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Passing, Covering and the Role of Authenticity in Marvel's X-Men Universe

Lauren C. King

A Thesis in the Field of English Literature

for the Degree of Master of Liberal Arts in Extension Studies

Harvard University

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Abstract

The objective of this thesis is to demonstrate the evolution of racial passing to covering, as a result of the changing social climate. Additionally, I will be demonstrating the role of authenticity in self-identification versus group categorization. I will be discussing the problems with utilizing group categorization and how this affects one's psyche. Through the lens of passing literature such as Nella Larsen's *Passing* and Kenji Yoshino's autobiographical essay on *Covering* we will explore how this evolution has transferred to literature such as graphic novels. In particular, I will be analyzing selected works by Chris Claremont from Marvel's X-Men series, and how the topic of racial passing and covering is discussed in non-traditional literature.

Biographical Sketch

Lauren Caryl King attended the University of Texas at Austin and initially enrolled as a double major in History and English. As graduation approached, she opted to focus solely on completing the requirements for the History degree. She graduated from The University of Texas at Austin in 2010 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in History, with a minor in Business Administration. Her area of specialization was United States History from World War 1 through the Cold War.

Upon acceptance into the Master of Liberal Arts program at Harvard, Lauren opted for an interdisciplinary approach to her research. She sought out courses that utilized literature and the arts to teach history. Combining her love of both History and English Literature, as well as graphic novels, she began researching graphic novels that dealt with historical events and socially conscious topics. Her short term academic goals are to pursue a graduate level degree in the field of digital media arts.

Outside of academics, Lauren is actively working in the sports media field as an Audio-Video Specialist for the Boston Bruins and Boston Celtics at TD Garden. Her volunteer interests are promoting literacy and participation in fine arts with youth athletes.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my parents Dr. Daryl Cleveland King and Drs. Gloria Jean King. I would like to thank my parents for supporting me in my decision to return to academia after a nearly ten year absence. Welcoming home a newly unemployed thirty year old who has decided to start all over likely wasn't included in your parenting manual, but you accepted the addition nonetheless.

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The decision to pursue a graduate degree at Harvard was an easy decision to make, but the consequences of such a decision weren't always easy. It meant leaving a professional level job in California and moving back home to Texas. It meant humbly accepting jobs that I was overqualified for, but allowed me the flexibility to attend classes. It afforded me the opportunity to find mentors who helped me to not only pursue my dreams but to achieve all of them. I am thankful for the countless supervisors I had along the way that supported my pursuit of a graduate degree and my career change. It is a rarity to find supervisors that are willing to not only accommodate a short-term employee, but assist them in maximizing their future potential. I received an overwhelming amount of support from each of them and cannot thank them enough for all of their help along the way. They say everything happens for a reason. I truly believe that through the grace of God all of my puzzle pieces managed to fall into place. Special thanks to Dr. Talaya Delaney for your positive support and encouragement throughout my research process. Special thanks to Dr. Stephen Burt for encouraging me to think outside the box. You allowed me to write on a topic that is truly in line with my ideals and interests and didn't let me write to appeal to the status quo. Although it was a challenging process, I learned that I was capable of completing such a task. Lastly, special thanks to Dr. Hillary Chute. If it wasn't for a chance meeting at your book signing, I likely would have opted to stay inside the box. Thank you all for the

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Chapter 1

Introduction: Passing versus Covering

Definitions belong to the definers, not the defined—Toni Morrison

The act of acknowledging one's true self is something that has been described in various ways. Individuals that have diverse genetic and/or cultural backgrounds may struggle with this due to conflicting realities. A multiracial individual, who visually appears to be white, yet identifies as black, may struggle with how society categorizes and classifies them. Toni Morrison once wrote, "definitions belong to the definers, not the defined", or in other words, a label only has meaning because we choose to give it meaning. The language we use has both power and limitations. How an individual is labeled by society does not always agree with how that individual chooses to label him or herself, if at all. In 1943, French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre published a philosophical text titled *Being and Nothingness.* Sartre outlines the impact that free will has on defining one's identity, as well as the binary distinction between the unconscious being and the conscious being. Sartre argues that there is a constant struggle between the conscious being and the unconscious being, where one part is "concrete and lacks the ability to change" and the other part is "forced to create itself from nothingness". This drive to create one's own identity is something that the conscious being desires as the conscious self "lacks a predetermined essence". Sartre claims that an individual who allows himself

to solely be defined by his social categorization is acting in "bad-faith". He uses the example of a waiter in a cafe to illustrate how an individual performing the role of a waiter, is not that individual's formal identity. It is simply a role and it does not define who the waiter is as an individual.

> But what *are we* then if we have the constant obligation to make ourselves what we are, if our mode of being is having the obligation to be what we are? Let us consider this waiter in the cafe. His movement is quick and forward, a little too precise, a little too rapid. He comes toward the patrons with a step a little too quick. He bends forward a little too eagerly; his voice, his eyes express an interest a little too solicitous for the order of the customer. Finally there he returns, trying to imitate in his walk the inflexible stiffness of some kind of automaton while carrying his tray with the recklessness of a tight-rope-walker by putting it in a perpetually unstable, perpetually broken equilibrium which he perpetually re-establishes by a light movement of the arm and hand. all his behavior seems to us a game. He applies himself to chaining his movements as if they were mechanisms, the one regulating the other; his gestures and even his voice seems to be mechanisms; he gives himself the quickness and pitiless rapidity of things. He is playing, he is amusing himself. But what is he playing? We need not watch long before we can explain it: he is playing at *being* a waiter in a cafe. There is nothing there to surprise us (101-2).

The waiter in Sartre's illustration is acting in "bad-faith" as his formal identity is not that of a waiter, but rather something else entirely of his own creation. Similarly, simply being African-American, or Gay, or in the case of Marvel's X-Men-a Mutant, does not define who you are as an individual. These are social categorizations that may influence your formal identity, but they are not solely your formal identity. Sartre argues that in order to grow and move beyond our current situation, one must not act in "bad-faith", but rather create a true and formal identity. Sartre contends that the identity we project is something that is entirely within our own control and that we have the ability to change our identity as we see fit. Furthermore, when we project a "false identity" it is apparent that this identity is a charade as it lacks authenticity. Authenticity is frequently discussed in conjunction with identity politics. Identity politics appears in many spheres, whether it is based on race, sexual orientation, class or religion, the crux of the matter is the same. Who we are, and what defines us is largely influenced by our surroundings and what groups we identify with. Additionally, how others perceive us may not align with how we define ourselves.

In the context of passing literature, readers will see a similar struggle with the characters. Individuals may feel as if they are caught between two worlds, either through genetic factors such as a multiracial background; or social factors, such as immigrant parents and American-born children, etcetera. However, in the context of passing literature, characters are attempting to overcome an oppressive society that views them as "less-than" or "other". W.E.B. DuBois refers to this as "double consciousness" in his essay "Of Our Spiritual Strivings" from his 1903 book *The Souls of Black Folk.*

> After the Egyptian and Indian, the Greek and Roman, the Teuton and Mongolian, the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world, --- a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness, -- an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder (par.3) .

Both DuBois and Sartre encapsulate this inner struggle one has with defining their true self and carving out a formal identity. In the following chapters, I will be examining the evolution of this struggle and its modern day implications. The terms used to describe this struggle have changed since DuBois and Sartre initially described them, however the internal struggle itself has remained the same. Moreover, these theories and ideas introduced by both DuBois and Sartre have influenced future iterations of passing literature.

One of the primary texts in the passing literature canon is author Nella Larsen's novel *Passing.* In this novel, Larsen discusses the concept of racial passing during the 1920s in Harlem. Racial passing occurs when an individual labeled as one race is accepted as a member of a different race, often by means of deception. Whereas, in his

book *Covering*, Kenji Yoshino argues that some individuals are "covering" (their identities) rather than passing, as their true self is known, however it is not acknowledged. Acceptance by the majority is gained by downplaying their true self and actively performing another (socially acceptable) identity. Both texts, while set in different timeframes, deal with the struggle one has with double consciousness and authenticity. Larsen's fictional work describes this struggle during a pre-Jim Crow era, whereas Yoshino's autobiographical essay chronicles his struggle in a near post-racial America. Both works echo the sentiments of DuBois and Sartre and illustrate this evolution of passing to covering, all while trying to create an authentic identity.

The act of passing may have evolved into the act of covering in part because of the Civil Rights Movement and the cessation of Jim Crow laws. The fear or rationale that drives the need for covering or passing is relative to which aspect of their identity is deemed more of a threat. For instance, a gay white male is not faced with the same challenge that a gay African-American male or gay Latino or Latina might be. Through a discussion of the play "Melting Pot", Yoshino asserts that "older generations cannot assimilate and younger generations can't help but assimilate" (141). I would argue that the same holds true for the argument of passing versus covering. Racial passing was a necessity due to Jim Crow laws and a pre-Civil Rights movement era, whereas covering has become a necessary form of assimilation. Therefore, older generations could only opt to pass if they wanted a better life, whereas younger generations cannot help but cover if they wish to assimilate and socially advance. Yoshino asserts, "the act of giving birth to oneself is miraculous and terrifying, but unlikely to be calm" (14). This act of

acknowledging one's true self, oftentimes, proves difficult when your true self is classified as abnormal or "less than". Yoshino recalls a time early in his career:

> When I began teaching, a colleague took me aside. "You'll have a better chance at tenure," he cautioned, "if you're a homosexual professional than if you're a professional homosexual." He meant I would fare better as a mainstream constitutional law professor who "happened to be gay" than as a gay professor who wrote on gay subjects. (17)

The difference between choosing to "pass" and choosing to "cover" is that those who choose to "pass", although they are actively downplaying their minority status, the majority group truly accepts them as one of their own. Individuals who are "passing" are actively trying to transform themselves rather than assimilate themselves. By definition, to assimilate means simply to resemble or liken, rather than to become. The difference is not only in the active denial of the true self, but in the act of being accepted as a majority member rather than like a majority member. I would also argue that the act of assimilation is relatively the same thing as Sartre's argument of acting in "bad faith". Assimilation requires a person to take on characteristics of another's culture and either downplay or eliminate pre-existing social and psychological characteristics. The question of authenticity only becomes an issue if the individual already identified with the "new" culture. For instance, an individual who was raised in a conservative environment who has always held beliefs and characteristics similar to a liberal environment is not acting in bad faith by continuing to exude liberal traits. However, if that same individual clings to

conservative beliefs, while privately expressing liberal beliefs, *is* acting in bad faith as that is not their authentic and formal identity, it is an act. So the question now becomes, what are the constructs of passing and what are the constructs of covering?

Yoshino argues that there are four axes of covering:

> *Appearance* concerns how an individual physically presents herself to the world. *Affiliation* concerns her cultural identifications. *Activism* concerns how much she politicizes her identity. *Association* concerns her choice of fellow travelers—lovers, friends, colleagues (79).

Yoshino's four axes of covering seem to be identical to the constructs of racial passing, with the exception that with racial passing one must fully separate themselves from their community of origin. He goes on to state that "unlike conversion and passing, covering is a strategy of assimilation available to all groups, including but not limited to the classic civil rights groups of racial minorities, and people with disabilities" (79). If Yoshino's theory is an extension of racial passing, one can argue that his theory can be applied to the characters of the X-Men Universe. I believe that Yoshino's theory can be extended to *X-Men* characters Wolverine, Magneto and Mystique. Within the X-Men Universe you have characters that choose to either "mute" their identities or "flaunt" their identities. Magneto's preference of referring to mutants as "homo superior" rather than as "mutants" would indicate that he actively chooses to "flaunt" his mutant identity. It also serves as a testament to how some characters choose to label themselves. Wolverine struggles with muting his identity for the sake of love. In order for him to be deemed acceptable in the

eyes of his true love, he must mute his mutant identity. Mystique on the other hand is a character that not only can mute her mutant identity, but also has the ability to pass for human, or any other being, due to her ability to shapeshift. Mystique can alter her appearance with a high level of accuracy and deceive humans and mutants alike.

However, it is impossible to discuss the constructs of covering without discussing the constructs of passing. The idea of racial passing is discussed in depth in Nella Larsen's novel *Passing.* In Larsen's *Passing*, two childhood friends, Clare and Irene, reconnect in Chicago during the 1920s. Clare Kendry is passing for white and is married to a white man who is unaware that his wife is African-American. Irene Redfield is an African-American woman who is capable of passing for white, although only attempts it sporadically as a matter of convenience. On their first encounter as adults, Irene thinks to herself "Never, when she was alone, had they even remotely seemed to suspect that she was a Negro" (11). The ability to pass requires one to consider with whom one associates. Irene is only successful in passing when she segregates herself from other African-Americans. Yoshino asserts that the other three axes of covering involve *appearance, affiliation,* and *activism.* All of these axes are present within the theory of racial passing.

Once Clare Kendry and Irene Redfield have reconnected, Irene becomes curious about how one goes about this business of passing.

> She wished to find out about this hazardous business of "passing," this breaking away from all that was familiar and friendly to take one's chance in another environment,

> not entirely strange, perhaps, but certainly not entirely friendly. What, for example, one did about background, how one accounted for oneself. And how one felt when one came into contact with other Negroes. (17)

Irene believes that this "business of passing" is one that is far too difficult a charade to pull off. Appearance is something that can be manipulated, if one already possesses certain features such as a lighter skin tone or different texture of hair. Irene knows that these are basic things that can be masked or manipulated to accomplish a different look. However, the question of affiliation and association require a greater deal of effort, as well as a fear of discovery. Irene questions how Clare is able to hide her background from her new community:

> What about background? Family, I mean. Surely you can't just drop down on people from nowhere and expect them to receive you with open arms, can you?
> "Almost," Clare asserted. "You'd be surprised, 'Rene, how much easier that is with white people than with us. maybe because there are so many more of them, or maybe because they are secure and so don't have to bother. I've never quite decided." (18)

Clare's assertion that it is easy to hide one's background simply because people don't ask any questions is eerily similar to an assertion that Yoshino makes on the theory of

covering. Yoshino argues that covering is not only a byproduct of white supremacy but also that the majority party's desire to remain secure in their status, and remain willfully ignorant while doing so:

> The reason racial minorities are pressured to "act white" is because of white supremacy. The reason women are told to downplay their child-care responsibilities in the workplace is because of patriarchy. And the reason gays are asked not to "flaunt" is because of homophobia. (xi)

Yoshino continues this assertion by remarking on a time he felt forced to re-enter the closet. After already being an out gay male, he went to visit a former mentor of his. He remarks that his mentor's behavior towards him and his disinterest in hearing about what was truly bothering him was troublesome. "I became certain he knew I was gay and did not want to be told. That was the first time I experienced a person willing me not to come out to him by fashioning a field of resistance around himself" (61-2). It is curious that Yoshino differentiates this act of willful ignorance from that of whites that suspect someone they liked or were acquainted with potentially was passing. Yoshino describes this as having an "open secret" (62) whereby another party has a suspicion about one's true self, yet has not been able to confirm or deny this suspicion. In a scene in *Passing,* Larsen presents us with yet another example of willful ignorance, or to borrow Yoshino's phrasing "fashioning a field of resistance around himself". In this particular scene, Clare

is needling her husband Jack, who despite her constant comments and intimations, is unaware of her hidden identity:

> Speaking with confidence as well as with amusement, she said: "My goodness, Jack! What difference would it make if, after all these years, you were to find out that I was one or two per cent coloured?"
> Bellew put out his hand in a repudiating fling, definite and final. "Oh, no, Nig," he declared, "nothing like that with me. I know you're no nigger, so it's all right. You can get as black as you please as far as I'm concerned, since I know you're no nigger. I draw the line at that. No niggers in my family. Never have been and never will be." (29)

Jack Bellew is sitting around a table with three Black women and fails to "see" or refuses to "see" their true identity. It isn't until later in the novel, when Jack runs into Irene with another black woman that Jack is confronted with the truth. When Jack runs into Irene and Felise, he sees the two women side-by-side and slowly begins to notice features in Irene he previously overlooked. Jack resisted acknowledging things that were literally staring him in the face.

> His hat came off. He held out his hand, smiling genially. But the smile faded at once. Surprise, incredulity, and -- Was it understanding? -- passed over his features. He had,

> Irene knew, become conscious of Felise, golden, with curly
> Black Nego hair, whose arm was still linked in her own. She
> Was sure, now, of the understanding in his face, as he looked
> At her again and then back at Felise. And displeasure (70).

I agree with Yoshino that the intent behind "covering" is an act that is being forced upon another; however, when you consider the reasons behind "passing" the only difference is legality. Passing was done to gain access to privileges legally restricted from blacks, whereas covering is encouraged in order to circumvent laws in place to protect minority classes.

In Catherine Rottenberg's essay "*Passing*: Race, Identification and Desire", Rottenberg argues that Larsen's novella *Passing,* "can help us begin mapping out the differences between gender and race norms since it uncovers the way in which regulatory ideals of race produce a specific modality of performativity" (490-491). Rottenberg goes on to argue "unlike other passing narratives of the period, Larsen's presents us with two protagonists who can pass for white; yet only Clare "passes over" into the white world" (491). The juxtaposition of the two characters demonstrates the complexities of race performativity as well as the constructs of identity. While both Clare and Irene are capable of "passing", only Clare chooses to "pass over in the white world". Yoshino writes about the inner conflict one experiences when choosing to pass in the racial context: "Passing is often associated with death, as in the racial context, where to pass as white has been to die a social death in one's community of origin" (67). In order to

successfully “pass”, (whether it is in the racial context, gay for straight, or mutant versus non-mutant) one must be willing to cut ties with their “community of origin”.

Rottenberg argues that there exists a correlation between racial identification and the “desire-to-be” which is defined by the existence of a white supremacist society. In a society whereby whites are deemed to be good and blacks are deemed evil, it creates social stratification and those who are deemed “less-than” strive to be seen as equals. This “desire-to-be” creates an inner struggle for those who have the ability to “pass” yet identify as “other”. The “tragic mulatto” in literary works describes the stereotypical sad mixed-race individual who neither fits into the black or white world. The archetypal tragic mulatto has evolved into the tragic other and in the context of Marvel’s X-Men, the tragic mutant. Rottenberg asserts, “so long as blackness is coded as undesirable under white supremacist regimes, only those black-identified subjects who strive to embody attributes associated with whiteness will gain admittance to some of the benefits of privilege and power” (501). Rottenberg’s theory certainly holds true in regards to Larsen’s novella *Passing*, I would contend that there are characters within the X-Men universe that this applies to as well. Again, Yoshino’s theory of covering does not exist without the existence of passing. Furthermore, the earlier arguments by DuBois and Sartre of feelings of “double-consciousness” and creating a formal identity continue to resonate with characters who attempt to pass, or cover. Additionally, the existence of a marginalized group, such as mutants, allows for this assertion. Regardless of whether one chooses to pass or to cover, the issue at hand will always revolve around how one chooses to self-identify.

In a chapter of *Passing Interest* entitled "Can One Really Choose? Passing and Self-Identification at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century", Jene Schoenfeld discusses the problem with self-identification and the one-drop rule. Schoenfeld argues that:

> The one-drop rule gained strength in connection with the consolidation of Jim-Crow segregation because it eliminates—in custom and sometimes in law—the possibility of a multiracial identification, thereby dividing all neatly (and primarily) into the categories of "black" or "white" (96).

Without the presence of Jim Crow laws the need to pass lessens, and the desire to cover increases. If an individual realizes that they can theoretically maintain their visible identity, while downplaying the aspects of their identity that are deemed a threat, wouldn't they take advantage of this in the same manner individuals took advantage of their ability to pass? Marvel's X-Men presents readers with an environment familiar with the concept of passing, and moving towards the concept of covering.

The X-Men are a group of fictional superheroes created in the early sixties by writers Stan Lee and Jack Kirby. They are a group of mutants who possess superhuman powers and within the X-Men Universe are known as being of the homo-superior species. Their mutations are caused by the X-gene and as a result they possess a wide variety of powers and abilities. Earlier X-Men comics focused on themes of prejudice and racism, as the mutants themselves were victims of prejudice and racism. Furthermore, the time

period the comics were written was just prior to the cessation of Jim Crow laws and the early stages of the African-American Civil Rights Movement. Creator Stan Lee, born Stanley Martin Lieber, was the child of Romanian-born Jewish immigrants. Co-creator Jack Kirby, born Jacob Kurtzberg, was the son of Austrian Jewish immigrants. Lee and Kirby strove to create characters with which readers could identify. In a climate such as the Civil Rights Movement, it is hard to ignore the feeling of isolation, and the pangs of alienation because of race and/or religion. The mutant versus non-mutant conflict was, and still is, something with which readers can identify. Readers are able to focus on the subtext of the story, which is about "other" identities, and how those in the majority perceive "other".

Stan Lee and Jack Kirby's creation of fictional superheroes that were born with mutations presents the reader with a variation of Yoshino's theory in that we are presented with mutants who choose to either cover their identities or flaunt their mutant identities. Furthermore, in the case of characters such as Mystique, we are presented with some mutants who can "pass" for human and those who cannot pass. For the purpose of this thesis, the characters I will be analyzing are Wolverine, Magneto and Mystique. Additionally, I will be focusing primarily on writer Chris Claremont's story arcs for these characters. I have chosen Claremont's story arcs in part because of his seventeen-year stint on Uncanny X-Men, and his story arcs are consistently and unquestionably ranked among the best X-Men storylines within the graphic novel community. The X-Men stories I will be focusing on are *Wolverine, Days of Future Past, Born Again,* and *God Loves, Man Kills.*

The primary story arc I will be looking at for the character of Wolverine is the limited series *Wolverine* and supported by ancillary story *Days of Future Past.* Wolverine #1-4, was the initial volume of the Wolverine series. It was a 4-issue arc published in 1982. Writer Chris Claremont fleshes out the character Wolverine, and we are presented with an anti hero with a questionable past, and an explosive temper that he struggles to keep in check. It is in this 4-issue arc that we watch Logan fight to hold on to his love Mariko Yashida. Yashida hails from a noble family and, despite he and Mariko's mutual love, her family will never accept someone like him. Logan struggles to hide the darker side of himself from Mariko in his fight to win her back and it is only when Mariko is confronted with his "true identity"(figure 1) that he fully realizes he will not be accepted as Wolverine. In issue #2, Logan fights to save Mariko and unwittingly reveals his darker side to her (figure 2).

> I lost control. I feel sick. I feel great. I see Mariko.
> She's never seen me as a berserker. It's a side of myself
> I never wanted her to see. She doesn't bother to hide her
> reaction. She turns an'leaves without a word, without
> a backward glance. I let her go. Whatever we had,
> whatever we might have had. . . It's finished (52).

Although Wolverine is physically "unbreakable", it is here that we learn that his one weakness is a lover that does not accept the "real Logan". We begin to see a transformation in Logan, one that is accepting of his destiny and his identity. Logan's

struggle with his identity is presented as a struggle between man versus animal. In Wolverine #3, Logan details this struggle (figure 3):

> The key isn't winning—or losing. It's making the attempt. I may never be what I ought to be, want to be—but how will I know unless I try? Sure, it's scary, but what's the alternative? Stagnation—a safer, more terrible form of death. Not of the body, but of the spirit. An animal knows what it is, and accepts it. A man may know what he is—but he questions. He dreams. He strives. Changes. Grows (75).

Wolverine possesses a mutation that presents him as caught between two worlds, man and animal. Wolverine possesses the ability to mask or "cover" his mutant identity, but by "covering" his mutant identity he runs the risk of exposure and ultimately losing the love of his life. Wolverine cannot be fully accepted into the human world and ultimately must accept his mutant identity. Yoshino's identity performance theory can be applied to these specific works, primarily because Lee and Claremont present the notion of mutant as race.

Days of Future Past, published in 1981, is a futuristic dystopian storyline where mutants are placed in internment camps. Kitty Pryde, with the assistance of empath Rachel Summers, transfers her adult mind to the body of her younger self to prevent the assassination of Senator Robert Kelly by Mystique. The assassination of Robert Kelly is a pivotal moment in X-Men history, which would ultimately cause a present-day holocaust. Senator Kelly is likened to politicians such as Joseph McCarthy, who incite "anti-other" hysteria through the use of propaganda and scare tactics. Mystique and the Brotherhood

of Evil Mutants are targeting public figures with anti-mutant sentiments. In this storyline, we see a gentler version of Magneto and we see how Wolverine has changed into someone focused on protecting his mutant family. The hysteria that Senator Kelly has created is starkly similar to that of Hitler's Final Solution. Early in the story, we see Kitty Pryde returning to the mutant internment camp and just how close the world is to suffering a nuclear holocaust:

> In North America. In the year 2013, there are three classes of people: "H," for baseline human—clean of mutant genes, allowed to breed. "A," for anomalous human—a normal person possessing mutant genetic potential. . . forbidden to breed. "M," for mutant. The bottom of the heap, made pariahs and outcasts by the mutant control act of 1988. Hunted down and—with a few rare exceptions—killed without mercy. (110)

Claremont's comparison of mutant internment camps to death camps during the Holocaust exemplifies how this "fear of other" can happen repeatedly. Passing, as well as covering would be unnecessary if this anti-other hysteria did not exist. Yoshino's theory that covering is a response to white supremacy and fear of other is exemplified here within the X-Men Universe.

When we look at a character like Magneto, it is easy to compare him to militant crusaders for justice and mutant equality. However, when you are looking at the character arc created by Claremont, we can see Magneto change from a diabolical freedom crusader out for revenge to someone who is dealing with his own inner demons and suffering from survivor's guilt. The main storylines I will be examining, with regards to

Magneto, are *God Loves, Man Kills* and *Days of Future Past. God Loves, Man Kills* was originally published in 1982 as a trade paperback and was not initially considered to be a canonical X-Men story. It was later retconned as having occurred between *Uncanny X-Men* #167 and *Uncanny X-Men* #168. The story begins with the murder of two mutant children by a group of individuals known as "purifiers". The story follows Magneto as he looks into the murder of these two children by followers of the preacher William Stryker. Reverend Stryker preaches hate for all mutants, similar to other mutant enemies such as Senator Kelly. One of the most disturbing scenes occurs early on in the novel, where Magneto has discovered the two murdered mutant children in a schoolyard; their lifeless bodies hanging by a noose on a swingset (figure 4):

> And for a time. . The schoolyard is quiet once more.
> The purifiers intended that the bodies be found tomorrow
> morning--an example for all the schoolchildren to see.
> But, long before dawn. . . An execution. Not the first,
> far from the last--only this time, the victims are children.
> So young. . .So innocent. . . To know such terror and pain.
> Their only crime--that they had been born. And for all my
> vaunted power, I was unable to save them. No more shall
> die--But those responsible for this artrocity! Whatever the
> cost, however long it takes, I will hunt them down--And
> make them pay!! (3)

God Loves, Man Kills serves as an excellent example of how quickly hate and prejudice can be spewed and ultimately cultivated. This anti-other sentiment is something that continues to permeate society and is what influences people targeted by this prejudice to

either flaunt or mute their true identities. It can also fuel so much self-hatred and fear that an individual may ultimately opt to pass if they are capable of doing so. Within this storyline, Magneto ,who is known for being an arch-enemy of the X-Men and occasional leader of the Brotherhood of Evil Mutants, opts to join forces with Xavier and the rest of the X-Men to prevent any further mutant genocide.

Magneto's struggle with having survived Auschwitz is something that defines his outlook on the anti-mutant crusade. He is determined to protect those who are deemed "undesirable" by individuals who are racist bigots. Rather than being viewed as a villain and someone who is out for vengeance, Magneto is shown to be someone with a fierce pride in being a mutant. He is determined to create a safe haven for mutants until the threat of extinction ceases to exist. Following Yoshino's theory of identity performance, Magneto is a character that not only chooses to flaunt his identity, but fiercely challenges other mutants to do the same. His way of fighting against prejudice and genocide is by not compromising his identity and advocating for the protection of other mutant's desire to be true to themselves.

Mystique is the last character that I will be focusing on and her powers make her a unique mutant in regards to Yoshino's theory of identity performance. Mystique is portrayed as a supervillain throughout the majority of the X-Men series. However, her ability to shapeshift is what makes her such a unique character. Mystique is fiercely proud of her mutant status, although she uses her ability to shapeshift to her advantage. This ability presents us with an interesting dynamic, since it raises the question of whether or not she is "passing" or simply "covering". I would argue that Mystique is a

character who "passes" for personal gain. She isn't ashamed of being a mutant, as she typically reveals her true identity once she has successfully achieved her goal. In addition to *Days of Future Past*, the other story I will be discussing in regards to Mystique is *Born Again*.

Born Again was originally published in November 1985. In this storyline we see Mystique use her ability to shapeshift to gain protection from the government from any anti-mutant or mutant control laws in place. Mystique enters the home of Valerie Cooper disguised as Valerie Cooper herself. Cooper arrives at her home and discovers Mystique, disguised as Cooper. Valerie Cooper is a Special Assistant to the National Security Advisor and a primary supporter of the Mutant Powers Registration Act, and served on the Commission on Superhuman Activities. She is responsible for monitoring the activities and threat levels of mutants and metahumans, such as the X-Men. Mystique approaches Cooper and offers the services of the Brotherhood of Evil Mutants in exchange for amnesty. Cooper accepts Mystique's offer under the condition that she deliver Magneto to the President:

> Think of the possibilities, Val—a trained cadre of super-powered beings, responsible to the White House. No more of the conflicts you periodically encounter with the Avengers or the Fantastic Four. The Freedom Force works for you—and, of course, the president. We'll do as we're told. Tempting. Full pardon—conditional on performance. If a single member of your group break our agreement, you all hang. And before I pitch this to the president, I want proof you're worth the investment. A trial run, a trial foe—if you're successful, we have a deal. You're to

> locate and capture the founder of the original brotherhood, the master of magnetism:…. Magneto! (6)

Cooper understands the value in capturing Magneto. Magneto is not only a force for the government to reckon with, but he is also an undeniable campaigner for mutants everywhere. Capturing Magneto would be damaging to mutants everywhere, despite his portrayal as a villain, he truly wants mutants to be free to live as mutants without fear of persecution. His actions may differ from that of X-Men leader Charles Xavier, but they both desire freedom for mutants to live as mutants. Mystique, however, not only demonstrates her desire for self-preservation but her willingness to use her ability to shapeshift for personal gain. Mystique is not choosing to mute her mutant identity or cover her mutant identity. She is actively choosing to pass herself off as something else, solely for the purpose of personal gain. She has no qualms about revealing her true identity once she has gained whatever she is seeking. She is proud to be a mutant, and regularly flaunts her mutant powers. However, her mutant powers afford her the ability to pass if and when she chooses. Therefore, I would argue that Mystique, unlike Wolverine and Magneto, is a character that actively "passes" rather than "covers" her identity.

I would argue that Yoshino's theory of "covering" is essentially a variation of "passing". The act of covering derives from the act of passing and "others" attempting to assimilate within the majority group. The existence of a majority group which reaps the benefits of freedom and protection of civil rights, is what drives the need or desire to cover. Yoshino argues that covering is an assault on minority's civil rights, and I would argue that he is correct primarily because the cessation of Jim Crow laws created an environment in which a majority group attempts to circumvent the law and create a proxy

version of Jim Crow laws. Marvel's X-Men, similar to graphic novels such as *Maus*, employs a postmodern technique of presenting characters in a surreal manner while actively discussing very real issues such as self-identification, prejudice, genocide and social reform. Additionally, the X-Men series allows individuals of varied backgrounds to identify and relate to these characters, simply because they understand all too well the feeling of marginalization simply for failing or refusing to adhere to the status quo.

Chapter 2

Wolverine: Self Identification and the battle for Authenticity

"I doubt any of these people covered willingly. I suspect they were all bowing to an unjust reality that required them to tone down their stigmatized identities to get along in life" –Kenji Yoshino

The act of covering, although it requires one to actively downplay parts of their identities that may be deemed undesirable, it is hardly a voluntary choice. Noted X-Men writer Chris Claremont was primarily responsible for the character development of Wolverine. *Wolverine* Volume 1 is considered to be arguably the best story arc of the character Wolverine. In this four issue limited series, Wolverine is shown to be a failed samurai hopelessly trying to hold onto his lover Mariko Yashida. Yoshino argues that one of the issues with covering is the existence of an "open secret" amongst the individual covering and other parties. Yoshino describes a situation whereby a friend of his suspected he was gay, yet it was never discussed because Yoshino failed to acknowledge it, and the friend simply never asked.

> I was gay—she knew I was gay—I knew she knew I was gay. Like mirrors held up to each other, we created an infinite regress of knowledge. But as the literary critic D.A. Miller says, there is a difference between knowledge and acknowledgment of knowledge. Because I would never acknowledge our collective knowledge, she could not do so either. So we

> carried on—each week more strained than the last. I berated myself, making resolutions to speak, telling myself she would think I did not trust her. While, of course, I did trust her, I felt I had lost the moment. But that had been—when? (62)

Wolverine fights to keep his "berserker" side hidden from Mariko. He fears that once he reveals this side to her that she will no longer love him. Similar to Clare's dilemma in Larsen's novella *Passing*, Wolverine is placed in a situation whereby he knows keeping this secret from Mariko is causing a strain on the relationship, yet if she discovers this secret, the relationship will cease to exist. In the first issue Wolverine travels to Japan after discovering she's been married off to repay a family debt. Upon his arrival, Mariko instructs Wolverine to leave immediately because she is honor bound and cannot leave with him. Immediately thereafter Wolverine is attacked and brought in front of Lord Shingen, Mariko's father (figure 5). "Your Japanese is as flawless as my English, Wolverine—yes, I also know who and what you are—" (21). This is the first hint at Wolverine's "open secret". Lord Shingen alludes to the fact that Wolverine is a mutant, yet never explicitly states that he is a mutant. Nor does Wolverine confirm or deny that he is a mutant. He simply reflects to himself "I can't start anything with Mariko present—too risky—she could get hurt. I stall. Time is on my side" (21). Wolverine's thought is multi-faceted in that first, he chooses to avoid fighting her father in front of Mariko, and thus revealing his berserker side, second, he refuses to acknowledge the open secret by revealing that he is in fact a mutant, and lastly, he simply doesn't want Mariko to get injured.

The problem with maintaining an open secret is trying to figure out how to balance how much of yourself you can reveal without truly revealing your secret. Wolverine is juggling several things, simply to prolong this open secret. Not only is it a juggling act, but an act of deception which requires an individual to assess which aspects are more threatening. Simply being a mutant or part of a minority group is often all that it takes to rile up fear and animosity. In an essay from *X-Men and Philosophy* entitled "The Lure of the Normal: Who *Wouldn't Want* to be a Mutant?", writer Patrick Hopkins discusses the idea of passing and how it allows an individual to reveal their true identity on their own terms:

> This concept of passing--successfully pretending to be normal --is an important and well-documented real-life experience among homosexuals and light-skinned African-Americans. It gives the abnormal (the term here is understood to be simply descriptive) the ability to be treated as normal and thus can allow them to confront, or not confront, their own difference on their own schedules (8).

One could argue that this is acting in bad faith or, what I would contend, that it is part of the process or struggle with both passing and covering. There are many aspects of one's formal identity and the process of reconciling the various facets of one's identity is the core argument of double-consciousness. Wolverine is cognizant of the fact that there are different parts of his identity, some of which he is fearful of revealing. Yoshino discusses how individuals who choose to mask certain characteristics are viewed as cowards and

run the risk of being outed or shamed for covering. The task of self-identification becomes an issue of self-preservation.

> The thwarted fantasy of transformation explains part of the rage against Chinnis. But it does not explain all of it. At first, I also deemed Chinnis a coward—he was out to the gay community, so what excuse did he have to reenter the closet? Over time, I came to see that if Chinnis was a coward, so was I. I, too, had engaged in selective passing after I had initially come out. (64)

Wolverine is aware that Lord Shingen knows he is a mutant and has special powers and abilities. However, neither is willing to share this information with Mariko. Covering, or as Yoshino has dubbed it "selective passing", has similar challenges to that of racial passing. If you choose to keep family and loved ones close to you while you are engaged in selective passing or covering you have to be careful that you don't lose sight of who you truly are. At some point, your false identity and your true identity become intertwined and become something else entirely. How do you define yourself? Do we allow others to dictate who we are and define us and ultimately deny ourselves the freedom to be our true selves? Or do we choose to flaunt our identities like Magneto and maintain a staunch pride in self? Wolverine's main struggle is deciding whether or not he will continue to mute his identity and thereby maintain an open secret, and risk forever damaging his relationship with Mariko.

In a chapter from *Passing Interest* entitled "Passing for Chicano, Passing for White", author Amanda Page discusses critic Elaine K. Ginsberg comments on how passing impacts the constructs of identity.

> [Passing] is about identities: their creation or imposition, their adoption or rejection, their accompanying rewards or penalties. Passing is also about the boundaries established between identity categories and about the individual and cultural anxieties induced by boundary crossing. Finally, passing is about specularity: the visible and invisible, the seen and the unseen. (181)

Ginsberg's comments are similar to that of Yoshino's in that the whole concept of passing, and covering for that matter, rely heavily on maintaining an open secret. There is speculation about an unknown. Something that you are partially aware of but simply do not flat out acknowledge. Wolverine's anxiety is tied to this open secret and the potential for the accompanying rewards and/or penalties attached to the revelation of his true identity. Mariko's father is determined to "out" Wolverine and reveal his open secret to Mariko. Lord Shingen refuses to allow Wolverine to come to terms with his own identity in his own time.

Lord Shingen successfully baits Wolverine into showing Mariko his true colors by needling him into a fight. One thing that Claremont consistently reiterates is that Wolverine is unstable and always lets his temper get the best of him. This is Wolverine's weakness, not his love for Mariko, but rather his rage. If Wolverine could control his rage, he could successfully mute his berserker side and prevent Mariko from seeing his

true identity. Wolverine believes his one weakness is Mariko, and it is easy to buy into that; however, his actions show us that his weakness is his inability to consistently contain his rage,which will reveal his true identity. Wolverine realizes Lord Shingen's ploy far too late and Claremont shows us the first instance where Wolverine shows Mariko his true identity:

> I've played into his hands. Mariko saw the duel, without understanding what his strikes were doing to me. Shingen challenged me to mock, "friendly" combat. She thought his attacks were meant to humiliate me. Now, though, when I appear to be losing . . . I turn our fight into the real thing. I couldn't dishonor myself more in her eyes if I tried. (24)

It is too late to pull back and Wolverine realizes that yet again he has allowed his rage to control the situation. His ability to mute his identity is solely controlled by his rage, not Mariko. Wolverine will continue to attempt to mute his identity for the sake of Mariko, in a vain attempt to hold onto his one true love. Yet, similar to Clare in Larsen's *Passing*, Wolverine takes risks and places himself in situations where he will no longer be capable of selective passing. He cannot mute his identity when he is walking into a battle.

Claremont's creation of Wolverine as a failed samurai is interesting partly because a samurai is a fighter. Samurais are supposed to be skilled fighters and it is understood that their work is violent and gory. Yet, this is the exact behavior that brings out his berserker side and makes it difficult to mute his identity as a mutant. His upper

hand as a samurai is his mutant powers and his claws are essentially multiple swords that he wields in battle. Wolverine is a failed samurai, not because he isn't a skilled fighter, because there is no denying he is a skilled fighter. He is a failed samurai because he will ultimately lose the love of his life, because his work as a samurai is exactly what prevents him from muting his identity. In one of the panels, artist Frank Miller shows us the initial moment when Wolverine realizes how his true identity will impact Mariko (figure 1).

> "Behold, daughter," I hear Shingen say. Though I see only Mariko, as I struggle to hold off oblivion, "the man" you profess to love. Except that he is no man at all, but an *animal* cast in a semblance of human form. "Gaze upon him, Mariko. Witness his true nature, his *true* self. Here is the . . . thing to which you have given your heart. Answer me truthfully—is he *worthy* of such a prize?" No.(26)

Miller's artwork here shows us the pain on Wolverine's face as he realizes his true identity is unappealing to Mariko. Mariko is shown with one eye open and one eye closed as she replies no. Claremont's wording here is interesting because he is demonstrating how Mariko's love for Wolverine places him on a pedestal. Shingen tells her to "behold" this image of Wolverine, rather than simply to look at him. Claremont's use of the word behold indicates that if Wolverine's true image is revealed, he will be knocked from his pedestal. Whereas, Wolverine simply says he "sees" Mariko and his struggle in the moment is preventing his fall from grace. Shingen then orders his daughter to "gaze upon him". Cambridge dictionary defines gaze as "to look at something or someone for a long time, especially in surprise or admiration". Mariko clearly loves Wolverine, yet he only

sees her. Although Wolverine loves Mariko, he doesn't know how to love her while protecting his true identity. Over the course of the next three issues of *Wolverine* Volume 1, Claremont will demonstrate how Wolverine shares his true identity with Mariko and it is only after Mariko is aware of his open secret that he loses her.

In the second issue, Wolverine struggles to deal with life without Mariko. He embraces his berserker side and commits to being a samurai, a killer for hire. He is only able to do so, because Mariko is no longer present. Frank Miller's artwork on the cover of the second issue (figure 6) shows an enraged Wolverine, claws out and pouncing on an enemy. The next couple of panels illustrate Wolverine fully engaged in combat, fighting off an army of samurais by himself. He comes out victorious, which solidifies the fact that he is a skilled fighter. We haven't yet seen him as a failed samurai, because although Mariko isn't in the picture, Wolverine has not given up hope of regaining her love. Additionally, we are beginning to see the illustrations of Wolverine become darker. Miller draws Wolverine's eyes with a despondent look filled with gloom. His face is engulfed in a dark shadow. Although he is a skilled fighter, he is aware that this side of him is what pushes Mariko away and he is tormented by it.

Claremont introduces the character Yukio as a potential love interest, but we learn that Wolverine is not ready to move on from Mariko. At the close of issue 1, we see that a woman has saved Logan, although we do not learn that this woman is Yukio until the second issue. Logan is now indebted to Yukio and takes on the role of protector. Yukio hopes for Logan's heart, but Logan is fully focused on simply his job of protector and fighter. He still loves Mariko and still hopes she will return to him and accept him for

who, or rather what he truly is. Miller's artwork continues to take center stage in this issue, his image of Wolverine while he proclaims " I have claws" (36) shows a man who is approaching his breaking point (figure 7). Miller illustrates Yukio as a woman who is mesmerized by Wolverine and who he truly is, while in contrast, Mariko displays horror and terror at the sight of Wolverine when he exposes his true identity. Despite Yukio's attempted advances, Wolverine casts her aside. Mariko is who he desires and if he cannot have her, he chooses to focus solely on fighting. Unfortunately for him, he is unable to balance his identity as a mutant and fighter, from his identity that he portrays to Mariko. Wolverine shares his full identity with Yukio, whereas with Mariko, Wolverine knows that his true identity is viewed as less than. Who, or what exactly, is Wolverine? Jason Southworth discusses the role of personal identity in his essay "Amnesia, Personal Identity, and the many lives of Wolverine" in the critical text *X-Men and Philosophy.* Southworth writes,

> When we consider the question of "Who am I?" we are trying to establish the characteristics that make you the person that you are, as opposed to some other person. . . The question of *who* counts as a person and *why* is one of the recurring tropes of Wolverine's storyline. We see this when the Ol' Canucklehead goes on one of his tears, complaining that he is not the animal that some people think that he is (18).

Wolverine's inability to be accepted for who he truly is, exacerbates this inner struggle of how much he can reveal and to whom. Mariko's family does not accept him as a person, or as a samurai for that matter, and these are two facets of Wolverine's identity that

define who he is. Although, Yukio is aware of Wolverine's identity, her intentions are not pure and Wolverine later realizes that Yukio has not been honest with him about her identity.

Lord Shingen hires Yukio to assassinate a man by the name of Katsuyori. Shingen wants the assassination to take place while his daughter Mariko is present, solely for the purpose of setting up Wolverine. Wolverine accompanies Yukio on her mission brimming with confidence, blind to the fact that he is walking into another trap. His focus continues to be on proving himself to be a superior fighter. Once he has circumvented security he discovers Mariko, yet still fails to see that he is walking into a trap set by Lord Shingen. Wolverine pauses to reflect on the subject matter of the play that Mariko and her husband are watching.

> It's a tale of honor, of loyalty, of the samurai determination to see a course through to its end. Regardless of the cost. It embodies all the qualities the Japanese revere most in their national character and heritage. The performance is superb—this is one of the finest kabuki troupes I've ever seen. (46)

Wolverine is fascinated by the samurai culture and desperately wants to embody the qualities of the samurai. He knows that samurais, unlike mutants, are revered for their skill and are an important part of Japanese culture. If he can be seen as a respected samurai, rather than a disliked mutant, he will have successfully overcome the disadvantages of his true identity. He will be accepted for who he is rather than for what

he is. However, Lord Shingen has other plans for Wolverine and he fails to see that he will not be accepted for the identity he wishes to portray, that of a revered samurai.

Wolverine notices the actor in the play launch into attack mode and he instantly moves into protector mode and fights back. He draws the fighter away from Mariko and engages in battle. In a series of panels, Miller illustrates the horror on Mariko's face contrasted against the diabolical look on Wolverine's face as he brutally takes on Mariko's attacker (figure 8). Wolverine reflects midflight on Mariko, "I want to spare Mariko a glance, to see if she's okay, but I don't dare" (48). Wolverine refuses to look at Mariko while he is fighting because there is a part of him that knows and understands that Mariko likely will be disgusted or horrified at the sight of his true self. He is not ready to accept or to acknowledge the possibility that Mariko will not accept him for who he truly is. He hopes that his success in this battle will afford him the same luxuries of the revered samurai. If he can prove to Mariko that he has the same qualities of the samurai, he will be loved and respected, and ultimately accepted by her family. He will be deemed an honorable human being rather than a mutant who is to be feared and avoided at all costs.

Wolverine drifts deeper into his dark side and annihilates the competition. Once the battle is over, he sits atop his opponent and comments "I lost control. I feel sick. I feel great" (52). Wolverine realizes that he is not in control of his rage. He gives in to his berserker side and is nauseated by what he has done, because he knows that there are consequences to his actions. However, he feels great because he enjoys being a berserker. It is who he is. He cannot deny his mutant side no matter how much he tries to mute his identity. He cannot deny who he is. Miller beautifully illustrates a horrified and grief

stricken Mariko in the final page of the issue (figure 2). Her hands are covering her mouth, eyes wide with tears streaming down her face.

> She's never seen me as a berserker. It's a side of myself I never wanted her to see. She doesn't bother to hide her reaction. She turns an'leaves without a word, without a backward glance. I let her go. Whatever we might have had. . . It's finished. (52)

Wolverine is cognizant of the fact that Lord Shingen orchestrated this battle so that Wolverine would reveal his true identity to Mariko. Shingen was fully aware that Logan would be unable to resist the opportunity to showcase his skill as a samurai and would jump at the chance to prove himself to be a noble samurai worthy of honor and praise. The irony of Logan's situation is not lost on the reader. Claremont's decision to make Logan a samurai who is also a mutant is ironic because within the X-Men universe, mutants are not considered noble or honorable beings. They are not considered to be revered parts of society's culture. They are disdained for being different and society wants nothing to do with them. The challenge for Logan is to be accepted for what he sees himself as, which is a skilled samurai, rather than what society defines him as, which is a mutant.

In the third issue of this four issue arc, Miller draws a dejected and lonesome Wolverine on the cover (figure 9). Logan is seated with his hands in his lap, staring down and visually appears to be broken. He is a man who has become aware of all that he has lost in the issue aptly titled "Loss". Wolverine has just experienced a public outing by Lord Shingen. Yoshino describes public outing as "the forced acknowledgement exacted

by homophobes, like the police tactics used during bar raids" (68). Logan was forced to reveal his true identity in a shocking manner, when he was not yet prepared to reveal his true identity. Coming out, whether forced or on one's own, is a difficult decision. It is one that is heavily weighed and typically is done after an extensive period of reflection. How one chooses to identify themselves or define themselves is something that should solely lie in the hands of the defined.

Self-identification is difficult whether one is covering or passing. Yoshino argues that covering is "a more complex form of assimilation than conversion or passing. At the most basic level, it raises thornier issues of classification" (91). How one chooses to identify themselves doesn't always align itself with how others view that person. Therefore the question becomes a matter of authenticity rather than an issue of failing to live up to a set of stereotypes. Yoshino asserts that his "commitment is to autonomy—giving individuals the freedom to elaborate their authentic selves—rather than to a rigid notion of what constitutes an authentic gay identity" (93). In the context of the X-Men Universe, Wolverine should be free to be his authentic self-which he deems to be a skilled samurai, who happens to be a mutant. Logan's commitment is to being an authentic samurai, rather than being an authentic mutant. Whether or not he is viewed as attempting to assimilate or cover his mutant identity, the question remains what is Logan's authentic self? Issue 3 focuses on explaining exactly who Wolverine is to its readers. Wolverine "used t'be a secret agent" and a "hero" and now he is simply a drunk (54). He viewed himself as a skilled fighter above anything else. He begins to embrace

his identity as a mutant, solely because he has lost his one true love Mariko and understands that he will never be viewed as an honorable samurai.

Wolverine begins a relationship with Yukio, yet his relationship is clouded by his drinking habit. He is shown in a drunken haze throughout the start of the third issue. After Yukio attempts to draw him into a joint suicide by train, Wolverine passes out drunk and dreams of being accepted as a noble warrior.

> I sleep. I . . . dream. A warrior rides out of the west,
> to win the hand of the woman he loves. She is Mariko,
> the daughter of a great house, heir to an ancient, noble
> line. He is a rude, rough-hewn man of common stock,
> but his skill and courage are legend. He thinks that is
> enough to make him worthy of her. But he finds the
> gates of her home barred, the walls lined with archers.
> "Turn away, Gaijin," He is told. "You are not welcome
> here." The odds are impossible, the cause hopeless. Yet
> not for a moment does the warrior hesitate. He attacks. (61)

Wolverine holds onto this dream, literally, of his warrior identity (figure 10). In this dream he is referred to as "gaijin", which translated from Japanese means "foreigner" or "outsider". Wolverine knows both on a conscious and subconscious level that he is viewed as an outsider and there is little that he can do to change this. This sense of normalcy and acceptance that Logan seeks is one that Yoshino discusses in his novel. This notion of good versus evil based on the majority party affiliation is one that causes

dissension and the urge to cover or pass. Although, there are non-mutants in these stories that do in fact like Logan, they are vastly outnumbered by those that view him solely as a bad mutant. Yoshino applies this argument to heterosexuals versus homosexuals, as well as minority parties such as African-Americans versus Caucasians. I would argue that this same argument can also be extended to the mutant versus non-mutant argument.

> While this rift dates back to Stonewall-era disputes between "suits" and "queers," it has become more pronounced in recent years. As social attitudes towards gays have softened, the historical line between "good" straights and "bad" gays has shifted in some quarters to distinguish between "good" straights and normal, on the one hand, and "bad" queers on the other. No longer an undifferentiated pathologized mass, gays feel increasing pressure to pledge an allegiance-to fade gracefully into the mainstream or to resist in the name of persisting difference. As African-Americans split between integration and separatism, or women split between equality and difference feminism, gays are splitting between normalcy and queerness (78).

This struggle that Logan is experiencing is no different than what gays and African-Americans experienced during a pre-Civil Rights movement Jim Crow era. The feeling of being marginalized simply because of who you are is one that many minorities have experienced. Claremont writes this character in a relatable manner, and as such it makes this argument that much more compelling.

Wolverine's dream of being identified as a warrior is quickly crushed on the following page. Miller's artwork shows Wolverine hit with an innumerable amount of swords and transforming from an indestructible being to that of a ghoulish being (figure 11). Miller shows Wolverine with zombie-like eyes and a soulless body, his arm outstretched almost begging for mercy. This is not the typical vision of Wolverine that we see here. Miller is showing how failing to be identified as a warrior and a noble being is literally killing Wolverine. Furthermore, the one killing him is his love Mariko.

> Finally, wounded unto death, the warrior drags himself into the castle's courtyard, and there at last, beholds the face of his beloved. "Why?" he asks. "My love is for a man," she replies, "Not a beast clad in human form who knows nothing of honor, or duty, or any of the beliefs I hold most dear. "Worthy of me? You are not even worthy of life!" Her arrow pierces his soul, casting him screaming back into the abyss out of which he had struggled so long ago. And, although he lives, the proud warrior is in truth no more. I dream. I . . . weep. (62)

Wolverine knows that Mariko will only see him as a mutant, and nothing more. Despite his attempts to change her view of him and how he identifies himself, she will never accept him in the same manner. Is Wolverine trying to pass for a warrior or is he trying to cover his mutant identity and ultimately gain acceptance and assimilate. The argument for passing versus covering is a gray area primarily because passing and covering are extremely similar actions. Yoshino argues that "an easy response to those who are anti-passing but pro-covering is that their stance is hard to maintain, as passing and covering

are often indistinguishable. The same behavior-such as not holding hands with someone of the same sex—can constitute passing or covering, depending on the literacy of the audience" (92). In Wolverine's dream Mariko acknowledges that Wolverine has been covering his true identity and attempting to pass for human, rather than as a mutant when she tells him that her love is "for a man" and "not a beast clad in human form". His subconscious is aware that on some level Mariko likely knows that he is a mutant and is aware of this open secret. He knows that he can no longer keep this secret from her and that by failing to acknowledge this secret that he is in essence being dishonorable.

Although Wolverine dreamt that Mariko would be the one to attempt to slay him, it is in actuality Yukio that has been sent to assassinate him. He trusts Yukio with his true identity and though he senses something is amiss with her, he is unaware of her true intentions towards him. Yukio has protected him for a period of time because she felt there was a possibility that he would grow to love her in the same manner in which he cared for Mariko. It is only when Yukio awakens him from his dream and he calls her by Mariko's name that she resigns herself to the fact that the two of them do not have a future together. Despite his verbal flub, Logan still maintains the belief that Yukio is not the enemy. He only learns of her deceit when he discovers the body of his friend Asano, who Yukio assassinated.

> I'm a loner—by nature, by choice. I don't have many friends.
> Asano was among the oldest, an' the best. Yet, I find myself
> prayin' this was an accident. It happens, in our line o' work.
> A body wanders into the wrong place at the wrong time. An'

> gets chopped by mistake. Then, I get a whiff of the blade. The scent's familiar----Been buggin' me all along. Too late, I realise why. When I arrived in Japan an' went to see Mariko, I was ambushed. Hit by shuriken coated with nerve poison, the same stuff that's on this blade. It was Yukio who nailed me that night. She works for Mariko's father, Shingen. She's been lying from the start, setting me up. (67)

Miller shows Wolverine surrounded by darkness, eyes blacked out clutching a blade (figure 12). He is gradually moving towards the dark side in each of these images because he is gradually learning how many people refuse to accept him for who he truly is. No matter how hard he tries, he will not be accepted and people want to kill him simply for being a mutant. Shingen's father wants Wolverine dead because he does not feel that he is worthy of Mariko's love, nor is he worthy of life, simply because he is a mutant, and not a noble warrior. The next six pages of panels show a drawn out battle between Yukio and Wolverine, and later between Wolverine and the Hand. It is a long awaited battle and it demonstrates that despite how Wolverine is defined by Shingen, he is a warrior. He is a skilled samurai. But he is also a mutant. He struggles to choose which identity is the real Wolverine. His inability to control his temper, prevents Mariko from loving him and accepting him.

Yoshino discusses self-identification in terms of authenticity. Becoming an authentic version of yourself is difficult, because although you may feel you are being authentically you, others still ascribe to stereotypical norms that they feel you should ascribe to as well. Wolverine felt he was being an authentic version of himself, but the

struggle to mute undesirable aspects of his identity proved to be rather burdensome. Yoshino asserts that "sometimes covering comes in the mindless ways we hold ourselves or exchange pleasantries on a bus. At other times, covering is the exhausting burden that Mungin ultimately felt it to be. In either case, however, covering is work" (130). Wolverine struggled to mute or cover his identity in the presence of Mariko's family and flaunted his identity in the presence of Yukio. Neither action proved successful as he proclaims that he lost them both despite his best efforts. What he does realize is that the reason he was unsuccessful is that he lost sight of who he truly is (figure 3).

> I love 'em both. I failed 'em both. Worse, I failed myself. Because. . .I **lost** myself. And yet, the patterns of life are as fluid as those of this gravel. I smooth the stones—new patterns emerge—chaos becomes order. The wheel turns. Perhaps that's the answer? The key isn't winning—or losing. It's making the attempt. I may never be what I ought to be, **want** to be—but how will I know unless I try? Sure, it's scary, but what's the alternative? **Stagnation**—a safer, more terrible form of death. Not of the body, but of the spirit. An animal knows what it is, and accepts it. A man may know what he is—but he questions. He dreams. He strives. Changes. Grows. (75)

Once Wolverine accepts the fact that he hasn't been living an authentic version of himself, he is able to grow as a person, which is what Sartre argues is necessary in order for growth to occur. Wolverine accepts that he is in control of what is an authentic version of himself, not anyone else. He has the power and the ability to define himself,

and not be defined by the stereotypical qualities assigned to warriors, samurais and mutants.

The fourth and final issue of this four issue arc is entitled “Honor”. For the past three issues, we have watched Wolverine struggle to achieve honor. He has struggled with becoming an authentic version of self. Once he accepts the challenge of becoming his authentic self, he is capable of attaining honor. The cover of this final issue in this story arc, Miller features Wolverine with a light surrounding his entire body and appears to be barely clothed (figure 13). This imagery evokes the idea of someone being naked before you presenting their true self. The light surrounding him suggests optimism for the future and the light in his eyes suggests his soul or spirit has returned. In this issue, Wolverine vows to come for Lord Shingen and destroy him in the process. “I’ve a message for your boss. Tell Lord Shingen—that Wolverine is coming for him. . Shingen spent years buildin’ his organization. I spend hours rippin’ it apart” (78-9). Wolverine no longer fears being his authentic self, nor does he fear losing Mariko for flaunting his authentic self. Once this message has been relayed to Lord Shingen, he vows to kill Wolverine in the name of preserving honor.

Wolverine is on a mission in this issue to prove that he no longer fears the ramifications of his mutant identity. He reflects on the events that have led him to this point and resolves to destroy anything that stands in his way. Wolverine violently slays the samurais that guard Lord Shingen’s castle and makes it clear that he is to be feared. He is to be feared, not because he is a mutant, but because he is a warrior and his mutant abilities make him the best warrior worthy of honor and praise. Once Wolverine enters

the castle, Mariko's husband attempts to flee and take Mariko with him. Mariko opts to stay and her husband uses her as a human shield in attempt to save his own life. Yukio assassinates Mariko's husband in an attempt to both shield Mariko from danger and win over Logan. Wolverine is focused on proving his worth to both Shingen and Mariko.

> When Shingen an' I first dueled, it was with **Bokan**—
> wooden practice swords. I asked him why not with steel.
> He said I wasn't worthy. And in that fight, he proved it.
> <Shingen.> <Am I worthy now?> (91).

Wolverine knows that by winning the battle with Lord Shingen that he risks losing Mariko in the process. But he also realizes that if he loses again to Shingen, he will solidify in Mariko's mind that he is not worthy of honor. Despite the risks, he must win this fight with Shingen. He must remain authentically Wolverine. After a hard fought battle, Wolverine kills Shingen and comes out victorious. Wolverine is cognizant of the fact that her culture dictates that she honor her father by making Wolverine her sworn enemy. He has killed a member of her family and is not worthy of her love or honor. Mariko's reaction to her father's death is not what Wolverine expects, but it is what he has desired for so long. She presents him with the "honor sword" and reminds him of the value and meaning of the sword (figure 14).

> This represents all we were and are and wish to be. It is
> perfection—of form and function, of reality and spirit—
> to be worn, not by the lord of the clan. . . but by the
> samurai who best exemplifies those qualities. My father. . .
> brought shame to clan Yashida. By his actions, he

> forfeited his right to touch this blade, much less wield it.
> Logan, the honor sword is yours (97).

By remaining authentically himself, Wolverine has earned both Mariko's love and honor. Furthermore, he has finally earned the title of samurai in the eyes of Mariko and validation that he embodies the spirit and qualities of the samurai. He has truly become worthy, simply by remaining authentic. He no longer has to mute or cover his mutant identity, because he has gained acceptance simply by being an authentic version of himself.

The correlation between identity and authenticity is oftentimes challenging because it requires individuals to resist the urge to assign identities with individuals based off of generalized categorizations. K. Anthony Appiah describes this in his essay entitled "Race, Culture, Identity: Misunderstood Connections," from the book *Color Conscious: The Political Morality of Race.* Appiah writes,

> In the liberal tradition, to which I adhere, we see public morality as engaging each of us as individuals with our individual "identities": and we have the notion, which comes (as Charles Taylor has rightly argued) from the ethics of authenticity, that, other things being equal, people have the right to be acknowledged publicly as what they already really are (92).

We have a moral obligation to acknowledge individuals for the identity they have selected for themselves. Refusing to acknowledge someone's true identity is what prompted DuBois to argue that "the problem of the twentieth century is the problem of

the color-line" (Appiah/Gutman, 3). Allowing individuals to speak freely about their identities, rather than forcing them to cover their identities, allows for growth. The notion of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" prevents an understanding of others and prohibits the ability to empathize with other groups' struggles. Once we allow people to self-identify and self-govern we create an autonomous society. Yoshino argues that autonomy is crucial to self-identification and Wolverine proves that he has the power to change not only how he is viewed, but that he defines who or what he is, not anyone else.

Chapter 3

Magneto: Mutant Pride and Prejudice

"It isn't the purifiers who are dangerous, but the man himself. His beliefs. His ideas. If we don't stand up to those—here and now—then all we've done is delay an inevitable holocaust"-Cyclops

The benefits associated with passing, for those who are capable of passing, oftentimes outweigh the stigma associated with passing. Yet the shame and disappointment associated with passing are a burden on one's mental psyche and can ultimately lead to distorted images of self. Those who are capable of passing, yet choose not to pass, but rather flaunt, their minority identity are often viewed as either fools or honorable for doing so. Marvel's character Magneto is one that visibly does not appear to be a mutant. He is an extremely powerful mutant, capable of extraordinary things and he does not choose to cover or mute his identity. Rather, he chooses to flaunt it to the level that he dubs mutants to be of a superior species than non-mutants. Magneto's origins are varied depending on which character arc you read. However there are certain facts about Magneto's origins that are undisputable. One such fact is that he is a Holocaust survivor and witnessed the genocide of his fellow Jewish people. Having survived Nazi Germany, it is undeniable that he understands the gravity of bigotry and hatred based off of something such as race, religion or simply being born a part of a minority group. One of the things that makes Magneto such a relatable character is that he is a survivor of an atrocious act in history that cannot be sugarcoated or explained away no matter how you

look at it. He is a minority that has survived countless acts of rejection and persecution. Additionally, at times he displays behavior consistent with survivor's guilt, and rightfully so. There is no rhyme or reason to who does and does not survive mass genocide. Magneto has chosen to make it his life's mission to prevent anyone else from suffering the atrocities he did. His methods may not always be agreeable, but his intentions come from the desire to protect those who are targeted by bigots and racists.

The first graphic novel I will be discussing in regards to Magneto is *Days of Future Past,* originally published in 1981. The story arc deals with a dystopian future whereby Mutants are forced to reside in internment camps, similar to the Jews during the Holocaust. We follow Kitty Pryde as she goes back in an attempt to stop the assassination of Senator Robert Kelly, whose death would potentially lead to the Mutant versus Human hysteria in future storylines. The story starts with the image of Park Avenue in New York City, in the year 2013. The cover image (figure 15) shows a virtually abandoned and boarded up city block. It is reminiscent of the European ghettos that were cleared out during the Holocaust. Kitty Pryde rides a bus drawn by horses (figure 16) similar to cattle cars used during the Holocaust, back to the internment camps. Artist John Byrne is clearly illustrating the correlation between the Holocaust that Magneto survived as a child, and the future Mutant genocide that the X-Men are collectively trying to prevent.

While on the tram back to the internment camps, Kitty is describing the different classes of people in 2013. The three classes of people are Humans, Anomalous Humans, and lastly Mutants. Physical Anthropology scholar Robert Wald Sussman describes the early history of race-mixing and why it was strictly forbidden in his book *The Myth of*

Race: The troubling persistence of an unscientific idea , originally published in 2014. In his book he discusses the role of a textbook entitled *Types of Mankind* in perpetuating the unscientific idea of race.

> The main purpose of the book was to show that the findings of science justified the institution of slavery (Brace 2005). Using Morton's data on fixity of skull size and shape and the "historical approach" of Nott and Agassiz, its theme was that the human races had different origins and in fact were different species, that mixture between the races led to inferior people both biologically and intellectually, that the people of the white race were superior to other races and were the only truly civilized race, and that mixture of whites with other races was causing a deterioration of civilization and a danger to the future (34-5).

The notion of race-mixing leading to the deterioration of society is the same argument being presented in *Days of Future Past.* "Anomalous Humans" are believed to simply have the potential for the mutant gene; it has not actually been determined that they have the gene-yet they are still forbidden to breed. Mutants are considered to be the lowest class of people and as such are either placed in the internment camps or exterminated, similar to the Jews during the Holocaust.

As Kitty Pryde re-enters the internment camp, she passes rows of headstones of all the mutants that have been killed during this present-day Holocaust (figure 17). Magneto, has yet again been saved from extermination- despite being confined to a wheelchair. Historically, individuals who are disabled in any manner are exterminated

rather than being sent to the internment camps. However, it is possible that since he possesses a vastly superior level of mutant abilities, he was again spared from extermination. Magneto is shown here in a much gentler fashion than what we are accustomed to seing. He implores Colossus and the rest of the surviving X-Men to stay the course for the good of the world-not just mutantkind.

> If there were an alternative, Peter--**any** alternative--we would take it. But if we do nothing, by tomorrow, the world will be at war. And by the day after tomorrow . . . . . The world will be dead. Our actions may not make things better--for humanity **or** mutantkind-- but they certainly cannot make them worse (111).

It is a rare occasion that we see Magneto as the champion for all of humanity, and not solely for mutantkind. However, in the context of this story arc, the preservation of humanity will in turn preserve mutantkind as well. Magneto must continue the fight against the anti-Mutant ideology, as it is the only way to preserve all of humanity.

Magneto is one of the few mutants who has staunchly defended Mutants and tried to protect them from persecution. He refuses to hide his true identity and epitomizes the ideal of authenticity. In a footnote from *Color Conscious,* Charles Taylor discusses the ideal of authenticity by saying, "If I am not [true to myself], I miss the point of my life" (93-94). The point of Magneto's life is to protect Mutantkind from suffering a similar fate as Jews during the Holocaust while remaining true to himself. Individuals who possess the ability to pass, yet choose to flaunt their identities in the face of adversary, run the risk of losing their lives or being stripped of various freedoms. Magneto is aware of the

risks and each time he is presented with the opportunity to simply protect himself and cover his identity (or pass) he chooses to flaunt his identity.

When Magneto is first introduced in the X-Men series he proclaims that Mutants are Homo-Superior, and therefore a superior race. Similar to the Final Solution, there were a series of events that allowed for anti-other hysteria to increase. Within this story arc, Senator Kelly's anti-Mutant campaigns bred an environment of hate. After Kitty travels back through time to 1980, she has to convince the X-Men that the assassination of Senator Kelly by the Brotherhood of Mutants will lead to this holocaust.

> The Brotherhood killed him to teach humanity to fear and respect the power of **Homo Superior**. Their plan backfired. Mutants became objects of fear and **hatred**. We thought the mood of hysterical paranoia would pass. It didn't. In 1984, a rabid anti-mutant candidate was elected President. Within a year, the first **Mutant Control Act** was passed (120).

Claremont's storyline continues to harken back to the Holocaust and the persecution of Jews. The hysterical paranoia that Claremont describes is no different from the paranoia created by the Nazis, and no different from the hatred created during the Jim Crow era. The implementation of the Mutant Control Act is tantamount to the Anti-Jewish legislation in Prewar Germany and Europe, and the Post Civil War Black Codes and Jim Crow Laws. Senator Robert Kelly is the aforementioned anti-mutant candidate seen standing behind a podium that reads "America! It's 1984! Do You Know What Your Children Are? (120). Artist John Byrne has drawn Senator Kelly with an eerily similar resemblance to Nazi dictator Adolf Hitler (figure 18). Kelly is shown with his arm

pointing towards the crowd screaming in anger. Given the imminent danger for mutants, one wonders why a Mutant who has the ability to cover his identity, such as Magneto, chooses to flaunt it instead. Individuals who choose to fight against the ideology have the opportunity to alter the course of history simply by refusing to cover their identity.

History scholar Allyson Hobbs discusses this dilemma in her book entitled *A Chosen Exile: A History of Racial Passing in American Life* published in 2016. Hobbs discusses the similar challenge that Blacks faced during the post Civil War era. Should they simply pass for white, and gain additional rights? Or do they simply continue to fight for equality while maintaining an ideal of authenticity?

> Their intermediate racial standing posed new problems in the aftermath of the Civil War- both for numerous mixed-race people and for the whites who struggled to locate them within fixed racial categories. At this radical historical juncture, these blacks had a choice: they could trade on their light skin and pass as white or they could continue to live as black. If they chose to remain black, they hoped to play a role in reconstructing a nation where blackness would no longer limit their claims for full personhood and equal citizenship (73).

Although, in numerous other story arcs Magneto simply wants to prove the superiority of Mutantkind, in this storyline he is well aware there is no room for his ideology. His only option is to attempt to preserve all of humanity, yet he never wavers on whether or not he should flaunt his mutant identity. In the face of the anti-mutant hysteria aroused by Senator Robert Kelly, Magneto must flaunt his mutant identity.

As the anti-mutant hysteria continues, Kitty describes the takeover of power by the Sentinels, a group of mutant-hunting robots, and the resulting devastation of life. The scare-tactics employed by Senator Kelly have created room for the government to reactivate the Sentinels, which puts them on a path towards a global war, and ultimately a global holocaust. Magneto is repeatedly depicted as a hero and potential martyr in this particular story arc, as he refuses to waver in the face of evil even if it costs him his life. Magneto remains behind, in the present day, as a deterrent to anyone who tries to stop Kitty and the other X-Men. Wolverine and Colossus describe Magneto's self-sacrificial efforts as a noble act, "He knew what he was doin' when he volunteered to cover our escape. His wheelchair would have slowed us up too much. A noble death is still a death, Logan, and I am so sick of death--eh (121)?" Magneto's true purpose is to preserve mutantkind and his way of doing so is by refusing to mute his identity or cover any aspect of his identity. Again, this act is an attempt to reconstruct their nation and change the course of history, simply by actively maintaining an ideal of authenticity and continued affiliation with fellow Mutants.

The Brotherhood of Evil Mutants manage to gain access to the Senate floor to attempt to carry out the assassination of Senator Kelly. Kelly is seen continuing to spew his vitriolic speech against Mutants. In spite of their numerous attempts, they are unsuccessful in killing Senator Kelly. Kelly's life has been saved by none other than mutant Kitty Pryde. Although Kelly has the X-Men to thank for sparing his life, he does not abandon his anti-Mutant agenda. Instead, he opts to create a covert operation to exterminate the Mutant problem for good. As history has taught us, it is not one act alone

that changes history, but rather a series of acts that will ultimately lead to a larger scale movement.

In *God Loves, Man Kills* we see how the earlier effects of Senator Robert Kelly's anti-Mutant agenda have impacted the citizens of America. Additionally, we see how this continued drive to exterminate mutantkind has caused Magneto to extend his turn at being good rather than villainous. *God Loves, Man Kills* was first published in 1982. The story follows Magneto as he hunts down the killers of two mutant children on the orders of evangelist Reverend William Stryker. Reverend Stryker preaches a message of hate and claims that mutants are an abomination to all mankind. Stryker's followers are not unlike followers of Hitler's regime and White nationalists who are convinced that the "solution" is to rid the world of these abominations and thereby incite mass exterminations. The "Jewish Question as Mutant Question" is posited in an essay by Jesse Kavadlo, entitled "X-Istential X-Men: Jews, Supermen, and the Literature of Struggle" from the book *X-Men and Philosophy.* Kavadlo initially questions how someone that is considered a "superhero" could allow such atrocities to occur without preventing it.

> No doubt, Charles Xavier could simply change people's minds to make them accept mutants. But to do so would be a science-fictionalized version of Sartre's "bad faith," or, "a lie to oneself within the unity of a single consciousness." Bad faith, for Sartre, is the cornerstone of anti-Semitism, the framework of which undergirds the entire nature of the X-Men stories. "The anti-Semite," Sartre wrote, "has chosen hate

> because hate is a faith; at the outset he has chosen to devaluate words and reasons." In their consistent use of physical violence, so do the X-Men's adversaries (40-1).

One such adversary in the X-Men universe is Reverend Stryker. Stryker's followers feel they are purifying the human race by exterminating mutants, and as such refer to themselves as "Purifiers" (figure 19).

In the opening panels, two African-American mutant children are shot and then hung on a playground swing for all to see. The panels are originally shown in a blue-black and white, mostly devoid of color, until the frame where one of the mutants asks after being shot, "Why?". The child's hand is shown covered in red blood (figure 20). The two children are branded with a sign that reads "Mutie", not unlike Jews were made to wear yellow badges during the Holocaust. When Magneto discovers the murdered children, he is shown in color, his skin a warm flesh color contrasting his livelihood to the human remains beside him (figure 21). After the opening panels, all future panels are shown in full color, despite some of the scenes similarly taking place at night.

Claremont dives right into illustrating the religious extremism of the Stryker Crusade. Reverend Stryker is shown reading an excerpt from the Bible which focuses on stoning individuals who are deemed abominations in the eyes of the Lord. In one of the panels artist Brent Anderson focuses on the eyes of Reverend Stryker which despite being piercingly blue are cloaked in black, while he proclaims aloud "Thy kingdom come, Lord, thy will be done, on *Earth*, as it is in Heaven" (figure 22). Claremont's intention here is to highlight how Stryker is interpreting the Bible to carry out his views

on Mutants. On the following page, Stryker prepares for a televised interview and remarks to his secretary that if "God is willing" the X-Men will cease to exist. His intent is to further his anti-Mutant agenda by employing scare tactics. Claremont shows us that the environment surrounding Stryker is already on a path laden with fear and hatred. As we saw earlier in *Days of Future Past,* Senator Kelly ignited a great deal of anti-mutant hysteria. Not unlike the Holocaust, which could not have occurred without a series of decisions that led to an atmosphere of hate. Reverend Stryker cannot successfully incite violence without an atmosphere primed for hate and prejudice.

This atmosphere of hate is what makes it necessary for individuals to pass or cover. Throughout the first chapter, Claremont reveals an anti-Mutant environment with non-Mutants protesting not only the existence of Mutants, but basic relationships with Mutants. In the next panel (figure 23), we see Kitty Pryde attacking a non-mutant as a result of his defense of the Stryker Crusade. Kitty's reaction in turn causes Daniel to argue that "Muties are evil! They deserve whatever they get! You wanna make somethin' of it Mutie-lover?!" Kitty's dance instructor Stevie Hunter assures her that "They're only words, child" and not to let the ignorance of another determine her self-worth. Nor should she allow it to define who she is as an individual; the responsibility of self-identification is hers and hers alone.

During a televised debate between Charles Xavier and Reverend Stryker, Professor Xavier attempts to dissuade the audience from grouping Mutants together as they are individuals, just as Humans are:

> Firstly, Mr. Cheever, Mutants per se are not a monolithic group, possessing one set of attitudes or goals. They are individuals--as are we all-- and should be judged as such.

Xavier's argument is one that consistently is discussed in terms of racial categorization and classification. In order to identify one's authentic identity, we cannot simply categorize individuals based on larger classifications. Appiah writes in his text *Color Conscious*, "If what matters about me is my individual and authentic self, why is so much contemporary talk of identity about large categories--race, gender, ethnicity, nationality, sexuality--that seem so far from individual (93)?" If we are to truly be our authentic self, we must be free to identify ourselves as we see fit. Stryker and Xavier continue to debate the idiosyncrasies of race and identification, both making a desperate attempt to sway the audience in their favor. Unfortunately for Xavier, the audience has already been primed to accept Reverend Stryker's arguments as fact. Following the debate, Stryker's followers kidnap Professor Xavier with the intent of using him to exterminate all mutants, and thus forcing Magneto to assist the X-Men in saving mutantkind.

The role of leader is not an unfamiliar role for Magneto, but he must learn to rein in his desire for world domination. Cyclops once stated that it is not Stryker's followers that are dangerous, it is the man who guides them with his beliefs. This is the challenge that Magneto must face, not falling victim to the same behavior as his enemy. When Magneto arrives on the scene to assist the X-Men he assures them that he "Magneto is here as a friend. . . And, if you'll have me, an **ally."** While attempting to diffuse a fight between Wolverine and one of the Purifiers, Claremont reminds the reader of how history

and the cycle of hatred repeats itself when Magneto comments, “Once more, genocide in the name of God. A story as old as the race”. One that Magneto is gravely familiar with.

Extremist religion has been used for decades to justify hate and prejudices. The bible was used as a means to justify slavery, it was used to justify mass genocide during the Holocaust, and it was later used to justify discrimination and hatred towards homosexuals. Extremism is the reason that individuals struggle with self-identification. Extremists will aggrandize their beliefs through manipulation, coercion and scare tactics. All of these practices have been used to alter the status quo.

The Purifiers, following their extremist leader Reverend Stryker, kidnap Kitty and attempt to kill her. Kitty manages to escape and make it onto a subway train to safety. The Purifiers board the train and in the process kill a police officer. Rather than leave the police officer’s side in his time of need, Kitty shows him compassion. Despite her pleas to the Purifiers to save the officer, they proclaim that “his death, mutie--at what’ll appear to be **your** hand--will serve our cause as effectively as your death.” Their only concern is to further their cause, regardless of who gets in their way.

Magneto, who has sworn to serve as the X-Men’s ally, comes to her defense. Kitty may have plead to the Purifiers to show compassion for their fellow man, but it was Magneto who actually showed compassion. Magneto uses his powers to save the dying officer, pulling the steel bullets from the wound (figure 24). As the officer comes to, he inquires who the X-Men are and why the Purifiers are trying to kill Kitty. Magneto responds:

> I am Magneto. My companions, X-Men. We are Mutants. As for reasons, you'd better ask the man those assassins are sworn to serve . . . . . **Reverend William Stryker.**

Magneto knows the risks involved with admitting his identity and he always chooses to flaunt his identity. Not only does he admit his true identity, but here in this scene, he refers to the X-Men as his companions. He does not view them as his enemy, as he understands that the only way to ensure their survival collectively is to work with them, and not against them. This sentiment is further exemplified when he discovers that Professor Xavier has been tricked into helping the Purifiers locate and exterminate mutants. Magneto discovers that Xavier has spared the lives of Storm and Cyclops. Magneto notes that Xavier has simply created "the illusion of death" in an attempt to spare their lives. Storm and Cyclops question why Magneto is helping Wolverine, and he again confirms his affiliation with the X-Men.

> Considering our past association, your reaction is understandable. I am not your enemy, X-Men, nor do I consider you mine. True, my goal has ever been the conquest of Earth--but solely to create a world where our race, *Homo Superior*, can live in peace.

Magneto shares their goal of living in peace, although his means usually differ from that of Xavier and the X-Men. As we previously saw in *Days of Future Past*, Magneto understands that if we allow extremists to dictate which individuals matter and which ones don't, humanity will cease to exist.

Magneto's stance on world domination is understandable, given the historical events he has both witnessed and survived. He has survived the Holocaust, survived a second threat of global genocide in *Days of Future Past*, and again we see him fighting to protect Mutants from extremists. He questions why the X-Men persist in defending individuals who would rather see them dead than live amongst them in peace. The X-Men argue that Magneto is no different from Stryker with all of his proselytizing, however this is the first occasion where Magneto suggests that after he is long gone, he would want the X-Men to carry on his work- which would suggest that he is allowing for the possibility of Mutants and Humans to live amongst each other in peace.

> Anyone can create an utopia for a single generation, Magneto; The trick is making it last. Who preserves your dream after you're gone? You, of course, Cyclops. And the X-Men. Why do you think I want you by my side? But all this may well be rendered academic if Reverend Stryker's plans are left unchecked. Consider my offer, X-Men. Should the fates be kind, we shall speak of it again.

Magneto leaves the company of the X-Men to try and stop Reverend Stryker from carrying out his plan of exterminating mutantkind. Stryker is in the midst of a press conference asserting that "God created Man--The **Human** race! The bible makes no mention of the mutants". Stryker, like many religious zealots, is attempting to interpret the Bible to suit his needs and his ideological beliefs. One of the things that allows extremists such as Stryker to obtain success is from the silence of those who stood in

opposition. As Stryker is ranting about Mutants being abominations in the eyes of the Lord, two police officers are discussing the speech and one casually mentions an upcoming hockey game, Despite acknowledging he is terrified of what Stryker is capable of, he would rather turn a blind eye and remain blissfully ignorant to the threat Stryker poses.

Stryker launches his attack and mutants begin to start dropping one by one in the streets. The X-Men are hesitant to attack Stryker as he is carrying out his attack on live television. If the X-Men attack him in front of an audience, they not only will be identifying themselves as mutants, and making themselves targets, but would ultimately be proving Stryker's message to be true. Their fear of attacking has caused Magneto to jump into action, in the hopes of saving as many mutants as possible. Although the X-Men do not wish to create a genocide, their failure to act in a timely manner could potentially cause the same outcome. Failure to act because of fear is just as bad as failure to act out of indifference. Magneto jumps into action, prepared to meet whatever fate has in store for him. However, one of the Senators makes note of a small gesture of Magneto's which indicates that despite what Stryker may say, he comes in peace.

> Senator, we've got to get out of here! No, dammit! See--
> Magneto's replaced the roof, good as new! He's made an
> entrance, not an attack!

Magneto's gesture, though small, did not go unnoticed as it made the Humans aware that he is simply attempting to stop Reverend Stryker from spreading his message of hate. Slowly, it is revealed that individuals thought to be humans are in fact Mutants. They

implore Reverend Stryker to have mercy on them as they have always been faithful to him. Stryker shows no mercy and casts them aside. Magneto questions Stryker's actions "Is this then the **Holy Word**, Reverend--that any who oppose you must die (figure 25)?" It is only then that the Humans realize their grave error in blindly following Reverend Stryker. Despite the presence of numerous people who wished to see him dead, Magneto stood his ground and never hid his identity.

In the final panels of the graphic novel, Reverend Stryker is in a standoff between the police and the X-Men. Stryker implores the Humans to reconsider their newly changed view on Mutants. He points out Nightcrawler and asks "You dare call that. . . thing. . . **Human**?!? (figure 26)" Kitty and the rest of the X-Men stand together against Reverend Stryker and identify themselves as Mutants, prepared for whatever action Stryker may take against them. Ironically, the police officers who previously chose to turn a blind eye, choose to take action against Stryker. On the closing panels, artist Brent Anderson slowly zooms in on the gun Stryker is holding, and then his menacing face (figure 27). One of the police officers shoots and kills Stryker. Although, the officer stopped Stryker from killing the X-Men, we discover that Stryker's message of hate will continue on and he has gained even more followers. The cycle of hate and persecution continues, as will the struggle with self-identification of Mutants against those who wish to harm them.

In a chapter from his book *Speculative Blackness: The future of race in Science Fiction,* author Andre Carrington discusses the fear of self-identification in regards to the X-Men. He writes,

> The "children of the atom" fear discovery and
> persecution, just as the X-Men fight to preserve
> the safety of a world that hates and fears mutants,
> and mutants who can hide their true identities
> from the public tend to do so in the comics" (112).

There is no question that Magneto is one of the few mutants who can hide his identity, yet consistently chooses to flaunt it. Yoshino cites the four axes of covering are appearance, affiliation, activism and association. Magneto does not attempt to alter his appearance in any manner, as he sees no issue with his appearance. His affiliation is solely with Mutants and he is extremely active in protecting them from those who wish to harm them. Magneto fits the criteria for an individual that flaunts his identity. Oftentimes, individuals who choose to flaunt are glorified or seen as heroes to the cause. However, this is not the case with Magneto, given his propensity to perpetuate his own ideology and frequently exhibits the same qualities and commits the same heinous acts against Humans. In the closing panels of *God Loves, Man Kills*, we see a dejected Professor Xavier who fears that his mission of peace amongst Humans may never come to fruition. He questions whether or not Magneto's way may be best for the survival of Mutantkind. However, the X-Men refuse to follow in Magneto's footsteps and abandon everything they have fought for all these years. Magneto realizes that he cannot stay the course with the X-Men and there is no question that the compassionate, team oriented Magneto ceases to exist. He has returned to his original plan of action, to defeat the Humans at all costs.

Chapter 4

Mystique: A Questionable Identity

"My old man died in a fine big house. My ma died in a shack. I wonder where I'm gonna die, Being neither white nor Black?"

-Langston Hughes

The question of identity and self-identification is one that is difficult for most individuals to answer. The characteristics that an individual may select to describe themselves, may not agree with what another individual may use to describe that same person. It becomes an even more challenging question, when you factor in racial ambiguity. Racial ambiguity is a term that is used to describe the inability to pinpoint a particular race or ethnicity of an individual via a visual survey. This may be because the individual is of mixed heritage or because the individual has altered their appearance for that purpose. In the context of Marvel's X-Men Universe, Mystique is a mutant character who possesses the ability to shapeshift. Her ability allows her to mimic the appearance of anyone with precision. Arguably, her ability to shapeshift can be viewed as the ability to pass or to cover her mutant features. Her natural appearance is blue skin, which clearly denotes she is a mutant. Given her superpower, it would be rather easy for her to abandon her fellow Mutants and attempt to pass as Human. However, Mystique chooses to use her abilities to her benefit. This tactic is commonly referred to as strategic passing.

In a chapter entitled "White is the Color of Freedom" from the book *A Chosen Exile,* author Hobbs discusses the rationale behind strategic passing and how it became commonplace in antebellum America among racially ambiguous people.

> White skin functioned as a cloak in antebellum America. Accompanied by appropriate dress, measured cadences of speech, and proper comportment, racial ambiguity could mask one's slave status and provide an effectual strategy for escape. . . . Tactical or strategic passing--passing temporarily with a particular purpose in mind--was born at this moment out of a dogged desire for freedom (29).

Strategic passing affords an individual access to job opportunities, housing, and various other necessities that they may have been previously banned from obtaining. It also might allow them to enter establishments restricted to a specific race, such as whites-only establishments during the Jim Crow era.

In *Days of Future Past*, Mystique and the Brotherhood of Evil Mutants have concocted a plan to assassinate Senator Kelly for his anti-Mutant campaign. We see a well-dressed woman by the name of Raven Darkholme arrive at work at the Pentagon, which is one of the most secure government buildings in existence (figure 28). Claremont writes that Raven's position at the Pentagon grants her "access to the most secret and sophisticated weaponry in America's arsenal" (124). Claremont quickly reveals in the following panel that Raven is actually a Mutant by the name of Mystique. Mystique is using her shape-shifting ability to gain access to not only a vast arsenal of weapons, but quite certainly information that a civilian would not have access to. When Raven transforms back into her natural appearance as Mystique, she no longer has the appearance of a friendly well-dressed young woman. Rather, she has glowing yellow eyes and her facial structure looks almost alien (figure 29). Mystique has taken over the reins of the Brotherhood from Magneto, and clearly is trying to assert her authority over the Brotherhood. She quickly proclaims to the Blob,

> You're correct, Blob. I'm not Magneto. But cross me-- in **any** way--and you'll find I can be as implacable and **deadly** a foe as the master of magnetism ever was. Now, prepare yourselves mutants. The time has come--to **strike**. (125)

Mystique rallies the Brotherhood into action and they head to the Senate where they plan to assassinate Senator Kelly. The Brotherhood swiftly destroys the walls surrounding the senate building and reveal their identities. Mystique, like Magneto, makes no qualms about revealing her true identity. However, in the case of Mystique, she reveals it after she has gained information through the use of her strategic passing.

Where Mystique differs from Magneto is she has no issue with killing her fellow mutants if they stand in her way. Magneto would choose to protect Mutants over Humans, whereas Mystique does not differentiate between killing Humans or killing Mutants. When Storm and the other X-Men attempt to stop Mystique and the Brotherhood from completing their mission, Mystique orders the evil mutants to "kill them" (128). Her indifference towards the lives of other Mutants is similar to that of Blacks passing for Whites or Jews passing for Christians, being presented with the option of self-preservation or turning on their fellow man. Mystique, though fiercely proud to be a mutant, is more concerned with self-preservation than the overall preservation of mutantkind.

As the Brotherhood continues to wreak havoc within the Senate, Mystique begins to explain her rationale behind killing Kelly.

> **Senator Kelly** is fond of speaking against the mutant menace. My colleagues and I are that menace incarnate! As an example of our dread power--as an object lesson to those who would oppose us--we intend to **kill him** (132).

Mystique wishes to make an example out of Senator Kelly to all other Humans who wish to persecute or mistreat Mutants. The X-Men are aware that Mystique poses a threat to mutantkind, more so than their foe Magneto. But, Mystique will stop at nothing to carry out her plan of action. As Moira McTaggert attempts to remove Professor Xavier out of harm's way, a police officer appears offering them assistance (figure 30). McTaggert trusting the police officer quickly follows her to presumably a safer place. As they approach the room, it becomes apparent to Xavier that the police officer is not who she appears to be. The police officer is revealed to be Mystique, who wishes to hold Xavier as a hostage. Again we see that Mystique is not concerned for the lives of other mutants as she tells Xavier, "You are my most dangerous foe, Xavier. I should kill you while I have the chance, but for the moment, I think, you're of more use as a potential **hostage**" (136).

Meanwhile, the rest of the X-Men are attempting to stave off the Brotherhood and failing miserably. While the two groups engage in battle, the military has arrived prepared to kill all of the mutants. As the battle continues, Nightcrawler finds himself face to face with Mystique, who unbeknownst to him is his mother. Artist John Byrne depicts Mystique in this particular panel as two different individuals occupying the same body (figure 31). The duality of identities is visually demonstrated here, as Mystique is always performing dual identities.It reveals rather duplicitous behavior by showing the dual identities. Byrne depicts her in a similar manner in the following panel, shown as half Raven and half Mystique. She skirts away vowing to strike again when the time is right.

One of the issues with passing, and to a certain extent covering, is the problem of

duplicity. In order to pass or cover one must engage in deceitful behavior to hide their true identity. One of the things that Yoshino argues in his book *Covering* is that we are quick to judge the individual who is covering "rather than the institution that commands him to do so" (65). With respect to Mystique, her duplicitous behavior is not meant to to protect herself from the anti-mutant establishment, but rather for her own personal gain. Mystique is opportunistic and uses passing to her advantage, and is what is occasionally referred to as a "Peola". Sociology professor Brooke Kroeger defines what a "Peola" is in her book *Passing: When People Can't Be Who They Are* published in 2003.

> A "Peola," a passer, in fiction or in real life, has never been a good thing to be. We judge the Peolas harshly for the lies and deceits they perpetrate, and for the pain and embarrassment they seem so willing to inflict on those they owe the most. We accuse them of duplicity, of cowardice, of not being themselves, of not fighting the food fight. Yet think of Peola's seventy-year old example through twenty-first century eyes. Here was a woman reared in a white household in the "sublime democracy of childhood," in an atmosphere of white promise, white hopes, and expectations. She even looked the part. (2)

The "Peola" Kroeger is referring to is the character named Peola from Fanny Hurst's novel *Imitation of Life* published in 1933. Peola was a black female raised with her mother in a white household. She struggled with her identity because she was able to pass as white, but because people knew she was Black, she wasn't afforded all of the same opportunities. Similarly, Mystique is able to pass as a Human, and does so to reap the benefits. The only difference is the character Peola was ashamed of who she truly was, whereas Mystique will reveal her true identity when the time is right. When the novel *Imitation of Life* was released as a film, the actress who played Peola was an African-

American woman who appeared to be white. In the book *A Chosen Exile*, actress Fredi Washington comments on the duplicitous nature of passing:

> Washington was often asked why she chose not to pass. She would reply, "Because I'm honest, firstly, and secondly, you don't have to be white to be good. I've spent most of my life trying to prove that to those who think otherwise. . . . I am a Negro and I am proud of it." Washington would allow whites to speak disparagingly about African Americans and then shock them with the truth about her racial identity, In the presence of whites who assumed she was white too, Washington remarked, "I give them plenty of rope. . .. I let them talk, hang themselves, and the I quietly say,'I'm Negro.' (172)

This commentary is strikingly similar to Mystique's behavior towards Humans. Although she will mask her appearance, once she reveals her true identity she does it in a manner that lets them know that she is in a position of power, and does not fear what may happen to her.

In *Born Again*, Mystique forges a partnership with Special Assistant to the President, Valerie Cooper. Mystique offers the services of herself and her team the Brotherhood of Evil Mutants, in exchange for a pardon from the government. It is becoming increasingly dangerous for Mutants, and she is entering into this partnership for the sole purpose of self-preservation, Mystique is willing to trade on the lives of other mutants for the sake of her own. The current anti-mutant legislation and mutant control laws implemented by Senator Kelly, as well as the anti-mutant sentiment exacerbated by Reverend William Stryker, have spurred this idea. Cooper agrees on the condition that Mystique turn over Magneto to the government, to which Mystique agrees (figure 32).

> We're switching sides for the most human of reasons--- self-preservation. Life is getting increasingly dangerous for mutants and I have no intention of spending the

> rest of mine in prison--assuming I'm even that lucky.
> (10)

Mystique goes on to explain that Cooper should not be worried about the potential for being double-crossed, as there has been a history of "conversions" within the government, as well as with the mutants. Mystique mentions that two mutants in particular, Quicksilver and the Scarlet Witch, went from being members of the Brotherhood of Evil Mutants to joining the Avengers, two vastly different groups. Mystique mentions two other mutants who were previously criminals who reformed themselves and became members of the Avengers. While this conversation is taking place, Mystique is continuing to shapeshift and take on the appearance of various individuals. Mystique started the conversation with Valerie Cooper's visage, then slowly morphed into a median version of herself and Valerie. She then states she will "shape change to someone more familiar" and "comforting" (10) and takes on the visage of former President Ronald Reagan. While in the shape of President Reagan, Mystique suggests this alliance and attempts to reassure Cooper by stating that "In its time-- when it suited the national interest-- the federal government has protected and employed all manner of villains" (10) (figure 33). Given the history of Reagan's presidency during this time period, it would seem that Claremont and Byrne are drawing a correlation between the scare tactics of McCarthyism and the Cold War, with the anti-Mutant agenda in the X-Men Universe. There is certainly a correlation between the witch hunts and threats of nuclear warfare of the Cold War, to the anti-mutant hysteria seen here created by Senator Kelly and Reverend Stryker.

Mystique's mention of espionage is interesting because again it is referencing the

duplicitous nature of passing and covering, particularly when one is doing so for personal gain. The reason why individuals who "pass" for the sake of personal gain are spoken of in a negative light is because of the deceitful behavior that must be utilized to fully carry out the act of passing. An individual who is passing has their identity that they are acting and their true identity. It is in essence what philosopher Sartre referred to as "bad faith".

Mystique agrees to offer up Magneto to Cooper and sets out to implement her plan. Mystique arrives at the National Holocaust Memorial, where she finds Magneto with Kitty Pryde. Mystique is disguised as Lee Forrester, the former lover of Cyclops. Mystique overhears a woman explaining that Magneto is the reason she survived the Holocaust. Magneto attempts to deflect praise away from himself, insisting that he is no hero and if he is a hero so is every other individual that survived this mass genocide. Mystique reveals herself whilst verbally attacking Magneto, insisting that his actions today are no different than that of Hitler's.

> And what, pray tell, would your doting admirers
> say, Magneto, if they knew the **truth**-- "**Lee?!?**"
> --that you've become one of the most feared
> **criminals** on the earth. . .A man as cruel and
> heartless and full of hate as any Nazi ever born?!! (18)

Mystique reveals her true identity and proclaims that the Brotherhood of Evil Mutants ceases to exist, they are now known as Freedom Force, employed by the United States government. Mystique's dual identity at times reflects a bit of self-hatred. Although she willing reveals herself to be a mutant, her indifference towards the lives of other mutants, indicates a level of self-loathing similar to those who attempt to pass. Yoshino mentions in his book *Covering* that "passing is often associated with death, as in the racial context, where to pass as white has been to die a social death in one's community of origin" (67).

Mystique plays with different identities which allows her to float between varying communities. However, she is not accepted by most mutants as one of their own, because she does not seek to protect them from persecution. The mutants that do accept her, primarily the Brotherhood of Evil Mutants, are a group of socially rejected mutants. Even Magneto shows a level of disdain for Mystique and both are foes of the X-Men. If ever there was something the two could unite to fight against, is their equal disregard for the X-Men.

Mystique's reference of Hitler in her conversation with Magneto has angered him, as he is a Mutant who has been heavily impacted by the Holocaust. Furthermore, despite his differences with the X-Men, he does not care to see his fellow Mutants harmed. Even despite his villainous nature, when Mystique attempts to engage him in battle in the middle of the Holocaust Memorial, Magneto wishes to keep the innocents out of harm's way. Magneto manages to hold off the Freedom Force, while keeping the innocents safe from the mutants, until the X-Men arrive to offer assistance. Despite Magneto's villainous behavior, the X-Men are still willing to help him because he displays true authenticity and does not attempt to hide his true identity. Whereas, Mystique, though she will still reveal she is a mutant, willingly displays a level of ambiguity that makes her a Mutant without a community. During earlier years, the term tragic mulatto was used to describe individuals caught between two communities. Mystique is not a sad or suicidal individual, she is an angry individual hell bent on proving her worth, yet she can never be fully accepted by the mutants or by Humans. She uses the Humans to benefit herself, and abuses the Mutants as if she is better than them.

Destiny, the precognitive mutant, warns Mystique that Kitty has departed the

Memorial and will likely return with the help of fellow mutant Colossus. The Freedom Force and the X-Men battle it out until Spiral is able to neutralize Magneto's powers (figure 34). Mystique places a gun to Magneto's head threatening to kill him. Cyclops and Wolverine are able to overpower Mystique and turn over the Freedom Force to the police. Magneto contemplates aloud whether or not his actions have turned him into the kind of person he hates. He turns himself in order to stand trial for his criminal actions. Although Mystique assisted in apprehending Magneto and ultimately his turning himself in to the government, she is no different than Blacks who helped slave masters track down runaway slaves and Jews that helped the Nazis. Even though their actions were for the purpose of self-preservation, they did so at the cost of their fellow man. Individuals who actively perform dual identities do so at the cost of numerous individuals around them. Regardless of their intention, self-preservation, self-advancement or otherwise, their actions impact on individuals who bear no other difference from then other than the inability to pass.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

The act of discovering one's true identity, and ultimately remaining authentic is challenging because there are so many different facets to one's identity. Racial ambiguity and the question of "Who are You?" hold a great deal of significance given the historical time periods where passing and covering were deemed necessary. Individuals who sought protection from persecution because of the basis of their race, religion or sexual orientation were placed in a situation whereby they had to decide, what is more important, self preservation or class preservation. It is a dilemma that arguably cannot be made in a split second. It is something that takes shape over time. In the case of Wolverine, we watched as he struggled with his identity. He grew as an individual as he learned to accept his fate and who he truly is as an individual. He learned that he defines who he is and how he is viewed, and that power should not be given to anyone else to define who he is. When writer Toni Morrison wrote, "definitions belong to the definers, not the defined" she was referring to individuals taking ownership of their identity. You cannot, or rather should not give anyone else power over your identity.

Shared commonalities within a group are simply that, commonalities. They are not meant to solely define who an individual is. We cannot force individuals to adopt aspects of a culture that do not fit who they feel they are as an individual. To do so, would be forcing individuals to act in bad faith. K. Anthony Appiah discusses the impact of racialism and how individuals may fail to fit the norms of their race in *Color Conscious.*

> As a result, the failure of an individual to fit the norm for her race would not by itself refute the theory: for it might be that that person had simply conquered her inherited disposition. Many of what I shall call the characteristics of a race were thus not, to use a modern term, phenotypic: they did not necessarily display themselves in the observable behavior of every individual (55).

Failing to live up to the characteristics of a particular group can cause an individual to feel less-than and struggle to find their place. We saw this behavior with Wolverine as he felt his true identity was that of a samurai. Although he was a mutant, he still believed that his identity was that of a samurai and his not being accepted as a samurai, caused a great deal of inner turmoil. Once Wolverine let go of these notions and accepted that he defines who he is as an individual, he was able to grow. Sartre argues that living a life defined by one's social categorization does not allow that individual to transcend their situation. In order to grow, they must create their true identity and accept that their projection of self identity is entirely within their control.

In an excerpt from his essay *Multiculturalism and "The Politics of Recognition"* within the book *Color Conscious*, Charles Taylor argues that "the politics of recognition" are "a politics that asks us to acknowledge socially and politically the authentic identities of others" (92). We must accept the identity that someone is projecting as their authentic self. Whatever preconceived notions one might have about another's authentic self are irrelevant. If that individual is projecting their formal self, we must refer to them as such. Taylor goes on to assert that,

> The rhetoric of authenticity proposes not only that I have a way of being that is all my own but that in developing it I must fight against the family, organized religion, society, the

school, the state--all the forces of convention (94-5).

Fighting against opposing forces is a part of defining who your authentic self is, however, these aspects still contribute to shaping you as an individual. They simply may not shape you in the same way as other individuals with similar experiences and exposure to these conventions.

I would argue that the hardest challenge is steadfastly admitting your true identity in situations where it is more beneficial to hide your identity. Magneto faced multiple challenges by committing to exposing his true identity. As a survivor of the Holocaust, he stood firm on his identity as a Jew, well aware of the consequences of such an action. He remained true to himself as both a Jew and as a Mutant. Despite all of the anti-Mutant hysteria he continued to fight for both Jews and mutantkind alike. The individuals who opted to stay true to themselves, would ultimately have an impact on legislation and change history. Despite having differences on how to achieve equality for mutants, both the X-Men and Magneto shared the common goal of changing Humans' views on mutants and potentially eliminating the need for existing anti-Mutant legislation.

Bearing the burden of representation requires an individual to challenge existing stereotypes and misperceptions about a given race or categorization. Oftentimes individuals who are able to simply avoid this burden, by way of masking their true identity, choose to do so. However, they are simply trading one burden for another. The new burden they must bear is the burden of double-consciousness or dual-identities. Trading on racial ambiguity allows an individual to prove that they are no different from anyone else, however they are doing so at the expense of their community of origin. They are in essence doing a disservice to the origin community, by proving that they must lie

or hide who they are in order to succeed. They are condemning the community of origin rather than the environment that created such hate and animosity.

Historically, the act of passing has been viewed negatively, as it is merely another form of acting in "bad faith". The rationale behind passing is understood, however, these individuals still end up being caught between two worlds. They are never truly accepted in either world. Individuals such as Mystique have proven to be an individual without a country so to speak. She is capable of assimilating into the world of the Humans, though she never remains Human for long. Her callous disregard for other mutants, combined with her ability to pass for Human, make her a threat to other Mutants. She is capable of acting as a double agent and has done so. How can either side fully trust an individual who is sole concern is with self-preservation? This is the burden that an individual who passes must bear.

Combining traditional literature such as *Passing*, with autobiographical essays such as *Covering* provide the reader with both real and fictionalized accounts of life for individuals who pass or cover. Furthermore, introducing non-traditional literature such as graphic novels allows the reader the opportunity to process the topic of persecution without explicitly discussing race, religion or sexual orientation. Andre Carrington writes in his book *Speculative Blackness: The Future of Race in Science Fiction,*

> Critical approaches to literature and media show us how culture can mystify and demystify social relations; when it comes to identity, in particular, cultural production can propagate ideas with profound implications for the intellectual, emotional, and economic lives of individuals and social groups. Literary and paraliterary texts function as historical evidence and fodder for argumentation, and along with other mediations, they posit ideas through

which we comprehend our place in the world (8).

Being able to discuss topics such as race, religion and sexuality allow us to fully understand others and how these things contribute to shaping individual identities. It allows us to empathize with individuals because we too understand what it means to bear the burden of representation. We can fully understand what it means to be able to define who you are as an individual and have society accept you for who you say you are. The anti-other hysteria and sentiments can be eliminated if individuals learn to accept self-identification and not challenge other's identities.

The necessity for passing has greatly diminished, however it has not completely disappeared. We have made progress, but there is still a great deal of room for improvement. Asking individuals to cover, or tone down, aspects of their identity that you simply disagree or disapprove of are forcing an individual to act in bad faith. Ideally, we can move to a point where covering is no longer a necessity and we fully allow for self-identification. It is my belief that eventually that can happen, but we need to be able to discuss in plain terms topics such as race, religion and sexuality. Analyzing texts that deal with these topics, without directly mentioning these topics, is a step in the right direction. Hopefully it will allow for continued conversations and more in-depth conversations about the politics of race, the burden of representation and the struggles of self-identification. If we can allow individuals to proudly and freely reveal their true and authentic identity we can accomplish what Sartre initially suggested which is the ability to transcend our current situation.

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Fig. 1 Mariko discovers Wolverine's "true identity"

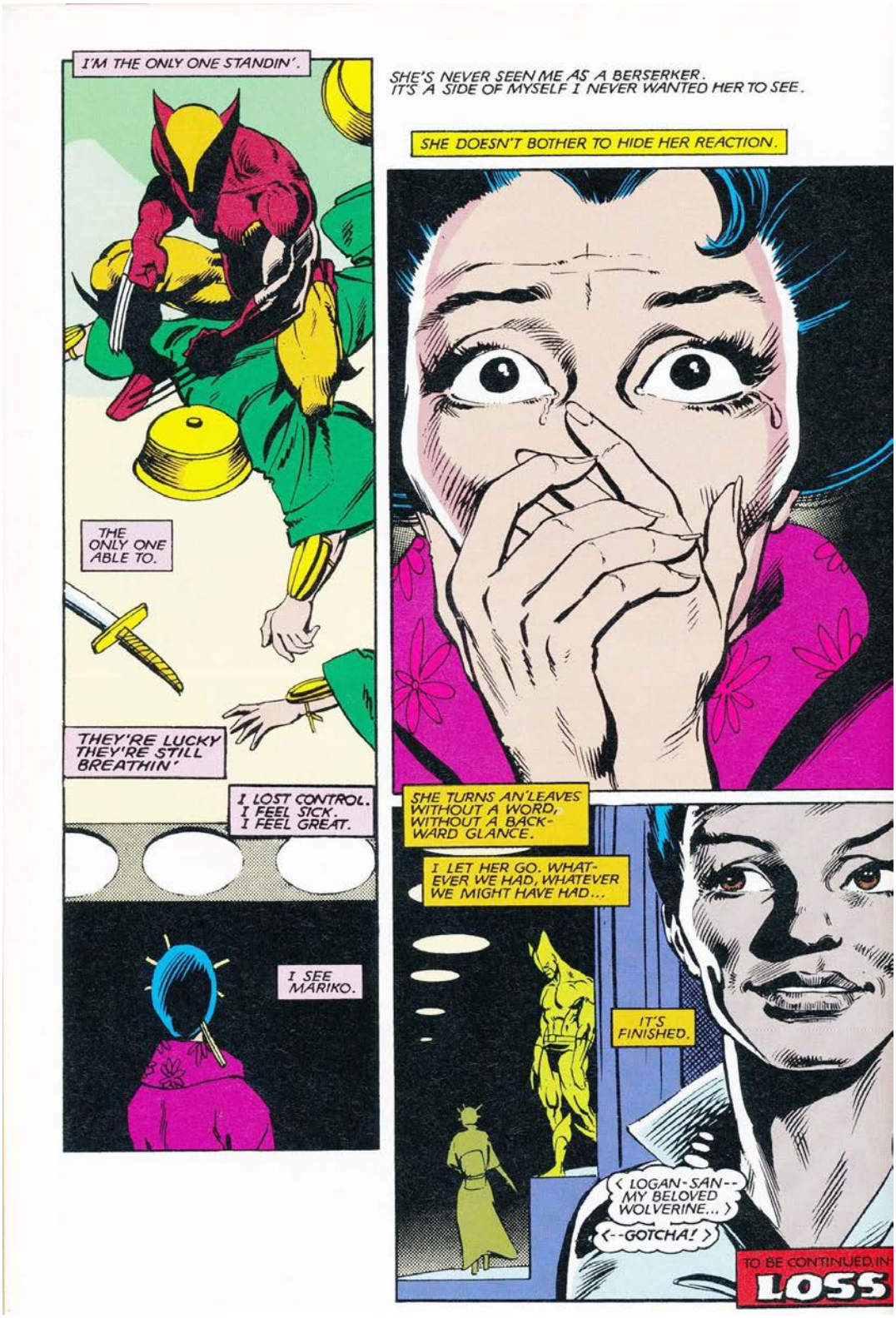


Fig. 2 Wolverine's "dark side"

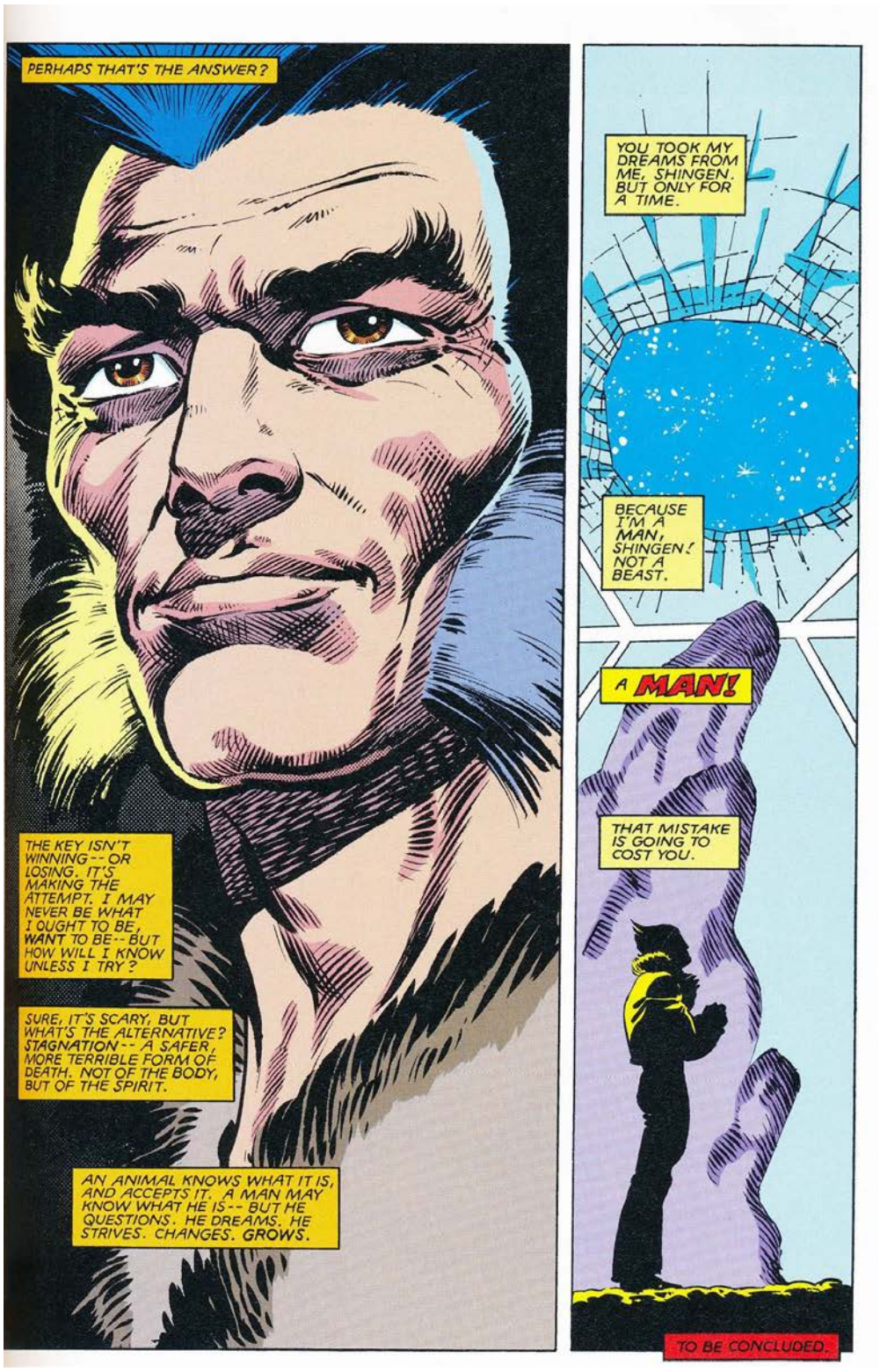


Fig. 3 Wolverine's identity struggle: Man or Beast



Fig. 4 Magneto discovers Mutant children in schoolyard

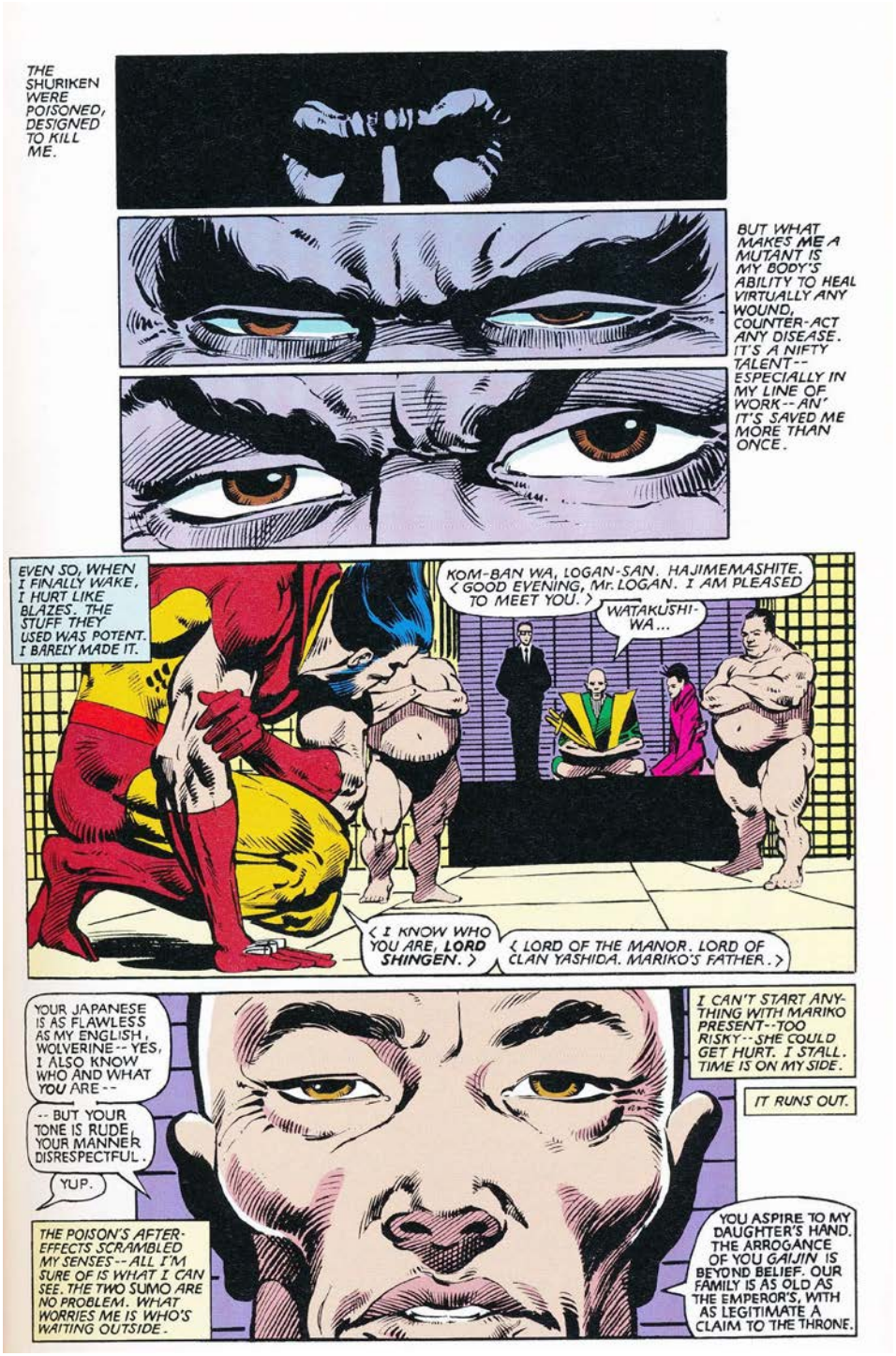


Fig. 5 Wolverine meets Lord Shingen

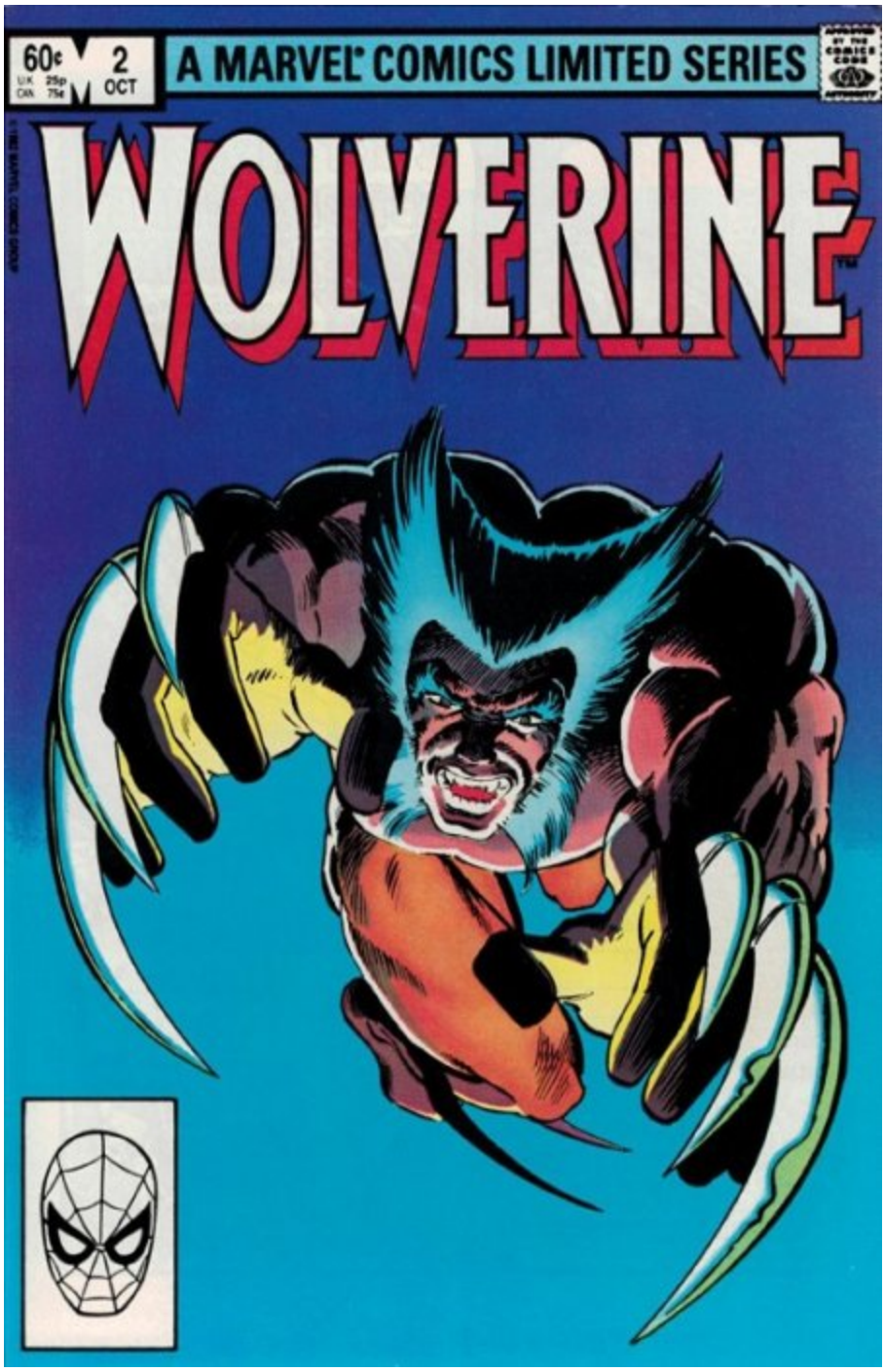


Fig. 6 Cover of Wolverine Issue #2



Fig. 7 Wolverine “I have claws”



Fig. 8 Wolverine spares Mariko a glance

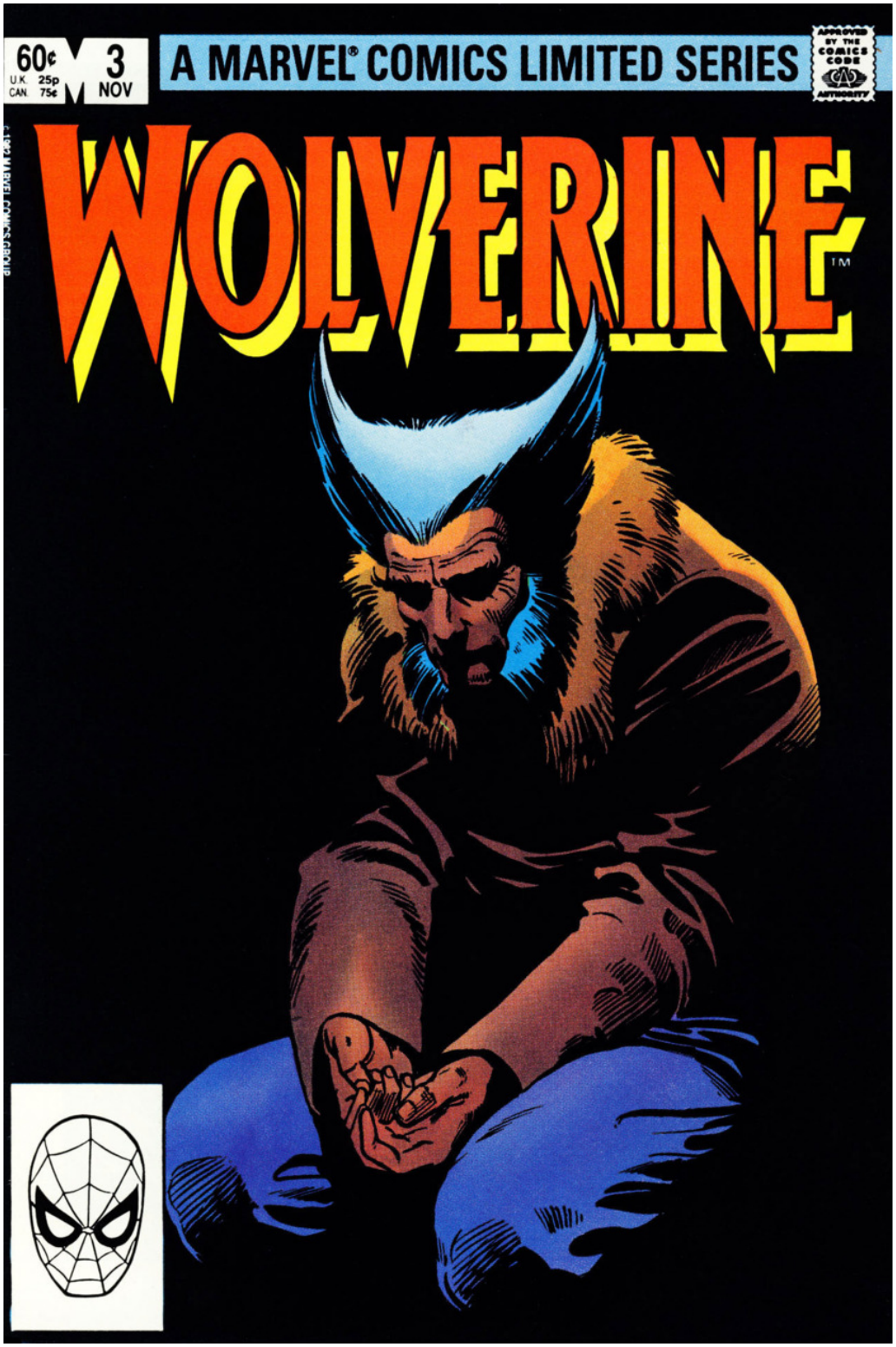


Fig. 9 Cover of Wolverine Issue #3



Fig. 10 Wolverine's Warrior dream



Fig. 11 Wolverine attacked by arrows



Fig. 12 Wolverine discovers Asano



Fig. 13 Cover of Wolverine Issue #4

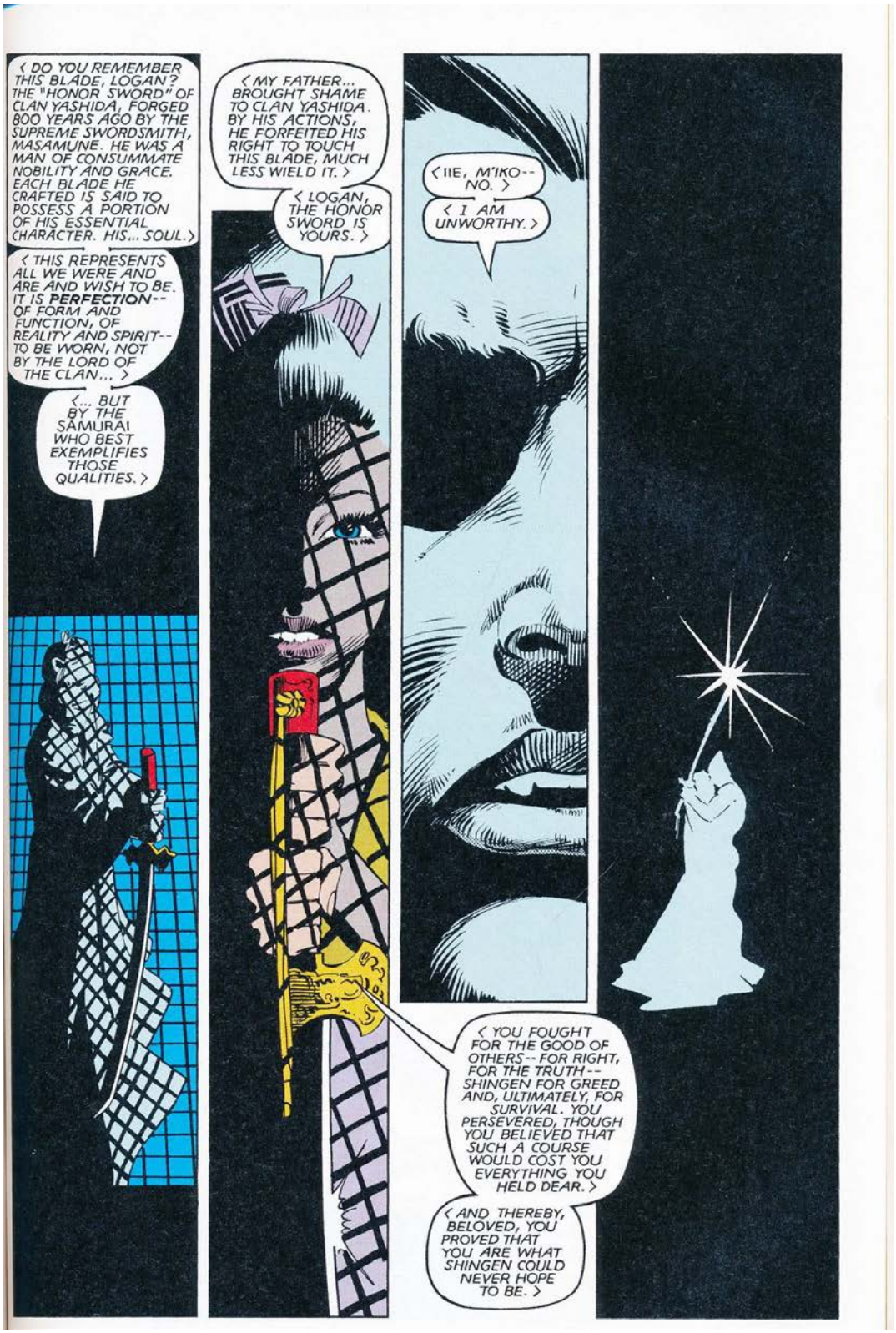


Fig. 14 Mariko gives Wolverine the Honor sword



Fig. 15 Days of Future Past credits page

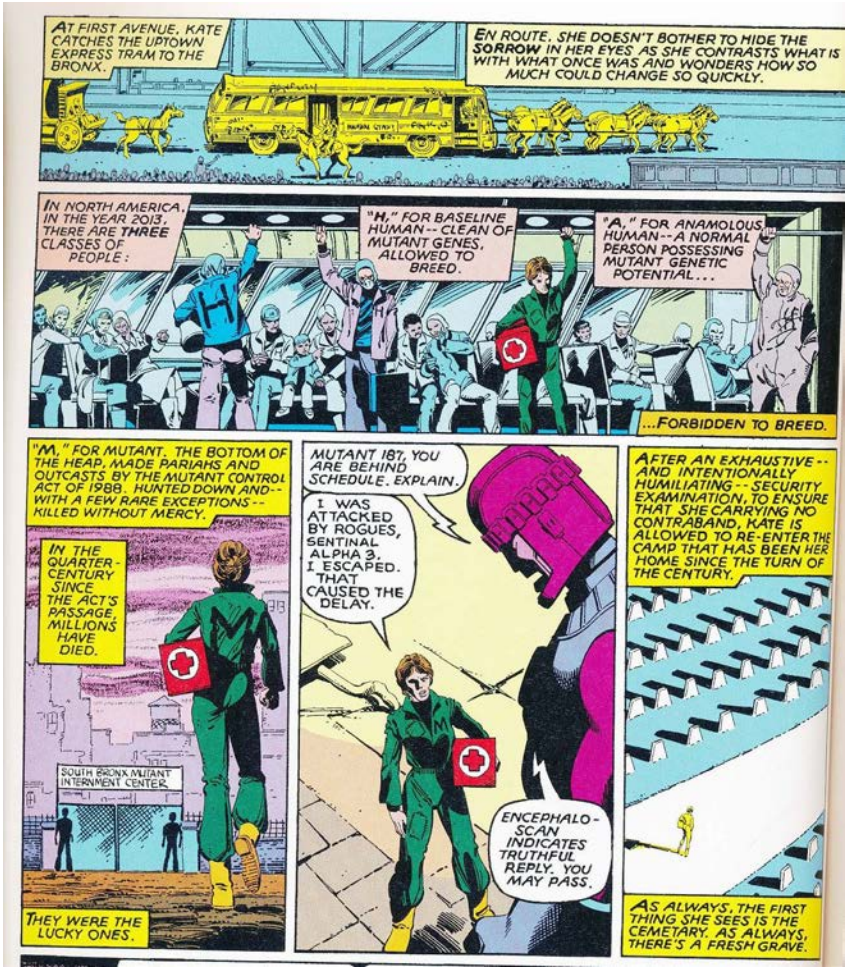


Fig. 16 Days of Future Past horse drawn tram

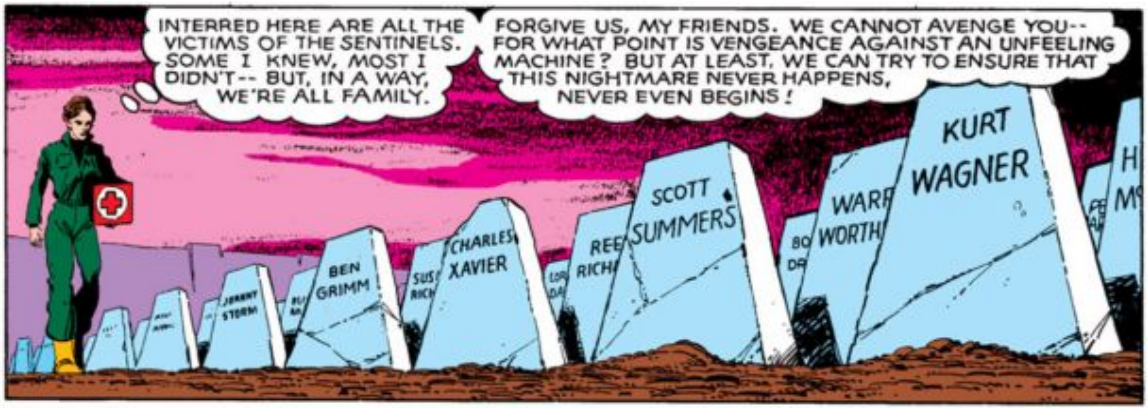


Fig. 17 Days of Future Past headstones

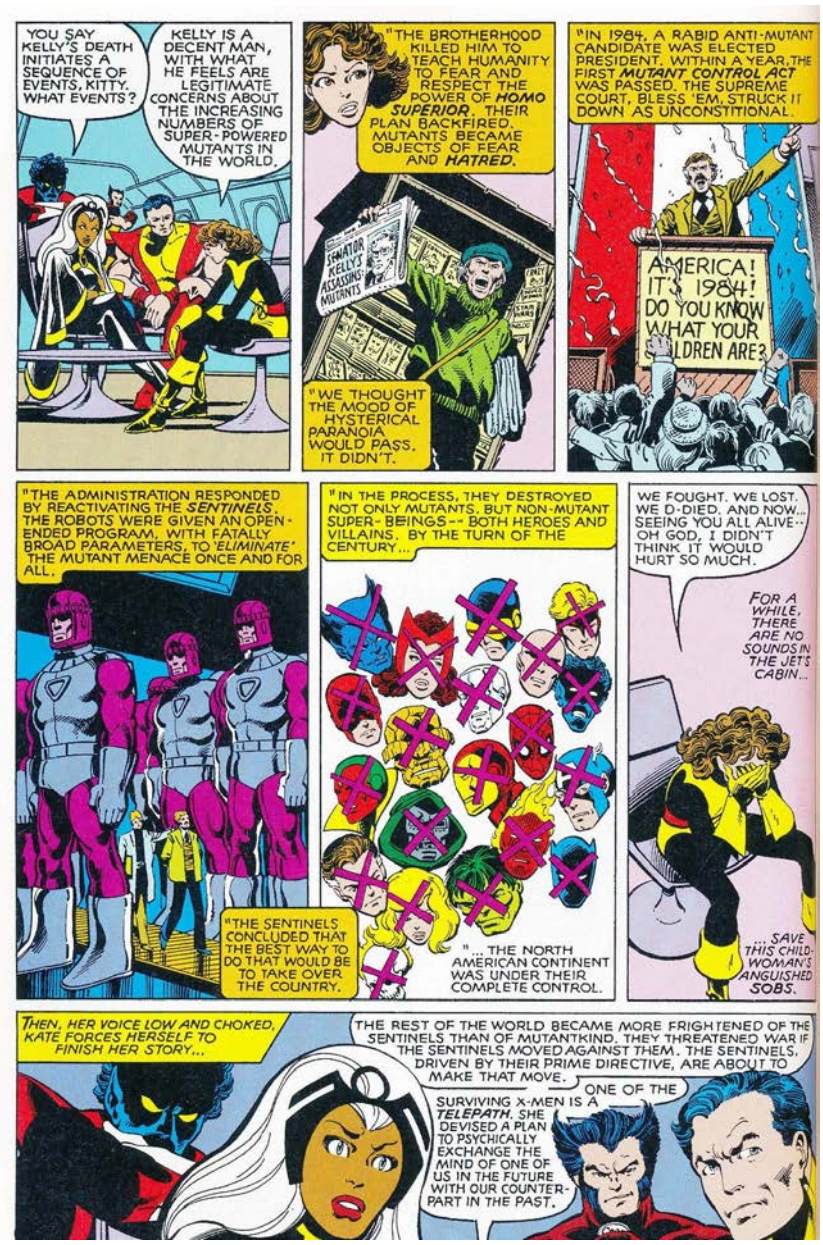


Fig. 18 Senator Kelly “Do You know What Your Children Are?”



Fig. 19 We are Purifiers



Fig. 20 Mutie asks Why?



Fig. 21 Magneto closes children's eyes



Fig. 22 Reverend Stryker praying



Fig. 23 Kitty Pryde attacks non-mutant



Fig. 24 Magneto saves officer



Fig. 25 Magneto questions Stryker



Fig. 26 Stryker points at Nightcrawler- You Call That a Human



Fig. 27 Close-Up of Stryker and gun

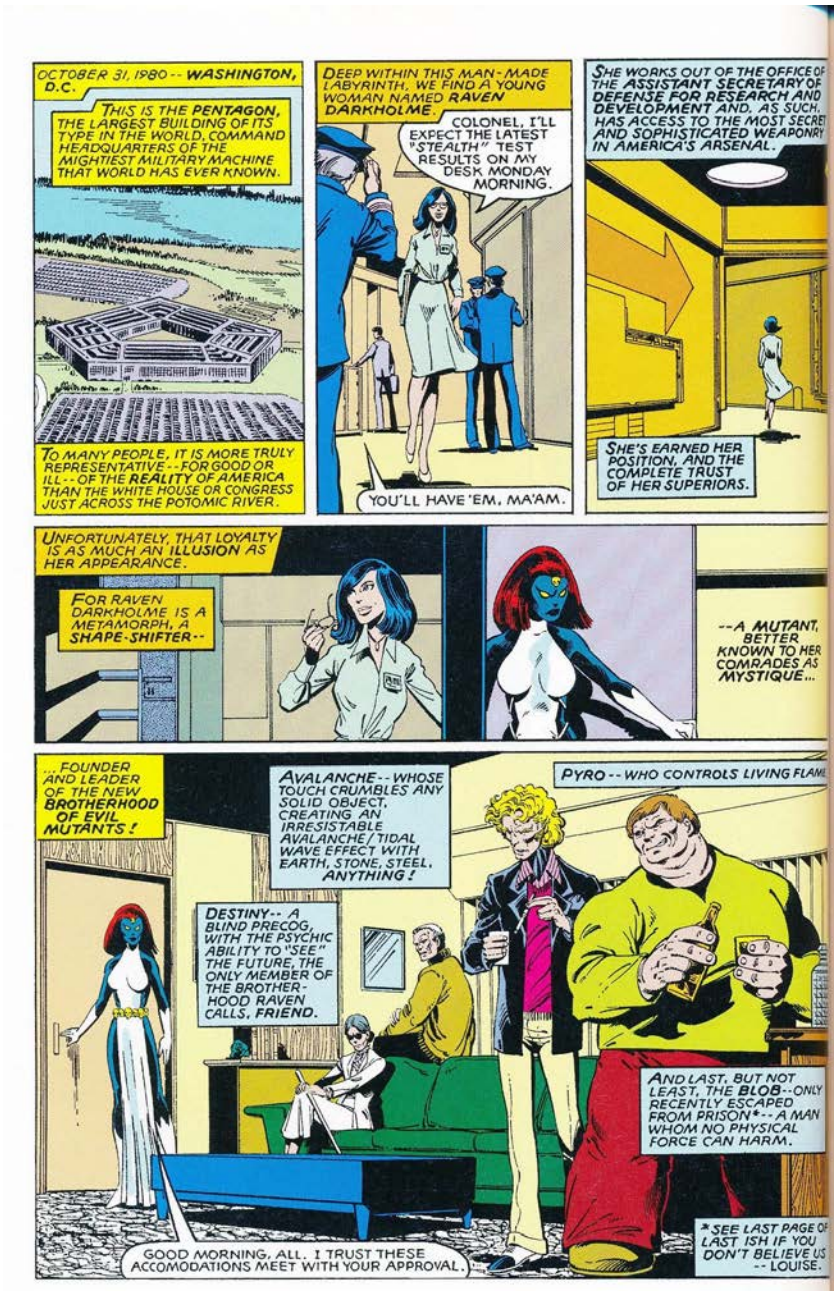


Fig. 28 Mystique as Raven at Pentagon



Fig. 29 Close-Up of Mystique



Fig. 30 Mystique poses as Police



Fig. 31 Mystique dual identities

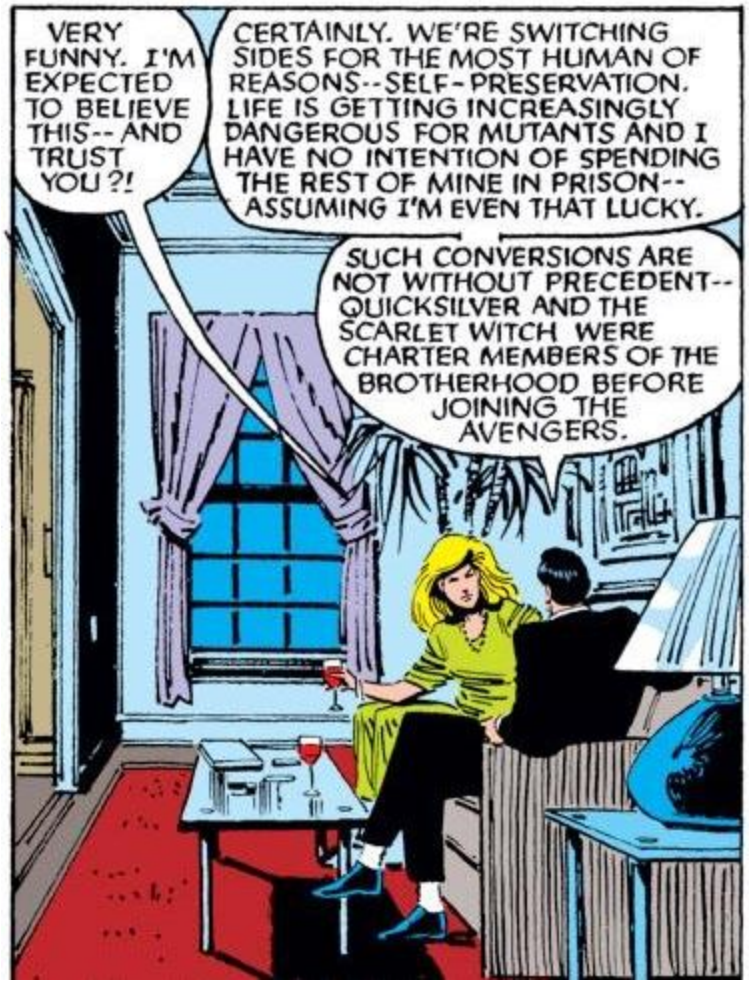


Fig. 32 Mystique meets with Valerie Cooper



Fig. 33 Mystique as Ronald Reagan



Fig. 34 Spiral neutralizes Magneto