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Persepolis 2: The Story of A Return Read Online.

Marjane Satrapi - Persepolis 2: The Story of a Return, read online this award-winning graphic novel.

Persepolis 2: The Story of a Return, first published in 2004, is the second part of Marjane Satrapi's graphic novel memoir, sequel to Persepolis 1: The Story of a Childhood. While the first book focuses on the childhood of Marji (short for Marjane), when she was around 10 to 13 years old, the second book explores her more mature stages of life: her high school and college years, her marriage and divorce, and her adulthood. That is why Persepolis 2 is considered more than a mere memoir graphic novel, but also a bildungsroman (a coming-of-age story).

In Persepolis 2: The Story of a Return graphic novel, Marjane Satrapi revisits her high school years in Vienna, Austria. She highlights how she dealt with new friends, her relationship with boys, and her experience with drugs. Satrapi then recollects her return to her home country Iran and how the oppression felt even more so for her while she was struggling with her own depression. She then highlights the important events she had during college in Iran, her marriage and divorce. She closes the second part of her graphic memoir with how she took the most important decisions in her life.

Just like the first graphic novel, the second book is also constructed of 19 short sections (chapters). Each of those sections is made of around 7-10 pages.

Persepolis 2: The Story of A Return has successfully won several awards including the Angoulême International Comics Festival Prize for Scenario in Angoulême, France, for its script and in Vitoria, Spain, for its commitment against totalitarianism.

Persepolis 2 by Marjane Satrapi.

Persepolis (3) (Persepolis 2: The Story of a Return)

by Marjane Satrapi.

The English translation is titled: Persepolis 2: The Story of a Return, but it is, in fact volumes three and four of the French edition. See also our review of volumes 1 and 2 (published in English as Persepolis)

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See our review for fuller assessment.

Review Summaries Source Rating Date Reviewer The Economist . 30/10/2004 . The LA Times . 15/8/2004 Laurel Maury New York . 20/9/2004 Boris Kachka The NY Rev. of Books A 24/3/2005 Patricia Storace The NY Times Book Rev. A 22/8/2004 Luc Sante The Observer . 7/11/2004 Samantha Ellis San Francisco Chronicle . 29/8/2004 Sandip Roy Time . 23/8/2004 Lisa McLaughlin.

"Yet there is a deceptive simplicity to Ms Satrapi's drawings, which capture a range of emotions with an economy of line. With a notch of a pen above or below an eye, she can render compassion or fatigue. In this way, she teases out universal feelings to draw attention to her country's troubled politics. The effect is powerful." - The Economist.

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The third part of Marjane Satrapi's comic book Persepolis -saga (see also our review of volumes 1 and 2) begins with teenage Marjane's arrival in Vienna, Austria, where she is sent by her parents in 1984, to escape oppressive and dangerous Iran. She moves in with Iranian friends -- Zozo, her husband Houshang, and their daughter Chirine (a childhood friend) but it's a short-lived plan. These are unhappy exiles -- the wife reduced to being a hair stylist, the husband unable to find work -- and they don't have room for (and Zozo in particular doesn't have interest in looking after) another child. After ten days Marjane is moved to a boarding house run by nuns in the city centre. She attends the Lycée Français and eventually makes a few friends. Still, she is something of an outsider, without family or, for example, a place to go over Christmas vacation -- but things more or less work out for her. She makes a few friends, her roommate invites her to the Tyrol for Christmas, etc. Marjane has something of a temper, and occasionally she explodes. Usually there's a reason -- the nuns insult her, her landlady accuses her of theft -- but Marjane's outbursts cost her a place to live several times. Over her years in Vienna she moves about quite a bit, sometimes welcomed but never really able to establish any firm roots. For a while she even sleeps on the streets. Her changing body, different Western mores (especially regarding relationships between the sexes), and budding romantic ambitions also add to the complications. Much of this is the usual teenage stuff, but without parental guidance and the safety of a true home, Marjane has a bit more to deal with than most. Inevitably, there is both heartbreak and romance. A visit from her mother provides a bit of comfort, but it's only a brief respite. And her parents have their own troubles back in Iran, so Marjane isn't really able to burden them with all that troubles her. Marjane does very well in school, but life outside remains somewhat tumultuous -- with her anarchist friends, desire for romance, odd jobs (including a bit of drug dealing), the election of Kurt Waldheim as Austrian president, and a general resurgence of anti-immigrant fervour in Austria. Eventually things spiral downhill -- her boyfriend cheats on her, her landlady calls her a thief -- and she is left completely adrift. Ultimately, she decides to return home -- making her parents promise never to ask her about what happened. It is clearly a tough decision for her, as she knows what she is giving up by returning to Iran, but given her loneliness apart from her family it is also understandable that she would want to return to the fold. Like the first two volumes of Persepolis this one is about a clash of cultures and the difficulties of a child and then adolescent in dealing both with that and the universal problems of growing up. Whereas in the first two volumes the clash was between the relatively free tradition Marjane had been raised in and the new, very conservative religious standards put in place in post-revolutionary Iran, in the third it is a more complicated (though also familiar) one of East meeting West, compounded by Marjane's imposed self-reliance (as there is no adult figure to offer much guidance or help). Satrapi's simple black-and-white drawings, with their effective use of both (especially the heavy

blacks), illustrate the stories well. Her episodic telling -- bits from the four years, covering all the highs and lows -- is simple yet works well: a great deal (of story and of feeling) is conveyed in these few words and pages. While it doesn't have quite the impact of the more foreign picture presented in the first two volumes, it is still a solid, moving piece of work.

"Persepolis:" Adding Feminism to the Graphic Novel.

"Persepolis" tells the story of Marjane Satrapi's childhood, adolescence and transition into adulthood set on the changing backdrop of her cultural location and identity[1]. Through her personal story, Satrapi educates her audience on what it means to her to be an Iranian girl and woman, the political situation in Iran at the time of her upbringing, and how she often clashed with her surroundings and fought back against oppressive and simplistic ideology encountered in both Iran and Europe. As inspiration for her graphic novel, Satrapi cites "Maus" by Art Spiegelman[2]. While in some ways "Persepolis" is very similar to "Maus," the changes that Satrapi has made can be seen as her way of creating a feminist text out of an uncommon genre -- the graphic novel.

"Maus" provides an interesting description of World War Two and the Holocaust, in which mice represent the Jews, and cats represent Germans[3]. This cat-and-mouse tale is personal for the author, Spiegelman, because it is his father's story of survival through the Second World War and eventual relocation to the United States. It is drawn in black and white and has a hurried and crowded feeling that could be inviting the audience to feel the sense of chaos and crowdedness that Spiegelman's father surely felt as he experienced the events in the graphic novel. The novel includes its own writing as part of the plot, with pages about the author's visit to his father in order to hear the story as introductions to many plot points. It feels as if the audience is invited into the process of creating the graphic novel, since we see its earliest inspiration.

This image shows the detail in "Maus," and is a scene in which the father is telling Spiegelman his story and the reader begins to see the process of "Maus"'s creation. There is shading, and many small details, such as the father's tattoo from the concentration camps. This level of detail is not seen in "Persepolis."

"Maus" is primarily a story about men, with Spiegelman and his father being the two most prominent characters. There are women present, but their characters are one-dimensional, and could be described as "wife" or "mother." This is not necessarily a flaw in the work, and it does not necessarily make "Maus" anti-feminist, but it does make Satrapi's use of her inspiration all the more interesting in her telling of a story primarily about the lives of women. It is significant that Satrapi looked to a primarily male text as a starting point for her own work.

Knowing that Satrapi saw "Maus" as an inspiration for her own work, it is clear that "Persepolis" borrows some stylistic elements from "Maus"; however, Satrapi adds a personal flair that makes her work unique. She also uses black and white, but the feeling of her panels is drastically different from Spiegelman's. They are much less detailed, so instead of the claustrophobic and cluttered feeling of "Maus," the panels and pages of "Persepolis" seem carefully thought out, with each detail being necessary to either the plot of the story or an understanding of Satrapi's internal conflict and dialogue. Satrapi does not show her audience the process of her writing, but instead presents the novel as a pre-formed and thought out story. An obvious, but important distinction between "Maus" and "Persepolis" is that Satrapi represents her life with human characters, while Spiegelman chooses to distance himself and use animals, perhaps softening the blow of a harsh moment in history. Although "Persepolis" also tells of several horrific moments, Satrapi humanizes them by allowing the reader to see them as she did.

The key difference between "Maus" and "Persepolis" is the presence of women in "Persepolis." Male characters, such as Satrapi's father and uncle, are certainly well developed, but women make up the core of the novel. Satrapi herself, her mother and grandmother are all extremely well described. They are multi-dimensional characters that show us their beliefs and inner conflicts. These women are shown to be imperfect, and Satrapi does not try to glorify, disparage, or unite women. Instead, she shows the complexities of their relationships and in doing so, their essential humanity. Conflict between groups of women is shown when Satrapi describes her feelings about wearing the veil. In these scenes, Satrapi only explores her own character; she does not claim to know the mindset of "the Iranian woman." The audience encounters women who are polar opposites from Satrapi, but we do not learn very much about them. "Persepolis" truly tells the audience about the life and mind of one woman; it does not try to show all perspectives or even explain anyone's actions but Satrapi's own.

These panels show the stark lack of detail in "Persepolis." Satrapi shows the details that are important, but leaves everything else blank. In "Maus," the faces of the individuals behind Satrapi's parents in the airport scene would likely have been filled in, and the characters themselves would have had more details or shading. By using strong lines and showing only what she wants, Satrapi controls the narrative and brings emphasis to the key emotions and plot points. In the scene depicting Satrapi and her mother, the audience can see their relationship and begin to understand the complexities of their cultural identities.

By examining her thoughts and presenting events as she witnessed them, Satrapi forces her audience to think and see as a girl and woman. By writing her own story, she has given herself agency and a voice, despite the many times her voice was "veiled" by others or by oppressive regimes. Telling the story of one woman and thoroughly exploring a female character, along with several female side characters, can be seen as feminist, and using the genre of the graphic novel makes it even more so. Traditionally, comics have used male protagonists and often hyper-sexualize their female characters or use them solely as plot devices. Satrapi's use of the genre, without hyper-sexualizing her protagonist, claims it and defies the reader's expectations of the graphic novel.

Using a graphic novel format, but altering key elements to suit an individualist feminist message works well in "Persepolis." Although it can lend itself to many interpretations, "Persepolis" can without a doubt be read as a feminist text, due to its exploration of female characters in male-dominated spheres, and an often male-dominated genre. Because the genre is so associated with male "heroes," using it to tell a woman's story creates more thought and discussion for readers. If Satrapi had written a memoir using prose, there would most likely be less conversation about the text, but by breaking a genre barrier, Satrapi promotes discourse about the implications of a heroine telling her own story.

[1] Satrapi, Marjane. *The Complete Persepolis*. New York, New York: Pantheon, 2009.

Persepolis 2 by Marjane Satrapi.

Marjane's search for identity presents itself early in the novel. After having arrived in Austria, she begins to adopt Westerner dress. In one scene, she even remarks that she is now "beautiful" after applying makeup (P Satrapi 30). She also goes through the perils of puberty by herself where she describes her mental and physical transformations in great detail.

From one scene to the next, Marjane continues to struggle with her ethnicity, which ends up being a barrier to acceptance in another country. Marjane even goes as far as to deny that she is Iranian, in hopes that people will like her more. Not surprisingly, she later feels guilty for rejecting a part of her personality. Her search for identity does not stop there.

Iran's dominant society believes that sex is meant for married couples. While in Austria, Marjane gives into her lust and loses her virginity. She becomes consumed by her lovers and searches for herself in each successive person. Her confusion for identity reaches a climax. Marjane is home alone, and decides that her depression is too overbearing. She consumes a bottle of prescription pills, a half bottle of Vodka, and attempts to slit her wrists in search of freedom.

Satrapi does not shy away from intimate details and is often blunt in descriptions. She does not hide and details or facts, and appears to be unashamed of her life. She is real and vulnerable the entire novel. This produces one of the most authentic stories I have ever heard, which makes the story all that much more compelling.

Persepolis 2 also goes into detail regarding Satrapi's beginnings as an artist. Marjane used to create comic drawings of her teachers while in class. These artistic skills were later implemented in both of these novels. And the drawings are fantastic. Satrapi's drawings are all in black and white and play upon the contrast of these two colors.

Aside from these drawings being aesthetically pleasing, they also give the reader a glimpse into Marjane's own experiences. In typical novels, the reader is forced to create his/her own mental images to accompany the words. However, in Satrapi's graphic novel, she shows you how she saw the scene from her perspective. Satrapi may accentuate certain character's facial expressions, produce larger frames for a scene's importance, or show how characters react to the dialogue. All of these artistic styles bring the reader closer to Satrapi's own vision of her childhood.

I highly recommend that you read this graphic novel. If you haven't read a graphic novel, now is the time to start. If you think that this story won't relate to you, I say give it a chance. I bet you will find parts of yourself in Satrapi's story. After all, finding or creating your identity is all part of life's journey.

Persepolis 2: The Story of a Return.

Funny and heartbreaking, this eagerly awaited sequel to Satrapi's memoir-in-comic-strips "Persepolis" about her Iranian adolescence and about the life of her entire nation continues with the same dazzling combination of singular artistry, insight, and storytelling as her first book. [Read More.](#)

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