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Constructing Magneto: The (Anti-)American Vision of the Holocaust

INTRODUCTION

The Holocaust is an impossibly multifaceted subject. There are hundreds of ways to approach it and hundreds of lenses to take: impersonal or personal, historical or fictional, victor or victim. In the USA, the vision of the Holocaust is usually from a moral high ground, often through either the savior's point of view or through the eyes of a suffering, victimized resistance figure, both of whom show their goodness contrasted with Nazi evilness. The novel *Sophie's Choice*, the play adaptation of *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl*, and the film *Schindler's List* all take these perspectives. However, as many note, this view of the Holocaust is distorted. The lens that all of these analyses of the Holocaust memory all adopt is one of purely American origin, which creates an alternative national memory to glorify American participation and morality.

In the *X-Men* film series, an American creation, the antagonist Magneto is presented as a haunted Jewish Holocaust survivor whose experience as a Jew has transferred to his paranoid identity as a mutant¹. Yet, his character defies the

¹ A core theme in all incarnations of the X-Men is the distinction between *homo sapiens*, non-mutant humans like the reader and myself, and evolved humans, fictitiously called "*homo sapiens superior*," such as Magneto and the X-Men. For the sake of clarity, I will refer to the former as "humans" and the later as "mutants." The films also follow this guideline. Within this essay, this distinction is purely for aesthetics, not to imply that mutants are inhuman. However, this debate about humanity is not as arbitrarily settled in the film and is a site of contention between humans and mutants.

"victimhood" Holocaust narrative familiar to American audiences: his origins as a Jewish American resistance figure, as an antihero, as a critique of the US government, and as a mutant all defy Americanization. Magneto is presented as the antithesis of the idealized, distorted American vision of the Holocaust in order to critique national memory.

RESEARCH/CONTEXTUAL INFORMATION

The "Americanization" of the Holocaust is a concept that emerged during the 1960s. The most prominent researcher of this phenomenon is Alvin H. Rosenfeld. In Rosenfeld's model, Americanization creates a moral dichotomy between good and evil; a savior-rescuer narrative with a "moral hero," usually of the US, in the center of a "cult of victimhood" of "weakly imagined" Jews; glorification of resistance against oppression; and happy endings with hopeful messages that often undermine atrocity to focus on the moral triumph of the Holocaust, a sentimentality that defies historicity (Dochartaigh 470, Rosenfeld 36-39). Americanization has been applied to both the events of the Holocaust and its survivors, who are expected to uphold this moralistic, victimizing narrative. This distortion allows the Holocaust to be appropriated as a metaphor for the US's own issues, such as homosexuality and black civil rights, via an ahistorical moral comparison. Francis Goodrich and Albert Hackett's play adaptation of Anne Frank's *The Diary of a Young Girl*, the most widely-read version in the US, is widely recognized as an Americanized retelling because of its optimistic, unrealistic representation of the Jewish experience (Rosenfeld 37). Similarly, William Styron's novel *Sophie's Choice* has been criticized for its "revisionist views" that "take the Holocaust out of Jewish and

Christian history and place it within a generalized history of evil” (Rosenfeld qtd by Mathé 453). Representing the Holocaust can be, therefore, risky. One must question the historicity of the narrative.

Still, many representations of the Holocaust do exist, Americanized or otherwise, especially in comics, which were often ignored before Art Spiegelman’s widely successful *Maus*. With *Maus*, scholars recognized that comics are a valuable lens to study the Holocaust because of their ability to represent the “un-representable” through allegory and symbolism (Mandel 1). The visual aspect of the medium allows for a nonverbal communication of experience (Decker and Castro 169). As film professor Walter Metz argues, although there is no “one way” to represent experience, “traditional forms of representation [are] incapable of grasping the reality of the Holocaust” because of verbal “un-representability;” thus, visual “popular culture artifacts” such as film and art become a way for audiences and creators to reimagine the Holocaust (Metz 16-22).

The prominent Jewish American influence in the comic industry is especially important in this context. Early founders of major comic industries were Jewish due to antisemitism in the “respectable” art world (Royal 4). Comics became an outlet for their frustrations with assimilation (Baron). Their characters, embedded with Jewish cultural values and experiences, are “best understood through a Jewish lens” (Royal 6). Characters such as Magneto with direct connections to both the Holocaust and America reflect hope for tolerance and a world without antisemitism (Baron, Weinstein 18). As the Holocaust has been employed by Jewish American comic artists as a metaphor, this is a form of Americanization. However, there is a critical de-emphasis of Jewish

victimization as a form of resistance by comic artists to highlight the need for Jewish inclusion and political power (Baron), contrasting the Americanized narrative.

The *X-Men* comic series uses the struggle for mutant political equality in a similar way. In the 1970s, “diverse leading characters” emerged to represent the US multicultural reality (Baron). Magneto’s own history was born in this period. Jewish writer Chris Claremont chose to imbue the Holocaust into his identity when trying to decipher “the most transfiguring event of our century that would tie in the super-concept of the X-Men as persecuted outcasts” (Claremont qtd. by Weinstein 110). Claremont’s reinvention of Magneto gave the character a unique complexity and realistic humanity, as he became less a supervillain and more a sympathetic Jewish Holocaust survivor fighting against the paranoia of mutant genocide that paralleled his experience in World War II (Morton). He represents Holocaust resistance through a transferred mutant identity. Journalist Paul Morton argues that this is “more respectable” to Holocaust memory by ignoring the common, fantastical villain-hero narrative of the Holocaust used in other forms of mass culture, allowing for the complexity of the event to be represented.

Bryan Singer’s *X-Men* (2000) and Brett Ratner’s *X-Men: The Last Stand* (2006) are film adaptations of the *X-Men* comics.² The films follow a continuous narrative and exist within the same “universe,” “a self-consistent fictional setting... [with] an established continuity and internal logic” (Wikipedia). Not every universe has the same

² Originally, this analysis was intended to study the X-Men film trilogy: *X-Men* (2000), *X2* (2003), and *X-Men: The Last Stand* (2006). The movies are often called *X1*, *X2*, and *X3* by the large fan-base. For the sake of brevity and making clear the distinction between *X-Men*, the film, and the X-Men, Charles Xavier’s mutant team, I will also be using this shorthand. However, because *X2* does not feature Magneto as a central character to the plot, nor does it prominently feature his mutant ideology, I have chosen to omit the film from the analysis. There are not any significant plot holes that arise from this omission regarding Magneto’s narrative.

characters and circumstances, so continuity is critical. In the movie universe, mutants are publically acknowledged free citizens in modern US but strongly face the possibility of government registration for being “dangers” to society. Magneto, a Polish Jew Holocaust survivor and volatile mutant that can manipulate metal, and Professor Xavier, a pacifistic, diplomatic telepath and headmaster of a mutant school, are the ideological figureheads of the mutant resistance movements to oppose the government, yet both have completely different methods and goals. Xavier preaches assimilation and acceptance into society; Magneto is quite opposite, willing to resort to violence against humans to protect mutants from what he sees as another Holocaust, a paranoia stemming from his past experiences.

ANALYSIS

X1 follows mutants Wolverine and Rogue as they join the Xavier Institute after Magneto targets Rogue in an attempt to weaponized her powers and kill all humans. Behind this narrative looms the government’s xenophobic view of mutants: it decides that mutants are dangerous and should be legally restrained and regulated. Though the government takes no action yet, it does support mandatory mutant registration. Magneto justifies his plan as a retaliation against this view and a necessary precaution to prevent what he believes will lead to a mutant genocide. Though Magneto’s story is not the core of the film, as the plot’s antagonist, his ideology drives the action. In many instances, the film suggests that the root of his extremist ideology is his Holocaust experience. Thus, one must examine how the Holocaust is framed to make sense of Magneto. *X-Men* uses two main techniques to allude to his Holocaust background,

dialogue and *mise en scène*, to allow the viewer to see how his experiences completely dictate his world view.

One of the opening scenes depicts Magneto's experience in Poland, 1944, which the film later visually references. Though not explicitly stated, there are implications that this is Auschwitz, such as barbed wire and a factory-like building that references the gas chambers. Young Erik Lehnsherr's family marches in together, but he is torn from his parents, a trauma that triggers the emergence of his mutation and the birth of Magneto. Visually, it is bleak and depressing. The camera often captures Jews from behind barbed wire, keeping the wire in the forefront of the frame yet not in focus, emphasizing their imprisonment. There is a monochromatic pallet: everyone, soldier or Jew, blends into a homogenous mass of all-black uniforms. This darkness contrasts with the pale and wan prisoners' skin. Everything else is a turbulent dark blue, puddles and clouds shaded by the rainy day. The only true color is the bright yellow stars on the prisoners' clothing. The camera briefly establishes a point of view: Erik notices the black serial number tattooed on a pale prisoner's forearm, and for a few seconds, this image overtakes the entire frame. This scene relies on a feeling of disorientation. The camera movements are smooth, yet the frame seems unsteady and unfocussed by the crowd's continuous motion, which makes the footage appear shaky. There are close-ups of peoples' faces as they march. The diegetic sounds create a cacophony of noise that disorients both the audience and Erik: exaggerated rainfall, shouting soldiers, barking dogs, splashing footsteps, and screaming families can all be heard at once. With no dialogue to focus on, one feels lost in sensations, just as Erik is. Singer, by depicting his

trauma, forces the audience's sympathy. The audience gains an understanding of Erik's own chaotic experience and disorientation from the Holocaust. His ideology becomes inextricably linked to his suffering.

The film repeatedly uses these techniques and dialogue in Magneto's appearances to link him to his Holocaust experience. For example, after the congressional hearing concerning mutant registration, Magneto is shown in an outfit similar to his Holocaust all-black garb: black tie, white shirt, long black coat, black hat. His face is completely shadowed, giving him an anonymity that references homogenization of the Jewish masses and the darkness from the first scene. Thus, Magneto the mutant is linked to Erik the Jew. Discussing his lack of "hope" in humanity with the idealistic Xavier, Magneto says, "I've heard these arguments before," implicitly referencing the Holocaust. Xavier argues, "That was a long time ago. Mankind has evolved since then," to which Magneto wryly replies, "Yes, into us," mutants. This establishes that Magneto is *not* Erik: he is a mutant first, not a human Jew. He clearly believes that mankind has *not* evolved past xenophobia but shifted its target. Registration becomes particularly ominous as the audience is expected to connect the dots and understand that Magneto's strong anti-registration, anti-human, anti-government ideology derives from his past. His *identity* has transferred from Holocaust survivor to mutant resistance fighter, though his *ideology* undeniably stems from the past experience and only transfers because the two persecuted groups suffered similarly. They are ostracized and never fit in or are accepted despite their humanity. They are treated as scapegoats and experiments for the government. On the horizon looms the threat of mutant public

identification and government regulation, which the Nazis subjected the Jewish people to. Magneto's disorientation in the camps parallels the disorientation in his identity. He has been forced by society to an identity labelled as a problem twice; the second time, as a mutant, his us-versus-them mentality from the Holocaust translates into a strong mutant-versus-human ideology. In fact, Magneto seems to completely disregard his Jewish identity: he rejects belief in God and targets *all* humans, Jewishness irrelevant. He is an extremist in ideology and in identity, which satires the American extremist moral dichotomy.

Magneto is later tied to the Holocaust by his Auschwitz tattoo. While he examines Wolverine's dogtags, the camera pans over his arm to his Holocaust identification number. The framing here is identical to the opening; both Magneto's and the unknown prisoner's forearms take up the entire screen from bottom-left to top-right, and their pale skin contrasts with the darkness of the tattoo and the rest of the frame. This reference is another link to the opening scene, but also shows how the Holocaust still lives in Magneto, both physically through his tattoo and as a basis of his ideology. On one hand, Singer subtly compares his experience as a mutant to his experience as a Holocaust victim to show the transference of his ideology and identity. On the other hand, the juxtaposition and irony of the past genocide evident on his body and the genocide that Magneto wants to create is highlighted by this comparison. This shows his connection to the Holocaust, but critiques Americanization: rather than morality and goodness being the message of the Holocaust, Magneto learned hate and paranoia. Yet, can one argue he is a villain?

At the climax of the film, Magneto explains to Rogue why she must be sacrificed. As he speaks, he looks down at the X-Men through a wire fence, and for a brief moment the camera shows his perspective with the wire in the forefront of the frame. The colors are muted to black or dark blue, with the introduction's overcast sky and water visuals. The camera zooms close to Magneto's face as he speaks. By using the same techniques in Magneto's later appearances as it did in his introduction to Auschwitz, the film explicitly connects Magneto's so-called villainous mutant identity to the Holocaust. The audience is forced to question his supposed evilness even as he defies humanity, in both sense of the word. It would be easy to hate Magneto, to use his actions to vilify him and his brutality to indict him. However, when he tells Rogue that her life is a sacrifice for mutant justice and equality, as he has seen "whole families destroyed simply because they were born different from those in power," it is impossible to label Magneto as *simply* evil as he becomes sympathetic. He is vengeful and extreme, but he cares about the future of mutants, and his anger at the government is clearly justified. He protects a whole segment of marginalized, targeted peoples and he is the definition of a resistance—in a distorted sense of the word, he is a hero to some. If nothing else, Magneto defines simple villainy and occupies the morally gray status of antihero.

Magneto makes no attempt at hiding his Holocaust past. Rather, he references the Holocaust often, implying that he justifies his ideology with this experience. Xavier recognizes this, saying to Wolverine that Magneto's identity was formed from vengeance: Erik Lehnsherr "became Magneto" only after disillusionment with "humanity," which he believed "would never accept us." What is key about this phrasing

is the vague “us” that references both Jews and mutants. Magneto’s disillusionment was not solely born from being a mutant; it was shaped by his real experience with persecution as a Jew before and was only deepened by mutant discrimination. How could he believe humanity would tolerate difference when he had been shown otherwise? Magneto himself affirms this logic. In speaking to Senator Kelly, a prominent proponent of mutant registration whom he kidnaps, Magneto ties his mutant experience to his Jewish one: “You see, what I think you really are afraid of is me, me and my kind... Mankind has always feared what it doesn’t understand.” His use of “always” is the indication here. Magneto implies that history repeats itself because of this xenophobic fear, and by this cycle, his experience in the Holocaust implies that mutants will too be victimized. There are more explicit references as well. Referring to mutant registration, he says “Let them pass that law and they’ll have you in chains with a number on your forehead.” When looking at the Statue of Liberty, he says “I first saw her in 1949. America was going to be the land of tolerance, of peace. [But] there is no land of tolerance. There is no peace, not here or anywhere else.” These references to his personal history in the Holocaust create a comparison between the victimization of the Jewish people and mutants that clarify Magneto’s ideology and reaffirm his antihero, as opposed to villain, status. In the final scene, he asks Xavier, “Doesn’t it ever wake you in the middle of the night, the feeling that someday they will pass that foolish law, or one just like it, and come for you and your children?” He is oddly vulnerable, and this question begs pathos. Fear drives Magneto. It is a remembrance of the Holocaust, of the victimization and the relentless persecution, that has constructed Magneto. He fights for

freedom and the “tolerance [and] peace” that he has never found. He fights not for inclusion, but for a morality that he has never seen, not from the Nazis and not from the United States.

In *X3*, directed by Brett Ratner, the industrial firm Worthington Labs releases a “mutant cure,” which outrages those who do not see their mutation as a “problem.” The government weaponizes it to oppress mutants. In retaliation, Magneto enlists the Phoenix and reforms the Brotherhood to destroy the Labs. Unlike *X1*, though he competes with Wolverine³ for screen time, Magneto’s ideology and actions are at the forefront of this film’s plot. The fight against the Labs is from his perspective. For *X3*, during which the “cure” is clearly presented as a parallel to the Nazi’s “Final Solution,” this is critical; Magneto’s opinions and action against it are telling of his character’s Holocaust influence.

Magneto’s pro-mutant ideology is presented as acceptable and Xavier’s pacifism is increasingly devalued, thereby reinforcing the idea that it is only Magneto’s “realistic,” anti-Americanized experience with genocide that can inform current politics. Even X-Men align with Magneto’s resistance, opposing Xavier. Storm, the X-Men’s second-in-command, says, “Why are we still hiding?” and “Since when did we become a disease?” upon hearing about the cure, both echoing Magneto’s own opinions. In particular, the second statement is a direct reference to *X3*’s opening, when Magneto, speaking with a mutant’s parents, asks in repulsion, “Do you think your daughter is *ill*?”

³ The film follows two separate storylines: the mutant cure and the Dark Phoenix, who is telepathic, telekinetic mutant Jean Gray’s uncontrollable, lawless subconscious. Her lover Wolverine agonizes over and eventually kills Phoenix for the good of mankind. *X3* has been critiqued for trying to fit too many plotlines into one film, and the second plot will be ignored as it does not relate to Magneto.

Storm embodies Magneto's ideology as she experiences the start of a Mutant Holocaust. Hank McCoy, an X-Man and government official, asks "Is it cowardice to save oneself from persecution?", arguing that the X-Men must enter the fight for mutant rights to prevent genocide. When he resigns from office, McCoy tells the President of the USA that this conflict proves that he needs "to be where he [belongs]," which detracts from the past assimilationist model that the X-Men, including McCoy, had once supported. Again, this is reminiscent of statements Magneto himself has issued when justifying violence. Xavier's pacifism is portrayed as increasingly ineffectual and his meddling presence seen as overbearing; his constant repetition that Phoenix need be "controlled" is the antithesis of Magneto's mutant liberation. This reversal of acceptable ideology, especially by leaders of the X-Men, verifies Magneto's thoughts and vilifies Xavier's, an important distinction from *X1*. Though Magneto no longer identifies as Jewish, it's impossible to separate his Jewishness from his mutant ideology because of how deeply the Holocaust is embedded in his beliefs. Faced with their own taste of the genocide, mutants become more like Magneto: amoral, violent, and anti-government. These mutants are not Jewish, nor are they Holocaust survivors, but the comparison of the current situation to the Holocaust allows them to still embody an anti-Americanized Holocaust survivor character, like Magneto. Wide-spread acceptance of Magneto's ideology implies that the moral dichotomy, the "weakly imagined" victim, and the US savior do not exist, both in the Holocaust and in this comparative experience. Resistance against the "cure" also counters this narrative.

The Brotherhood formation scene, much like parts of *X1*, makes use of visuals and dialogue to remind the audience of Magneto's Holocaust experience. The scene begins with a mutant gathering. Unlike the clean-cut X-Men, these mutants meet in a deserted warehouse, and they dress, speak, and act like misfits of society: they have tattoos to "mark" them as mutants, wear all black, and are lower class. Some have visible mutations, unlike nearly all the X-Men in the film. These mutants cannot simply assimilate or ignore their mutations, nor do they seem to want to. As one mutant preaches that they diplomatically ask the government to "understand" mutation, they vocally disagree. His call to "show them, to educate them" associates him with Xavier's increasingly unpopular peaceful assimilation approach. Magneto interrupts when the man argues that the cure is "voluntary:" Magneto says, "No one ever talks about [extermination]. They just do it... They will force their cure upon us." He is dressed in black and his helmet is absent, humanizing him. His shirt has a curious black patch on it; though it is not in the same spot nor is it the same color as the Jewish identification forced on him in the Holocaust, with the all-black attire and the illusion of vulnerability he presents outside of armor, this patch resonates as a parallel to his past. Magneto calls the "cure" the start of an "inevitable genocide." With all of these visual and spoken references, Ratner indicates that Magneto's paranoia stems from the Holocaust. Magneto, who cannot escape his Jewish identity despite his rejection of it, associates these mutants with Holocaust victims by calling them "my brothers." Though they may not be Jewish, they too become surrogate bodies for the Holocaust narrative by facing

genocide. These “Holocaust victims” similarly adopt an anti-government, violent approach, defying simply victimization and moral “goodness.”

Interestingly, Magneto’s connection to the Holocaust validates his authority. When three mutants approach him after his speech, they ask where his “mark” is. In reply, Magneto rolls up his sleeve to expose his identification tattoo and says, “I have been marked once, my dear, and let me assure you, no needle shall ever touch my skin again.” The tattoo, stark against pale skin and surrounded by black clothing and a dark background, is another reference to *X1* and his past. His words have many meanings. On the one hand, he establishes his logos and ethos as a genocide victim. On the other hand, “needle” is a double entendre. He refers to tattoos, but he also refers to the “cure,” which is administered by a shot. When Magneto implies that he will not be a victim again, he implicitly says he will not stand for the “cure.” This connection between the current politics and his past immediately stops the mutants from questioning his “big talk;” they believe in his ideology because he has faced extermination before. He survived once; he may just succeed again. He has a sense of authenticity. Ratner uses these mutants to ask the audience where it stands in the conversation. The mutants must choose whether to fight or assimilate; the audience is asked which side is justified. Both Magneto’s Brotherhood and the X-Men choose to fight: they must be their own saviors.

One of the strongest, most ironic parallels that the film draws between the current mutant politics and the Holocaust is that of Magneto as Hitler via visual similarities. This is most obvious in the forest rally, when Magneto announces to the Brotherhood camp that they will destroy Worthington Labs and “take power.” In this

speech, Magneto's style and the camera's framing creates a comparison to the Nazi leader. According to Dutch rhetoric professor J.C. de Jong, Hitler was a "technically brilliant" orator with a distinctive style: he would not use "big words," began quietly with a sympathetic voice to indicate he was one of the people, employed silent pauses for dramatic effect, cultivated emotions for an explosive end, and used large gestures (de Jong qtd. by Zijlstra). Magneto uses all of these techniques in his speech. He begins quietly, saying, "*We* are the cure. The cure for their infernal perfect condition called *homo sapiens*," which inspires unity but also supremacy within the ingroup of mutants. He then shakes his fists, loudly declaring that mutants would attack "with a vengeance and a fury that this world has never witnessed." He pauses as the crowd cheers, looking down in approval. As he ends his speech, he now shouts that they will take power and triumphantly holds his arms up, inspiring the crowd to cheer loudly and mimic his motions. The entire scene is shot from high angles that emphasize Magneto's raised location, and the camera focuses on him alone, as if he were their dictatorial leader. Magneto's speech is comparable to Hitler's. The Holocaust victim becomes the Holocaust aggressor. The narrative of resistance and the "Final Solution" has a moral twist when the supposed hero embodies both. Yet, this comparison is not out of character. As much as Magneto is presented as heroic for mutant liberation, he still is intent on creating his own genocide to kill all humans. He still resorts to violence and he is always morally gray. By comparing Magneto to Hitler, Ratner makes clear that the mutant leader is decidedly *not* a hero, yet nor is he a villain: Magneto truly embodies the antihero. He cannot be used as a metaphor or to relate to because of his extremism

and contradictory morality. His adoption of both the resistance figure and the genocide initiator critiques the Americanized good-evil dichotomy. Magneto's linkage to Hitler show that the moral pedagogy that the Holocaust was supposed to have did not translate into survivors. Rather, Magneto represents mutant power, anti-assimilation, anti-victimization, and anti-government ideology.

CONCLUSION

“Auschwitz was no instructional institution... You learned nothing there, least of all humanity and tolerance. Absolutely nothing good came out of the concentration camps... and he expects catharsis, purgation, the sort of thing you go to the theater for?”

– Ruth Klüger, *Still Alive: A Holocaust Girlhood Remembered*

In her memoir, Klüger combats the idea that the Holocaust somehow made heroes and found goodness in Jewish victims, the fluffy wholesome story many believe to be true. Herself a survivor, Klüger finds this idealization frustrating. She denies that survivors “learned” anything from their experience, especially not about morality. Auschwitz was not a “theater” with a story-book ending; it was a reality.

Americanization of the Holocaust is one of many narratives that instills these distorted views of morality into the history of the Shoah. It demands certain aspects of the experience be dramatized to create a moral dichotomy, a hero-victim narrative, and a promotion of the US that culminates into an optimistic end. It pushes these idealizations onto both the history of the Holocaust and the survivor, who is expected to have “learned” these traits. Americanization trivializes the event into something

digestible and patriotic, something that can be used as a comparison for the US's own issues.

Magneto offers a retelling of this Holocaust memory by defying Americanization. Throughout Bryan Singer's *X-Men* and Brett Ratner's *X-Men: The Last Stand*, Magneto acts as the antithesis of Americanization. He is an anti-hero, a strong aggressor, and an anti-government resistance leader. He refuses weak victimization and appropriation of his Holocaust story because of his contradictory and often villainous ideology. By constantly referencing his Holocaust past through visuals and dialogue while presenting his complexities, Ratner and Singer emulate the larger history of comics as "true" or "authentic" representations of Holocaust memory. This is especially relevant for *X-Men*, whose Jewish American writers, artists, and later directors express discontent with victimization and anti-Semitism. Magneto offers a restructuring of the narrative that embodies the frustrations and idealizations of these creators. Simply by existing as a problematic character, Magneto combats the distortion of Americanization. He offers a critique of national memory through exaggeration and opposition. Magneto, the multifaceted character, demands that history be reimagined.

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