

Girlhood, Repression, and Trauma: Psychoanalysis of Warsan Shire's *Extreme Girlhood*

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes Warsan Shire's poem Extreme Girlhood using Freud's psychoanalysis. The focus is on repression, trauma, and unconscious processes shaping girlhood. Freud's framework explains how childhood experiences influence later identity formation. The poem reveals cycles of suffering repeated across generations. Freud described this as repetition compulsion, where trauma returns symbolically. The analysis highlights how repression silences pain but creates recurring symptoms. Prayer, fear, and self-condemnation illustrate unconscious desires and guilt. Freud's theory of displacement explains altered images of trauma. Dream symbols like ropes and shadows mask hidden fears. The poem becomes a dreamlike stage for repressed memory. Freud's concept of the superego clarifies the voices in her head. These voices reflect internalized criticism from parental and cultural authority. The study shows how the home becomes a site of danger. Freud explained that the family first imposes repression on the child. The poem illustrates this process with striking imagery and symbolism. Trauma is inscribed on the body through grooming and violence. The analysis confirms Freud's relevance for interpreting Shire's work. It also fills a gap in existing scholarship. Previous studies addressed culture and migration, but few used psychoanalysis. This approach uncovers hidden meanings beyond cultural interpretation. The study contributes new insight into girlhood, repression, and unconscious struggle. It shows how psychoanalysis explains the poem's symbolic language. Freud's theories remain useful for exploring contemporary poetry. This research strengthens dialogue between psychology and literature.

Keywords: Psychoanalysis, Freud, repression, trauma, unconscious, repetition compulsion, symbolism

INTRODUCTION

The poem *Extreme Girlhood* stands as the first piece in Shire's book. It immediately sets the emotional tone for the collection. The title itself shows tension and vulnerability. The word "extreme" suggests danger and struggle. The word "girlhood" suggests innocence and early life. Together they signal a harsh experience of childhood. This poem captures the complexity of growing up female. It mixes fear, survival, and longing. The lines show the inner world of a young girl. They also reflect wider cultural pressures. Readers are invited to explore hidden emotions. These emotions are revealed through strong, vivid language.

The collection explores trauma and survival in multiple ways. The opening poem acts as a guide. It directs the reader to the book's central themes. These include memory, pain, and identity. They also

include migration and cultural displacement. The introduction poem makes these themes visible from the start. It allows us to see the struggles of childhood. It shows how early memories shape adult life. It also highlights unconscious fears from youth. The voice in the poem is both personal and universal. The language connects individual memory with shared experience. The result is a poem that resonates with many readers.

Studying this poem requires careful attention. The text contains layers of meaning. Some meanings are clear and direct. Others remain hidden beneath the surface. Psychoanalysis helps uncover these deeper layers. It examines unconscious symbols and repressed emotions. It studies how fear and desire appear in language. This approach shows how poetry reflects the mind. It reveals connections between words and psychological states. The method allows us to interpret silence as well. Even absence can hold meaning in a poem. These tools guide this article's analysis of *Extreme Girlhood*.

The introduction of a poetry collection is very important. It sets the tone for the entire work. It tells the reader what themes will appear. It also shows the emotional style of the poet. *Extreme Girlhood* does exactly this for Shire's book. It reveals the vulnerability of young girls. It also shows their resilience in harsh conditions. The poem balances tenderness with fear. It reveals danger but also survival. The poem's voice is fragile yet strong. It creates both discomfort and admiration. This complexity makes it ideal for psychoanalytic study.

Warsan Shire's poetry often explores displacement. She writes about migration and cultural loss. She also writes about identity and belonging. These themes appear strongly in this book. They are present in the very first poem. Childhood is described as unstable and unsafe. The language reflects trauma and confusion. Yet the poem also shows resistance. The girl in the poem survives. She endures despite fear and repression. This survival speaks to many readers. It reflects a universal human struggle.

The introduction also connects personal experience with collective history. Shire's own background influences her writing. She grew up between cultures. She experienced migration and displacement. These experiences enter her poetry. They give her work emotional depth. They also give it political meaning. *Extreme Girlhood* reflects this mixture of personal and collective. The voice is intimate but also communal. It represents one child and many children. It reflects a shared memory of fear. It also reflects a shared struggle for safety.

By beginning with *Extreme Girlhood*, Shire makes a strong statement. She wants readers to understand the stakes. Childhood here is not simple or safe. It is shaped by violence and repression. Yet it is also marked by resilience. This resilience creates hope in the poem. The introduction therefore balances despair with strength. It speaks about suffering but also survival. It portrays fragility but also endurance. This tension is central to the collection. It continues throughout the later poems. It begins powerfully with this first piece.

This article studies the poem using psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis is a useful tool for literature. It examines unconscious thoughts and desires. It looks for hidden meanings in language. It studies repression and trauma. These ideas connect well with Shire's work. Her poems contain deep psychological themes. *Extreme Girlhood* is full of such themes. It reveals unconscious fears through images. It also shows repressed desires and silences. The method helps explain these symbols. It allows deeper understanding of the text. Psychoanalysis is a vital tool for exploring hidden meanings in literature. It examines unconscious desires, fears, and conflicts of characters. Freud's concepts of repression, trauma, and the superego reveal psychological depth in texts. Literary symbols, dreams, and repetitions can be interpreted through psychoanalytic theory (Lacan, 1977). Psychoanalysis also uncovers the author's unconscious influence on writing. It explains recurring motifs and emotional patterns in stories and poems. Through this lens, readers gain insight into human behavior and motivation. The method bridges

psychology and literature, offering richer interpretations. Psychoanalysis highlights inner conflicts and symbolic structures within literary works (Winnicott, 1960).

Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it connects poetry and psychoanalysis. It shows how literature reflects unconscious fears. It also shows how poetry reveals hidden desires. The study highlights the importance of childhood memories. These memories shape identity and emotional life. They also influence cultural and social understanding. By focusing on *Extreme Girlhood*, the study offers insight. The poem becomes a lens for trauma and resilience. It represents both personal and collective experiences. The study provides tools for deeper interpretation. It helps readers see beyond surface meaning. It shows how literature and psychology enrich each other.

Research Questions

1. How does *Extreme Girlhood* reveal unconscious fears through poetic imagery?
2. How can psychoanalysis explain repression and survival in *Extreme Girlhood*?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Many scholars study Warsan Shire and her unique poetic voice. Her poems speak of exile, displacement, and belonging. Critics highlight her use of personal and collective memory. They note her sharp focus on women's experiences. Her poetry blends tenderness and pain in striking ways. Scholars recognize her deep exploration of trauma. They also see her bold feminist perspective. Shire's voice connects private struggles with political issues. Her poems resonate with readers across cultures. This resonance builds her growing reputation. Her work inspires critical and creative discussions. She is now a leading contemporary poet.

Other studies focus on the cultural background shaping her work. Shire's Somali heritage plays an important role. Her writing reflects migration and exile histories. Scholars trace her links to African oral traditions. They see influence from Somali storytelling forms. This oral tradition shapes rhythm and imagery. It also deepens her sense of community. Critics argue her poetry bridges past and present. It links heritage with modern diasporic identity. This cultural framing enriches her poetic voice. It gives readers historical depth. It also situates her poetry within global literature.

Several critics examine themes of gender in her poetry. They note her focus on women's voices. Her work often explores girlhood and motherhood. It portrays struggles faced by women in exile. It also highlights bodily experiences and trauma. Her poetry challenges silences around women's suffering. It brings female voices into public spaces. Some scholars see strong feminist activism in her poems. Others emphasize her intimate portrayals of vulnerability. Her focus on women has wide appeal. It empowers readers through shared experiences. It broadens the scope of feminist literature.

Another set of studies explore trauma in Shire's work. Her poetry often speaks of wounds and scars. It portrays experiences of violence and loss. Scholars connect her poems to trauma theory. They examine how memory works in painful texts. Some link her writing to postcolonial trauma studies. They argue her poetry represents collective wounds. Others emphasize psychological trauma in individual lives. Her imagery reflects brokenness and resilience. Trauma becomes a central theme in criticism. It guides many interpretations of her poetry. It also links to psychoanalytic readings.

Psychoanalysis provides another approach to Shire's poems. Freudian theory explores unconscious fears and desires (Freud, 1920). It examines repression and symbolic expression. Critics apply these ideas to literature widely. They study metaphors as signs of hidden meaning. They see imagery as language of the

unconscious. Shire's poems invite such readings. They contain dreamlike symbols and dark images. Her childhood poems especially show repressed fears. They reveal memory fragments in poetic form. This makes psychoanalysis very useful. It uncovers layers beneath her words.

Some scholars apply Lacanian theory to poetry. They focus on language and subject formation. Lacan highlights the symbolic and the imaginary. He also emphasizes desire and lack. These ideas apply well to Shire's poems. Her speakers often search for identity. They move between cultures and languages. They struggle with belonging and exile. This reflects Lacan's fragmented subject. The imagery of wounds fits this theory. It shows gaps in the self. It makes psychoanalytic reading more convincing.

Literary critics also compare Shire with other diaspora poets. They connect her to voices of African migration. She is placed with writers exploring exile. Her poetry resembles themes in Chimamanda Adichie's work. It also resonates with Caribbean diasporic voices. Critics see shared themes of survival. They note the blending of languages and cultures. They highlight the creation of hybrid identities. This comparative study enriches understanding. It situates Shire among global voices. It shows her unique yet connected position. It deepens appreciation of her contribution.

Research also highlights her use of imagery. Her metaphors are vivid and haunting. They often involve the body and wounds. Critics explore this symbolic language carefully. They connect it to memory and trauma. Some see images as signs of repression. Others interpret them as survival strategies. Her imagery thus carries psychological meaning. It also carries cultural memory. Readers find her images unforgettable. They make her poems powerful. They also invite psychoanalytic study.

Another important discussion focuses on childhood in Shire's work. Critics note repeated references to girlhood. These references highlight vulnerability and growth. They also reveal experiences of danger. Childhood becomes a stage of trauma. But it also shows resilience. Her girlhood poems capture contradictions. They mix innocence and fear. They show repression and resistance. Scholars connect this to feminist theory. They also connect it to trauma studies. It strengthens psychoanalytic interest in her work.

In summary, scholarship covers many aspects of Shire's poetry. Critics explore trauma, migration, and exile. They also study gender and feminist themes. They highlight her Somali heritage and oral traditions. They apply psychoanalysis and trauma theory. They compare her to other diaspora writers. They examine her powerful imagery closely. They analyze childhood as a central theme. Together these studies build a strong foundation. They show rich ways to approach her work. They also open space for new research. This article continues that critical conversation.

Research Gap

Many studies explore Shire's poetry from cultural perspectives. Scholars focus on migration, exile, and trauma. They also study her Somali heritage and oral traditions. Feminist readings highlight her focus on women. Trauma studies connect her poetry with memory. However, fewer studies apply psychoanalysis directly. Some mention Freud or Lacan briefly. But they do not analyze *Extreme Girlhood* deeply. The poem remains underexplored with this method. There is space for detailed psychoanalytic study. This article addresses that missing space. It contributes new insight into Shire's first poem.

METHODOLOGY

This study relies strongly on Freud's psychoanalytic framework. Freud introduced ideas of the unconscious mind (Freud, 1910). He argued that hidden thoughts shape behavior. Repressed memories also influence later experiences. His concept of repression is central here. It explains silenced fears in *Extreme Girlhood*. Freud also studied childhood trauma carefully. He believed childhood shapes adult life

deeply. His ideas support analysis of girlhood in Shire's poem. The method applies Freud's theory consistently. His framework guides interpretation of language and imagery. Freud's psychoanalysis forms the study's foundation.

Close reading is combined with Freudian analysis. Each line of the poem is examined. Imagery is linked with unconscious processes. Repressed content is identified through symbols. Freud believed symbols represent hidden thoughts. His dream theory is applied here. He explained how dreams disguise desires. Poems can act like dreams. They conceal wishes within images. This study reads *Extreme Girlhood* like a dream. Symbols are decoded with Freud's methods. His concepts explain the poem's hidden structure.

Freud's ideas about childhood are especially important. He saw childhood as decisive for personality (Freud, 1914). Traumas in childhood shape unconscious life. *Extreme Girlhood* describes early memories. These memories often reflect fear and repression. Freud's childhood theories explain this fear. His Oedipus theory also highlights family dynamics. Although cultural differences exist, repression remains universal. Freud's concepts of fixation and regression are useful. They explain recurring childhood images. They also explain emotional return to early experiences. His theories give strong psychological depth.

Freud also explored sexuality and desire (Freud, 1905). He argued repression often hides desires. In Shire's poem, desire appears indirectly. It is masked by fear and violence. Freud's theory of displacement explains this shift. He showed how desires appear in altered form. The poem's imagery shows this displacement. Freud's concept of condensation is also applied. Multiple meanings blend within single images. This method finds layered meaning in Shire's text. Freud's work guides interpretation of these complexities. His framework clarifies otherwise hidden connections.

Finally, the methodology integrates Freud with literary study. The poem is treated as symbolic text. Freud's ideas about dreams and repression apply directly. His theory of unconscious wishes supports interpretation. His focus on trauma fits the poem's themes. His ideas about memory explain recurring images. His approach to symbols guides reading of metaphors. This method does not measure variables. It interprets meaning instead. It follows Freud's psychoanalytic lens closely. It emphasizes repression, trauma, and unconscious desire. This focus makes the study significant.

ANALYSIS

The opening lines present a cycle where girlhood is tied to pain, as the "loop" suggests repetition across families and generations (Shire, 2022, p. 13). Freud explained repetition compulsion as the return of repressed trauma, and these lines reflect that concept clearly. The girl's arrival is described as a "prelude to suffering" (Shire, 2022, p. 13), which shows how repression predetermines her life before experience begins. Freud emphasized that early life experiences shape unconscious fears, and here the unconscious marks the girl with inherited trauma. Her birth is not innocent but already charged with the family's unspoken pain. This reflects Freud's view that repression travels across generations, reproducing unexpressed desires and fears within the family structure. The idea of the girl as both beginning and burden reflects Freud's theory of repression as the silencing of unacceptable truths, hidden yet powerful. The "loop" represents more than tradition; it symbolizes the unconscious cycle of suffering that repeats without awareness (Shire, 2022, p. 13). Freud believed symbols carry disguised meaning, and here suffering is disguised as destiny. The family's unconscious expectation shapes the girl before she can speak, placing her into roles defined by fear and loss. This instance reflects how repression not only hides but structures life, creating patterns of distress that appear inevitable. Psychoanalysis reveals how such language encodes hidden meaning, where repetition itself becomes the sign of unresolved trauma. Freud's focus on the family as the first site of repression is crucial here, because the girl inherits more than blood;

she inherits silence, fear, and desire. In this way, the poem demonstrates how unconscious forces are transmitted, binding girlhood to suffering through cycles that seem unbreakable.

The lines describing the “baby girl” with a “caul of dissatisfaction” present a powerful image of how repression marks identity from birth (Shire, 2022, p. 13). Freud emphasized that the unconscious often projects dissatisfaction onto objects or people, and here the girl becomes the carrier of her family’s unspoken discontent. The caul, usually seen as protective, is transformed into a sign of burden, symbolizing the way unconscious expectations enclose the child even before her development. Naming her the “patron saint of not good enough” illustrates the internalization of inadequacy, a theme Freud connected to repression of desire and the superego’s harsh demands (Shire, 2022, p. 13). The girl becomes sanctified in failure, suggesting the unconscious elevation of suffering into identity itself. This reflects Freud’s idea that repression creates distorted self-images, where denied desires resurface as self-punishment. The unconscious voice tells her she will never satisfy others, linking to Freud’s discussion of guilt as an outcome of repression. The repetition of dissatisfaction across generations ensures the girl inherits unresolved conflict rather than freedom. Freud argued that unconscious wishes often disguise themselves in symbolic language, and here dissatisfaction functions as the disguised desire of others, projected onto the child. The saintly metaphor reveals a paradox: she is revered for embodying lack, yet denied full humanity. Psychoanalysis shows how the unconscious idealizes what it simultaneously condemns, producing internal conflict within the subject. The girl is made into a symbol rather than a person, reflecting Freud’s view of repression as a force that reshapes identity through denial and projection. In this instance, Shire’s language demonstrates how the unconscious defines subjectivity by burdening girlhood with inherited guilt and unmet desires, making her existence marked by dissatisfaction from the beginning.

The appeal “Are you there, God? It’s me, Warsan” reveals a fractured self seeking reassurance while simultaneously acknowledging absence (Shire, 2022, p. 13). Freud described prayer and religion as projections of unconscious wishes, often directed at a paternal figure, and this direct questioning of God reflects the return of unmet childhood needs. The speaker exposes an unstable relationship with authority and care, linking to Freud’s view of the father figure as both protective and restrictive. The reference to “maladaptive daydreaming” introduces a mechanism Freud recognized as wish-fulfillment, where fantasy compensates for repressed desire (Shire, 2022, p. 13). However, the description of daydreaming as maladaptive suggests the fantasies no longer provide comfort but instead deepen detachment. This connects to Freud’s concept of regression, where the mind retreats to earlier states when overwhelmed by reality. The words “obsessive, dissociative” highlight symptoms of repression, as Freud often linked compulsions and dissociation to unresolved trauma. The obsessive state shows the return of repressed thoughts, constantly intruding despite conscious denial, while dissociation reflects the mind’s attempt to protect itself by splitting awareness. The speaker identifies herself by name in this plea, which emphasizes a fragmented identity attempting to unify under an external figure, echoing Freud’s notion of the ego struggling with demands of the superego and unconscious desire. The unanswered call to God also reveals repression of disappointment, as faith fails to supply the security she unconsciously seeks. Freud’s theory of transference helps explain how unmet familial protection is displaced onto divine authority, only to result in renewed frustration. These lines therefore capture the psyche caught between yearning and repression, with prayer, fantasy, and dissociation functioning as symbolic defenses. Through this instance, the poem exposes the unconscious struggle of survival within absence, guilt, and desire.

The description of being “born to a lullaby lamenting melanin” shows how repression enters the psyche from the moment of birth, as the song intended to soothe instead communicates shame about racial identity (Shire, 2022, p. 13). Freud emphasized that unconscious messages in early life shape self-perception, and here the lament becomes a formative voice of disapproval. The child’s earliest sounds are not nurturing but critical, which aligns with Freud’s claim that repression begins with family influences.

The “newborn ears checked for the first signs of color” demonstrates how the body becomes an object of scrutiny before identity forms (Shire, 2022, p. 13). This instance reveals projection, as Freud argued families often impose their own repressed anxieties onto children, marking them with burdens not their own. The concern for melanin reflects internalized prejudice, showing how collective repression of race enters individual psychology. Freud noted that repression of forbidden fears often reappears as compulsive observation, and the inspection of the baby’s body enacts that compulsion. The newborn cannot understand but unconsciously absorbs these attitudes, which become part of the superego’s harsh voice. The lullaby itself functions like Freud’s concept of dream disguise, carrying a hidden wish that the child might escape stigmatized traits. Yet the disguise is fragile, and the lament exposes the painful truth of cultural repression. This moment demonstrates how unconscious desire and social prejudice combine to wound identity at its root. For Freud, early impressions return later as symptoms, and this fixation on skin color suggests recurring trauma. The lines expose how even love is tainted by repression, turning nurture into criticism. In this way, the poem illustrates the deep psychological cost of inherited prejudice, showing how unconscious judgments shape the subject from the beginning.

The admission “at first I was afraid, I was petrified” signals the centrality of fear in the shaping of childhood identity, where early life becomes structured by constant vulnerability rather than security (Shire, 2022, p. 13). Freud argued that fear often masks deeper unconscious anxieties, and here the child’s terror suggests unresolved trauma reemerging in conscious thought. The image of a child who “reads surahs each night” illustrates a defense mechanism, using ritual as protection against threats that feel overwhelming (Shire, 2022, p. 13). Freud described such practices as displacement, where unconscious fear is transferred into repeated symbolic actions. The surahs function like Freud’s understanding of magical thinking, offering comfort by creating an illusion of control over danger. The attempt “to veil her from ill” reinforces this reading, as the veil becomes a symbolic shield against psychic intrusion as well as physical harm (Shire, 2022, p. 13). Freud often noted that protective symbols disguise underlying vulnerability, and here the veil conceals helplessness with ritual defense. The reference to “protecting body and home from intruders” broadens the fear beyond personal safety to the sanctity of domestic space (Shire, 2022, p. 13). For Freud, the home represents the first space of security, but when violated, repression intensifies as the psyche attempts to mask helplessness with rituals. The child’s repetitive recitation shows Freud’s idea of compulsive repetition, where the unconscious relives trauma in disguised form. Instead of peace, the prayers highlight constant anxiety, revealing that repression cannot fully conceal fear. Freud’s concept of the uncanny is also relevant, since the ordinary act of prayer becomes tied to dread, turning the familiar into a site of unease. These lines expose how religious ritual functions as a symbolic defense, yet also reveal the depth of repression that structures childhood in an environment dominated by fear and insecurity.

The description of a girl who “wakes with a fright” reflects Freud’s claim that dreams often reveal repressed fears through disguised imagery (Shire, 2022, p. 14). The image of “someone cutting the rope” suggests the unconscious fear of abandonment or loss of stability, which Freud saw as central in early trauma. The “something creeping deep inside her” represents intrusive anxieties that cannot be consciously expressed, resembling Freud’s concept of repression returning in symbolic form (Shire, 2022, p. 14). Such images reflect displacement, where hidden fears manifest in altered shapes. The repeated plea “Are you there, God?” shows the transfer of unmet parental security onto a divine figure, which Freud linked to wish-fulfillment and the search for protection (Shire, 2022, p. 14). Yet the self-identification as “the ugly one” signals the damaging effect of internalized judgment, showing the superego’s harsh voice labeling the self as unworthy. Freud argued that repression often produces feelings of inadequacy, which resurface as guilt and self-loathing. Here, the unconscious has absorbed negative perceptions, turning them into identity. The child does not simply feel ugly; she names herself as such, echoing Freud’s point that internalized criticism becomes part of the ego structure. The night terrors,

intrusive images, and desperate prayers demonstrate how repression overwhelms the psyche with symbolic returns of trauma. Freud's theory of the uncanny also applies, since the ordinary space of sleep transforms into a threatening stage for hidden fears. The rope, the creeping presence, and the divine silence all symbolize the gap between desire for safety and the reality of vulnerability. Through these lines, the poem shows how fear, repression, and inherited judgment form an unconscious cycle that shapes selfhood, trapping the child in both terror and self-condemnation.

The call to "bless the Type 4 child" exposes how identity is framed through categories that define difference rather than affirm individuality, echoing Freud's view of repression as a force that distorts natural development (Shire, 2022, p. 14). The image of a "scalp massaged with the milk of cruelty" suggests the paradox of nurture and harm intertwined, where an act of care becomes infused with aggression, reflecting Freud's theory that repressed hostility often disguises itself within affectionate gestures (Shire, 2022, p. 14). The phrase "cranium cursed" implies that repression has marked the body itself, as if the child's very being carries an inherited burden of shame. Freud explained that childhood experiences often shape unconscious beliefs about the body, and here the head becomes the site where cruelty imprints lasting psychological wounds. The violence of being "crushed between adult knees" represents domination and the child's helpless position within structures of authority, aligning with Freud's focus on power dynamics in early development (Shire, 2022, p. 14). The force inflicted by adults reflects the superego's oppressive role, punishing the child and inscribing submission into her unconscious. The image of being "drenched in pink lotion" adds another layer, suggesting attempts to mask or soften cruelty with superficial care (Shire, 2022, p. 14). Freud would interpret this as displacement, where aggression is disguised through rituals of grooming. The lotion becomes symbolic of the attempt to cover pain, yet the act itself confirms repression, blending violence with tenderness. This mixture of nurture and harm demonstrates the ambivalence Freud described as central to the unconscious, where love and cruelty exist together, unresolved. The child's identity forms within this ambivalent space, inheriting not only care but also repression, domination, and self-denial. These lines reveal how unconscious trauma is written onto the body itself, shaping both self-perception and memory through repeated symbolic violence.

The declaration "everything you did to me, I remember" expresses the return of repressed trauma into conscious memory, confirming Freud's belief that repression never fully erases painful experiences but drives them into the unconscious until they resurface symbolically (Shire, 2022, p. 14). The speaker's direct address to the mother emphasizes the family as the origin of both love and wounding, which Freud consistently described as the earliest site of repression. The survival statement "Mama, I made it out of your home alive" underscores the home not as a space of safety but as a site of psychic danger, aligning with Freud's claim that childhood environments deeply shape unconscious fears (Shire, 2022, p. 14). The language of escape suggests the compulsion to break away from repeating cycles of trauma, while the emphasis on survival shows the ego's fragile defense against overwhelming forces. Freud explained that unresolved childhood pain often reemerges as internal conflict, and this is captured in the admission of being "raised by the voices in my head" (Shire, 2022, p. 14). These voices symbolize the superego, the harsh internal authority created by repression, repeating accusations and demands long after the external figure has been left behind. They also represent the persistence of introjected trauma, where the child carries the mother's criticism and control as unconscious echoes. The act of remembering signifies a movement from repression to acknowledgment, but the survival is marked by fragmentation, since internal voices replace external care. Freud would argue this instance illustrates how repression converts external cruelty into internalized psychic structures that dominate the self. The child becomes both survivor and captive, escaping physical danger but carrying the unconscious weight of inherited trauma. Through this moment, the poem illustrates how memory, repression, and survival remain deeply intertwined, revealing the psychological costs of a childhood shaped by cruelty and control.

CONCLUSION

This study explored *Extreme Girlhood* through Freud's psychoanalytic lens. The poem reveals repression from childhood experiences. It shows trauma shaping identity unconsciously. Freud explained that repression hides unbearable truths. The lines reveal how fear returns symbolically. Images of suffering represent the unconscious at work. Freud's repetition compulsion is strongly visible. Trauma repeats across generations without resolution. Repression silences voices but symbols keep speaking. The poem becomes a stage for the unconscious. Through Freud, hidden meanings are revealed. The analysis confirms psychoanalysis as a powerful method.

The discussion highlighted Freud's idea of childhood trauma. The girl is marked by fear at birth. Family expectations weigh on her identity. Freud argued the family begins repression. The poem illustrates this clearly. Symbols of cycles reflect repetition compulsion. The unconscious returns through recurring pain. Freud's theory of displacement also applies here. Fear appears through altered images. The child feels threats in disguised forms. These reflect unconscious processes at work. Freud's insights clarify the poem's meaning.

The study also emphasized Freud's concept of repression. The girl represses fear and desire. This repression produces symptoms and inner voices. Freud described this as the superego speaking. The poem reflects this inner authority. Voices in her head dominate identity. Childhood wounds become unconscious laws. The girl inherits trauma as memory. She survives but feels divided. Freud's view of guilt applies here. The superego punishes the ego. This creates inner suffering beyond external harm.

Another key insight involves Freud's theory of dreams. The poem functions like a dream. Its images disguise forbidden truths. Cutting ropes or creeping shadows mask unconscious fear. Freud explained dream symbols as wish-fulfillment. The girl wishes for protection. Instead, symbols reveal insecurity. Prayer reflects unconscious desire for safety. But repression blocks satisfaction. The divine silence echoes parental absence. Freud's framework explains this tension. The dreamlike lines show hidden wishes. Psychoanalysis uncovers these concealed truths.

In conclusion, *Extreme Girlhood* reveals repression's deep power. Freud's psychoanalysis clarifies this power. Childhood trauma shapes unconscious identity. Repression produces cycles of suffering. Symbols disguise unbearable truths. The girl becomes voice for hidden pain. Survival is marked by division. Psychoanalysis interprets this division. Freud's theories explain repetition and repression. They reveal unconscious processes in the poem. This study fills a research gap. It confirms Freud's relevance for Shire's poetry.

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