contemporary understandings of property and land both in the US and in Romania, postsocialist and connected approaches help illuminate what transpires when these histories entangle with those of data colonialism and AI. After all, while both Silicon Valley and Romania have long been sites of data accumulation, albeit of different genres, questions remain as to what happens when these forms mix in to the postsocialist moment. How does ownership of land and the ownership of data enfold upon each other? How does this entanglement lead to a new form of postsocialist

double dispossession, one that continues to inflict violence and extraction upon the lives that techno-imperialism and racial technocapitalism have always depended?

A connected rather than comparative approach brings these configurations into visibility, foregrounding entanglements across space and time. Methodologically, connected inquiry remains rooted in community organizing, and centers housing, technological, and cartographic justice as fields of inquiry. Romanian cities are neither the Silicon Valley, the most dangerous town on the internet, nor the little Paris of the East. This is not to deny that older histories of comparativity are not deeply woven into Romania's materialities and dreamworlds; rather, it is to think beyond modes of comparison and metaphor that delete spatiotemporal connections and the politics of displacement. Moving forward, I hope that mapping these connections across time and space help create new forms of international solidarity. Tracing these nodes and routes can after all help in charting and organizing futures unrecognizable to Silicon Valley imperialism and racial technocapitalism alike. Today, this new terrain of proptech AI, as it transits race, data, and dispossession across postsocialist space, be one of many places in which this work of non-alignment might continue.

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Endnotes

[1] I am indebted to Megan Moodie for pointing me towards thinking connectivity as method. Her guidance was integral as I began drafting this conceptual intervention.
[2] The Housing Justice in Unequal Cities was launched at the University of California, Los Angeles in 2019, led by Ananya Roy. Comprised of various partners, myself included, the Network aims to address interconnected housing crises in various scales, maintaining "transnational, interdisciplinary, and intergenerational collaboration to tackle analytical and methodological problems pertaining to spatial exclusion." By foregrounding the "realms of geographic inquiry, carceral geographies and land dispossession" it "builds data collection, data visualization, and story mapping tools that can capture the complex space-time geographies of housing precarity" (Unequal Cities 2019).
[3] The Dark Enlightenment is a neo-fascist and "neo-reactionary" movement that considers itself to be paradigmatically opposite of the Enlightenment. It opposes democracy, and it is popular amongst far-right and "alt-right" bloggers in the US (Haider 2016).
[4] Here I draw upon Katherine McKittrick's observation that spatial matters are racial matters in contexts of Black diaspora (2006).
[5] While numerous debates have endured since Edward Said's 1978 writing of Orientalism as to its spatial and temporal purchase beyond the Middle East, arguably there are many Orientalisms (Bakić-Hayden 1995; Lowe 1990; Saul 2007; Todorova 1997; Wolff 1994; Zăloagă 2012).
[6] In this section, I draw upon work co-authored with Alex Werth, which troubles the imposition of San Francisco-based urban study frameworks in Oakland, as well as comparative trends in gentrification studies (McElroy and Werth, 2019). I also draw upon ongoing conversations with Megan Moodie on the merits of connected rather than comparative methods.
[7] At the time of this writing, the eviction is on hold. Meanwhile, Impact Hub has left the park
[8] Perhaps queering and corrupting techno-normative narratives of corruption enacts a similar coding act as found in Marx's interpretation of Hegel's "negation of the negation" in *Kapital*. There, Marx describes how for Communism to manifest, first capitalism must negate feudalism, and then Communism must negate capitalism (1976, 837). Might the *șmecher* corruptions of anticommunist corruption narratives help also to produce something new, some queer excess of desires past and yet-to-come?
[9] After archival material and news of Kamprad's Nazi past was published in a Swedish newspaper in 1994, Kamprad publicly renounced his affiliation. However, years later in 2011, he claimed that "Per Engdahl was a great man, and I'll maintain that as long as I live" (Asbrink 2018). IKEA didn't know how to respond to resurfaced Nazi ties, and eventually donated $51 million donation to the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees in response.
[10] Harvard paid over $100 million for the land incurred debt through the transaction, which IKEA assumed in exchange for obtaining 98 percent of Harvard's property.

[11] Redlining was a racist cartographic method implemented by the Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC) in the 1930s, in which over a million homes across the United States were ascribed within "residential safety maps." Areas were classified according to the age and type of buildings, but also the "threat of infiltration of foreign-born, negro, or lower grade population," who were considered "dangerous" to lend to (Green 2016). Red areas were considered most dangerous, secondarily, yellow ones. Communities of color suffered economically due to the limits that redlining set, and disinvestment made them ripe for speculators to profit later. Today, as the California Reinvestment Coalition and the Anti-Eviction Mapping Project have found, banks and real estate investors profit in the designated red and yellow "off limit" areas (2018). This indicates what can be understood as contemporary urban revanchism, or reverse-redlining, processes exacerbated by the influx of technocapitalist wealth and speculation. Marxist geographer Neil Smith (1996) uses the term revanchism to describe the gentrification of late-20th century New York City. Building upon the political economy of late-19th century Paris and the withering of liberal urban policy, Smith understands the revanchist city as that in which neoliberal urban policies and forces enact revenge upon communities of color, working-class and poor neighborhoods, and queer spaces.

[12] Technology innovation districts are often called clusters, and they are often understood as strategically grouped in order to accumulate capital. Many resemble each other, and they are thought to be clones of Silicon Valley.

[13] There have been debates as to whether the Soviet Union can be theorized as an empire in its move to expand, as Moore (2001) and Lazarus (2012) well argue. One therefore cannot elide the importance of space when theorizing Soviet socialism. Neither can one ignore the importance of time under capitalism. Rather, I draw upon these ratio formations to stress differential structures of spatiotemporal valorization.

[14] Bears have been used to symbolically denigrate Russians since the 16th century (Platoff 2012).