

## A Displacement of Place:

### U.S. Suburbia's Futile Attempt at Control in the Anthropocene

As you stand on a polished street, without a pothole in sight, an elegantly manicured green lawn sits before you. From a slight distance, it looks just like Astroturf. Every blade of grass is maintained and accounted for with precision. The lawn leads toward a drab-looking McMansion with overbearingly predictable architecture and with a fashionable car — perhaps a Range Rover — parked on a smooth, gray concrete strip. The strip, or driveway, cuts through the neatly trimmed grass as if to provide a red carpet to showcase the luxury car's eloquence. Everything's like a stock image of what a home 'should be.' And that image replicates itself to create rows upon rows of house-lawn combinations that ooze monotony. These rows then form an overarching conglomerate of Getty-like Images — a neighborhood at its most stereotypically American dream peek embodiment of excellence.

I've never understood the popular draw to this way of life, but regardless, what I just illustrated is United States suburbia in one of its most opulent forms. It's an attempt to create a 'home sweet home' aesthetic, a place in nature where families can safely dwell without a care in the world. This aesthetic, though, is manufactured through a human domination of space, and while presented as a controlled place, it possesses zero control when put up against our planet's power. The suburban aesthetic is at the mercy of our physical realm, or planet, which of course goes against the aesthetic itself — being safe and without a care in the world. I use the term "physical realm" synonymous with "planet" because I want to distinguish, but not completely divorce, physical concepts from metaphysical concepts. My cosmic thinking falls in the tradition of Plato and Charles Peirce, specifically regarding the Platonic Forms, which are the ultimate reality that exist beyond the physical realm. The physical realm is a shadow, or image, of the

truest reality of the Realm of Forms, according to Plato. And the Realm of Forms are ideals such as Beauty, Justice, Nature, and Goodness that exist independent of space and time. Through the Neoplatonist lens of Peirce, aesthetic ideals (akin to the Platonic Forms) are attained through the growth and habit of the universe through firstness, secondness, and thirdness. Plato believes that ideals simply exist without change, and Pierce believes that ideals grow in continuation with the universe's progression. Nevertheless, the physical realm, or planet, acts as a metaphysical ground that holds the possibility to see the truest form of reality through art and artistic perception. To agree or disagree with Plato or Peirce's respective philosophies is beside the point of this paper, because, in the modern age, it's clear that our planet, our ground, is in grave danger. Ideals will always prevail; however, it has become clear that our ground to access them is by no means infinite. This philosophy is important to keep in mind because it is where Nature (an uppercase ideal) exists. Throughout this paper, I'll put forth that nature (a lowercase physical practice) no longer exists on our ground. No matter anyone's philosophical dispositions, we should all care about the ground. We should all care about sustaining the planet because it's the only thing that houses us.

And with this in mind, getting back to suburbia, the reason for its heightened passive position in the physical realm is due to global warming. Global warming is significantly caused by the human mechanization of the planet, which has constituted the death of nature. nature (lowercase), being a universally reciprocal relationship that people once had with the planet through ideology and action, has been dead for quite some time. It has been dead since the 17<sup>th</sup> century with the rise of the Scientific Revolution when nature began to be viewed a collection of inert particles prime for mechanical manipulation — destroying the universally reciprocal relationship that people once wholistically had with the natural world in systems of thought and

action such as Neoplatonism, Naturalism, Vitalism, and Indigenous subsistence. Nature exists metaphysically, beautifully represented in text, for example, by writers such as Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henri David Thoreau. Suburbia is an aestheticized version of nature and therefore a displacement of the places that were once cultivated and present within past practices. Suburbia removes nature, then imagines nature, then replaces nature with an aestheticized human domination of space. Suburbia follows in the Scientific Revolution's tradition to futilely control our planet through human domination. And now, particularly with global warming, that futility is realized, and fear consequently kicks in — fear for the future ecological consequences that human diminutive action set in motion.

Before continuing with themes of human domination in the context of suburbia, I want to clear up the terminology presented in my paper's subtitle. Firstly, let's figure out what a place actually is. It'd be helpful to use my introductory suburban sketch to come up with a hypothesis. Imagine that before the suburb existed, trees covered the land. A beautiful canopy of trees traversed the land to such an extent that as a place, it was clearly a forest. But one day, developers decided to cut all the trees down. They didn't like how the trees just sat there, only used by nonhuman organisms, completely lacking a human presence, and completely lacking the economic value that Capitalism demands. After chopping the trees down, the developers let the land be, not touching it whatsoever, just for a few months while preparing to build. Grass took over where the forest used to be — an expansive amount of untamed green grass. As a place, this area was clearly no longer a forest. There were no longer any trees, and trees are of course an essential part of what makes up a forest. With such an expansive plot of greenery, it's safe to say, as a place, this area is now a meadow. Unfortunately, it was never in the developers plans to make a meadow. So, after those few months of planning passed, they elected to pave oversized

gray concrete strips for cars all throughout the green grass, and they decided to erect individual houses with mini gray concrete strips of their own, and what was left over from the meadow, they designated a grand grass amusement where people could whack around balls with sticks. With all this manipulation, what we have now is no longer a meadow at all. It's a road, a conglomeration of Getty houses with driveways, and a golf course, respectively. And all these things put together, maybe with a few added accessories, are the makings of a suburb. The point is that a place is what occurs in a space — a space being any geographical plot of land. Then, anthropologically, one's social, economic, and political identity with what occurs in a space, along with an understanding of the human and nonhuman relationships that are inherent in that space, determines one's sense of place and one's ecological awareness.

The other term I want to unpack is Anthropocene, which is the current geological period when human activity started to have a significant impact on the planet's climate and ecosystems. Simply put, the Anthropocene is the age of global warming. Its epoch is highly debated among geologists, but I'm not too interested in any of that debate because the fact of the matter is that we are in it. However, there are two dates that I want to highlight. Firstly is 1492 — when mass genocide in the west, initiated by Christopher Columbus' arrival to the Americas, followed by Europe's consequent colonization efforts, uprooted approximately 20,000 years of established cultural practices among Indigenous people. Through Indigenous subsistence methods, there was a wholistic relationship among people, land, animals, and all organisms. That relationship was so wholly ingrained, that with Columbus' arrival, due the reduction of land use, the land's vegetation increased carbon stocks. In other words, because of settlers' violent disturbance, there was a consequent ecological secondary succession whereby plants and animals were forced to

recolonize THEIR habitats. This led to a carbon uptake that “reduced atmospheric CO2 levels that likely contributed to the coldest part of the Little Ice Age” (Koch et al. 14).

The second important date is 1784 — when carbon from coal powered industries began to be globally deposited as a result of the steam engine, invented by James Watt. The steam engine catapulted the industrial age. I chose these dates not to make a superficial argument about the direct correlation between whites and global warming, because at the end of the day, not just whites excessively manipulate our ecosystems and contribute to global warming. What I am saying is that whites, through grotesque global capitalism, contributed to a standard of violent ecological exploitation — stripping away the wholistic practices that people once had with the natural world on a global scale. Whites teed up the carbon uptake. When you think of the Anthropocene, think of colonialism and think of industry.

Colonialism and industry are integral parts of suburbia’s construction, and more broadly put, the construction of the entire U.S. With suburbia reflecting the U.S. consciousness, it’s a perfect template for investigation. American suburbanization is inherent in the American ethos due to the ‘pastoral imagination’ — or the dreams of explorers to live with ease in natural abundance, without burden, labor, or oppression. And, when Thomas Jefferson published his *Notes on Virginia* in 1785, American pastoralism, which was just an emerging idea at the time, became an “all-embracing ideology” to “invoke nature as a universal norm” (Marx 88). As I said before, though, to actualize this concept, it required the mechanical manipulation of land. In her work, *The Death of Nature*, Carolyn Merchant focuses on the cause for this manipulation. She details, as I previously mentioned, the Scientific Revolution’s removal of people’s once reciprocal relationship with the natural world. Additionally, through a feminist lens, she unpacks how nature, historically symbolized as female (Mother Earth), allowed for industrial leaders to

perceive landscape as benevolent. Merchant specifically points this concept toward the pastoral imagination:

“In pastoral imagery, both nature and women are subordinate and essentially passive. They nurture but do not exhibit disruptive passion. The pastoral mode, although it viewed nature as benevolent, was a model created as an antidote to the pressures of urbanization and mechanization. It represented a fulfillment of human needs for nurture, but by conceiving of nature as passive, it nevertheless allowed for the possibility of its use and manipulation” (Merchant 9).

Suburbia, as a reaction to industrialism, got its start on the idea that there needed to be a peaceful utopia away from work and away from the laborious and oppressive city. Using Jefferson’s pastoral imagination and agrarian *Notes on Virginia*, the displacement of the places that once existed in true nature commenced with force. Moreover, by designating suburbia as nature, developers mimicked the places they assumed existed within the societies that held a reciprocal relationship with the natural world. This mimicking can be characterized as a natural simulacra, which is a term from the French philosopher, Jean Baudrillard. The natural simulacra is “founded on the image, on imitation, and counterfeit, that are harmonious, optimistic, and that aim for the restitution, or the ideal institution of nature made in God’s image” (Baudrillard 121). And a century after Jefferson established his copy-cat ideology, suburbia took shape as a place distinct and separate from the city. In his seminal book on U.S. suburbanization, *Crabgrass Frontier*, Kenneth Jackson says, “... the major urban centers, the merchant princes and millionaires were searching for hilltops, shore lands, and farms on which to build substantial estates: crowded cities offered fewer attractions with every passing year” (Jackson 25). The merchant princes and millionaires sought a utopia, and all the while, as Merchant says, “allowed for the possibility of

[the land's] use and manipulation" (Merchant 9). The millionaires thought according to this framework because they were constructing nature. Manipulation was at the very heart of their natural utopia.

Manipulation is exactly what had to occur to create a gateway from the city to the suburb. The development of transportation is a useful way to understand such a gateway as an initiation for diminutive land use in connection with suburbia. In *The Railway Journey*, Wolfgang Schivelbusch makes clear how in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, James Watt's Anthropocene-inducing steam engine helped put human domination into practice through locomotive materials: "Iron became the new industrial building material, coal the new combustible. In the steam engine, the prime mover of industry, these two combined to produce energy in theoretically unlimited amounts" (Schivelbusch 2). This illusory concept of coal, a nonrenewable energy source, being thought of as unlimited, falls in line with the illusory concept of the pastoral imagination, viewing the North American landscape as a container for unlimited bounty, where no matter what one did to it, there would be peaceful living. And, of course, if one were to put both concepts in conversation with Manifest Destiny — settlers' belief in eternal expansion — manipulation and illusory beliefs would seem to be at the heart of the United States ideological founding, and that's not even touching upon the founding's intrinsic relationship with slavery — grotesquely evil human exploitation that sprung from such ideology.

However, returning to transportation and the gateway to suburbia in conversation with the pastoral imagination, Schivelbusch says, "In the United States the industrial revolution was seen as a natural development, not only because it appeared right at the beginning of American history, but also because it happened first in agriculture and transportation and was thus related directly to nature" (Schivelbusch 92). This relation to nature is a manufactured version of nature

that required mechanization and industrialism. Although, even with mechanization and industrialism, it was still possible to view the suburban product as nature because, as Merchant already said, “By conceiving of nature as passive, it nevertheless allowed for the possibility of its use and manipulation” (Merchant 9). In the American ethos, nature and manipulation were not contradictory terms. With suburbia’s construction, nature and industry went hand-in-hand, firstly, because of Schivelbusch’s point regarding the natural world’s relation to transportation. And secondly, due to a passive consensus regarding the planet, nature is thought to stagnantly sit and patiently wait for anything to be done to it. But because we know that physical nature is based on one’s relationship with the planet and its ecosystems, and with that relationship long terminated, the thing being manipulated is the physical planet, not some illusory concept of nature that can be violently prodded without consequence. As a result of this prodding and the consequent manufactured nature that results, suburbia does not lie over the hill and through the woods off in the distance. Suburbia is situated in the Anthropocene, not some pastoral nature. Physical nature has been removed and replaced by suburbia. Physical nature, as a place, has been displaced by suburbia.

Accordingly, as Jackson previously hinted at regarding suburbia’s construction in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, nature was sold “‘wholesale’ to real-estate developers, for sale to homeowners at retail” (Jackson 29). Selling nature in this fashion implies that nature is designated only to specific places. And the railroad journey that transports one to these places accentuates this designation. According to Ralph Waldo Emerson, a 19<sup>th</sup> century Transcendentalist thinker, the industrial revolution was a railway journey in the direction of Nature. While his statement does have metaphysical connotations — there being a metamorphosis between the physical and metaphysical, or poetic imagination — it’s helpful to physically explore the statement because it

exemplifies the American consciousness in relation to nature. In the physical sense, such a railway journey implies two concepts — that nature actually exists in the physical realm and that there is a foreground and a background. We've already established that nature no longer physically exists on our planet, and drawing from ecological writer and philosopher Timothy Morton, a background and foreground is something that never existed whatsoever. The railway journey, something that the Scientific Revolution allowed for with a fundamental manipulation of landscape, implies that one moves from the foreground — the industrial space — into the background — being nature: something over yonder. Nature doesn't exist 'over yonder.' As I've said, physical nature doesn't exist at all. In actuality, what the railway journey does is transport passengers from one place to another on the same ground, that ground being the Anthropocene. Point A and point B exist in the Anthropocene. This unpacking of the railway journey falls in line with the way Morton characterizes the false conception of nature as a background: "... a substance 'over there,' underneath, just around the corner, despite appearances out back, behind the surface, comfortingly present, endless, normal" (Morton, *Dark Ecology* 56). The railway journey, from the city to the suburb, is a journey through the Anthropocene. There is no getting out of it. One cannot run off to nature and escape the Anthropocene.

In the American consciousness, though, suburbia is an escape. It's a far-off land away from worry. It's an illusion, and again, by initiating suburbia with the pastoral imagination in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, comfort was key to maintain this illusion. The railway journey played an integral part in creating a peaceful transition from the city to suburbia. Specifically, the interior of the train was useful for such a transition. This was clear from 1870 to 1878 when "the mechanized reclining chair [took] shape" (Giedion 420). During this period, reclining chairs were most prominent in barber shops and railway cars. Regarding the railway cars, these chairs

revolutionized what was expected in the uniquely American railway journey. Giedion underscores this phenomenon in his work when discussing America's obsession with comfort: "Sleeping car and couch, parlor car and dining car, are typical products of the American movement. They sprang from patent furniture, from the aspiration to create a new type of comfort" (Giedion 439). And in these comfortable cars for much of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there was deceptively one travel class. I say deceptively because it was only open to white people, and an additional class was present for Black people and immigrants. This 'one' class upheld the illusion of American democracy, where all people are welcome to travel via train from city to suburb. The U.S., though, obviously has a long history of "processes that produce urban and suburban separation in the United States [and] also [has] a long history based on racism and racial segregation" (Low 47). In the 1950's and 60's, white flight, largely sparked by a fear of 'the other,' accentuated suburbia as a form of segregation. And this irrational fear from white people further erupted by racist news coverage from various mass media outlets regarding city crime among minority communities:

"News stories chronicle daily murders, rapes, drive-by shootings, drug busts, and kidnapping. An ever-growing proportion of people fear that they will be victimized, such that the fear of crime has increased since the mid-1960s even though there has been a decline in all violent crime since the 1980's" (Low 47).

White flight, in combination with lending discrimination, among other systemically racist practices, made suburbia a utopian place of whiteness.

Returning to the deceptively democratized American railway car, whites could sit back with knowledge that when they got off at their stop, they could enter eternal and pure bounty —

good old fashion U.S nature. And before reaching their stop, as the train glides through the land, they could look out the window and add to the illusion with a morphed space-time continuum:

“...in view of the traveler’s situation in the train compartment: enclosed in it, the traveler has no way of distancing himself from the objects — all he can do is ignore them and the portions of the landscape that are closest to him, and to direct his gaze on the more distant objects that seem to pass by more slowly” (Schivelbusch 56).

The passenger’s gaze is transfixed on a slow-moving background, because on the railway journey, distant objects are, just as Schivelbusch points out, the only legible objects. This distant gaze among passengers heightens the illusion of the railway journey: drifting away in the direction of nature. It heightens the illusion of a background, when in the Anthropocene, there is no difference between point A and point B. There is just one point — a physical realm of global warming.

However, carrying on with the illusion, when the passenger gets off at their stop, and proceeds to walk through so-called nature, eventually entering their home, there is a smooth reinforcement of comfort. This is especially true regarding similarities between the interior of the railway car and the interior of the home. The successful reception of reclining chairs in railway cars allowed them to enter “the intimacy of the home” (Giedion 418). Reclining chairs are symbolic of the comfort represented in the entire suburban home due to the pastoral need to escape into a reclined state. There is an ideological connection with comfort in the suburban home:

“The single-family dwelling became the paragon of middle-class housing, the most visible symbol of having arrived at a fixed place in society, the goal to which every decent family aspired. It was an investment that many people hoped would provide a

ticket to higher status and wealth. ‘A man is not a whole and complete man,’ Walt

Whitman wrote, ‘unless he owns a house and the ground it stands on.’” (Jackson 50).

Suburbia as a utopia is an actualized manifestation of the pastoral imagination and of the goals of eternal expansion espoused by Manifest Destiny — a consequent dwelling place in the land made in God’s image. Again, there are racist connotation here with such an emphasis being put on the necessity to own part of the utopia to be complete. The previously mentioned legislative policies impede Black people and people of color from achieving “higher status” and “wealth” and becoming “whole” and “complete.” With this, in conversation with the pastoral imagination and Manifest Destiny, suburbia is more than a physical place. It's also a part of illusory American ideology. Regarding the suburban home, Jackson says, “Although it is only a box and often the unindividualized result of mass production and design, it is a very particular box and is almost a tangible expression of self” (Jackson 52). This expression of self, a privatized form of identity — no matter its specifics — situates itself in the context of a safe and comfortable ideology. It situates itself in a background.

Moving into the 20<sup>th</sup> century and keeping with the theme of transportation, this time with the Model T, “the ownership of an automobile had reached the point of being an essential part of normal middle-class living” (Jackson 161). The automobile expanded suburbia with roads and highways. Automobiles don’t conform to straight tracks and predetermined stops like trains do. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, roads and highways allowed for a larger reach and a more expansive manufactured nature. “The most important characteristic of the automobile suburb was its lower density and larger average lot size as compared with anything ever previously experienced in the urban world” (Jackson 184). And, in a similar fashion to how trains influenced comfortable home living, so did cars.

Following World War Two, this influence became apparent in the sphere of kitchen appliances, which is a critical area regarding the peaceful, domestic aesthetic that suburbia holds. As Laura Scott Holliday writes in her “Kitchen technologies: promises and alibis,” “Women’s food preparation and cleanup were ‘labors of love,’ work that reproduced the bourgeois family as an institution ideologically and materially by reiterating an appropriately gendered division of labor and by erecting the home as a space distinct from the public sphere” (Holliday 82). Gendering the domestic sphere (suburbia) as female and as distinct from the world of male labor aligns with how Merchant previously detailed nature as “subordinate and essentially passive,” and prime for manipulation (Merchant 9). The separation of the public sphere (industry/labor) and domesticity (nature) further reinforces nature as a background, as opposed to upholding the reality that there is no background in the Anthropocene. It is part of the overarching ideology where nature and manipulation go hand in hand.

Moving forward with domestic appliances and automobiles, kitchen companies, such as Streamline Moderne, departed “from a ‘gears-and-grease’ aesthetic,” which can “be read as an evolution away from noisy, dirty, and laborious present-day machines toward machine of the future, which are coded as quiet, clean, and effortless, as though they operated via magical rather mechanical principles” (Holliday 109-110). To maintain suburbia as a pastoral background, to polish its natural aesthetic, mechanization had to be concealed. Mechanization in suburbia had to be clean and represent leisure, not some laborious chore. It had to represent freedom and progress, which is why “the promises of kitchen technologies are initially established through the showcasing of cars alongside kitchens, promoting a parallel between automobiles and major kitchen appliances” (Holliday 86). Holliday continues: “...the kitchen, or at least having the appropriate cutting-edge Frigidaire appliances in a kitchen, offers independence and personal

freedom (and status) parallel to that enabled by owning an automobile” (Holliday 86). Suburbia represents freedom — a democratized natural place where anyone can escape from the labors of everyday work life. It’s a place without burden. Such nonsensical rhetoric simply contributes to the notion of the natural simulacra as reality. We should all know by now that suburbia is not a vessel of escape. It’s a mechanically produced place that sits in global warming. The Anthropocene melts around suburbia just as it does in all places on our planet. Displacing physical nature with suburbia and the illusions that come with the pastoral imagination changes nothing concerning its situation in the physical realm.

One realizes this with ecological awareness, recognizing that there is a difference between how things appear and how things are. Referencing Morton again, this time regarding ecological damage in conversation with this contrast, he says, “I can’t actually wipe [the vomit] off. We enter a thick ambiguous boundary between shame and a region that lies within it. At this boundary, there is a recognition of trauma, an acknowledgement that we never wiped away the vomit and never could...” (Morton, *Dark Ecology* 133). There is shame because we realize that we (humans) are completely and utterly at fault for the ecological crisis we face. We puked everywhere and are having to now clean it up. Every time we return to the scene of the puke, it still smells putrid. And even more than that, there is no one scene. The scene is everywhere. It’s in all places.

Continuing with Morton terminology, global warming and the reality that is the Anthropocene can be characterized with the term, hyperobjects — ‘objects’ that are “massively distributed in time and space, exhibiting nonlocal effects that [defy] location and temporality, [and] cuttable into many parts without losing coherence” (Morton 47). Hyperobjects defy location and temporality because they are “the future, somehow beamed into the present”

(Morton 91). You can't hold or touch a hyperobject in the sense that you can't hold or touch global warming, which Morton comprehensively unpacks in his work, *Hyperobjects*. With ecological awareness, you instead feel the effects of the hyperobject. For instance, you feel rain from a violent storm, which is an effect of the hyperobject. You can't touch or hold the global warming that caused that rain. And even more, the rain, in conglomeration with the violent storm, reminds you of the ability of global warming to destroy, which brings the impending future of the hyperobject into the here and now.

By becoming ecologically aware in the suburban place, and acknowledging the ever-present puke, things become uncanny. The uncanny, as Sigmund Freud says, "applies to everything that was intended to remain secret, hidden away, and has come into the open" (Freud 187). To bring this uncanniness into the light, it's helpful to harken back to the suburban image I illustrated in the first paragraph. Let's start with the eloquent Range Rover parked on its concrete red carpet. It leaves the strip every day, going to and from places (any places, undoubtedly countless places) and consequently impacts the global carbon footprint. If it's an electric car, the fossil fuels and rare earth minerals that allow for its existence still have profound effects on global warming. Traversing from the concrete strip to the Astroturf-looking lawn, the pesticides that contribute to forming its perfection contaminate soil, water, and vegetation and therefore harm all organisms, including birds, fish, and insects. The lawn is the largest irrigated crop in the continental United States. Americans spend more than \$36 billion every year on lawn care. That's four-and-a-half times more than the annual budget of the Environmental Protection Agency (Holthaus). Walking into the interior of the house, and skipping over the visible objects, such as furniture and appliances that are only present because of global warming inducing industry, one thing is apparent: the air feels comfortable. It feels refreshing and judging by the

suburban illustration's beautifully manicured green lawn, its most definitely summertime. It's hot outside, and by walking inside, one experiences the ambient, cool breeze that air conditioning produces. By 2050, researchers expect the number of room air conditioners on Earth to quadruple to 4.5 billion. Greenhouse gas emissions from air conditioning will account for as much as a 0.5-degree Celsius rise in global temperatures (Underwood). There is a frightening contrast between appearance and essence in the American utopia.

This new vantage point of something so normal, familiar, and safe becomes disorienting. It's to the point where an ecologically aware suburbanite might walk out their front door, squint their eyes, and channel the Talking Heads from the band's famous song, "Once in a Lifetime:" "...What is that beautiful house? / ...Where does that highway go to?" / "...Am I right? Am I wrong? / ...My God! What have I done?" (Talking Heads 2:19). The lyric's lack of familiarity with the house and the highway encapsulates the process of attuning oneself to the horrors of the Anthropocene, and then recognizing the horrors. Questioning whether one is right or wrong and concluding accountability and personal wrong-doing, and subsequent fear of such wrong-doing — that is ecological awareness.

And this recognition of essence in the Anthropocene can be further illustrated in Stanley Kubrick's 1980 film, *The Shining*. In the film, a family of three head to an isolated hotel (The Overlook Hotel) as its caretakers for the winter where a sinister presence influences the father into violence, while his psychic son sees the horrific presence from both the past and the future. Kubrick uses time, place, and memory to articulate how past and future violence are represented in an omnipresent fashion. He specifically does so regarding violence against Indigenous people, and the film is covered from front to back with Indigenous symbolism. Indigenous imagery is printed on canned goods in the hotel's pantry. Indigenous art scatters the hotel on which the main

protagonist (the father) — Jack (played by Jack Nicholson) — violently throws a ball to both kill time and solve his writers block. The hotel is built on an Indigenous burial ground and Wendy (the mother) — played by Shelley Duvall — wears clothing with inscribed Indigenous imagery, with instances of her hair done in two braids as well. These are just a few examples.

With that imagery in mind, when the film's violence appears on screen, it's meaning is that much more visceral. For instance, with the Grady twins, who were murdered by their father, the previous caretaker of The Overlook Hotel, we get an insight into this heightened meaning. As mentioned before, the current caretaker is Jack, played by Jack Nicholson. One day, Jack's son, Danny, sees the Grady twins unharmed in a hallway of the hotel. He experiences the twins in the present because Danny is unaware of their prior demise. In the present, as they are, the Grady twins are already uncanny because they are doubles of themselves. However, things get particularly uncanny when the twins' essence is revealed to Danny — that essence being the fact that they were axed to death by Mr. Grady, the previous caretaker of the hotel. Danny observes something that for him, is the twins' future fate, but in actuality is a past occurrence. After their essence is revealed, the twins say, "Come play with us Danny, forever and ever and ever" (Kubrick 50:14-50:21).





Kubrick uses the past and the future to articulate the omnipresence of time and its infinite entwinement. The Overlook Hotel, just like a suburb in the Anthropocene, and more generally, just like the entire Anthropocene, is a hyperobject. As Morton says, “The present does not truly exist. We are experiencing a crisscrossing set of force fields, the aesthetic-causal fields emanated by a host of objects” (Morton 93). We are constantly reckoning with the past, and in conversation with that reckoning, the future is “beamed into the present.” (Morton 91). When we ecologically view the suburb as a place in the Anthropocene, we experience a crisscross of events and feelings. Firstly, we become aware of past industrial exploitation, we become aware of the pervasive presence of that exploitation (even within what was thought to be the peaceful background — nature or suburbia), and we become aware of a future that is destroyed by ecological crisis because of the past — a crisscross of time and space. Secondly, we become aware of the colonial violence that contributed to a global standard of violent exploitation. We see the past blood of Indigenous people cover the present ground and we fear for the future that such violence put in motion. The past and the future exist simultaneously. When you think of suburbia, and more broadly, when you think about the Anthropocene, picture colonialism and industry. That picture, and the process of picturing — becoming ecologically aware — penetrates place with unease because it is an acknowledgement of the violence that has been enacted to the planet and an acknowledgment of how we are currently part of that violence. It's

an acknowledgement of we are actively participating, how we are actively dominating, and how that domination is a futile attempt at control. It stands no chance against the planet's inherent power and its reaction to the excessive human mechanization that has caused global warming. The planet is The Overlook Hotel, and we are the Grady twins. We are subject to the consequences of how we disparage the planet.

We have displaced physical nature with excessive mechanization. This excess is a veil that threatens ecological awareness and paints over the planet's natural relationships. The fact of the matter is that the places which we live do have profound meaning, even in a painted-over form. Their meaning is so profound that its critical to acknowledge the fear that I've mentioned and use it as a tool to inform the ways we live and the ways we respect our physical surroundings. It should inform the empathy that we have for the human and the nonhuman life on Earth. We should view ourselves as stewards and not as rulers or subjugators. We are at the mercy of the planet and the planet has yet to reveal its power in full — not even close. Let's acknowledge the damage that we have done to the planet, let's strip away the natural simulacra façade that suburbia cloaks places with, and let's live with care and protect our physical surroundings. Let's live with the planet and all its humans and nonhumans. Maybe then we'll can be witness to its poetic ecology.

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