

# THE UN-DEAD HISTORY OF RESIDUAL HAUNTINGS: TRANSGRESSIVE IDENTITIES IN ALVIN LU'S THE HELL SCREENS

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In clinical psychology, there are cases of patients who suffer from traumatic memories that are in fact of alien origin. Observing these phenomena, which Nicolas Abraham had termed "Transgenerational Phantoms," one cannot help but wonder how a separate entity's psychic wounds could transgress the tight and private boundaries of individual consciousness to exert such a strong influence, even granting that a certain degree of emotional transference or projection may be possible. Can one truly harbor so much empathy for another as to risk his/her own psychological and physical integrity, by so thoroughly embracing and internalizing life-threateningly painful visions? How may we understand not only the content, but the very mechanism of such hauntings? The question becomes further complicated when alien memories begin to incorporate "lifeless" objects, such as material possessions or locales, as in Alvin Lu's novel *The Hell Screens*. In Lu's eerie vision of a ghost-infested modern cityscape, undead legacies stake their claims across the wide gaps among individual consciousness, socio-historical contexts and even geographic boundaries. Invasive voices and presences of others prey upon the mind despite a lack of, or in resistance to, prior knowledge about them or any intentional act of recollection. In this paper, I propose the concepts of "residual haunting," "reference points" and "literary witnessing" as an attempt to understand the dynamics of transgression in the intricately intertwined traumatic memories of the I and the other, the living and the dead.



Haerin Shin is an assistant professor of English, Asian Studies, and Media Arts at Vanderbilt University. Shin's research focuses on the relationship between technology and ontology, digital/visual media, and Asian American fiction. She has published and forthcoming articles on topics ranging from cyber-bullying, techno-Orientalism, posthuman race and gender, zombies and affect theory, internet communities, and the mindware discourse. She is currently completing a book on telepresence technology in contemporary fiction.



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