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An Imagological Analysis of *A Girl in Paris* by Shusha Guppy: Between Stereotyping and Realism

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Extended ABSTRACT

The field of imagology, a branch of comparative literature, focuses on analyzing how "Otherness" is constructed and represented in literary and cultural texts. By examining the depiction of the "Other," imagology sheds light on the complex processes of identity formation, cultural differences, and the interplay between the self and the foreign. This study takes an imagological approach to analyze the representation of "Otherness" in *A Girl in Paris*, a memoir by Shusha Guppy, an Iranian writer who studied and lived in Paris during the mid-20th century. The central aim of this research is to investigate how Guppy, as an observer and immigrant, portrays French society and culture, and whether she reproduces typical cultural stereotypes or transcends them through a more nuanced and critical perspective. Drawing on the theories of Daniel-Henri Pageaux, an eminent figure in imagology, the research categorizes the observer's reaction to the "Other" into three main types: "mania" (idealization or blind admiration of the foreign culture), "phobia" (rejection or denigration of the foreign culture), and "philia" (a balanced and reciprocal recognition of both the self and the Other). In the context of Guppy's memoir, the study explores whether her extended stay in Paris, her immersion in the French intellectual and artistic circles, and her personal experiences lead her to perpetuate stereotypical views of France or engage in a process of demythologization, breaking away from preconceived notions of the West. The findings of this research show that Guppy adopts an affectionate gaze towards the French "Other." This approach, based on mutual respect and deeper understanding, enables her to avoid the two extremes of "mania" and "phobia," common among short-term visitors to foreign cultures. Unlike many Qajar-era travel writers who often idealized Paris as an epitome of progress and modernity, Guppy offers a more grounded and realistic depiction of French society. Her experiences, including the challenges of student life, the housing crisis, and the socio-political upheavals of post-war France, allow her to engage critically with the complexities of French culture, revealing both its positive aspects and its contradictions. Moreover, the research suggests that Guppy's interaction with French culture is not limited to observing the "Other"; it also serves as a means for her to reflect on and redefine her own identity. Through her memoir, Guppy illustrates how extended cultural encounters can lead to a process of self-discovery, where the observer gains insights not only into the foreign culture but also into their own cultural assumptions and identity. The demythologization of Paris, for Guppy, is thus accompanied by a parallel process of self-knowledge and personal growth. This research employs a descriptive-analytical methodology, focusing on key themes in the memoir, such as the representation of French society, cultural interactions, and the depiction of everyday life in post-war Paris. By analyzing these aspects, the study contributes

to a deeper understanding of cross-cultural encounters and the role they play in shaping both individual and collective perceptions of identity and difference.

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