

Cheng, Yue Zi Joy, National Taiwan Normal University, Taiwan

Pain and Trauma in *Persepolis*

Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood* and its sequel, *Persepolis 2: The Story of a Return*, since their publication in 2000, have received a wave of rave reviews and more importantly have assumed, in the wake of the 9/11, a far greater importance vis-à-vis the War on Terror. Satrapi, an Iranian French graphic writer, embarks on this autobiographical undertaking in defiance of the label of terrorism associated with Iran, her native country.

One of the major concerns inscribed in her memoir is Satrapi's special attention paid to the suffering of human body, which mobilizes the possibility of an ethical reading alongside the depiction of pain and trauma. In relation to the ways in which Satrapi represents pain and trauma, I am interested in how the representation is achieved in light of Derrida's notion of *différance*. The Derridean notion of *différance* helps me illuminate the narrative with an emphasis on how it is rendered in sequential panels with the frames both disengaged and interlocked by the gutters. I am also exploring the superimpositions of the images and the text, in which Satrapi brings into play figures of speech including amplification, simplification, dissonance, and estrangement, so as to produce the affective contagion, or dramatize the shocking effects the other way round by deliberately toning down the gravity of the pain in disguise. By analyzing the duality of the visual-verbal conjunction and its interplay on top of and along with the visual rendering of the frames and gutters, this paper aims to investigate how the effect of this interplay mediates the life narrative and enhances the expressivity of the visual images as well as our sensitivity toward the pain endured by the others.