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# Learning from and Reflecting on Marjane Satrapi's Persepolis II: The Story of a Return [Composition]

Ece Aykol

*CUNY La Guardia Community College*

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**Composition I - ENG 101:** Scaffolded research paper

**Curriculum Map:** Baseline

**Core Competency:** Integrative Learning

**Ability:** Written

**Grading:** High stakes

*This staged Composition I - ENG 101 assignment in its entirety was completed over the course of approximately six weeks. Students were allowed to revise and re-submit their work along the way and the grade they earned from this module constituted 30% of their final grade for the course.*

*In addition to being aligned with the integrative learning core competency and written ability, the assignment emphasizes advancing the students' abilities to closely read primary and secondary sources, synthesize their understanding of these texts in their writing, and reflect on their work and learning in all the parts outlined below.*

*While this particular assignment is scaffolded and divided into five parts completed and revised over the course of several weeks, instructors may choose to combine the different parts of this module. Instructors may also choose to grade each part separately or assign a cumulative grade.*

*By the time the students begin Part I of this module, they will have read Marjane Satrapi's graphic memoir *Persepolis 2: The Story of a Return* in its entirety and completed a number of low stakes writing assignments, which stemmed from close reading questions and class discussions.*

## **PART I**

Active reading questions on "Memoir as Iranian Exile Cultural Production: A Case Study of Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis* Series" by Amy Malek

Answer the following questions about this peer-reviewed journal article. Questions 1-5 are based on pp.353-359.

1. Identify the paragraph that states Amy Malek's thesis statement (claim) and write down her thesis. Write a sentence or few sentences that paraphrase the thesis.
2. How does Hamid Naficy describe being in a "state of exile"? What does being in this state pave the way for?
3. Read carefully footnote 5 and write down the definition of the notion of diaspora as defined by Ted Swedenberg and Smadar Lavie. Also identify the distinction Malek makes between "exile" and "diaspora."

4. Read footnote 12 and paraphrase what Stuart Hall and Hamid Naficy say about the kind of identities and cultures exiles create.
5. On pages 377-378, we learn why Marjane Satrapi wrote the *Persepolis* series. Write a paragraph where you summarize in your own words Satrapi's reasons for creating this memoir.
6. Look up the definition of the word "liminality." Read pages 379-380 and, in your own words summarize what, according to Malek, Satrapi's "liminal position" enabled Satrapi to achieve with this memoir.
7. Log on to the library database, find this article, and copy-paste below the MLA style citation information.

## PART II

Now that you have answered the active reading questions based on the article "Memoir as Iranian Exile Cultural Production: A Case Study of Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis* Series" by Amy Malek, return to *Persepolis 2*. Use both your Malek homework and the notes you took in class to write a **300-word summary of *Persepolis 2*** where you use **at least five** of the following terms:

"state of exile" (Hamid Naficy's definition)  
liminality / liminal (adj.)  
disparity (used in relation to identity)  
to assimilate (into)/ assimilation  
hybridity/ hybrid (adj.)  
diaspora  
exile  
resistance versus submission  
public realm X private realm

Submit a paper copy, typed, double-spaced, font 12 times new roman. Also refer to your syllabus pp.3-4

## PART III

In Part I of this module, you read closely a peer-reviewed journal article that not only offered an interpretation of Satrapi's memoir, but also introduced you to advanced academic vocabulary relevant to the subject matter. In Part II, you composed a summary of Marjane Satrapi's memoir with the insight you gained from reading Malek's article and also using some of the terms this literary critic introduced us to.

**In Part III**, you will synthesize what you have learned and practiced in the first two parts, and integrate the insight and vocabulary you have acquired to the writing task outlined below:

From *Persepolis 2*, **select one episode from Marjane's life in Vienna and another one from her life in Tehran** after she returns to Iran from Austria where she has to respond

to challenging situations. These situations should be those that emerge because of her vague status where she is sometimes an insider and other times an outsider, and most of the time, an “in-between.”

**Compare** Marjane’s response to these moments in her life to **what your response would have been**. Would your response be similar or different? When determining your response, take into consideration your own identity, culture, beliefs, and social status. Don’t neglect to **describe the two situations** you have selected thoroughly and to **explain the rationale** for how you would respond.

One of the **secondary sources** you must use in your essay is Amy Malek’s “Memoir as Iranian Exile Cultural Production: A Case Study of Marjane Satrapi’s *Persepolis* Series.” I encourage the use of another secondary source which may be one of the earlier texts we have read in this class or a peer-reviewed journal article or any other academic publication relevant to your essay. Please make sure to discuss your additional source with me during the drafting process.

Your essay should be between 900-1000 words and should have a separate “Works Cited” page. Also refer to your syllabus pp.3-4 for information regarding the essay format. You must submit a typed, paper copy of this essay.

#### **PART IV**

According to Marjorie C. Allison in her article “Not Lost in the Margins: Gender and Identity in Graphic Texts,” Marjane Satrapi’s graphic memoir *Persepolis 2: The Story of a Return* enables its viewers to gain “not only a new and more complete understanding of Iran, but also a new and more complete understanding of the readers themselves” (82). As one of *Persepolis 2*’s many readers, write an essay where you

- a) Identify and explain two discoveries this text led to about Iran and Iranians that altered your prior knowledge about this country and her people.
- b) Continue your essay with a reflective analysis of what you have learned about yourself as a result of your engagement with this graphic memoir.

In your essay, make sure to closely refer not only to the primary text, but also to at least two secondary sources we have read throughout this semester. These texts are:

Salman Rushdie - Excerpt from *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*

Andres Martin - “On Teenagers and Tattoos”

Robert L. Heilbroner - “Don’t Let Stereotypes Warp Your Judgment”

Julie Clarke - “All Too Human: Edward Scissorhands”

Amy Malek - “Memoir as Iranian Exile Cultural Production: A Case Study of Marjane Satrapi’s *Persepolis* Series”

Marjorie C. Allison - “Not Lost in the Margins: Gender and Identity in Graphic Texts.”

I also encourage you to use one or two additional academic sources, such as peer-reviewed articles and/or scholarly books on the subject. These additional sources must be discussed with me during the drafting process.

Your essay should be about 1000-1250 words and should have a separate “Works Cited” page.

**PART V (Post-Essay Reflection)**

What were some of the pleasures and challenges of writing an essay based on a graphic memoir? Was the experience different from the other kinds of texts (articles and film) we wrote on this semester?

What were some of the instances when reading the graphic memoir and writing this essay that you thought you would like to know more about something Marjane Satrapi’s *Persepolis 2* exposed you to? What discipline/field of study would enable you to further your knowledge and understanding of this issue.

Your response should be about 250-300 words.