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### The Identity Search

“No one leaves home, unless home is the mouth of the shark”. Immigrants go from one country to for one reason, in search of a better life for themselves or for their loved ones, but imagine being a teenager and being sent to another country because your family thought it was what’s best for you. You're alone in this new place so you begin to question who you are and what your purpose in this life is. In the novel “Persepolis 2”, by Marjane Satrapi, it explains the journey of a teenage girl moving to a new place and learning how to adapt to this change such as different life styles and customs. Marjane searches for her identity in her Iran and in Vienna, but instead finds herself being alone, forcing herself into the wrong crowds, and battling depression all at the same time with not a single idea of who she is, or who she’d like to be. Marji struggles to find an identity in her homeland Iran, and in her new home Vienna because she can’t find an identity, many negative things come her way intervening with her growing up.

Marjane in Vienna and in Iran slowly begins to see the people who come into her life, end up walking out of it leaving Marjane physically and mentally alone. Marjane begins her life in Vienna as nerd like girl who is curious and questions just about everything. Once Marjane is sent to Vienna to a boarding house, as the holidays begin to approach Marjane begins to become aware that she will be spending these holidays on her own. One frame shows Marjane on the side of her bed looking inconsolable and all alone after realizing the streets and the boarding house

will be alone since everyone would return home to spend the day with their families (Satrapi 15). In Vienna Marjane is at a party with her friend Julia, the frame shows everyone in the party having a great time, I chose this frame to focus on mainly on the image for the reason that everyone here is having a good time yet she is in the corner crouched over her knees all alone, this image resembles Marjane life and how different everyone around her is (31). Marjane anticipates her return to Iran and excited to be back home. Marjane hits the rock bottom of loneliness after she returns to Iran, here she becomes overwhelmed by what she hears, what she sees, and what she feels it all becomes an awakening to her emptiness. In the frame it states “ Nevertheless, since I was drunk, I managed to graze myself”, at this moment Marjane felt so alone, with no identity or purpose that she felt taking her life would be the best solution (118). Marjane cannot seem to find her identity because she doesn't seem to fit in-in either Iran or Vienna because the people who are in her life are only their temporarily as she tries please them all, she changes herself for them and once they disappear from her life, so does the person she pretended to be, leaving her feeling alone, without a place to call home, and with no identity.

Another reason why Marjane doesn't seem to form some type of identity for herself in Vienna or Iran is because she desperately feels she has to belong somewhere so she ends up hanging out with wrong crowd one too many times. She first starts off by hanging out with a girl named Julia who happens to be 4 years older then her, she then introduces Marjane to her friends and states “An eccentric, a punk, two orphans and third-worlder, we made quite a group of friends...”, the reason why she says they made quite a group of friends was because they were all so different from one another, since Marjane however wasn't welcomed with other girls her age she felt that trying to be like this group of people and hanging out with them it would help

her uncover who she truly was, that however was not what happened (13). In Vienna Marjane meets a boy named Markus who becomes her boyfriend, once Marjane meets him, she cuts most ties with other people to devote her time to him. Markus was a big smoker and although Marjane didn't like to do it, she did it for him, she tried changing herself to fit his expectations which mainly just pushed her away even more from uncovering her true self. Markus sends Marjane to go buy "cheap hash" and she goes and states "I went in. I was very very scared. It was the first time that I'd set foot in such a sordid place", here Marjane basically explains to us how it was not like her to do something like that yet she tried to be in a way rebellious because Markus liked a girls like that therefore she tried to be like that for him and in the end that also didn't get her anywhere (68). When Marjane returns to Iran she hangs out with a group of her old friends, here Marjane is asked "Have you had sex? of course, I'm nineteen" although she hadn't she said she did to try and make herself seem mature and grown up, the girls however were disgusted by Marjane's "actions" which hadn't even really happened (116). Marjane tried fitting in with too many different types of crowds that she never really decided who she actually wanted to be and I'd like to believe that this was because she was never satisfied with any of the identities she had attempted to become.

Lastly, Marjane struggled with uncovering her true self because at the same time that she was trying to uncover who she wanted to be, she was battling depression without her even noticing it. I first begin to notice she's going through a type of depression when she calls herself a "vegetable" after viewing herself change and describing it so negatively, I feel that she saw other people changing in a good way and she wanted to look like them but instead she only saw herself changing in a bad way (35). She looks very depressed after seeing a scene on TV from

Iran, it displayed buildings being bombed and becoming completely distorted. Marjane states “I wanted to forget everything, to make my past disappear, but my unconscious caught up with me”, here she thinks that by erasing away all her memories she would be happy and take her away from the depression she was in (40). Marjane spent a lot of her time being very sad that in the end I think she just gave up with trying to figure out who she was suppose to be she just viewed herself very negatively. Marjane feels very sad after she has a fight with her grandmother, “My grandma had just yelled at me for the first time in my life. I decided that it would also be my last” (137). This moment when Marjane’s grandmother yells at her it takes her back to a dark place since this is a person who means so much to her. In relation to Marjane, my mother herself said that after she left her country at the age of 18 and came to the U.S., depression was one of the things that followed her and no matter how hard she tried to get away from it, it was just like a dark cloud that never seemed to leave and along with it came many other negative factors to her life. Marjane battles this depression and darkness that seems to follow her around wherever she goes. She attempts to try things such as forgetting her past and just nothing but to struggle in finding her place in this world.

When immigrants arrive to a new country, everything becomes new to them a lot of these immigrants leave their lives behind along with the people they once were and instead come with an open mind in hopes of trying to find their identity and a better life. Some however struggle in finding who they because they try to please others just as Marjane Satrapi did for a majority of her teenage years she did what other people wanted her to do, and nothing for herself. Marjane never really formed a sense of identity because she always felt alone, she hung out with the wrong crowd, and she was going through depression which forbid her from dedicating time find

herself in Vienna and in Iran. In most cases with immigrants this tends to happen while going onto this better journey but as Kellie Elmore once said “Sometimes, the only way to ever find yourself is to get completely lost”.

## Works Cited

Satrapı, Marjane. *Persepolis Volume 2: The story of a Return*. 1<sup>st</sup>ed, New York: Pantheon 2004.

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