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Knock Knock, Neo

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I'd say that a good adaptation shouldn't just be about making the original work more accessible; it should have merit in and of itself. It's almost like a good movie adaptation. It can take its roots in the original work, but it really ought to be something new as well. The one that pops to mind is one of my favorite books of all time, and it sort of sits in my wheelhouse of themes—*Silence* by Endo. He's a Japanese writer, and he was a Japanese Catholic. He wrote a lot about the coming together of East and West. *Silence* is about this European Jesuit who discovers that one of his mentors went to Japan as a missionary and abandoned the faith and took a Japanese wife. He can't believe it. So he goes to Japan to look for him at a time when there's a lot of religious persecution in Japan. It's a great book, a brilliant book. I love that book so much, I don't know if I'd be able to do it justice.

Works by Gene Luen Yang

Animal Crackers: A Gene Luen Yang Collection (SLG Publishing, 2010) features two of Yang's earliest graphic works—*Gordon Yamamoto and the King of the Geeks* and *Loyola Chin and the San Peligran Order*. Both focus on Asian-American teenagers who are unwilling hosts to aliens intent on remaking the world. Like many of Yang's works that followed, these two graphic novels are whimsical in tone but metaphysical in intent.

American Born Chinese (First Second, 2006) is the critically acclaimed story of a Chinese American teenager coming to grips with his culture. Deftly interwoven with Chinese mythology, this graphic novel confronts issues of racial stereotyping and cultural assimilation and is increasingly taught in middle and high school settings.

The Eternal Smile (First Second, 2009) collects three stories written by Yang and illustrated by Derek Kirk Kim. Kim's visual style is more complex and less endearing than Yang's, but the stories hang together around themes of loneliness and cultural conflict.

Prime Baby (First Second, 2010) may be the quirkiest of Yang's graphic novels. A one-time math teacher, Yang returns to his roots with an imaginative story of a baby who is born knowing math—and the older brother who discovers why.

Level Up (First Second, 2011) is another collaboration, this time between Yang and the illustrator Thien Pham. *Level Up* tells the story of Dennis Ouyang, an Asian-American teenager who must choose between his love of video games and the medical career his parents want him to pursue.

Knock Knock, Neo

Even when you are the One,
you still have to listen to Trinity.
You still have to choose
to follow the white rabbit, to swallow
the red pill over the blue
to wake up in the real world.
You have to let your eyes ache
from using them for the first time
to push your way out of your pod
and to be disconnected from all
that seemed and all that was real.
You have to ponder what the Oracle
says and doesn't say about you;
you have to learn that
if there is no spoon,
there aren't any bullets, either.
Facing the Agent who has come
to destroy you, you have to grin at him
and beckon him toward you
with your own hand,
just so you can kick
his glasses off, after which
both of you will see much more clearly
who you really are.
But none of this will be possible
if you don't let Trinity love you,
even when you are the One.

Brian White

Brian White is a Professor of English at Grand Valley State University. He would never have written this poem about a superhero if it hadn't been for his children, who forced him to watch *The Matrix* with them.