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Carrie and the Suburban Gothic genre represent the 'suburban fear' distinct from its Korean and Japanese counterparts by adhering to the expectations of the American audience.

The Suburban Gothic genre, specifically *Carrie* by Stephen King, distinguishes the 'Suburban Fear' from its Korean and Japanese counterparts by adhering to the expectations of the American audience, diverging in types of threat, including characteristics only present in suburban settings, and utilizing different kinds of imagery that suit the American audience more in terms of culture.

The United States' rapid economic growth post World War II brought a rise of suburbs, which featured replicated houses, high-esteem residents, and the secluded 'suburban community.' As the suburbs grew, the fear of being isolated in a suburban environment and the fear of the sense of 'over-idealness' grew with it, which enabled the genre 'Suburban Gothic' to be born. However, the US was not the only country that faced the creation of these large communities full of strangers. Korea and Japan, in the 20th century, faced rapid industrialization and, thus, urbanization; after World War II, secluded towns and massive urban areas populated Korea and Japan, and there was no place for newcomers. This cultural background caused a similar fear of being isolated to grow in these areas, making texts that explore this fear prominent throughout the century. As such, those genres are similar in that they appeal to the fear of isolation and sublimeness that was prominent in these environments.

20th-century Korean and Japanese texts incorporate the fear of isolation and the unknown by featuring a threat in the sublime: These texts often describe the threat as not of a human cause but rather internal or supernatural and sublime in a sense. An iconic example of this in Korean literature would be 무진기행, or *Record of a Journey to Mujin*, by Kim-Seung-Ok, which creates threat from the internal conflicts of the protagonist, metaphorized in the text as the ‘mist that makes people cry for sun and wind to come.’ (Kim, p. 1) An example of this in Japanese literature would be 羅生門, or *Rashomon* by Ryuunosuke Akutagawa, which generates conflict and terror from the selfish human nature and the world that forces individuals to take these actions, in the famous quote of “Then, do not blame me for doing the same [exploiting and stealing from the powerless], as I would also starve to death if I did not.” (Akutagawa) A possible reason for this aspect of sublime terror to be commonplace is that the texts are written in the Korean and Japanese historical period of colonialism and war: the texts explore the powerlessness individuals in the era felt, with commonplace topics centered around the Japanese colonial era and the Korean War for Korean literature and the Kurofune(黒船) incident and World War II in Japanese literature. This convention and the common fear that the texts feature are often phrased as “전후문학”(한국민족문화대백과사전), or “Post-war literature” in Korean literature: these ideas are present throughout the literary texts and artworks from the period, such as the following painting of the Kurofune, which equates the Kurofune with the traditional Japanese “demon” of 鬼(Oni). This historical difference would be why the conventions of these texts differ from the suburban gothic genre in terms of representing a threat.

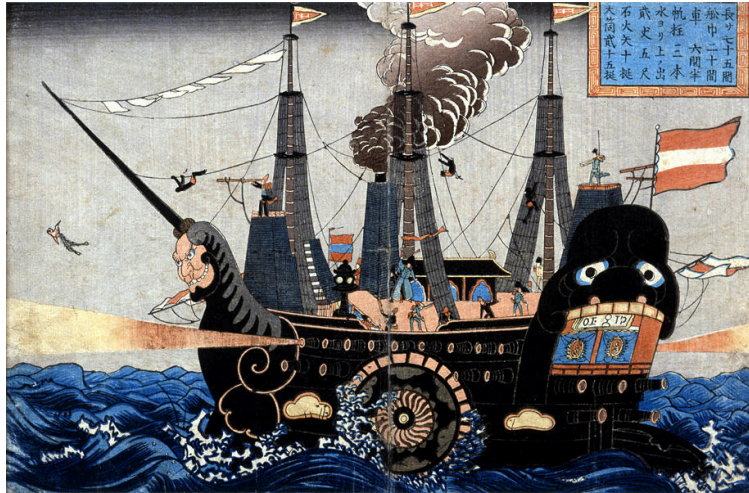


Fig. 1. Monstrous depiction of the Kurofune(黒船), Unknown, 1854, © Nagasaki-ken

On the contrary, the Suburban Gothic genre often presents a human threat: the threats are commonly associated with individuals or groups, which could and often are fought against in various forms. In *Carrie*, this is shown in the monstrous description of Carrie's mother when she is preparing to kill Carrie: "She was a big woman with massive upper arms that had dwarfed her elbows to dimples, but her head was surprisingly small on the end of her strong, corded neck. It had once been a beautiful face. It was still beautiful in a weird, zealous way." (King, p. 104) or in the film *Halloween*, which features a psychopathic serial killer as the main antagonist. Likewise, the stereotypical antagonist of a suburban gothic text would not be the supernatural element themselves but the suburban residents related to such elements of monstrosity. This difference originates from the different cultural backgrounds from which the genre arises: the 'suburban fear' arises purely from the lack of social interaction in suburban communities from the 1950s, the 'danger from the people in the house next door.' (Murphy) As such, the audience could relate more to the plot involving the 'uncanny neighbors' than the sublime fear prominent in Korean and Japanese literature. Therefore,

as a reaction to such preferences from the audience, the sublime gothic mostly features human threats, making it a unique and specific representation of the ‘American Suburban.’

Korean and Japanese texts from the 20th century utilize images of natural scenery, both in a way to express nostalgia and homesickness in the new urban environment and a way to express the sense of hopelessness against the sublime. An example would be from *Gwangjang*, or *The Square*, in ‘The sea, swatting heavily with walloping blue scales, saturated than crayons, breaths.’ (Choi, p. 1) Throughout the text, the sea is described as the ‘blue square’ (Choi), symbolizing the freedom from social pressure the protagonist receives throughout the plot and juxtaposing with the human ‘square’ to convey such social pressure to the readers as sublime. This representation of the vast, powerful nature results in the plots of those texts being in an open space: the theme of ‘being lost in the vast, unfriendly world’ is a common motif for the 20th century Korean and Japanese texts, present also in the aforementioned *Record of a Journey to Mujin*, or in 人間失格, known as *No Longer Human*. As such, those texts discuss ostracism and futile attempts to escape such uncanny environments physically; for instance, in the quote, “The sign wrote, in black distinguishable letters, ‘You are leaving Mujin-eup, farewell.’ I felt deeply ashamed.” (Kim, p. 16), in which the protagonist escapes from Mujin out of guilt but realizes that he cannot escape from the guilt itself. This method of integrating natural imagery is as these texts often focus on exploring the self in such a threatening environment, which is often a reflection of the post-war state of Korea and Japan, and thus presents the protagonist or the narrator as more observant and aware of the surroundings, contrary to the suburban gothic genre. This description of nature could also be said

to have a cultural origin and a nostalgia for such culture, as the beauty of nature is a common topic in Asian pre-modern literature.

However, *Carrie* and the suburban gothic genre utilizes vile imagery such as blood and flesh while removing the aspect of nature from the text to emphasize the trapping nature of the suburban environment. The most iconic representation of this in *Carrie* would be the climatic prom scene, which serves as the signpost for the start of destruction and chaos plotwise, from ‘All at once there was a huge red splash in the air.’(King, p. 117), in which the text explores the breaking chaos through the sudden presence of blood and vileness. The vileness in the suburban gothic genre could originate from the common idea of ‘corrupting the ordinary’ to generate eeriness and uncomfortableness while maintaining the background setting relatable to the audience. In some ways, this could also be seen as a reflection of American popular culture, as other genres that discuss vileness, such as the slasher genre, gained popularity in a similar period to the suburban gothic genre: this could be reflective of what the American audience had expected from horror genre texts and movies in the period, as films such as *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*(1974) or *Friday the 13th*(1980) was successful in the era. The noticeable lack of natural imagery used in Suburban Gothic texts is also a good comparison point of how the suburban gothic genre differs from Korean and Japanese texts: filling up the story’s background with endless continuations of suburban houses and streets is extensively used in the suburban gothic genre, such as in “On her right was downtown-the department store, the Kelly Fruit, the beauty parlor and barbershop, gas stations, police station, fire station-”(King, p. 132). This environmental difference could be because suburban gothic texts tend to focus on the physical aspects of the conflict, in comparison to Korean and Japanese texts, which

focus on self-reflection in such threatening environment, which leads to the need for physical constraints in the plot, to keep the same gist that such threat is unavoidable and inescapable. Therefore, the suburban gothic genre represents American Suburbia differently from other genres by focusing on the physical vileness of the conflict and, hence, adhering to the cultural expectations of the genre in the era.

The suburban gothic differs from 20th-century Korean and Japanese literature in several dimensions: the threats they feature and the different settings and images used in the texts. This difference is primarily due to the cultural and historical differences between American suburbia and 20th-century Korea and Japan. However, the suburban gothic genre focuses on the threat created by social isolation from the neighbors, the eeriness generated from the ‘perfectness’ of the suburbia, and is reflective of the vileness present in the American film industry in the era. An intriguing takeaway would be how the suburban gothic genre has developed or will develop, as Korean and Japanese literature took different paths after the 20th century. With the ‘Miracle of the Han River’ in Korea, the genre became more memoir-like, such as in the book *소년이 온다* or in the film *서울의 봄*, with mainstream literature being more political, such as in *82년생 김지영*. However, in Japan, the genre shrinks in the bubble economy era. However, after the Lost Decade era, it prevails in both mainstream literature and subculture literature, in the book *IQ84*, in the game *ひぐらしのなく頃に*, or the film *日本沈没*. This different branching of Korean and Japanese literature shows what the suburban gothic genre might evolve into, which is a takeaway point from this comparison between genres.

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