Graphic Matters: Teaching Asian American Studies with Graphic Narratives in Taiwan

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In the conclusion to his provocative essay, "Transnational American Studies for What?," Joel Pfister contends that at the center of transnational and national American studies there should be a "critique of systemic contradictions we must never be too 'protected'—by class, race, gender or nationality—to face and help overcome."[1] What concerns me most as a practitioner and educator of transnational American studies from outside North America is how to make manifest these contradictions for my students so that they can be mindful of American racial diversity and politics. In this essay I would like to use my graduate seminar on Asian American literary and visual studies in the Fall of 2020 as an example to illustrate how graphic narratives can help nonnative students cultivate needed cultural and historical literacy in order for them to review and challenge the dominant ideologies that have informed their imagined vision of the United States. I argue that with "the generative tension between word and image,"[2] graphic narratives can make visible and illuminate the systematic operations of racial, class, and gender inequality inside and outside the United States, an understanding that is essential to the practice of transnational American studies.

Before presenting my experience of teaching Asian American studies in Taiwan, I will first draw upon selected cases to briefly map out crucial issues that are relevant to teaching Asian American studies in East Asia. Asian American studies in the United States has its foundation on political imperatives that are closely related to Asian American history and reality since it is a discipline born "out of the civil rights and Third World Liberation movements of the 1960s and 1970s."[3] However, students of Asian American studies outside the United States generally lack the activist vision that prompted Asian American studies into existence in the first place. The responses from the 2012 special issue of the online journal *The Asian American Literary Review* offer some useful insights

regarding the practices and complications of teaching Asian American literature in East Asia.[4] Sharing his experience of teaching Chinese American literary and cultural studies in Taiwan, Te-hsing Shan maintains that the practice is more challenging than that in the United States since the instructors and students alike "have to overcome linguistic, literary, and cultural obstacles."[5] In addition to the general obstacles faced by non-native speakers, geopolitical differences also play a significant role in terms of the reception of Asian American literature in Asian classrooms. In her response, Hyeyurn Chung draws on the academic and political environments of South Korea and explains the reasons behind her students' ambivalence toward studying Asian American literature. Primarily, she notes, they tend to read Asian American texts as examples of Asian rather than American writing and prefer to study canonical (i.e. classic texts by mostly white writers) works.[6] Moreover, the transnational elements in Asian American texts become "a source of anxiety" for students who are concerned with "the 'unraveling' of their nation-state" because of the animosity against illegal immigrants in Korean society.[7] On a different Seoul campus however, senior scholar Kung Jong Lee reports that his students consider Asian American texts more relatable than texts from other minority groups in his American literature class; he also observes that among the general public, interest in Korean/Asian American narratives in Korea has been growing since 2003, which was "the centennial anniversary of Korean immigration to the U.S."[8]

In his contribution to the special issue, Chih-ming Wang reflects on the ways in which the common perception of Asian Americans in Taiwan aligns with the model minority discourse: "They are hardly ever seen within the history of racism and struggle but perceived to be the embodiment of transnational success and positive hybridity, finely mixing the East and the West."[9] Wang further posits:

> Asian American literature appears in Asia as both narratives about Asians in America and what America means to "us." It tells stories not so much of what happened to them (Asian Americans) as what it could have become for us (Asians). It is a literature that is at once foreign and familiar in the visceral sense of dis/connection, a literature that in traveling beyond the U.S. territory embodies a complex articulation of Asian-Asian American relationality, one that can probably be summarized as the "desire for model minority."[10]

While studying and teaching Asian American literature in Asia, Wang emphasizes, we need to critically engage with "the desire for model minority in *us*" engendered within the post/Cold War contexts (emphasis added).[11] Although I cannot fully concur with Wang's observation that Asian American literature is regarded "as a niche market for Asian scholars to occupy—or as a passage to enter—the global academy of humanities,"[12] I do agree that we should break away from the predominant Asian belief in meritocracy and reexamine the nuances of "Asian-Asian American relationality." In

other words, we need to unravel the ideological underpinnings sustaining the discourse of American exceptionalism and demystify the glorification of transnational mobility for our students so that they can be recognizant of the many faces of systemic racism against peoples of Asian descent.

Wang's reflection reveals the fact that many non-Asian American students in Asia lack historical awareness and cultural literacy regarding anti-Asian racism and violence. In light of the fact that Asian American history has been systematically overlooked in North America, it should come as little surprise that it is absent from the curricula in Asia since it is too specific a topic for it to be present in Asian schools. Moreover, many Asian students tend to read Asian American works as literary texts disconnected with historical and political specificities. How to make Asian students aware of the "systemic contradictions" mentioned by Pfister thus poses a tremendous pedagogical challenge for instructors. Students are likely to experience what Sau-ling C. Wong identifies as "decontextualization" that typically takes place in a foreign language classroom.[13] By using what Wong terms "the 'FL approach'"—basically filling in necessary background information—an instructor may intervene productively in the classroom. However, as Wong warns us, there may still exist "a contextual hole" for Asian readers of Asian American texts: "Somewhere between true cultural affinity and easily identifiable foreignness is a vast zone of complex cultural negotiations that is the very terrain of Asian American literature."[14] Responses of readers from China regarding their encounters with Chinese American texts provide ample examples for the performance of "*Asian American recuperation*"—the downplaying or highlighting of certain elements relating to "a master narrative of the Asian nation to which it has putatively 'natural' ties."[15]

In my Fall 2020 seminar on Asian American literary and visual studies, decontextualization clearly was a central issue to contend with. Most of the students had little or no prior knowledge of Asian American literature and culture.[16] To jumpstart the students on the critical historical issues related to Asian American studies, I played part of the 2020 PBS documentary series *Asian Americans* at the beginning of the semester. Besides assigned literary texts—John Okada's *No-No Boy* (1957), Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* (1976), David Henry Hwang's *M. Butterfly* (1989), Ha Jin's *War Trash* (2004), Pauline Chen's *Final Exam* (2007), Russell Leong's *Mothsutra* (2015) and Ling Ma's *Severance* (2018)—and showing selected feature films and documentaries by Asian American filmmakers, I experimented with assigning graphic narratives as additional "visual aids" to make visible the socio-historical issues in relation to Asian American experience. Six graphic narratives were chosen for the class—Miné Okubo's *Citizen 13660* (1946), George Takei's *They Called Us Enemy* (2019), Gene Luen Yang's *American Born Chinese* (2006), G. B. Tran's *Vietnamerica* (2010), Malaka Gharib's *I Was Their American Dream* (2019), and the web installments of *In/Vulnerable: Inequality in the Time of the Pandemic* illustrated by Vietnamese American artist Thi Bui. The graphic texts aimed to cover variegated experiences of Asian America—Japanese American internment during the WWII, the angst of growing up visibly different for a

second-generation Chinese American, the Vietnam War and its aftermath, the migratory experience of Filipino Americans and the lived experience of mix-race Americans, and different levels and forms of precarity for people of all classes and races during the COVID-19 pandemic in American society. I sought, ultimately, to shed light on the complicated histories and ideological foundation behind the formations of Asian America.

My decision to use graphic narratives as an instrument for cultural and historical contextualization in my seminar primarily served a pedagogical purpose. At the most basic level, visual language can be a very powerful and effective medium of communication for nonnative speakers. For millennials who have grown up with the omnipresence of visual stimuli, graphic texts can offer them an inviting venue to get into literary training. Scott McCloud in his *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art* defines comics as "juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence, intended to convey information and/or to produce an aesthetic response in the viewer."[17] In its most simplified definition, comics in a sequential form both communicates information and produces affective responses in the reader. Theresa Tensuan also observes: "Comics make a reader complicit in the practice of creating meaning from—and between—the frames of the comic."[18] In her exploration of the interaction between aesthetics and politics in Asian American graphic narratives, Tensuan further maintains that these graphic texts can "enable a reader to review and renegotiate social relations, cultural practices, and political discourses, and thus offer a productive platform from which to review the formations of 'Asian American' as a political identity and as an aesthetic framework."[19] Such a "productive platform" is crucial in an Asian American studies classroom, especially in a transnational context.

With the exception of *American Born Chinese*, the graphic texts chosen for the seminar were nonfiction narratives representing personal and historical experiences. Hillary Chute, one of the comic scholars who are most keen on investigating how comics as a form of popular culture can effectively represent public and personal expressions, specifically explores the dynamic connection between comics and historical representations in her seminal essay "Comics as Literature? Reading Graphic Narrative."[20] As Chute contends, "Comics is a structurally layered and doubled medium that can proliferate historical moments on the page" because the intermixture of word and image has created "new possibilities for writing history that combine formal experimentation with an appeal to mass readership."[21] "The most important graphic narratives," she argues, "explore the conflicted boundaries of what can be said and what can be shown at the intersection of collective histories and life stories."[22] Chute's argument about the power of graphic narratives to contextualize historical reality for readers is applicable to almost all the graphic texts in my seminar. For instance, the two Japanese American graphic memoirs—*Citizen 13660* and *They Called Us Enemy*—complement each other with different ways of articulating the "collective histories and life stories" of Japanese American camp experience.

In *Citizen 13660*, Okubo has recorded, with careful exercise of restraint, the sentiments and activities of pro-Japanese and antiadministration leaders in the camp. We witness what the internees had experienced through the caricaturesque visual retracing of their daily lives. Even when an elderly resident was shot and killed by a camp guard for unknown reasons in "the Wakasa case," Okubo offers a picture foregrounding a crowd of internees in tears while positioning a handful of protesters in the remote background.[23] Such a visual layout exemplifies Okubo's strategy of "maintaining an emotional distance from its subject" in *Citizen 13660*, as suggested by Vivian Fumiko Chin.[24] Despite its "even, unemotional tone," however, for Chin Okubo's graphic memoir produced in a hostile political context is "counterhegemonic," demonstrating "a gesture of resistance that sufficiently refuses to represent a compliant, invisible, and silenced Japanese American internee."[25]

By contrast, *They Called Us Enemy*, a collaborative project by Takei and his artist team, offers a more affective portrayal of the incarceration. Recollecting the camp experience from the perspective of a young child, *They Called Us Enemy* moves beyond his lived experiences in the camp to record racist practices and landmark events related to the incarceration. It showcases Takei's activist vision, for example, by including Ronald Regan's formal apology to the internees on August 10, 1988 and the 2018 case of Trump v. Hawaii, in which Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts repudiated the 1944 Korematsu decision.[26] The different renditions of the camp experience—the single-paneled, discrete, unobtrusive, and emotionally suppressed representations in Okubo's classic text in contrast with the multiple-paneled, forthright, and affectively expressive accounts in Takei's memoir—may indicate a certain kind of progress out of which Asian Americans have gained the courage and rights to speak out.

Nevertheless, *They Called Us Enemy* ends with another case of racially motivated violence: the 2015 shooting of African American senator Reverend Clementa Pinckney and eight other victims in a Charleston church. The epilogue shows Takei's visit to the Memorial Cemetery of Rohwer Relocation Center in Arkansas, with narratory blocks from Barack Obama's eulogy at the funeral service of Reverend Pinckney as the voice-over.[27] It is followed on the next and final page of the narrative, with a sketch of the Japanese-style stone monument that has been in the cemetery since June 1945. The kanji inscription on the monument, 淨信久遠慰靈碑, communicates a wish for a safe passage to the Buddhist Pure Land for the victims of Japanese American incarceration and concomitantly offers a prayer to appease their spirits. In the context of contemporary American society, the monument of the historical site cautions us against all kinds of racist violence.

Inasmuch as Okubo's and Takei's graphic recollections help us understand the past with the hope that history will not repeat itself, Thi Bui's *In/Vulnerable* confronts us with different levels and forms of human precarity during the pandemic for people of different racial, economic, and class backgrounds in contemporary America. The inclusion of *In/Vulnerable* in the required reading list was an attempt to respond to the

immediate context of a global crisis, the rapid spread of COVID-19. Despite the fact that in Taiwan the health crisis was contained and citizens lived in relative safety until the outbreak in May 2021, people in Taiwan have been constantly bombarded by news of how the pandemic is ravaging the world. The fifteen weekly installments that comprise *In/Vulnerable* can be regarded as a practice of graphic journalism or "comics journalism," as Chute puts it,[28] since the stories included are Thi Bui's visual translations of the interviews conducted from March to June 2020, when COVID-19 first started to radically change the lives of people globally.[29] As a joint project between Reveal, the first nonprofit investigative journalism organization in the United States, and the Nib, an independent online publisher of daily comics, the series mainly aimed to record the different ways in which COVID-19 has devastated communities across the United States. The journalistic angle of the series is to highlight the unequal distribution of resources and the ensuing socioeconomic gaps against the background of the pandemic crisis; the eight panels dedicated to each interviewee vividly capture how people respond to and cope with the threat of the deadly virus and the ensuing financial crisis.

The only Asian interviewee of the series, Billy Chiu from San Francisco's Chinatown, discusses how his family restaurant business was severely damaged by the pandemic. Billy recounts how people started to avoid Chinatown after the then-President Donald Trump coined the term "the Chinese virus" and made it popular through the media,[30] leading to a sense of insecurity—"the feeling of, like, being a potential target for violence or death"—in the place where he was born and raised.[31] In view of the rapid rampage of anti-Asian violence across the nation and the world, Billy's ominous feeling appears sadly prophetic. Specifically, his Chinatown story exemplifies what David Leiwei Li has termed "Asian abjection."[32] While Billy intuitively attributed such an abjection to the racist slurs manufactured by politicians who were eager to shift the blame, mounting anti-Asian hate crimes in fact embody reified racial ideologies that have been defining and confining Asian peoples for ages.

To a certain extent Billy's story manifests a different kind of "Asian–Asian American relationality" suggested by Chih-ming Wang. Overt hostility toward peoples of Asian ancestry during the pandemic has become viral, spreading globally. My students in Taiwan, who had not experienced drastic changes in their daily lives during the pandemic, need to be cognizant of the precarious position of Asian peoples—not just Asian Americans—around the world because of persistent racism. They also need to understand the importance of re-examining the idealized conception of American democracy vis-a-vis the visual representations of disparities. What we can all learn from Billy is his spirit of hope, that he believes in the power of good food to transform bigotry and prejudice. As he expresses through the speech balloon: "Whoever racist comes to San Francisco—they can walk in the door and you can change their perception."[33]

My experiment with including graphic narratives in the seminar confirms that the visual medium can efficiently present contextualized information in a foreign language classroom. It could even activate some particular affective responses. A number

of students of my class, for instance, confessed that while reading the assigned graphic texts they sometimes experienced intense emotions, even a sense of vulnerability, along with the characters in those texts. It seems that in addition to the contextualized knowledge of Asian America, they had an opportunity to engage in what Eszter Szép terms an "embodied dialogue" with the authors and their texts as well.[34] In *Comics and the Body: Drawing, Reading, and Vulnerability*, Szép argues, "[t]he ways creators and readers interact with each other via nonfiction comics can be seen as embodied engagement with their own and with others' vulnerability."[35] For Szép, such an engagement can enable an "ethical encounter," which is "an 'affective transaction' between embodied minds and mindful bodies" that "can transform the participants taking part in the encounter by not only acknowledging but also experiencing the vulnerability of the self and of the Other in interactions with the comic."[36] Such an "ethical encounter," "affective transaction," and potential transformation are highly important for a student of Asian American studies, inside or outside of North America. The predominant themes of Asian American studies have long been "labor exploitation, immigration policies, racial stereotypes and oppression, community development, gender inequalities, social injustices, U.S. imperialism in Asia, struggles of resistance, and the formation of Asian American identities"[37]—with the recent addition of "transnational, transpacific, and trans-hemispheric considerations of race, ethnicity, migration, immigration, gender, sexuality, and class"[38]—all of which are vividly represented in the graphic narratives chosen for my seminar. It is my hope that this embodied engagement with these texts of my students will prompt them to reflect on their own ethical involvement in Asian American studies and thereby gain some transformative and life-changing insights.

Like Szép, Chute also recognizes the importance of embodied engagement and focuses on the double/doubled valences—the aesthetics and politics—of comics as a hybridized form. "The embodied engagement demanded by comics's duotextuality, or binocularity," Chute contends, "shows how aesthetic and political values cannot be disentangled."[39] The double-page spread presenting a scrabble game in *Vietnamerica* exemplifies such duotextuality.[40]To visually strengthen the representations of refugee/immigrant life and the angst of contending with dislocation and racial discrimination in the written expressions, Tran inserts pictorial vignettes to fill in the blanks of the board, showing for instance the state of abject poverty of the Trans when all three generations of the family cram and sleep in a single room, Tran's childhood memories of encountering with racist epithets and his aggravated sense of humiliation for having to wear a Minnie Mouse T-shirt salvaged from the Salvation Army thrift store, and the inevitable disruptions of familial relationships when the children are on a fast track to become Americanized. For the most prominent part of the graphic composition, Tran places these words on the game board—"IN," "A," "FOREIGN," "THREATENING," "CULTURE," "OUR," "OWN" and the scattered tiles on the side that are yet to be formulated into the word "HOME"—to reference an uneasy sense of alienation and insecurity experienced by the Tran family when they first arrived in the United States.

One of my students wrote in her reading note that she could somehow engage in a visceral way with the acute sense of displacement experienced by the Trans, especially when she came to realize how the word "HOME" was deliberately left incomplete in the scrabble game by the artist. Hence Tran's innovative deployment of the form of a scrabble game to communicate the affective history of an immigrant family not only exhibits creative complexity of the comics art but also demonstrates the power of graphic narratives to be at once aesthetically appealing, intellectually challenging, and bodily engaging.

In addition to assisting students in gaining historical intelligence, cultural competence, and embodied engagement with Asian American studies in a transnational context, moreover, the incorporation of graphic texts in my seminar helps promote the study and research on graphic narratives. In her 2019 *PMLA* article, "Drawing Is a Way of Thinking," Chute points out that the study of comics has yet to appear widely on the curricula and oral-examination lists in the English departments of the United States.[41] It is even more so in Taiwan. The inclusion of graphic narratives in the seminar was in fact unprecedented as a tool for teaching Asian American studies in Taiwan or any ethnic literature to that matter.[42]

Perhaps what is even more important for Chute is that the graphic medium allows one to envision "public humanities" that may reach beyond academic circles.[43] In a sense, the physical hardship and affective traffic of Asian Americans can be indeed made more accessible to readers in general through visual registers. To further complicate the issue of public reception, graphic narratives representing the exigencies of displacement and dislocation as well as the nexus of power relations on which Asian Americans situate their daily existence may generate new meanings on a transnational circuit, especially in this time of rising anti-Asian racism. It would be of course too preposterous to assume that the beginning readers of Asian American graphic narratives in my class could challenge the field in any significant way. Yet they clearly felt greatly benefited from this first encounter with Asian American graphic matters, as did I from this invaluable experience of teaching Asian American studies with graphic narratives in a transnational context.

Notes

1 Joel Pfister, "Transnational American Studies for What?," *Comparative American Studies* 6, no.1 (July 2008): 31. https://doi.org/10.1179/147757008X267213

2 Theresa Tensuan, "Comics," in *The Routledge Companion to Asian American and Pacific Islander Literature*, ed. Rachel C. Lee (New York: Routledge, 2014), 417.

3 Cathy J. Schlund-Vials, Linda Trinh Võ, and K. Scott Wong, "Introduction," in *Keywords for Asian American Studies*, ed. Cathy J. Schlund-Vials, Linda Trinh Võ, and K. Scott Wong (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 1.

[4] The special online forum originated in a 2012 *MELUS* panel entitled "Teaching Asian American Literature Outside the U.S." On that occasion, twelve academics from East Asia—China, Korea, Hong Kong and Taiwan, to be specific—shared their experiences of teaching Asian American literature in the region.

[5] Te-hsing Shan, "Response," *Asian American Literary Review* (Summer 2012): 30.

[6] Chung notes, "it is specifically the relatability of (or the easier cultural identification with) the Asian American text which does not add to but curtails its appeal to Korean students, with very distinct (and unfortunately narrowly conceived) ideas about what American literature is and wish to resurrect the works of 'dead white men' in their American literature classrooms. This demotion of Asian American literature seems to derive primarily from the (mis)perception of Asian American literature as 'Asian,' rather than 'American'; disqualified as authentically American, Asian American literature is passed over in preference for works by 'canonical' authors." Hyeyurn Chung, "Response," *Asian American Literary Review* (Summer 2012): 14.

[7] Chung, "Response," 15.

[8] Kung Jong Lee, "Response," *Asian American Literary Review* (Summer 2012): 20.

[9] Chih-ming Wang, "What's Wrong about being a Model Minority?," *Asian American Literary Review* (Summer 2012): 7.

[10] Wang, "What's Wrong?," 8.

[11] Wang, "What's Wrong?," 8. King-Kok Cheung observes that many East Asian students "preserve the characteristics associated with the model minority"; King-Kok Cheung, "Pedagogies of Resonance: Teaching African American and Asian American Literature and Culture in Asia," in *Crossing Oceans: Reconfiguring American Literary Studies in the Pacific Rim*, ed. Noelle Brada-Williams and Karen Chow (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2004), 14, https://muse.jhu.edu/book/5577/. Interestingly, Yuan Shu points out that whereas Asian students seek to project their idea of the American Dream onto Asian American literature, non-Asian students in the United States are more interested in the "Asian values" reflected in Asian American texts; Yuan Shu, "Globalization and 'Asian Values': Teaching and Theorizing Asian American Literature," *College English* 32, no. 1 (2005): 86, https://www.jstor.org/stable/25115247. These presumed "Asian values," however, are not truly hereditary. Rather, as Shu explains, they "were initially proposed and articulated by Asian leaders at a moment when their nation-states were recently independent from European colonial powers" (88). Later on, this invented discourse of Asian values is used "as a strategy to respond to Western 'decadence' and as a gesture that tries to define the moral role that Asian nations should play in the global context" (89). Asian values became "Asian differences" since the 1990s, assisting Asian politicians to fence off Western critiques against human rights abuse (91).

[12] Wang, "What's Wrong?," 8. In my overview of Asian American literary studies in East Asia, I specifically address the issue of "niche" scholarship: "as East Asian Americanists, we seem to possess a unique vantage point as a result of our bicultural and bilingual backgrounds. While a sense of cultural mobility and multiplicity may not seem truly advantageous in view of the constant flux of globalization around us, it can, nevertheless, give us enough critical flexibility to engage with ethnic literary texts from perspectives that may differ from our colleagues outside of Asia. Yet we are conscious of the fact that this apparent advantage is actually double-edged and may even entrap us conceptually and methodologically" (264-65).

[13] Sau-ling C. Wong, "When Asian American Literature Leaves 'Home': On Internationalizing Asian American Literary Studies," in *Crossing Oceans: Reconfiguring American Literary Studies in the Pacific Rim*, ed. Brada-Williams Noelle and Keren Chow (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2004), 32.

[14] Wong, "When Asian American Literature Leaves 'Home'," 32.

[15] Wong, "When Asian American Literature Leaves 'Home'," 35. For the study of Asian American literature in the US, Wong also coins the terms "deminoritization" and "*US Nationalist Recuperation*" to describe respectively "the shedding of characteristics of minority discourse when an Asian American text leaves both its geopolitical and discursive 'homes'" (37) and "the potential for the literature … to take on hegemonic characteristics, to become a face of, or a synecdoche for, or even an unwitting apologist for, the US nation" (37).

[16] The students however showed no sign of the "*Asian American recuperation*" cautioned by Wong. Although they knew about the legend of Fa Mu Lan and could certainly recognize the prototype of Yueh Fei in Maxine Hong Kingston's "White Tigers," they nevertheless never challenged Kingston's creative mythmaking.

[17] Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art* (New York: Harper, 1993), 9.

[18] Tensuan, "Comics," 415.

[19] Tensuan, "Comics," 417.

[20] In the 2008 *PMLA* article, Chute opens with an overview of the history and development of graphic narrative in the United States, offering one of the early examples in which useful information is provided for scholars who are not familiar with the emergent field. Hillary Chute, "Comics as Literature? Reading Graphic Narrative," *PMLA* 123, no. 2 (October 2008): 459, https://www.jstor.org/stable/25501865

[21] Chute, "Comics as Literature?," 459.

[22] Chute, "Comics as Literature?," 459.

[23] Miné Okubo, *Citizen 13660* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1983), 180.

[24] Vivian Fumiko Chin, "Gestures of Noncompliance: Resisting, Inventing, and Enduring in *Citizen 13660*," in *Miné Okubo: Following Her Own Road*, ed. Greg Robinson and Elena Tajima Creef (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008): 69–70.

[25] Chin, "Gestures of Noncompliance," 70.

[26] George Takei, *They Called Us Enemy* (Marietta, GA: Top Shelf Productions, 2019), 192, 200–01. In 1942 Fred Korematsu refused to leave the West Coast and appealed to the Supreme Court to challenge President Roosevelt's Executive Order 9066 as being unconstitutional (*They Called Us Enemy* 198).

[27] Takei, *They Called Us Enemy*, 203. Part of the four blocks on the page come from the last part of Obama's remarks: "Clem understood that justice grows out of recognition of ourselves in each other. That my liberty depends on you being free, too. That history can't be a sword to justify injustice, or a shield against progress, but must be a manual for how to avoid repeating the mistakes of the past …."

[28] Chute, "Comics as Literature?," 459. Chute introduces Joe Sacco's *Palestine* as an example of "comics journalism."

[29] The series was edited by Amanda Pike and Esther Kaplan; the interviews conducted by *Reveal* staff were adopted into comic scripts by Sarah Mirk.

[30] Bui Thi, *In/Vulnerable: Inequality in the Time of the Pandemic*, in *Reveal*, ed. Amanda Pike and Esther Kaplan (*Reveal* and The NIB, November 2020), 18, https://revealnews.org/invulnerable/

[31] Thi, *In/Vulnerable*, 19.

[32] David Leiwei li, *Imagining the Nation: Asian American Literature and Cultural Consent* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), 8.

[33] Thi, *In/Vulnerable*, 19.

[34] Eszter Szép, *Comics and the Body: Drawing, Reading, and Vulnerability* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2020), 2.

[35] Szép, *Comics and the Body*, 5. However, most of my students could only engage in the dialogical interaction via the digital format since they had to rely on Kindle versions for the assigned readings. The fact that some of them complained about this lack of physical contact with the text may very well evidence the importance of the material object of the comic text.

[36] Szép, *Comics and the Body*, 8.

[37] Schlund-Vials, Trinh Võ, and Wong, "Introduction," 1.

[38] Schlund-Vials, Trinh Võ, and Wong, "Introduction," 2.

[39] Hillary Chute, "Drawing Is a Way of Thinking," *PMLA* 134, no. 3 (October 2020): 634. https://doi.org/10.1632/pmla.2019.134.3.629

[40] Tran, *Vietnamerica,* 108–09.

[41] Chute, "Drawing," 631.

[42] My paper "Autobio/Graphic Writing: The Construction of the Site of Memory in *Vietnamerica*," written in Chinese, was the first research paper on Asian American graphic narratives published in Taiwan. I also contributed an essay introducing the practice of Taiwanese graphic medicine to the *Graphic Medicine* website (https://www.graphicmedicine.org/listen-to-the-doctors-graphic-medicine-in-taiwan/). In 2019, I offered an undergraduate elective course on graphic narratives. There is now a growing interest in graphic narrative research locally after a decade of promotion.

[43] Chute, "Drawing," 635.

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