"Watch me go invisible":

Representing Racial Passing in Mat Johnson and Warren Pleece's <u>Incognegro</u>

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In the opening of Mat Johnson and Warren Pleece's <u>Incognegro</u> (2008), light-skinned African American journalist, Zane Pinchback, recalls his recent trip to the U.S. South, during which he passed as white in order to expose the lynchings still taking place there. Posing as a photographer's assistant so that he can take note of the names and addresses of the attendees, Zane barely escapes from the mob when they realise that he is a "nigger."[1] One crucial aspect of this scene commands the reader's confrontation with two different technologies of "truth-telling," one visual, one textual. On page 9, the lynching photographer's camera features in three of five panels, while Zane's notebook and pen appear in the other two. The camera confirms, for those who pose with the lynched man, that they were present at the event; meanwhile, Zane's notebook and pen lead to the exposure in his newspaper of those involved. The juxtaposition of technologies of visual and written representation raises provocative questions regarding the interplay of image and text in a graphic novel which treats of one of most enduring tropes in American culture: racial passing. How, in other words, can what Scott McCloud terms "the art of the invisible" (comics) depict what Joel Williamson memorably calls "invisible blackness"?[2] While racial passing witnessed something of a resurgence in fiction, memoir, biography and popular culture beginning in the 1990s, <u>Incognegro</u> is the first graphic novel devoted to the subject.[3] According to Hillary Chute and Marianne DeKoven:

> comics is a mass cultural art form drawing on both high and low art indexes
> and references; comics is multigeneric, composed, often ingeniously, from

widely different genres and subgenres; and, most importantly, comics is

constituted in verbal and visual narratives that do not merely synthesize.[4]

As a "hybrid project," add Chute and DeKoven, graphic narrative has the potential to pose "a challenge to the structure of binary classification that opposes a set of terms, privileging one."[5] Since passing narratives are themselves devoted to unsettling binaries—racial binaries—this essay will consider the marrying of the graphic novel and the passing narrative in Incognegro, arguing that the novel's hybridity resolves some of the paradoxes that underlie several of the most widely-discussed narratives of racial passing, but not without generating others in the process.

I am particularly interested in two aspects of Incognegro's hybridity, one of which relates to content, the other to form. First, in terms of content, the collaborators make several significant revisions to the comic book's signature character, the superhero, amalgamating the conventions of the superhero story with those of passing narratives in order to destabilise some of both genres' most telling assumptions. Second, in terms of formal devices, this essay examines the particular combination of visual and textual vocabularies deployed in Incognegro to portray the ambiguously-raced subject, comparing it to the ways in which such subjects have been racially-encoded in more conventional literary and cinematic narratives of passing. For Derek Parker Royal, because comics are "a composite text made up of words and images," they can have "an impact far different from that produced by more traditional modes of narrative such as the short story or novel."[6] Ultimately, this essay considers whether Incognegro's hybrid properties offer new political possibilities for the narrative of racial passing.

It is worth emphasising at the outset that both comics and passing narratives have a vexed history when it comes to questions of race and racial representation. Since, as

McCloud argues, drawing upon Will Eisner, comics involve "amplification through simplification," it follows that comics have long been implicated in a history of offensive racist caricature.[7] However, while Royal acknowledges that in "comics and graphic art there is always the all-too-real danger of negative stereotype and caricature," the form is also "well suited to dismantle those very assumptions that problematize ethnic representation, especially as they find form in visual language." For Royal, because comics particularize the general, they undermine "any attempts at subjective erasure through universalization." Furthermore, "Because time is spatialized in graphic narrative, where readers see the character development across panels, comics can underscore the fluidity of ethnic identity."[8] Meanwhile, Marc Singer observes that while comics need to be "held accountable for their ideological assumptions," it is also important to acknowledge that, when it comes to issues of race, readers of comics are not necessarily passive recipients of stereotypical representations; in fact, they may engage in more sophisticated modes of reading rather than simply allowing such stereotypes to govern their minds. Ultimately, Singer summarises, "the handling of race is forever caught between the genre's most radical impulses and its most conservative ones."[9]

Equally, the political implications of racial passing have long divided writers and scholars. As Charles W. Chesnutt wrote of the practice in his novella, Mandy Oxendine (1997, but composed circa 1897), passing is a "heroic remedy" to the dilemma of being a light-complexioned but legally-black subject, a remedy that "demand[s] either great courage or great meanness, according to the point of view."[10] Some argue that the act of passing constitutes a radical critique of racial binaries; others, such as Amy Robinson, point out that "the social practice of passing is thoroughly invested in the logic of the system it attempts to subvert."[11] By "crossing the color line," the passer simultaneously overturns and reinforces the racial binary. S/he subverts it by exposing its constructedness, its permeability, its instability. But in the very act of passing, s/he also reinforces it by granting authority and

credibility to the "color line" as a real and true boundary to be transgressed. For Harryette Mullen, furthermore, the "passing genre is reactionary to the extent that such freedom of choice [the freedom to pass as white] is limited to the individual, who resolves to practice the rules of the system of racist-sexist oppression, and even to reproduce it by reproducing children whose advantage over others is their whiteness."[12] P. Gabrielle Foreman distinguishes between passing "<u>for</u> white" and passing "<u>through</u> whiteness," a strategy employed, she claims, by "indeterminately colored enslaved women" such as Ellen Craft: "Once Ellen and William Craft reach the North, the narrative emphasizes her dramatic return both to her gendered and racial identities." In other words, for Foreman, occasional or temporary passing can be radical, but passing permanently is not: a "temporary appropriation" of whiteness "stops short of ontological identification."[13] Conversely, Teresa Zackodnik contends that if "acts of 'passing' are arguably acts of signifying and parodic performances, they are also part of an African American cultural tradition of subversive performance." Comparing passing to blacking up—which has, at least since the appearance of Eric Lott's <u>Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class</u> (1993), been acknowledged as a potentially radical performance—Zackodnik observes that "while readings of passing as subversive are often undercut by the assertion that it is an ambivalent act that partakes of and depends upon the very power structure we would like to see it challenging, the ambivalence of minstrel masking has not, likewise, kept us from inquiring into its complexity and the threat to white identity it may have presented."[14] For her part, Gayle Wald warns against reproducing "a critical dualism of 'subversive' or 'complicit' passing that echoes the binary logic of race."[15] Ultimately, Carole-Anne Tyler's intentionally awkward configuration of passing as "not quite not resistance" captures the paradox quite effectively.[16] What I want to consider here is whether <u>Incognegro</u>'s generic and formal

innovations enable it to get beyond "not quite not resistance"; put another way, do its generic and formal innovations generate a less equivocal form of critique?

Before proceeding, it is necessary to provide a brief plot summary of <u>Incognegro</u>, which is inspired by Walter White's forays to the American South on behalf of the NAACP. White, a very light-skinned African American, passed as white in order to report on the lynchings still taking place there. In <u>Incognegro</u>, set in the 1920s, the White-like character is Zane Pinchback, a reporter for the New York-based <u>New Holland Herald</u>. He agrees to make one last trip to Tupelo, Mississippi before taking up a long-promised position as literary columnist for the newspaper when he discovers that the man to be lynched is, in fact, his darker-complexioned twin brother, Alonzo, who is accused of murdering the white woman Michaela Mathers. Accompanied by his equally fair-skinned friend, Carl, who wants to prove to his fiancée that he is capable of doing something serious and worthwhile with his life, Zane travels to Tupelo in order to exonerate his brother. His investigation initially leads him to assume that the real killer of Michaela is the sheriff's deputy, Francis White, who has disappeared since the murder occurred. Instead, he discovers that Michaela is still alive; the dead body is that of Frances White, a woman who passed as a man in order to work as the sheriff's deputy, and who was killed by Michaela. While Zane attempts to clear his brother's name, Carl poses as an Englishman among the white Tupelo élite. His "true" identity eventually uncovered and presumed to be "Incognegro," Carl is lynched. After striking a deal with the sheriff, Zane and Alonzo return to Harlem, taking Carl's encoffined corpse with them.

Zane Pinchback: A High-Yellow Super-Negro

One of the most obvious challenges facing African American comics' creators is the fact that the form's signature character, the superhero, first appeared in a deeply reactionary

racial context. Adnan Morshed argues that the emergence of flying superheroes such as Superman, Buck Rogers and Flash Gordon is part of a wider trend whereby aviation was celebrated and admired in the 1920s and 1930s: "With all its loaded associations of transcendence, evolutionary advancement, and optical power, the ascending body of the aviator offered the modernists an appealing mold from which to cast the New Man." Distilled from "Social Darwinism, popular utopianism, and Nietzsche's idea of the Ubermensch," it is not difficult to perceive the extent to which the conception of the superhero relies, from its origins, on problematic notions of white racial superiority.[17] Indeed, in a knowing nod to this history, Pleece visually frames the head Klansman in Incognegro, in terms explicitly reminiscent of the superhero. As Megha Anwer observes, referring to the bottom panel on page 9, "dressed in his Klan uniform with its symbol on his chest, belt around his waist," the chief Klansman "calls to mind the early sketches of Superman—the definitive (and simultaneously Nietzschean and brand-American) white 'hero' of modernity."[18] In spite of the superhero's tacit implication in discourses of white racial superiority, however, Singer finds that "the superhero genre's own conventions can invite a more nuanced depiction of minority identity" than might initially seem plausible. As he argues:

> Because superhero comics have evolved their own conventions for representing the dilemmas of a divided self, they have the potential to become perfect vehicles for exploring minority-group identity; similarly, from the perspective of the comics, minority groups may be ideal subjects for these same reasons.[19]

A closer look at the conventions of superhero comics and of passing narratives reveals the potential for their compatibility. In Incognegro, Johnson and Pleece capitalise on the potential of certain conventions and revise others.

In his definition of the superhero, Peter Coogan notes that they often have "dual identities, the ordinary one of which is a closely guarded secret."[20] It hardly bears mentioning that this is exactly the crux of the passing narrative: whether or not the protagonist's "true" racial identity will be revealed. Richard Reynolds lists seven characteristics of the typical superhero, many of which are deeply resonant in the context of racial passing. The first—"The hero is marked out from society. He often reaches maturity without having a relationship with his parents"—is consistent with a general obsession with paternity and paternal abandonment in the wider context of passing narratives.[21] The mixed race figure is commonly depicted as "somehow abandoned" either because s/he is literally an orphan or has been separated from his or her parents.[22] As Judith Berzon puts it, s/he is "an outcast, a wanderer, one alone [. . .] a fictional symbol of marginality."[23] For Scott Bukatman, the superhero "can be understood as visually, kinetically, and even verbally performative. The visual element is the most obvious; the iconography of superheroes depends on costumes and masks."[24] While Zane Pinchback does not wear a mask—itself a significant revision to the conventional superhero narrative—the passer has often been imagined as so doing. For example, in William Dean Howells's An Imperative Duty (1891), Dr. Olney's impression of passer Rhoda Aldgate's face is that it is "a mask"; she is "wearing this family face, with its somewhat tragic beauty, over a personality that was at once gentle and gay."[25] Rhoda's "tragic mask" is a formulation that recurs (Howells 27, 133, 171). In Chesnutt's The House Behind the Cedars (1900), when Rena Walden is revealed to have been passing, her would-be white suitor George Tryon reflects that "To-night his eyes had been opened—he had seen her with the mask thrown off, a true daughter of a race in which

the sensuous enjoyment of the moment took precedence of taste or sentiment or any of the higher emotions."[26] Rena is "discovered and unmasked" (146). Similarly, in Nella Larsen's Passing (1929), Clare Kendry's white-looking "black" visage is repeatedly compared to an "ivory mask."[27]

 If superhero conventions may be easily reconciled with those of passing narratives, Incognegro belongs in a long tradition of narratives that suggest racial passing might be heroic, an idea that can be traced at least as far back as Frank J. Webb's The Garies and their Friends (1857). In that early African American novel, light-skinned George Winston delights at having spent a great deal of time in the company of a consummate white racist who "prides himself on being able to detect evidences of the least drop of African blood in any one."[28] Werner Sollors finds George's brand of passing "heroic": "George, who after all passes only temporarily and shares his secret with others who appreciate it, plays the subversive trickster and spy whose successful (if dangerous) activity undermines racial thinking and exposes its adherents to ridicule."[29] Incognegro is loosely inspired by the real-life passing undertaken by Walter White in his position as chief investigator of lynching for the NAACP in the late 1910s and 1920s. Fair-complexioned White used his light skin to disguise his "blackness," thus enabling him to go undercover in the South and expose the racial injustices taking place there. In his autobiography, White describes a trip to Estill Springs, Tennessee in February 1918, to carry out "a first-hand investigation," which he configures as "sleuthing," of a particularly brutal lynching, that of Jim McIlherron. Passing as white, and posing as "a prospective buyer of land," White earns the trust of the white townsmen who discuss openly the "facts" of the case. Upon his return to New York, the publication of these facts creates "a modest sensation" and precipitates a NAACP report entitled "Thirty Years of Lynching in the United States, 1889-1918" (1918).[30] (The opening of Incognegro quotes from this report). The following year, White travelled to Phillips County, Arkansas to investigate the Elaine

Race Riot, in which over one hundred African Americans were killed and a further seventy-nine men put on trial for attempting to organise a farmers' union that would agitate for an improvement in the conditions under which they worked as sharecroppers for local white landowners. Posing as a white journalist for the Chicago Daily News, White is eventually warned by a local African American man that the "white folks" are "against [him]." White takes the first train out of Arkansas and is informed by the conductor that "There's a damned yellow nigger down here passing for white and the boys are going to get him" (White 50-51). Zane's precarious passing, then, is deeply indebted to White's autobiography. More recently, Robert Skinner has published six novels set in New Orleans in the 1930s. In these noir mysteries, the hardboiled detective is Wesley Farrell, a light-skinned man of "colored Creole" ancestry who is passing as white.[31]

In his career as journalist, Zane resembles most closely Vera Manning in Jessie Fauset's There is Confusion (1924). Having passed unhappily for many years in New York, Vera eventually finds personal and professional fulfilment taking precarious trips South, passing for white, and reporting atrocities committed against black Southerners to her newspaper-employer in New York. She thus uses "her absence of color, to the advantage of her people."[32] Of course, comic book superheroes are often reporters, journalists or photographers in their everyday lives. The most famous examples of this are Clark Kent/Superman and Peter Parker/Spiderman. However, as Vanessa Russell points out, Clark Kent's "mild-mannered reporter" is ineffectual: he is only heroic as Superman. Citing innovations in comic books from the 1960s, Russell notes that works such as Art Spiegelman's Maus (1986) and Joe Sacco's Palestine (1992) "move the reporter into the central, mediating role that attempts to silence and repress the fantastical role of the superhero."[33] Such works demonstrate that "the comic book reporter can effect change without the use of fantastical superpowers."[34]

Incognegro can be read alongside these recent graphic narratives, in which the

protagonists' skills as investigative journalists, rather than fantastical superpowers, constitute

their real heroism. Johnson's prose makes this explicit when, pursued by the angry mob in

Tuscaloosa, he cannot call upon superpowers to facilitate his escape. Instead, he simply runs,

"like beige lightning going downhill" (Johnson and Pleece 11). Unlike Black Lightning—an

African American superhero created by DC Comics who first appeared in 1977—whose

superpower is the ability to generate electrical energy, Beige Lightening (Zane) can only flee

from his would-be lynchers. More importantly, Johnson and Pleece make the absence of

fantastical superpowers the crux of Incognegro's commentary on American race relations in

the 1920s. Zane's "superpower" is his ability to pass as white. His friend Carl refers to him

as "the high-yellow super negro! Able to pass for Nordic in the blink of an eye" (13).

However, unlike most superheroes, who acquire their powers through farfetched scientific or

supernatural means, Incognegro emphasises that Zane's ability to pass as white is the legacy

of centuries of "slavery, rape, hypocrisy" (18). As Richard Dyer argues, "In Western media,

whites take up the position of ordinariness, not a particular race, just the human race."[35] If

western narratives of race construct whiteness as ordinary and comic narratives, historically,

cast the superhero as extraordinary, Incognegro subverts both narratives concurrently by

insisting on the ordinariness of its ambiguously-raced protagonist. This is most evident in a

remarkable scene that draws attention to the conventions of the superhero transformation

scenario just as it simultaneously refuses to subscribe to those conventions (**Johnson and

Pleece 18; Figure 1**). Though he does not "wear a mask like Zorro or a cape like the

Shadow," Zane confesses that he "dons a disguise nonetheless" (18). Yet Zane's seeming

acceptance of the cultural logic of passing (pretending to be something that one is not) is

explicitly contradicted by the visual frame. The only visible difference between the "before-

and-after" of panels one and five is that Zane dons a suit. The change in his hair, straightened

by recourse to Madame C.J. Walker's products, is barely perceptible. The scene, which

emphasises the correspondence, rather than dissonance, between self and mirror image is thus

also a revision of what I elsewhere call "one of the defining tropes of the racial passing

story"—the "mirror scene"—which the passing subject has an uncanny confrontation with a

racial identity that does not seem to correspond to his or her physical appearance.[36]

What is also striking about this transformation scene is the superimposition of a rape

scene and an American flag over Zane's body in panels 2 and 3 respectively. The

iconography of the American flag alludes both to superhero mythologies (notably Captain

America [1941]) and to more conventional African American visual artists' mobilisation of

the stars and the stripes to critique American mythologies of democracy and equality of

opportunity.[37] Captain America, a Marvel invention, was "the embodiment of American

patriotism during the Second World War" and is distinguished by a costume and shield

derived from the stars and the stripes of the American flag.[38] Like in Captain America, the

American flag is inscribed upon Zane's body in panel 3 (Johnson and Pleece 9); like in

Captain America, it can be read as part of a costume that facilitates Zane's heroic deeds. In

contrast to Captain America, however, Old Glory does not take the form of a shield

protecting American subjects against outside threats (the cover of Captain America #1

famously features its eponymous protagonist socking Hitler). It does not prevent Zane's

black female ancestor(s) from being raped by (successive?) white men. Thus, unlike in

Captain America, panel 3's comingling of the American flag and Zane's body is an

indictment, rather than a facile endorsement, of American ideologies of life, liberty and the

pursuit of happiness. Furthermore, the understated nature of what Zane frames as his

"disguise" is contrasted with the extravagant performativity of the lynching ritual, in which

Klansmen cloak their identities in robes and hoods and impose humiliating costumes—in

Incognegro, a soldier is stripped of his army uniform and clad in a clown costume—on their

victims. Thus, in Incognegro, the superhero's costume and mask are aligned with white supremacists while the "camouflage" of the novel's "true" hero is "provided by [his] genes" (Johnson and Pleece 18).

While the collaborators' revisions to both the superhero and standard passing narrative are innovative, they are not entirely unproblematic. As noted above, Wald warns against reproducing "a critical dualism of 'subversive' or 'complicit' passing that echoes the binary logic of race."[39] In celebrating "heroic" passing, Incognegro retroactively "passes" judgement on earlier narratives of passing, particularly those published in the period during which Incognegro is set, that of the Harlem Renaissance. For example, Carl's girlfriend lauds Zane for the "great service" he is going for "our people. You're not just passing for white to get a table at the Waldorf-Astoria" (Johnson and Pleece 12), an allusion, perhaps, to the opening scene of Passing, which features both Irene Redfield and Clare Kendry passing as white at the Drayton Hotel in Chicago. On a steaming hot day, Irene feels "disagreeably damp and sticky and soiled from contact with so many sweating bodies" (Larsen 147). Taking refuge in the hotel's rooftop café—a space to which she would not have access if she announced her racial identity—is "like being wafted upward on a magic carpet to another world, pleasant, quiet, and strangely remote from the sizzling one that she had left below" (147). In a subsequent scene, Carl and Zane board a southbound train and are joined in their carriage by a white Southerner. When the white man, not realising that he is in the company of two light-skinned African American men, declares his desire to go to Harlem "and whip some sense into those zip coons," Carl attacks him (Johnson and Pleece 20-21). This contrasts conspicuously with a similar train carriage scene from James Weldon Johnson's Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man in which the narrator, passing as white, is privy to an argument between two white men on "the bald, raw, naked aspects of the race question in the South."[40] Unlike Zane, Johnson's narrator does not react to the white Texan's discourse on

treating "niggers as equals," a "mulatto South" and letting "your daughter marry a nigger" (Johnson 76). While Incognegro does not endorse Carl's attack on the white Southerner (on the contrary, his eventual lynching underscores the precariousness of the enterprise of passing), the narrative does, nonetheless, set up a hierarchy between "subversive" and "complicit" passing that fails to acknowledge the complexities of the passer's experience.

Indeed, through its conscious echoing of Johnson's novella, Incognegro also implicitly critiques the ex-colored man's decision to pass as white after witnessing a lynching. At the bottom of this resolution "to forsake [his] race" is "shame, unbearable shame. Shame at being identified with a people that could with impunity be treated worse than animals" (Johnson 90). Whereas in Autobiography, there is a causal relationship between witnessing a lynching and passing (one leads to the other), in Incognegro, Zane passes in order to highlight the injustice of lynching. Set against Johnson's novella in this way, Incognegro reproduces an unhelpful binary between race betrayal and race loyalty; heroism and cowardice. On the contrary, the way in which the ex-colored man frames passing as white is much more ambiguous than such binaries allow. While Johnson's narrator certainly feels the guilt and nostalgia often associated with the idea of passing as race betrayal—at times, he feels that he has been "a coward, a deserter" and is "possessed by a strange longing for [his] mother's people" (99)—he also claims that "Sometimes it seems to me that I have never really been a Negro, that I have been only a privileged spectator of their inner life" (99). In other words, Johnson suggests provocatively that, rather than passing as white in his adult life, his narrator spent the first part of his life passing as black. Thus, Incognegro's understanding of passing in binary terms does not do justice to some of the more complex configurations of passing that have preceded it. Even more troubling is the fact that Zane's fluidity of identity is maintained at the expense of Francis Jefferson-White's,

whose "true" gender is unveiled in the course of the narrative, a point to which I return below.

Racial passing in the Visual and Textual Imagination

If Incognegro revises its predecessors in terms of content, it also does so with respect to form. The passing subject presents two key and interrelated challenges to the visual representational lexicon. The first is how to represent visually, in a credible way, a subject that is legally "black" but phenotypically "white." The second is that, as Wald observes, "racial passing, as a social practice, is mediated by the 'looking relations' of white supremacy."[41] White subjects imagine that they can categorise non-white subjects as such by gazing upon them and identifying a range of physical phenomena, such as skin colour, hair texture and even fingernail type that will reveal their "true" racial identity. As Irene Redfield observes in Larsen's Passing, "White people were so stupid about such things for all that they usually asserted that they were able to tell; and by the most ridiculous means, finger nails, palms of hands, shapes of ears, teeth, and other silly rot" (150). As such, the ambiguously-raced subject has, historically, endured an intrusive, penetrating, classifying and objectifying white gaze. Thus, to portray the white-looking black subject visually is not only to contend with centuries of "unrelenting and generally contemptuous objectification" of African American subjects, generally, but also the long and problematic history of the light-skinned African American as racialised spectacle, more specifically.[42] One example of this is provided by conceptual artist Adrian Piper, a light-skinned African American, who recounts attending her first faculty party as a graduate student in the 1970s and recalls her "grief and anger" and "groundless shame" when: "[t]he most famous and highly respected member of the faculty observed me for a while from a distance and then came forward. Without introduction or preamble he said to me with a triumphant smirk: 'Miss Piper, you're about as

black as I am!'"[43] In this scenario, the professor effectively accuses Piper of passing as black, of "fraudulently pos[ing] as black" rather than the more usual passing as white.[44] Regardless, the very possibility of passing is underwritten by whites' anxiety that visible markers of racial identity may be insufficient proof of that subject's "true" identity. As Robinson puts it, "The 'problem' of identity, a problem to which passing owes the very possibility of its practice, is predicated on the false promise of the visible as an epistemological guarantee."[45]

One of the challenges faced by producers of cinematic depictions of passing, then, is how to portray an ambiguously-raced subject persuasively without reinforcing his/her status as the exoticised object of an inquisitive white gaze. The earliest sustained explorations of passing—as main plot rather than subplot—appear in the 1940s.[46] In Pinky (dir. Elia Kazan, 1949), Lost Boundaries (dir. Alfred Werker, 1949), Kings Go Forth (dir. Delmer Daves, 1958) and Imitation of Life (dir. Douglas Sirk, 1959), the passers are played by white actors Jeanne Crain, Mel Ferrer, Natalie Wood and Susan Kohner, respectively. In her discussion of Pinky and Lost Boundaries, two films produced in the context of a post-war commitment to social realism in Hollywood cinema, Wald observes that "the 'realism' of the cinematic spectacle threatens to disintegrate under the pressure of the audience's awareness of realism's performativity." Yet, on the other hand, "by withholding the usual visual assurances provided by 'black' skin," such films "invite viewers—here interpellated as privileged spectators of the 'invisible' spectacle—to realize their own reliance on vision as a means of drawing a stable line between self and other."[47] In other words, while the insistent casting of white actors stretches the credulity of the spectator, such decisions have the potential to force whiteness—rather than blackness—to become visible as a racial position. For, as Dyer argues, "whiteness as race resides in invisible properties and whiteness as race is maintained by being unseen."[48]

Whereas in the 1940s, few reviewers quibbled with the decision to cast white actors as light-skinned African Americans, by the time Philip Roth's The Human Stain (2000) appeared as a film adaptation starring Anthony Hopkins as racial passer and college professor Coleman Silk (Robert Benton, 2003), the "near unanimous response" of reviewers was to condemn the decision to cast a "white" actor to play a "black" character.[49] For Rachel Gelder, the novel is preoccupied with comparing linguistic and visual constructions of race. It is "the word, and not the skin color, that makes a person black."[50] Hence, it is the word "spooks"—uttered by Coleman in reference to two students who have failed to appear at a single one of his classes, but subsequently construed as a racial epithet because the absent students are African American—that ends Coleman's career. By contrast, the novel "cultivates a skepticism of vision": "It is not a coincidence that Coleman's father was a licensed optician whose shop had failed. Or that what belies every central character's secret is not in the visage but the verbal slip."[51] Once the novel is adapted for the screen, however, the subtleties of its interrogation of language versus image is lost because "it only works for an American audience when the passing fails—that is, when the viewers can 'tell' what race the passer, underneath the guises, truly is."[52] Because viewers of the film are ultimately unwilling to suspend their disbelief, the novel "may take liberties of the visual that the film cannot pull off."[53] Gelder concludes, therefore, that the absence of visuality in literary texts is precisely what facilitates more complex and nuanced depictions of the ambiguously-raced subject.

However, the idea that literary texts trade exclusively in verbal description does not do justice to the myriad ways in which they engage with visual culture. For one thing, nineteenth-century narratives feature daguerreotypes, engravings, illustrations and frontispieces that testify to the potentially problematic interplay between image and text in representing racial ambiguity. For instance, in Hiram Mattison's Louisa Picquet: The

Octoroon (1861), a white Methodist minister's biography of former slave Louisa Picquet, the frontispiece for the book was derived from an engraving submitted by the subject of the biography herself. As Foreman argues, Picquet's engraving "resists reenacting the fetishized presentation of the flushed, nubile, loose-haired young mulatta on the block popularized in Uncle Tom's Cabin."[54] In other words, by taking control of the image, in which she is depicted as dignified and stately, Picquet sought to combat typical representations of fair-skinned African American women that accentuated their sensuality and dangerous beauty even as they attempted to evoke sympathy for their plight. However, Mattison's emphasis, within the narrative, on "a continuous parade of 'near white' or 'very light' concubines that 'pollute' Southern homes" elevates "the national disgrace of miscegenation over any such presentation of black eloquence or agency."[55] Thus, despite her attempt to assume autonomy over her self-representation by being in command of her image, Picquet still finds herself circumscribed by Mattison's control over the text.

Equally, scholars have drawn attention to visual depictions of light-skinned Roxy in different editions of Mark Twain's Pudd'nhead Wilson (1894). According to Twain:

> Only one sixteenth of [Roxy] was black, and that sixteenth did not show. She was of majestic form and stature, her attitudes were imposing and statuesque, and her gestures and movements distinguished by a noble and stately grace. Her complexion was very fair, with the rosy glow of vigorous health in her cheeks, her face was full of character and expression, her eyes were brown and liquid, and she had a heavy suit of fine soft hair which was also brown, but the fact was not apparent because her head was bound about with a checkered handkerchief and the hair was concealed under it.[56]

In the serialised version of the novel that first appeared in the <u>Century</u> magazine (1893-94), Louis Loeb's illustrations depicted Roxy as phenotypically "white," but five years later, in a subsequent edition, E.W. Kemble appears to have drawn Roxy as a stock "mammy" figure: dark-skinned and portly.[57] It is an example that, as Sollors observes, prompts questions "about the representation of 'race' and 'mixed race' in visual illustrations that accompany literature; and it is a question that opens wider issues concerning the relationship of text and image, the recognizability of illustrative art, and the employment of stereotypes." In a cultural system that relies on the binary opposition of whiteness and blackness, "can racial ambiguity be visualized, can it be imagined at all?"[58] In his fascinating essay, Sollors scrutinises the illustration "Roxy Harvesting Among Kitchens," which appeared as the frontispiece to the 1899 Harper & Brothers edition of the novel and in which the "Aunt Jemina" figure in the foreground of the image is assumed, by several scholars, to be Roxy. Sollors wonders if, in fact, Roxy is the figure in the background of the image: "Could Kemble have hidden his Roxy <u>consciously</u> in honor of Mark Twain's sentence, 'From Roxy's manner of speech, a stranger would have expected her to be black, but she was not'?"[59] Put another way, did Kemble conceal a white-looking Roxy behind three "visibly" African American figures in an attempt to reproduce, visually, the "invisible blackness" ascribed to Roxy by Twain?

A further way in which text-only narratives have engaged with visual culture, according to Margaret Toth, is by "strategically dismantling racist visual iconography" by "consciously staging their descriptions."[60] Toth draws attention to the ways in which nineteenth-century African American writers framed their verbal descriptions of light-complexioned black subjects in passages that explicitly foreground that these subjects are being gazed upon. Such descriptions thus challenge readers to interrogate their own participation in the spectacle of the ambiguously-raced subject. For instance, in William

Wells Brown's Clotel; or, The President's Daughter (1853), the reader first encounters the protagonist standing on the auction block: "There she stood, with a complexion as white as most of those who were waiting with a wish to become her purchasers; her features as finely defined as any of her sex of pure Anglo-Saxon; her long black wavy hair done up in the neatest manner; her form tall and graceful, and her whole appearance indicating one superior to her position."[61] Thus, Brown "embeds [his description of Clotel] within a framework that underscores the act of looking."[62] While she focuses, in particular, on Chesnutt's House Behind the Cedars, Toth's article makes a valuable contribution to what she terms the "strata of ocularity" underpinning textual representations of light-skinned African American subjects.[63] In Passing, for instance, Larsen frames her first physical description of Clare Kendry ("those dark, almost black, eyes and that wide mouth like a scarlet flower against the ivory of her skin" [148]) by emphasising that she is being observed intensely by Irene Redfield, who does not yet recognise her as her childhood friend. Moreover, in Incognegro, Zane's injunction to the reader to "watch [him] go invisible" confirms Toth's contention and underscores the validity of Robinson's claim that it is the spectator, and not the passer, that "manufactures the successful pass" (Johnson and Pleece 18, emphasis added).[64]

Given this problematic history, how do Johnson and Pleece contend with the depiction of their racially-ambiguous subjects? As Bridget Cooks phrases the question, "[H]ow are images of racialized spectacle [. . .] able to make successful interrogations of their own construction? In what ways can images of spectacle be used to support a reading that challenges the social order's dominant racial meaning?"[65] One way in which the collaborators undertake this is through the novel's interrogation of vision, and its aesthetic counterpart, photography, as tools that claim to capture objective truths. Incognegro opens on a scene of lynching at which, we subsequently learn, Zane was present, posing as a photographer's assistant so that he could take note of the names and addresses of some of the

attendees. In the bottom panel on page 9, both the head Klansman—who has coordinated the

lynching—and the photographer eventually realise that Zane has fooled them, that he is a

companion of neither the Klan leader nor the photographer. The Klansman's determination

to find and punish Zane is framed, both verbally and visually, in ocular terms. In the bottom

panel of page 12, Zane tells his friends that "the devil's out there, looking for me—" while

the reader is presented with a close-up of the Klansman's one-eyed face (12). (Indeed, the

images of the gouged-out eyes of the novel's two lynching victims [8, 110] anticipates the

fate of the one-eyed Klan leader). Subsequently, when he hears that Zane is in Tupelo, the

Klan leader tells his chauffeur, "I've been looking forward to seeing that boy again" (47,

emphasis added). This failure of vision early on in the narrative is linked, at the end of the

novel, with photography. Zane publishes a story, which gets syndicated nationally, under the

title, "Incognegro: Negro Race Spy's Identity Revealed" with an accompanying photograph

of the Klan leader (**Figure 2**). In Fayetteville, Missouri, the Klan leader protests that this is

"a case of mistaken identity" (134-35) but, as he is approached by a posse of white men

carrying baseball bats and rocks, the outcome is clear (**Figure 3**). In the novel's concluding

two-page splash, the drawn Fayetteville Sun-Herald unmistakeably recalls the cover of the

novel, which is itself designed to resemble a newspaper. Just as the (drawn) photograph of

the Klansman is "a case of mistaken identity," so the (actual) photograph of Mat Johnson on

the cover of the novel provides no guarantee of the "truth" of his subject position. As

Johnson writes in his Author's Note, "I grew up a black boy who looked white," standing out

in "a predominantly African-American neighborhood, during the height of the Black Power

era."

Indeed, the novel also invites readers to compare the cover image—the close-up

black-and-white photograph of Johnson—with a black-and-white image of Zane, drawn to

resemble a passport photograph, which appears just inside the cover under the caption

"Incognegro." (The image is reproduced, almost exactly, on page 61; **Figure 4**). Johnson

looks away from the presumed viewer, while Zane gazes straight at him or her. In both

images, the men's faces are partially obscured by shadow. However, because the drawn

image is less constrained by the demands of realism, a reader can more easily interpret the

shadow as a half-mask on Zane's face, a gesture that anticipates the novel's preoccupation

with the relationship between masking, superheroism and racial passing. Of course, the

image is such that a reader can perceive Zane as "black," wearing a partial "white" mask; or

as "white," wearing a partial "black" mask. Thus, while the collaborators' textual allusions

to The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man are troubling, the ambiguity of the drawn image

visually echoes Johnson's problematisation of the whole idea of passing (black passing as

white, or white passing as black?) discussed above.

For Anwer, Incognegro's singular contribution to African American visual culture lies

in the ways in which it "graphically" (in both senses of the word) revises the ideology behind

lynching photographs and "their claimed reliance on a facticist projection of 'objective

reality.'"[66] According to Anwer, "A photograph's propensity to freeze a moment eclipses the

'preceding coordinates' that made it possible for that moment to fructify, come into being.

Thus, the scene of the photograph becomes 'purified,' objectified, disengaged from and

independent of the larger context that produces it." By drawing attention to the context in

which lynching photographs were taken—notably, by foregrounding photography's means of

production, the camera—Incognegro recuperates

> the symbiotic-dialectical relationship between what is inside the photograph
>
> and the world outside it; this alone enables the viewer of modern graphic
>
> representation to challenge the 'there-ness' of photographs that give them their
>
> 'incontestable' evidentiary value, by asking not only what is in the photograph

but also: why is it there, what makes it possible for it to be there, what is left

out of the photograph?[67]

Indeed, Incognegro is, arguably, one of a number of contemporary African American graphic

novels which challenge the truth claims of documentary photography. As Michael Chaney

notes, Ho Che Anderson's King (2005) "simultaneously borrows from and disrupts

photography's presumed optical truths and claims to objectivity," calling into question "the

sanctity of photographic documentation."[68]

However, even while Incognegro challenges the truth claims of vision and

photography, it also reinforces them, first by privileging certain kinds of "seeing" and,

second, by reinstating the authenticating claims of the photograph, even as it dismantles

them. Robinson posits the narrative of passing as a triangular relationship between passer,

duped and the in-group clairvoyant who can "see" what/who the passer "really" is. Robinson

argues that "[t]hroughout the literature of racial and sexual passing, members of the in-group

insist on a distinctive location that allows them to recognize a never truly hidden prepassing

identity."[69] In other words, rather than disavowing vision—and, by extension, the "truth" of

racial identity—as a flawed and entirely subjective phenomenon, passing narratives in fact

rely on certain privileged forms of seeing. A common feature of passing narratives is a

character who "sees" what the passer "really" is. For example, Langston Hughes's "Passing"

(1934) takes the form of the letter from a son (who is passing) to his mother (who is not) to

apologise for ignoring her when he saw her in street. The son writes: "I felt like a dog,

passing you downtown last night and not speaking to you. You were great, though. Didn't

give me a sign that you even knew me, let alone I was your son. If I hadn't had the girl with

me, Ma, we might have talked."[70] In this scenario, the son is the passer, the white girl the

duped and the mother the in-group clairvoyant. Even Ralph Ellison claimed, in "The World

and the Jug" that "although the sociologists tell us that thousands of light-skinned Negroes become white each year undetected, most Negroes can spot a paper-thin 'white Negro' every time."[71] Incognegro also features an in-group clairvoyant: Josiah Ryder, the African American man who becomes Zane's chauffeur, realises right away that Zane is Alonzo's brother and, by extension, that Zane himself is a "negro" (Johnson and Pleece 64). As Josiah tells Zane, "White folks do see what they want to see" (64); by contrast, the narrative implies, Josiah sees the "truth." Equally, Zane's conjecturing regarding the "case of mistaken identity" involving Francis Jefferson-White is verified by recourse to photographs. Upon visiting Francis's cabin, he notes that there is "no razor" in the bathroom and that, along with the men's shirts hanging in her closet, there is also "a white dress" (97). When Josiah expresses incredulity at what Zane is suggesting, observing that the deputy "would have made one mean, homely-looking woman," Zane produces two photographs which bear out his suspicions (97; **Figure 5**). Arguably, Zane's own privileged position as a passer allows him to recognise Francis's "never truly hidden prepassing identity." Thus, Incognegro upholds the infallibility of vision and photography at the same time as it challenges them.

If Incognegro's thematic treatment of photography is ambivalent, the most striking aspect of its visual aesthetic is the collaborators' decision to present the novel entirely in black and white. In so doing, according to Tim Caron, "Johnson and Pleece seek not to eradicate racial categories but to wrestle with the racialized representations of African Americans in the comics medium—for to place a word, a concept, or a literary text 'under erasure' is to actually draw attention to it, forcing us [sic] wrestle with an abiding absence."[72] In fact, the black-and-white aesthetic of Incognegro is reminiscent less of the history of comics than of the visual strategies of film noir, scholarship on which has, for some time now, included discussions of its underlying preoccupation with race. In the most influential work on this issue, Eric Lott argues that film noir presents a universe that links

blackness/whiteness to corruption/purity, respectively, a moral code that is underwritten by the genre's chiaroscuro aesthetic. By "villainizing the desires that drive the narrative" and by "utilizing racial codes implied in moral terminologies and visual devices," film noir "preserves the idea of whiteness its own characters do not uphold."[73] Implicit, though not stated, in Lott's essay, is the possibility that film noir is also a response to anxieties surrounding racial passing. In other words, if a "white" character can become visually "black" through the camera's play with light, darkness and shadow and the spectator's own shifting perception, film noir betrays a lack of faith in the stability of racial categories even as it strives relentlessly to maintain them. The chiaroscuro techniques employed by Pleece are, thus, ideally suited only to the mood and content of Incognegro's noir-ish narrative, but also for the ways in which the novel interrogates race and racial ambiguity.

To return to the question I posed at the outset, then, can Incognegro's hybrid properties offer new political possibilities for the narrative of racial passing? Incognegro is deeply cognisant of the tradition of passing in American literature. While it self-consciously interrogates what has been a problematic history through its unique combination of visual and textual devices, ultimately, it stands emphatically within that tradition rather than outside it. Certainly, its revisions to the superhero narrative and its critique of the truth-claims of photography are welcome innovations. Equally, its emulation of the visual aesthetic of film noir both emphasises and extends that genre's underlying preoccupation with race. However, because it ultimately upholds, even as it challenges, some of the most troubling aspects of its literary predecessors, it constitutes, like them, a form of "not quite not resistance."

<div align="center">Notes</div>

1. Mat Johnson and Warren Pleece, Incognegro (New York: DC Comics, 2008), 11. Subsequent references will appear in parentheses in the main body of the essay.

2. Scott McCloud, <u>Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art</u> (New York: HarperCollins, 1994), 136; Joel Williamson, <u>New People: Miscegenation and Mulattoes in the United States</u> (New York: Macmillan, 1980), 103.

3. Fictional accounts of passing feature in John Gregory Brown's <u>Decorations in a Ruined Cemetery</u> (1994); Barbara Chase-Riboud's <u>The President's Daughter</u> (1994); Danzy Senna's <u>Caucasia</u> (1998); and Philip Roth's <u>The Human Stain</u> (2000). Memoirs include Shirlee Taylor Haizlip's <u>The Sweeter the Juice</u> (1993) and James McBride's <u>The Color of Water</u> (1996). Biographies include James M. O'Toole's <u>Passing for White: Race, Religion, and the Healy Family, 1820-1920</u> (2003) and Bliss Broyard's <u>One Drop: My Father's Hidden Life</u> (2008).

I have not found any other examples of comics or graphic novels that deal with racial passing. However, a number of comics evoke the passing narrative without thematising it explicitly. For example, the eponymous hero of DC Comics' <u>Xero</u> (1997-98) is an African American basketball player and government agent who is "forced by his superiors to disguise himself as a blond-haired, blue-eyed superhero" (Singer 116). According to Jennifer D. Ryan, a number of characters from the series of comics produced by Milestone—"Flashback, a black woman who can rewind time, Masquerade, a black man who can change his appearance at will, and Fade, who can disappear—resonate with the references to racial passing common especially to early twentieth-century black texts." See Marc Singer, "'Black Skins' and White Masks: Comic Books and the Secret of Race," <u>African American Review</u> 36.1 (2002): 116; and Jennifer D. Ryan, "Black Female Authorship and the African-American Graphic Novel: Historical Responsibility in <u>Icon: A Hero's Welcome</u>," <u>Modern Fiction Studies</u> 52.4 (2006): 926.

4. Hillary L. Chute and Marianne DeKoven, "Introduction: Graphic Narrative," <u>Modern Fiction Studies</u> 52.4 (2006): 769.

5. Ibid.

6. Derek Parker Royal, "Introduction: Coloring America: Multi-Ethnic Engagements with Graphic Narrative," <u>MELUS</u> 32.3 (2007): 7.

7. McCloud, <u>Understanding Comics</u>, 140.

8. Royal, "Introduction: Coloring America," 8-10.

9. Singer, "'Black Skins' and White Masks," 109-110.

10. Charles W. Chesnutt, <u>Mandy Oxendine</u> (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997) 27.

11. Amy Robinson, "Forms of Appearance of Value: Homer Plessy and the Politics of Privacy," <u>Performance and Cultural Politics</u>, ed. Elin Diamond (London: Routledge, 1996) 237.

12. Harryette Mullen, "Optic White: Blackness and the Production of Whiteness," <u>Diacritics</u> 24.2/3 (1994): 75.

13. P. Gabrielle Foreman, "Who's Your Mama?: 'White' Mulatta Genealogies, Early Photography and Anti-Passing Narratives of Slavery and Freedom," <u>American Literary History</u> 14.3 (2002): 507-8.

14. Teresa C. Zackodnik, <u>The Mulatta and the Politics of Race</u> (Oxford: University Press of Mississippi, 2004), xxiii-xxv.

15. Gayle Wald, <u>Crossing the Line: Racial Passing in Twentieth-Century U.S. Literature and Culture</u> (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 15.

16. Carole-Anne Tyler, "Passing: Narcissism, Identity, and Difference," <u>Differences</u> 6.2-3 (1994): 213.

17. Adnan Morshed, "The Aesthetics of Ascension in Norman Bel Geddes's Futurama," <u>Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians</u> 63.1 (2004): 82.

18. Megha Anwer, "Beyond the photograph: a graphic history of lynching," <u>Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics</u> 5.1 (2014): 26.

19. Singer, "'Black Skins' and White Masks," 116.

20. Peter Coogan, "The Definition of a Superhero," <u>A Comic Studies Reader</u>, ed. Jeet Heer and Ken Worcester (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2009) 77.

21. Richard Reynolds, <u>Super Heroes: A Modern Mythology</u> (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1994), 16.

22. Eve Allegra Raimon, <u>The "Tragic Mulatta" Revisited: Race and Nationalism in Nineteenth-Century American Fiction</u> (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2004), 8.

23. Judith Berzon, <u>Neither Black Nor White: The Mulatto Character in American Fiction</u> (New York: New York University Press, 1978), 100.

24. Scott Bukatman, "Secret Identity Politics," <u>The Contemporary Comic Book Superhero</u>, ed. Angela Ndalianis (New York: Routledge, 2009), 114.

25. William Dean Howells, <u>An Imperative Duty</u> (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1891), 25. Subsequent references will appear in parentheses in the main body of the essay.

26. Charles W. Chesnutt, <u>The House Behind the Cedars</u> (1900; London: X Press, 1998), 139-40. Subsequent references will appear in parentheses in the main body of the essay.

27. Nella Larsen, <u>Quicksand and Passing</u> (London: Serpent's Tail, 2001), 157, 220. Subsequent references will appear in parentheses in the main body of the essay.

28. Frank J. Webb, <u>The Garies and their Friends</u> (1857; New York: Arno, 1969), 4.

29. Werner Sollors, <u>Neither Black Nor White Yet Both: Thematic Explorations of Interracial Literature</u> (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997) 263.

30. Walter White, <u>A Man Called White: The Autobiography of Walter White</u> (London: Victor Gollancz, 1949), 40-42. Subsequent references will appear in parentheses in the main body of the essay.

31. For a discussion of Wesley Farrell, see Sinéad Moynihan, "Marginal Man and Hardboiled Detective: Racial Passing in Robert Skinner's Wesley Farrell Mysteries," <u>Clues</u> 26.3 (2008): 56-69.

32. Jessie Redmon Fauset, <u>There is Confusion</u> (1924; New York: Boni and Liveright, 1974) 274.

33. Vanessa Russell, "The Mild-Mannered Reporter: How Clark Kent Surpassed Superman," <u>The Contemporary Comic Book Superhero</u>, ed. Angela Ndalianis (New York: Routledge, 2010) 217.

34. Ibid., 229.

35. Richard Dyer, <u>White</u> (London: Routledge, 1999), i.

36. Sinéad Moynihan, "History Repeating Itself: Passing, <u>Pudd'nhead Wilson</u>, and <u>The President's Daughter</u>," <u>Callaloo</u> 32.3 (2009): 818-19.

37. Some examples include Gordon Parks's 1942 reworking of Grant Woods's <u>American Gothic</u> (1930); Faith Ringgold's series of flag paintings, including <u>The Flag is Bleeding</u> (1967) and <u>Flag for the Moon: Die Nigger</u> (1969) and David Hammons's flag-bordered <u>Injustice Case</u> (1970).

38. Roger Sabin, <u>Comics, Comix and Graphic Novels</u> (London: Phaidon, 1996), 62.

39. Wald, <u>Crossing the Line</u>, 15.

40. James Weldon Johnson, <u>The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man</u> (1912; New York: Dover, 1995), 77. Subsequent references will appear in parentheses in the main body of the essay.

41. Wald, <u>Crossing the Line</u>, 153.

42. Michele Wallace, <u>Dark Designs and Visual Culture</u> (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 186.

43. Adrian Piper, "Passing for White, Passing for Black," <u>Passing and the Fictions of Identity</u>, ed. Elaine K. Ginsberg (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996) 235, 234.

44. Ibid., 238.

45. Amy Robinson, "It Takes One to Know One: Passing and Communities of Common Interest," <u>Critical Inquiry</u> 20.4 (1994): 716.

46. Examples of passing occurring in earlier films include: two adaptations of Chesnutt's <u>The House Behind the Cedars</u>, one titled after the novel (1927) and another, <u>Veiled Aristocrats</u> (1932); both were directed by Oscar Micheaux. Both versions of <u>Showboat</u> (1936 and 1951) feature a passing subplot, as do both versions of <u>Imitation of Life</u> (1934 and 1959).

47. Wald, <u>Crossing the Line</u>, 94-95.

48. Dyer, <u>White</u>, 45.

49. Rachel Gelder, "Passing and Failing: Reflections on the Limitations of Showing the Passer in <u>The Human Stain</u>," <u>Women and Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory</u> 15.1 (2005): 293.

50. Ibid., 300.

51. Ibid.

52. Ibid., 294.

53. Ibid., 295.

54. Foreman, "Who's Your Mama?", 515.

55. Ibid., 512, 515.

56. Mark Twain, <u>Pudd'nhead Wilson</u> (1894; New York: Dover, 1999), 7.

57. To compare these images, see the "Illustrating Pudd'nhead" pages on Stephen Railton's wonderful <u>Mark Twain and His Times</u> website, hosted by the University of Virginia: <u>http://twain.lib.virginia.edu/wilson/pwillshp.html.</u>

58. Werner Sollors, "Was Roxy Black?: Race as Stereotype in Mark Twain, Edward Windsor Kemble, and Paul Laurence Dunbar," <u>Mixed Race Literature</u>, ed. Jonathan Brennan (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002) 72-73.

59. Ibid., 82.

60. Margaret Toth, "Staged Bodies: Passing, Performance, and Masquerade in Charles W. Chesnutt's <u>The House Behind the Cedars</u>," <u>MELUS</u> 37.4 (2012): 69-70.

61. William Wells Brown, <u>Clotel; or, The President's Daughter in Three Classic African American Novels</u>, ed. and intro. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (New York: Vintage, 1994) 329.

62. Toth, "Staged Bodies," 70.

63. Ibid., 75.

64. Robinson, "Forms of Appearance," 241.

65. Bridget R. Cooks, "See Me Now," <u>Camera Obscura</u> 12.3 (1995): 70.

66. Anwer, "Beyond the photograph," 15.

67. Anwer, "Beyond the photograph," 18.

68. Michael A. Chaney, "Drawing on History in Recent African American Graphic Novels," <u>MELUS</u> 32.3 (2007): 180.

69. Robinson, "It Takes One to Know One," 715.

70. Langston Hughes, <u>The Ways of White Folks</u> (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1934) 49.

71. Ralph Ellison, <u>The Collected Essays of Ralph Ellison</u>, ed. John F. Callahan (New York: Modern Library, 1995) 171.

72. Tim Caron, "Black and White and Read All Over: Representing Race in Mat Johnson and Warren Pleece's <u>Incognegro: A Graphic Mystery</u>," <u>Comics and the U.S. South</u>, ed. Brannon Costello and Qiana J. Whitted (Jackson: U of Mississippi P, 2011) 139.

73. Eric Lott, "The Whiteness of Film Noir," <u>American Literary History</u> 9.3 (1997): 550.