



## Traumatic Impact of Dust Bowl in Hannah's The Four Winds: A Psychoanalytic Critique

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### Abstract

This study means to carry out a psychoanalytic critique of the Dust Bowl's traumatic impact as depicted in Kristin Hannah's novel *The Four Winds*. The Dust Bowl, a devastating ecological crisis in the 1930s, profoundly affected Americans' lives. *The Four Winds* explore the emotional and psychological aftermath of this disaster through its characters, notably Elsa Martinelli, as they grapple with the challenges of survival amid dust storms, economic collapse, and societal turmoil. This analysis delves into the psychological dimensions of trauma, resilience, and adaptation in the novel. It examines how the relentless hardships of the Dust Bowl strain the characters' mental and emotional well-being, with a particular focus on Elsa's journey. Her resilience and evolving mental state will offer insights into the human capacity to endure adversity. In conclusion, this psychological analysis of *The Four Winds* reveals how traumatic events, like the Dust Bowl, mold the human psyche, testing its limits while showcasing its potential for resilience and growth. By examining the novel's portrayal of trauma and recovery, this analysis likely to explain the lasting psychological impact of environmental catastrophes and the enduring strength of those who endure them.

**Keywords:** Trauma, ecological crisis, psychological survival, economic collapse, human psyche, environmental catastrophes.

### Introduction

The Dust Bowl of the 1930s was an agonizing ecological disaster on the American Great Plains, another chilling testimony to the terrible blow that nature sometimes delivers when trying to cripple human existence. In Kristin Hannah's *The Four Winds*, the background of this disaster helps echo the mental and emotional traumas the story's characters had gone through. Beyond this, the book is a story of the psychological effects of the Dust Bowl and a trip back in time through the Dust Bowl with Elsa Martinelli as a window. Elsa's journey as the face of human beings tested by nature lights the well of inner resilience that all human beings can tap into amidst overwhelming challenges. This research brings more from those conclusions and provides a glimpse of the decades-old blow to the mind authored by *The Four Winds*, a book that captures the era of the Dust Bowl.

### Background of the Study

A variety of intellectual factors combine to contribute to the formation of the background of this study.

### Dust Bowl: A Catastrophe

The Dust Bowl, a catastrophic period in American history during the 1930s, stands as a stark testament to the devastating environmental and socio-economic consequences of the era. The

relentless dust storms, immense agricultural failures, and widespread human suffering wrought by the Dust Bowl left an indelible mark on the nation's collective memory. This research delves into the profound psychological impact of this ecological catastrophe, often referred to as The Four Winds, on the individuals and communities who endured its unforgiving trials. The Dust Bowl drought is notable as the most intense and prolonged drought recorded in the central United States. During the 1930s, Kansas experienced a significant rainfall deficit of -37.20 inches, roughly equivalent to 1.5 years of normal precipitation (Flora 1948). The most severe rainfall deficits occurred in 1934 and 1936 across the Great Plains, with average Palmer Drought Severity Indices (PDSI) plummeting to -5 and -4, respectively, translating to 3.5 and 2.8 standard deviations below the 1870–2005 mean. Furthermore, the summers of 1934 and 1936 were among the hottest in Kansas over the past 180 years, with daily high temperatures reaching 105–110 °F (40.6–43.3 °C). Beyond serving as a reflection of human experiences and the prevailing circumstances, the imagery of the Dust Bowl may play a crucial role in shaping our perception of and adaptation to the Great Plains environment. It can function as a shared psychological benchmark against which other droughts and challenging periods are measured. Recent findings from experimental and environmental psychology propose that the mind retains enduring images, acting as "anchors" or representations that aid in evaluating the significance of different events, emotions, risks, and ideas. This psychological tendency is recognized in cognitive psychological research as a notable source of bias and error in human decision-making. However, it also offers insights into how images like those of the Dust Bowl are formed, endure over time, and influence behaviour (Riebsame, 1986).

Guarino, K., and Bassuk, E discusses in their research that natural disasters often lead to homelessness, which, in turn, results in significant trauma for both children and adults. This trauma stems from the loss of home, safety, and a sense of security, profoundly influencing their thoughts, emotions, behaviors, coping mechanisms, and relationships with others. Understanding trauma and its consequences is crucial for delivering effective care to homeless families. To become "trauma-informed," service providers must tailor their support to meet the unique requirements of trauma survivors while avoiding causing further harm. In this article, the authors examine the impact of trauma on homeless families in the United States and suggest concrete strategies to address their specific needs (Guarino & Bassuk, 2010). Cathy Caruth asserts that trauma involves an overwhelming encounter with unexpected or catastrophic events, as per its standard definition. The response to such an event often manifests in delayed, uncontrollable, repetitive symptoms such as hallucinations and other pervasive phenomena (Caruth, 2016). Psychological processes play a crucial role in shaping the traumatic experience. Trauma creates a rupture in the fabric of normalcy, disrupting typical pathways of sorrow and mourning because it defies comprehension. It is characterized by psychological abundance that either obscures the memories of the event or imposes them onto the individual's present, emerging at unexpected moments. The person is not only left in a suddenly unfamiliar world but also must continue in a world unchanged by the same paradigm shift. They must "move on," a telling phrase, as they carry their awareness while having to conform to societal norms, all while experiencing profound estrangement and isolation.

Psychological trauma refers to damage to the psychological structure which occurs because of such events. Yet one of the most significant figures in the current trauma theory movement has redefined it in terms of "the form of its experience." This redefinition asserts that the event is never actually integrated or undergone at the time but is instead only comprehended retrospectively through its constant interruption of the individual's mind (Freud, 1920, p. 4). Herman, in her formulation of trauma, refers to an early Freudian concept he developed in his studies on hysteria: *Nachträglichkeit*. This idea refers to a non-linear retrieval of a memory in which two moments become intertwined; in a time of panic, suppressed memories find their way into the conscious mind and are now reinterpreted or reconstructed to fit the narrative imposed by the subsequent

existence of events, ambitions, and other psychological aspects. In this research, I embark on an exploration of *The Four Winds*, dissecting its themes, characters, and narrative intricacies. Through this research, my aim is to unravel the layers of historical authenticity and emotional depth that make this novel not only a compelling work of fiction but also a poignant reflection of the human condition during one of the darkest chapters in American history (Cutler et al., 2007).

### **Statement of the Problem**

This research addresses the traumatic impact of Dust Bowl in *The Four Winds*. Despite historical documentation of the Dust Bowl's devastating environmental and socio-economic effects on the The Four Winds region during the 1930s, there remains a limited understanding of the profound and lasting psychological trauma experienced by individuals and communities. This research aims to explore and analyze the psychological impact of the Dust Bowl on residents of the The Four Winds region, shedding light on the long-term consequences of this environmental catastrophe and contributing to a deeper understanding of trauma in the context of ecological disasters.

### **Research Objectives**

1. To investigate the role of resilience mechanisms in mitigating the traumatic effects of the Dust Bowl
2. To explore the long-term psychological effects of the storm as portrayed in the novel

### **Research Questions**

1. What are the factors that lead to long-term psychological consequences of PTSD, anxiety or depression among survivors of the Dust Bowl and their descendants?
2. What role did community support and resilience play in mitigating the psychological trauma in the novel?
3. How do music, art, and literature, serve as coping mechanisms against trauma?
4. What parallels can be drawn between the psychological effects on characters in the novel and more recent environmental disasters?

### **Significance of the Study**

This study may be useful for readers who are interested in literature. This research may also be beneficial for readers of trauma studies. Students of literature may benefit from this study. Teachers of literature may also use this study.

### **Literature Review**

A literature review on the traumatic impact of the Dust Bowl in *The Four Winds* region with a psychological analysis would involve summarizing and analyzing relevant studies and scholarly works on this topic. Traumatic events can take various forms, including major disasters like wars and natural disasters, as well as personal traumas such as physical or psychological neglect, abuse, and sexual assault. These traumas can be categorized into two types: type I and type II trauma. The impact of these traumatic experiences on individuals is influenced not only by the severity and duration of the trauma but also by how individuals themselves perceive and evaluate these events. People may respond to trauma with different types of stress reactions, including posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), complex PTSD, and trauma-related depression.

### **The Nineteenth-Century and Trauma**

The inclusion of trauma as a formal diagnosis in the DSM occurred in 1980, and soon after, literary theorists began using the term to analyze literature. Since the 1990s, theorists have primarily focused on twentieth-century trauma literature, with particular attention given to Holocaust and

Modernist texts. However, Victorian society, which faced railway catastrophes, industrial accidents, premature deaths, and infectious diseases, also grappled with psychological wounds through their lived experiences. Trauma scholars who work with nineteenth-century texts generally consider these works through the lens of modern trauma theories. Although the contributions of Cathy Caruth, Shoshanna Felman, Ann Whitehead, E. Ann Kaplan, Dominick LaCapra, and Judith Herman have sparked significant discussions about trauma literature, their development of the trauma concept seldom extends beyond Freud.

To identify depictions of trauma in my selected texts, I examined nineteenth-century literary works using both Victorian concepts of shock and twentieth-century definitions of trauma. It is crucial to situate these texts within the framework of Victorian theories of emotion and the nineteenth-century understanding of the conscious and subconscious mind. They also investigate whether the imprint of trauma is unaltered or influenced by the unconscious, what symptoms or behaviors indicate trauma, and whether the effects of trauma impact secondary victims. In "Trauma and Literary Studies: Some 'Enabling Questions'" (2006), Elissa Marder asserts that since the late twentieth century, literature and literary theory have offered some of the "groundbreaking and extensive perspectives" that address these questions. Marder particularly highlights the contributions of Cathy Caruth and Shoshanna Felman, who, she argues, have been "working creatively on the borders of trauma, literature, and psychoanalysis" since the late 1990s (Marder, 2006).

Atwood, through her literary works, likely explores the intricate dimensions of trauma, shedding light on its multifaceted nature and its profound impact on individuals (Erikson, 1959). In simpler terms, trauma is the psychological condition stemming from an injury, presenting itself as a form of imaginative expression. It represents a distressing and harmful encounter, an ordeal that unfolds as a delayed revelation of its inexpressible reality according to psychoanalytic theory. This allows psychoanalysis to explore the "textual anxieties" associated with depicting trauma. The focus is on women seeking to articulate their painful and individual experiences within societal contexts.

### **Trauma Significantly in Literature**

Trauma, or the act of traumatizing, pertains to a distressing occurrence that encompasses both emotional and experiential dimensions. In the realm of psychoanalysis, trauma manifests as a serious condition with enduring adverse effects. Essentially, the characters' minds in literature are impacted by past traumatic events and memories, leading to confusion and insecurity. Psychoanalytic trauma commonly arises from various sources, including sexual abuse, employment discrimination, police brutality, bullying, domestic violence, and notably, childhood experiences. It is crucial to note that childhood trauma may contribute to the development of violent behavior. Psychoanalytic trauma can be triggered by catastrophic events such as war, treachery, betrayal, and sexual abuse. However, a key point to emphasize is that individuals may respond differently to similar traumatic events. In other words, not everyone exposed to the same distressing experience will necessarily undergo psychoanalytic traumatization. From an interdisciplinary perspective, trauma is closely intertwined with fields like psychology, sociology, history, warfare, politics, and notably, literature (Heidarizadeh, 2015).

This paper explores Margaret Atwood's three novels: 'The Handmaid's Tale' (1985), 'Cat's Eye' (1988), and 'The Robber Bride' (1993), focusing on the female characters within them to unveil the past trauma experienced during both childhood and adulthood within the realm of literature. It is plausible to consider that humans, being inherently social creatures, interact with diverse facets of the universe, contributing to the creation of either utopian or dystopian environments. According to Harold Bloom, Atwood's imaginative sensibility falls into the gothic genre, characterized as a "mixed genre." Atwood effectively employs this approach, receiving praise from Bloom for her

careful, consistent, and chilling tone in her narrative style (Harold, 2009). The novels of the Brontë sisters endure because of their masterful depiction of the intensity of their characters' emotions. In relation to the representation of trauma, in the form of child abuse and the effects of domestic violence, this article uncovers in-depth analysis of the three major works *Jane Eyre* of Charlotte Brontë, *Wuthering Heights* of Emily Brontë, and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* of Anne Brontë. Drawing on contemporary related psychological research and scholarship in trauma, this article considers the authors' deep understanding of trauma, as illustrated through realistic scenes and character development.

While 'Jane Eyre' vividly depicts the process of child abuse, its consequences, and the subsequent healing, Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847) delves into the themes of child abuse and domestic violence, particularly through the character of Heathcliff. Heathcliff, an orphan possibly of gypsy origin, is brought to *Wuthering Heights* from Liverpool by Mr. Earnshaw. His encounter with bullying from Hindley Earnshaw shares notable similarities with Jane Eyre's experience under the torment of John Reed. Heathcliff is described as enduring Hindley's physical abuse without flinching, possibly due to the 'hardening' effect of prior ill-treatment as an orphan (WH, p. 36). Initially, Mr. Earnshaw provides support and understanding to Heathcliff, but after his death, Hindley's violence intensifies, surpassing the severity of John Reed's actions towards Jane Eyre.

This brutality includes physical attacks such as cuffing Heathcliff over the ears, threatening him with an iron weight, hitting him on the breast, and even endangering him near a horse, accompanied by hostile verbal abuse (WH, p. 37). Unlike Jane Eyre's assertive response, Heathcliff initially reacts with stoic acceptance, though Nelly Dean perceives it as stemming from 'hardness, not gentleness' (WH, p. 37). This passive acceptance foreshadows a later eruption of vengeful tendencies in Heathcliff. Nelly issues a warning about the child Heathcliff, noting that his infrequent complaints might deceive observers into thinking him non-vindictive, a misconception that will be unveiled as the narrative progresses (Morris, 2013).

'The Tenant of Wildfell Hall' (1848) by Anne Brontë narrates the story of an abusive marital relationship and its repercussions for the individuals involved. Helen Graham, against her family's advice, marries the charming but irresponsible Arthur Huntingdon. It is only after their marriage that she discovers his demanding and resentful nature. Arthur disapproves of Helen's religious devotion, expressing the view that a woman's faith should not diminish her devotion to her husband (TWH, p. 204). Rejecting this perspective, Helen firmly asserts, 'I will give my whole heart and soul to my Maker and not one atom more of it to you than He allows' (TWH, p. 204). In this analysis, the researcher has contended that 'Cat's Eye' effectively portrays repression at one extreme, while 'The Secret Life of Bees' illustrates repression at the other. Sue Monk Kidd's novel stands out with its use of humor, melodrama, and accessibility, whereas Margaret Atwood's 'Cat's Eye' employs dense imagery and anachronicity. Between these two extremes lie "Purple Hibiscus," effectively illustrating the effects of post-colonialism on the individual but being less effective in transmitting trauma, and "Housekeeping," offering a poignant portrayal of dysfunctional small-town America and demonstrating two varying reactions to trauma. These stories serve as a reminder of the profound effects of our actions, urging us to care for each other, consciously weigh our actions, and avoid falling into inadvertent 'sins'(Greenfield, 2014).

### **Dust Bowl and Trauma**

The environmental catastrophe of the 1930s Dust Bowl led to mass soil erosion on the US Plains. It made a strong mark on the development of agricultural technology, shifted the structure of crops toward those more exposed to the Dust Bowl, and added bio-chemical and planting technologies to mitigate environmental distress. Actually, the Dust Bowl was not only a regional phenomenon, but a global socio-ecological crisis fostered by settler colonialism and imperialism and harboring the

racialized division of nature and humanity. The crisis reduced substantially the values and revenues of the land in agriculture, with very limited reallocation of farmland, being thus a prime case of adjustment through migration.

The American Dust Bowl, an environmental catastrophe in the 1930s, led to a significant shift in agricultural technology development towards Dust Bowl-exposed crops and technologies that could mitigate environmental distress. This shift was observed at the county level and had a positive impact on agricultural land values and revenue, dampening the negative effects of land erosion. (Moscona, 2021) From 1930 to 1940, the Great Plains in the United States witnessed severe environmental challenges as inadequate rainfall, elevated temperatures, and strong winds triggered extensive dust storms (Cunfer, 2005; Stephens, 2023; Wallace, 1938).

The Dust Bowl transcended being solely an environmental crisis; it evolved into a profound human tragedy, particularly impacting the farming communities of the Great Plains. Occurring amidst the challenges of the Great Depression, the Dust Bowl exacerbated difficulties, as outlined in works by Cutler et al., (2007) and Wallace (1938). Economic adversity permeated these regions, with meager harvests leading to low incomes, malnutrition, and, for some, the distressing realities of farm foreclosure and migration (Stephens, 2023).

The consequences were not only economic but also directly impacted human health and well-being. Literature has influenced in the life of human being. It has an empowered language to display the inner world of man. There is a space for memories, introspection, retrospection, foreshadow, flashback and awful remembrances that are colored by pain, wound and trauma. Now is the time of producing the plot of anxiety in modern world. Margaret Atwood as a distinguished writer and poet criticizes the social, political, and spiritual bonds for female characters in her stories and poems. She has an aim to illustrate the pain and suffering of female characters in order to gain self-knowledge of and self-confidence for women. In *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985), *Cat's Eye* (1988), and *The Robber Bride* (1993) she has elaborately examined her understanding of creativity in the dream, fantasy and art of the protagonists.

### **Female Faces Double Trauma**

In many narratives, the focus lies on the inner lives of women, with feminist criticism delving into the societal oppression, anxieties, and traumas they endure. Atwood's primary theme revolves around female identity, recognizing the global subordination and oppression of women. Demonstrating a passionate commitment to women's rights in Canada, Atwood rebels against the patriarchal norms ingrained in her society. Her narratives depict women who reject traditional societal roles, seeking new values and endeavoring to reshape societal attitudes, particularly those of men. Importantly, Atwood's female characters strive for self- fulfillment and self-expression, challenging established norms. In her novels, she portrays women with strength, emphasizing their resilience rather than their vulnerabilities.

In 'Cat's Eye,' Elaine's return to Toronto for a retrospective art show becomes a catalyst for revisiting her childhood home. This reunion, coupled with a review of her art, prompts her to reconstruct the past, piecing together fragments much like she has done subconsciously in her paintings. In 'The Robber Bride,' Atwood introduces Zenia, a villain tormenting three women who, too, grapples with past trauma. Retrospective episodes gradually unveil the characters' secret histories. Despite Zenia being presumed dead, her sudden reappearance prompts a skillful exploration of the past as Atwood traces the lives of the three women, creating a narrative that oscillates between past and present, revealing confusion and a lack of order, leading to significant damage and turmoil (Heidarizadeh, 2015).

Over the last decade, a recurring character archetype has emerged in television adaptations – the mentally fractured heroine turned villain. These women, often victims of attacks, rape, or the loss

of loved ones to villains, respond with violent rampages, leading to their descent into villainy. Examples include Netflix's Jessica Jones and George R.R. Martin's A Song of Ice and Fire, adapted into Game of Thrones, where heroines' resort to violence for revenge. Notably, these violent heroines don't always become irredeemable villains; some find redemption while maintaining their hero status. The varying levels of violence they commit and the consequences they face reflect evolving societal morals. "The Four Winds: A Psychological Analysis" seeks to unravel the intricate tapestry of emotions and mental resilience that characterized those who weathered the Dust Bowl's relentless assault on their livelihoods and well-being. Even though ecological and economic features of this era have been scrupulously detailed in historical accounts, very little has been paid to the psychological cost it accrued on its victims. This paper intends on reducing this gap by highlighting the traumatizing events that Dust Bowl survivors went through and the long-term psychological aftermath. This highlights the gap in understanding the psychological effect of the Dust Bowl in the region specified by the scope in that existing research pays more attention to the environmental and socio-economic aspects.

Finally, the literature on the traumatic impact of the Dust Bowl in The Four Winds Region offers a much more nuanced view of the psychological effects of this ecological disaster. It is traumatogenicity, resilience, coping strategies, intergenerational effects, mental health problems, recovery processes, and generally in a thorough way for the comprehension of such psychological dimensions considering the legacy of the Dust Bowl disaster in order to throw more light on the solution of modern environmental problems.

### **Research Methodology**

This research is a narrative research project incorporating qualitative methods of data collection. This qualitative approach focused on textual analysis, critical interpretation, and thematic exploration. Primary sources include literary texts, manuscripts, letters, or interviews. Secondary sources encompass scholarly articles, books, reviews, and critical analyses. The data has been collected systematically, ensuring that the sources are credible, relevant, and contribute to my research objectives. This study employs qualitative close textual analysis grounded in psychoanalytic literary criticism. The analysis proceeds through four stages:

1. Identification of traumatic narrative events.
2. Psychoanalytic interpretation using Freudian constructs.
3. Structural examination of narrative repetition and memory.
4. Integration with contemporary trauma scholarship.

Rather than diagnosing fictional characters, the study interprets narrative patterns as symbolic enactments of psychic processes (Barry, 2017).

### **Theoretical Framework**

A theoretical framework for studying the traumatic impact of the Dust Bowl in The Four Winds region from a psychological perspective can draw upon various psychological theories and concepts. Here's a theoretical framework that integrates key psychological theories and concepts to analyze the traumatic impact.

### **Freud's Theory of Trauma**

This research study applies Sigmund Freud's Trauma theory, which he introduced to explain hysteria in his female patients. The Trauma theory, originating in the 1960s, addresses societal concerns about violence against women and children, such as rape, battering, and incest. Within the field of trauma studies, feminists have played a crucial role by highlighting issues specific to women and children, including physical and sexual abuse, female sexual slavery, genital

mutilation, practices like suttee, bride burning, 'honor' killing, and the use of rape as a tool of terrorism. In the context of a novel, the Trauma theory is utilized to elucidate various types of traumas and psychological challenges. For example, the protagonist Elsa has been traumatized in her childhood, and the books explain the effects of the aftermath on her adulthood.

Psychoanalytic theory, developed by Freud, has been influential in the field of psychology and has had a far-reaching impact on various fields of western humanities. The theory has been continuously studied, revised, and expanded by Freud's disciples and followers, leading to its theoretical development and practical significance in psychological counseling and treatment. Psychoanalysis provides specific guidance and implementation methods for psychological counseling and treatment, making it an important theory in this field. The method of self-analysis through long-term analysis and research, as summarized by Freud, has contributed to the understanding of psychological barriers and the exploration of psychological motivation. Psychoanalysis aims to reveal the surface psychological laws and explore people's deep unconscious psychological mechanisms, allowing for the understanding and investigation of difficult-to-measure psychological states (Bian, 2023).

As a result of this further research, a new understanding of personality organization evolved, the id, ego, and superego were defined. The id is described as an unconscious reservoir of inborn drives and impulses derived from one's genetic heritage that are aimed at survival and perpetuation of life. Freud suggested that the ego functions at two levels of awareness—conscious and preconscious and that it performed the tasks of perception, thinking, and practical judgment in dealing with reality. The superego, which represents the repository of all the individual's adopted beliefs, values, and standards of the community, acted as a censor over the ego's functions, and was determined by the environmental factors and community/family standards (Freud, 1920).

Trauma studies deal with the investigation of psychological trauma, its manifestation in language, and the contribution of memory to the construction of individual and cultural identities. The concern of the subject lies in psychoanalytic theories of trauma and is supplemented with theoretical models of post-structuralism, sociocultural theory, and post-colonial theory. The proponents use this theoretical model to investigate representations of traumatic experiences and their contribution to identity and memory. Thus, put under scrutiny, the term 'trauma' is usually defined as a profoundly disruptive experience that seriously affects emotional organization and the perception of the external world. Trauma studies are concerned with the investigation into the role of trauma in literature and society, examining all the psychological, rhetorical, and cultural aspects that are involved. Scholars explore the intricate psychological and social factors that shape an individual's understanding of a traumatic experience and how language both reflects and molds such experiences. The field places emphasis on analyzing formal innovations in various texts, encompassing both print and media, to gain insights into how extreme events influence identity, the unconscious, and the process of remembering (Balaev, 2018).

In his later work focused on the issue of traumatic repetition and drawn from his study in war neurosis, Freud widened his previous views concerning the defense mechanisms of the ego and the etiology and development of traumatic experience on the mind in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920). Traumatizing events create ego conflicts, which "split off" from the ego's unity and the splits are repressed, yet return, often as dreams. (Freud 1920: 8). Neurasthenia arising from traumatic events is seen as the result of stimulation which overwhelms defense (*neurasthenia traumatica*) and traumatic neurosis, loss of protective barrier against stimuli (trauma as a cause of traumatic neurosis). (1920: 35). Per Freud, the human mind is an organism with a skin and some insides. This outer skin is a "shield" for impulses of potential danger (1920: 35). This forceful replay of the traumatic events in one's memory to regulate the intense emotions those memories elicit is a central feature of the neuroses constituting trauma. (1920: 19). Freud asserts that

psychoanalysis and abreaction work to foster a better understanding between patient and history. "It was a room in which Cypriot archaeologists kept skulls of suspected criminals until 1959, when a second opinion by Erik Erlich—as a visiting physician attached to the UN forces in Cyprus suggested that they had been injured ... Freud 1955–73: 150; 1959: 19, 20." Trauma memory is pathological because it is bereft of a narrative myth that the mind can use in reconciling it. The importance of activating prior knowledge and the impact of story recall for the routine incorporation of memory and the main idea. In literary- critical terms of trauma, the notion of memory as a psychic storehouse of experience is central.

### **Viewpoints of Some Other Theorists on Trauma**

Janet's trauma theory is founded on his observations of the inseparable connection and dynamic interaction between the mind and body. He identified the subconscious, which contains fixed ideas that result in symptoms such as involuntary movements and paralysis. Traumatic events and hereditary factors lead to the retraction of consciousness, impairing its ability to integrate. Janet's approach to psychological healing focuses on reintegrating dissociated consciousness by eliminating fixed ideas through suggestion and reinterpreting traumatic events. Healing involves enabling the patient to recount traumatic events as past incidents from a current perspective. Adaptation is achieved by evaluating the level of mental energy and encouraging methods to prevent further exhaustion. Janet also highlights the importance of the therapist's moral guidance and support in fostering the patient's psychological independence. In his book *In an Unspoken Voice*, Peter A. Levine offers a deeper understanding of how trauma in the body, brain, and mind works. It stresses that trauma is not a disease or disorder; rather, it is an injury caused by fear, loss, and helplessness. Levine is of the opinion that our inborn processes, which he calls natural biological responses to terror, can release trauma by self-regulating extreme states of arousal and high levels of affect. His work combines biology, neuroscience, and body-oriented psychotherapy to reveal how the missing *pièce de résistance* in modern man (humanistic thinking, philosophy) is the balance between his animal instincts and his powers of reason, thus creating whole human beings (Yoo, 2022).

### **Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)**

According to Paramitha and Kusristanti (2018), PTSD is a mental health condition that can affect individuals who have experienced or witnessed traumatic events such as terrorism, serious accidents, natural disasters, rape or other violent assaults, war, or conflicts. PTSD symptoms fall into four categories: intrusive thoughts, avoidance of trauma reminders, negative thoughts and feelings, and heightened arousal and reactivity. Even long after the traumatic event, individuals with PTSD may continue to experience intense, disturbing thoughts and feelings related to the incident. They might have nightmares or flashbacks, reliving the event, and may feel sadness, fear, or anger, often feeling disconnected from others. Those with PTSD might avoid places or people that trigger memories of the trauma and may have strong reactions to seemingly minor stimuli like loud noises or unexpected touches. Consequently, exposure to certain types of victimization can predict issues such as memory problems, dissociation, and PTSD, even though the overall number of traumatic experiences may influence general mental health outcomes. There are also gender differences in the psychological, social, and physical effects of trauma, influenced by the nature of violence exposure and the type of trauma. Understanding these gender differences is essential for developing effective prevention and intervention strategies (Freyd, 2003).

### **Cultural Trauma**

Trauma theory, as a branch of cultural studies, originated in the mid-1990s, exploring the

representation of traumatic events in fiction. Literature holds significant sway over human life, employing a powerful language to unveil the inner realms of human existence. Within its domain, there exists a realm of memories, introspection, retrospection, foreshadowing, flashbacks, and haunting recollections, all tinted by pain, wounds, and trauma. In the contemporary era, there is a notable surge in constructing narratives infused with anxiety.

In literature, the intersection of shock and dreaminess is apparent, often signaling the presence of trauma. Carruth (1996) contends that trauma is intricately tied to culture, especially in an era marked by catastrophes. Exploring past events and attentively listening to trauma fosters a sense of unity among cultures. Carruth's frequently cited definition of trauma characterizes it as a metaphorical wound that vocalizes its distress, reaching out to convey a reality or truth that would otherwise remain elusive. This illustrates how Carruth employs literary and metaphorical language to elucidate the essence of trauma (Carruth, 2016).

### **Role of Memories in Trauma**

Carruth has outlined the optimal role of literature in depicting trauma, emphasizing that the actual moment of trauma, often unacknowledged at the time, serves as a silent witness that later seeks representation. Carruth's frequently cited definition characterizes trauma as akin to a vocalizing wound, conveying a reality or truth not readily available otherwise. Trauma, according to this perspective, is not confined to a singular violent or originating event in an individual's past; rather, it possesses an unassimilated nature. As a result, the true nature of trauma is not fully comprehended in its initial occurrence but continues to haunt the survivor in subsequent experiences. By incorporating these psychological theories and concepts into the framework, this study analyzes the multifaceted nature of the traumatic impact of the Dust Bowl, considering individual, community, and societal factors, as well as the potential for both negative and positive psychological outcomes.

### **Discussion and Analysis**

In Hannah's *The Four Winds*, the traumatic effect of the Dust Bowl is a major theme. Seen in the light of psychoanalysis, the book amounts to an investigation of the psyches of characters: who they are and what behaviors they exhibit because of their experiences within this environmental disaster. With her presentation of the psychological effects of the Dust Bowl, Hannah allows the reader to understand the complex interplay between trauma and resilience in the lives of her characters. Sigmund Freud's notion of psychological trauma underwent a significant shift over the course of his professional lifetime.

### **Freud's Theory of Trauma**

In his first scientific work, Freud associated the genesis of neurotic symptoms with the memory of an earlier occurrence of infantile sexual seduction. He holds the view that "unconsciously retained in the mind are latent traces of these experiences which manifest themselves as bodily symptoms: this is the so-called seduction theory. However, as Freud conducted his background research and subsequently his clinical practice, he came to focus his attention on the importance of unconscious fantasies in the development of neurotic strains and prohibitions. With this shift in focus, he became a student of the dynamics of conscious and unconscious processing and how inner conflicts lead to disturbances in psychological well-being. In this regard, his shift toward the study of the workings of the inner mind and the effects of trauma on the individual represented a significant departure from the work he had conducted previously.

### **The Impact of Trauma on the Psyche**

Freud's theory of psychic trauma emphasizes the multi-factorial interplay of external events, internal conflicts, unconscious phantasies, and the unique experiences of an individual. He was of the view that traumatic events disrupt the normal functioning of the mind and lead to various psychiatric disorders. According to him, the mind would utilize its repressive or dissociative techniques to protect the self from strong affects related to the trauma experiences. However, the concealed memories of such events of trauma would continuously influence the cognition, emotions, and behavior of the person who interacted with the individual, often taking the form of symptoms like anxiety, depression, or phobias. Freud was also of the opinion that psychic effects of trauma were not personal but could also be passed on to other generations. He believed that adequately worked-through traumas would be passed on through the unconscious communication and identification with the stories in the family.

### **The Significance of Memory in Trauma**

Memory is central to Freud's model of psychological trauma. He believed that traumatic memories are stored in a vastly different way from other memories, often being fragmented or isolated, but that the sufferers might be reminded of these by sensory stimuli or other features of the original trauma giving rise to flashbacks, nightmares, and other intrusive phenomena. He recognized repression in the genesis of the traumatic memory. In other words, he believed that people can unconsciously 'block out' or distort a memory of a traumatic event as a defense against overwhelming emotion. However, these blocked memories could still influence the sufferer's thinking, feeling, and behavior.

### **Therapeutic Approach to Trauma**

Freud's understanding of psychological trauma had a significant impact on the therapeutic practices applied during the recovery process. He believes that the purpose of therapy is to enable the patient to confront and assimilate the traumatic memories. This would assist him in mastering and integrating the affects that are associated with the experience and then devise more victorious means of coping. Freud's treatment approach is termed as psychoanalysis related to trauma. It comprises the conception of exploring the unconscious with the approach of free association and dream analysis. The role of the therapist is to assist in re-retrieving the repressed memories and conflicts to enable the patient to accept the psychological pain/frustration and devise a more coherent sense of self.

### **Trauma in *The Four Winds* by Kristin Hannah**

Trauma and its representation in *The Four Winds* by Kristin Hannah resonate more with Freud's later views on the phenomenon. Trauma is not just molded by past events; it is closely connected with inner conflicts, fantasies, and the psychological formation of the individual. Elsa Martinelli is oppressed with lots of traumatic situations in the novel during the episodes of poverty, social lack of respect, and loss of beloved people. At the same time, the novel shows how the inner conflicts of Elsa, and her style of coping strategies impact the perception of these traumatic situations by the character. Elsa is left to raise her children, Loreda and Anthony, on her own. Subsequently, Elsa faces the decision of whether to stay and fight for her home or go to California in search of a better life. The novel follows Elsa as she faces the shocking realities of the Dust Bowl, including poverty, illness, and exploitation. She becomes embroiled in a labor struggle that ends in disaster. It says itself, "She felt unexpected assurance. Throughout her insipid life, she had been made to believe that she was ugly, hence illustrating the psychological effect of parenting on self-view and the

important role of resilience in combating emotional pain. Elsa's story is very enlightening in the process of seeking self- assurance despite the negative views by the parents and is great in understanding the interplay web that operates between self-view, resilience, and individual development when adversity knocks on one's door. "She felt surprising confidence. All her life, she had been told she was unattractive." (Hannah, 2021, p. 10). Interestingly, this comment also suggests another turning point in Elsa's journey, in that despite these horrific parents, she suddenly began to feel positive about herself. This shift in her self-concept can thus be read as a manifestation of her resilience, insofar as she has started to push back and fight against the stories that have been told about her by her parents and society. Her boosting self-esteem she can now relate to the second research question of study, which explores community support and strength as factors that lie at the base of overcoming psychological damage. While the novel itself does not focus on community support itself, the fact that Elsa was able to transcend what her parents have done to her and develop her own inner strength can be seen as an exemplar of her own resilience and growth.

### **Overcoming Negative Self-Perception**

She now struggles to break free from this negative self-image that her parents and society inculcated in her. She is going to be molded into a confident girl, very contrary to the perception she had in relation to her confidence. Unlike in the past, she perceives that society ought to have valued her because she was inculcated with the notion that she is unattractive in the earlier stages. Elsa's transformation is her strength to face adversity and be resilient to the challenges of the grim reality during the Dust Bowl era. Elsa now thought about herself as unattractive due to her self-esteem developed from her situations and experiences. Self- esteem of an individual is influenced by her self-concept, which has already been marred by the negative utterances of her parents and laws of society.

### **The Influence of Environmental Crisis on Mental Health**

This work portrays the traumatic effect of the Dust Bowl on the psyches of the main characters, including Elsa's own problems regarding her sense of self and self-worth. This understanding clearly outlines not only the interrelatedness of environmental emergencies and mental health but also the need to develop comprehensive strategies in confronting the mental repercussions of these calamities.

"Your daughter is expecting, "Mama said "charlotte? it's about durn time. I thought " No Mama snapped. Elsinore. "Me? expecting? it could not be true." (Hannah, 2021, p. 27). It suggests the psychological distress of dealing with personal success amidst planetary madness. The passage elaborates on the conflictual relationship between individual stories and generalized environmental distress. The first skepticism that Elsinore mans is a representation of the psychological coping mechanisms usually witnessed in individuals dealing with highly tense situations as those of the Dust Bowl against which the people had to come to terms.

"He gave Elsa one final look of disgust. Either way, I don't ever want to see you again, Elsinore. You are no daughter of mine." (Hannah, 2021, p. 31). It is the discovery of the fact of Elsa's father's rejection of her when knowing about her pregnancy that adds the next note of complication to the representations of family alienation proposed by the novel. In the given context, the father's inability to accept Elsa because of her pregnancy only complicates the already hurt emotions of Elsa and increases the psychological trauma of their relationship. It is here that one needs to bring out the fact to understand how personal choices and external circumstances interact in the emergence of psychological implications post-Dust Bowl. The pregnancy of Elsa is a metaphor for her own choices and has been a catalyst in the disintegration of the family ties under the

compulsion of environmental trauma.

Figures like Elsinore may well find refuge in acts of creation, making sense of and giving voice to emotional experience in stories. The book thus unfolds psychological journeys on a piece of its characters because they are involved in creative activity, whether by writing or storytelling, and invites one to see living and creating as a form of bridging back to resilience. Suffering from brokenness and the hurting relationships that emerge create an empathetic space with broader experiences of humankind dealing with the loss, displacement, and deep-seated turmoil caused by natural catastrophes. The reader is thus encouraged to see how natural disaster resonates with the human psyche, either individual or collective, through the character's psychological trajectory and actual human experiences of trauma.

### **Elsa's Character Experienced A Traumatic Event**

Elsa's account epitomizes the reasons for the chronic psychological effects of Dust Bowl survivors. The fact that the father and later husband Rafe left her was of great impact on her feeling of self-respect and security. The trauma of being abandoned to raise a child on her own combined with the social disgrace and decline associated with unmarried mothers are manifested in additional embarrassment, shame, and abandonment. These psychological scars are further developed deep into her lifetime, exacerbated by her struggle with post-traumatic stress disorder and anxiety and aggravated by depression.

"I will be a mother...for this child, Elsa would marry a man, who did not love her and, join a family for her child." (Hannah, 2021, p. 35).

This is because Elsa chooses to marry for reasons that stem from only one: to be able to say that she was married when her child was born, to provide familial security for the same child. A human being can go to such an extent to make sure that their loved one is safe and secure, and they have everything to call a perfect family in the turmoil that life is. A bit more sense is made of the passage when it comes from how autonomy and family responsibilities are negotiated post-Dust Bowl. Elsa making a choice toward serving her motherly role is to show the resiliency mechanisms which work the efforts to reduce the severe consequences of an environmental catastrophe. Her resilience, on the other hand, can be attributed to how she takes control of her mind and is able to stand strong in handling personal tests and mental turmoil's.

"They had suffered through these dry years in Texas panhandle, but with the whole country devastated by the crash of '29, and twelve million people out of work, the big city newspapers did not bother covering the drought." (Hannah, 2021, p. 44).

The novel tells of a web of trauma, not only for the environmental catastrophe of the Dust Bowl but also the larger social and economic upheaval associated with the Great Depression. The Dust Bowl led to much more than physical displacement and agricultural ruin. It led to psychological suffering linked to loss, uncertainty, and social disintegration. This is the wider conception of trauma to which, of course, your articulation of the more enduring psychological effects afforded by the novel apply. Along these same lines, the repetition and affirmation used to the statement that the news did not report the drought serve to further cement the impression of isolation and abandonment that was felt by individuals and communities who experienced the Dust Bowl.

"There was no money to buy the children new shoes, or to replace her last pair of stockings, and now, her husband was drinking on credit." (Hannah, 2021, p. 47).

The financial hardships would have a severe impact on the mental health of the characters. Elsa's husband is drinking booze on credit, maybe because of all the worrying and stress caused because of their financial situation. Economic instability and the husband using alcohol to cope with the accumulated problems point to the great difficulties that families have in meeting their financial obligations during this period. Socioeconomic factors contributing to the psychological effects that

were there throughout the Dust Bowl. The family is unable to afford the money to be able to purchase basic commodities like shoes and hosiery, typical of the widespread material deprivation and financial insecurity that characterized the Dust Bowl period.

“It had been hard times for as long as Loreda could remember. oh, in the early years, the time before memory, she knew rains had fallen, season after season, nourishing the land. Pretty much all Loreda remembered...” (Hannah, 2021, p. 48).

Loreda's reminiscence of "difficult times" exemplifies the widespread adversity faced by families enduring the Dust Bowl era. The stark juxtaposition between her idyllic recollections of plentiful rainfall and lush terrain during her early years and the desolation experienced during the Dust Bowl era highlights the significant and far-reaching changes brought about by environmental catastrophe. Loreda's contrast between previous abundance and current lack emphasizes the lasting psychological effects of environmental trauma, influencing not only her personal experiences but also her perspective of the surrounding world. The alterations in memory and perception have a role in the psychological effects of trauma, impacting an individual's sense of self, connection, and ability to take action in challenging circumstances.

### **Theme of Isolation**

This theme of loneliness in the novel evokes consideration of the possibility of cultural expressions like music, art, and literature to be defenses against trauma. Forms of these arts bring solace, release from suffering, and the ability to make meaning and logical sense of one's life through such powerful experiences, thereby implying that the psychological impact in case of trauma is reduced.

“Now, it wasn't just the animals and the people who were drying up. The land itself was dying.” (Hannah, 2021, p. 63).

From a psychoanalytic standpoint, the mental effects of witnessing environmental degradation and this loss of sustenance on the mental states of humans are disastrous. The presentation of the land as "dying" speaks to a profound sense of terror and despair, as the residents struggle for survival every day but also struggle with the sense of environmental scarcity and loss of lifestyle. The existence of such an existential threat creates feelings of impotence, anxiety, and depression for the survivors and their descendants who must face the realistic state of their circumstances. Moreover, the community and perseverance to help reduce the psychological damage that the characters experience within the story are also highly important. As the land undergoes destruction, communities are forced to come together, in reliance on each other, for support and as a means of strength in the face of disaster.

“At night, they gave the animals what water they could. The vegetables that Elsa and Rose had tended with such loving care were dead.” (Hannah, 2021, p. 65).

The tender care of their crops by Elsa and Rose is an insight into their deeply emotional stake in a matter of giving life in the face of affliction. A sudden and total wipe-out of their vegetables results in an actual destruction of their means of living. More painfully, the act demolishes the feeling of strength and hope for the future. Most often, the trauma of loss and helplessness is translated into long-term psychological conditions, such as post traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, and depression, in survivors and in the lives of their children. These are individuals who have fought and keep on fighting the trauma that has occurred in their life and a future that is still uncertain. Community plays a role in psychological suffering in this novel through the characters' coming together despite the devastation to aid in support however they could, as this is important in any emergency time. Kindness and community help are important in the role that is played helping to lessen the psychological trauma the characters are going through in the storyline.

“tell my parents and my children I love them. you are all better off without me. please, don't look for me. I don't want to be found. i don't know where I'm going anyway.” (Hannah, 2021, p. 89).

Rafe's decision to leave his family can be seen, in psychoanalytic terms, as a reflection of the mental repercussions of severe stress and poverty on the psyche. The inevitable poverty and ecological ruin caused by the Dust Bowl breed hopelessness and despair and make some people, like Rafe, truly feel that they are entirely immersed and devoid of power to change their condition of life. Despair can exacerbate feelings of worthlessness, guilt, and humiliation and cause such long-term psychological effects as PTSD, anxiety, and depression to the survivors and generations to come. At another level, Rafe's request not to be found and his saying that he does not know where he is going symbolize the disorientation and the loss of identity that the trauma of abandonment and being abandoned creates in the lives of the people.

### **Environmental Degradation**

By examining these motifs from a psychoanalytic perspective, we might enhance our comprehension of the distressing consequences of the Dust Bowl and its lasting influence on both group recollection and personal mental states.

“In these dust and drought years, the animals on the Great Plains were dying, and so this treeless land was losing the fuel source that the farmers had assumed would last forever.” (Hannah, 2021, p. 106).

Such a description of animal death and the land losing its ability to sustain life feeds on the deep sense of loss and disillusionment experienced by the farmers upon realizing that their surroundings were being ruined and were not living up to what they had believed would go on forever. The existence of environmental danger and chaos leads to antisocial psychological effects like post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, and depression among the victims and their future generations. These people are tortured by a history and an unknown future.

It's the blow to your psyche of seeing your environment and way of life deteriorate. Long-term psychological effects are reactions such as post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, and depression both in those who have had such experiences and also among their descendants. Existentially threatening environmental disruption engendering loss and a sense of betrayal and riddled anxiety about the future. Social relations and mutual aid at times of adversity.

### **Cultural Coping Mechanisms**

The novel's protagonists and individuals and communities affected by modern crises share similar psychological impacts. The long-lasting consequences of environmental trauma and its influence on the shared recollection and personal mental states. Analyzing these themes using a psychoanalytical approach is crucial for gaining a deeper comprehension of the traumatic impacts of environmental disasters in various situations and time periods.

“The season of cold had been hard on Loreda, too. She'd lost her father and her best friend and now school had closed. The dwindling of her world left her sullen and depressed.” (Hannah, 2021, p. 110).

Loreda also felt the coldness of the cold season. She had lost her father and best friend, and the school also closed. The reduction of her environment to degrees made her feel so blue and dispirited. This proves to psychologically mark the era of the Dust Bowl, but through Loreda. Loreda losing her father and best friend under the severe situation that the Dust Bowl was in proves how it can destroy family-social life. Her loss gets intensified by the closure of school, which embodies the destruction of normalcy and order in her life.

Loreda, as a character, is at this very moment in high adversity. She has lost her father, best friend, and school due to bad weather conditions. All of these are losses she experiences because now she feels miserable and depressed. She feels very lonely and unhappy because her world is shrinking. This again corresponds to our question on why a person and members of the family who survived

the Dust Bowl would usually experience prolonged feelings of sadness, fear, or tension. Now it does not explicitly state, but it is rather clear that Loreda has weaker support from her community.

### **Coping Strategies**

Loreda may employ various methods to improve her emotional well-being, although they are not explicitly mentioned in this context. For instance, she may resort to engaging in activities such as listening to music, engaging in artistic pursuits, or reading, as a means of effectively managing her emotions. This aligns with our third inquiry regarding the utilisation of art and music as therapeutic mechanisms during challenging times.

Resilience and Community support: Elsa's reflection hence provokes thought on community support and resilience as mediators of post-traumatic psychopathological symptoms. Absent laughter is the conveyer of the message of the trials the families had to go through during the Dust Bowl period and conveys sharply the very great importance of community and mutual co-operation in the building up of resilience and in the provision of comfort in times of distress.

“Nine Days, and still no respite from the storm. Wind rattled the walls and scratched at the door. When Elsa woke to yet another day of wind, she checked on Ant, who slept beside her. He hadn't been strong enough to get out of bed in the last four days” (Hannah, 2021, p. 129).

From Elsa's point of view, we experience the ongoing battle against the elements, which vividly demonstrates the traumatic effects of the Dust Bowl. This scene strongly relates to our research topic, objectives, and questions, providing valuable understanding of the psychological impact of environmental hardships.

### **Psychological Effects**

The continuous and prolonged exposure of the survivors of the Dust Bowl and their offspring to the relentless storm is a factor that contributes to their long-term psychological effects. The continuous wind, the walls that rattle, the scratching at the door, all help create an atmosphere of constant tension and anxiety, which can irritate conditions such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, and depression as time goes by.

“Your son is seriously ill, which I'm sure you know. He has a high fever and is suffering from severe silicosis. Dust pneumonia. Prairie dust is full of silica. It builds up in the lungs and tears away the air sacs.” (Hannah, 2021, p. 135).

Elsa's distress regarding her son's condition mirrors the intense emotional upheaval endured by Dust Bowl survivors and their progeny. The diagnosis poses a threat not just to her son's health but also Furthermore, the portrayal of Elsa's son's condition emphasizes the interdependence of physical and psychological well-being. The persistent environmental hardships of the Dust Bowl not only present immediate risks to physical health but also give rise to enduring psychological effects such as worry, powerlessness, and hopelessness. The story reveals the firsthand experience that Elsa would use as an example of the residual strength and fortitude that it would take to confront and, eventually, reverse the devastation of the Dust Bowl.

“Rose said. we can sell the cows to the government. That'll help some.” Tony said. They'll give us thirty-two bucks for the two cows.” Elsa drew in a deep, painful breath and stared out at the dead, She didn't want to go into the no job and almost no money.” (Hannah, 2021, p. 136).

Elsa's response to this information is clear. As she inhales deeply, she not only confronts the harsh truth of their financial predicament but also feels the burden of their shared hopelessness. Her glance towards the lifeless scenery matches the bleakness of their environment, expressing the emptiness of their future possibilities and the deep feeling of sorrow that fills their lives. The phrase “no job and almost no money” succinctly captures the stark reality confronted by Dust Bowl survivors. It was a harsh, in-your-face reminder of how far unemployment and economic suffering

reached in these families at the time, threatening to make the leap into extreme poverty. Elsa's refusal to talk of this nightmare setting with epilar answers much about the emotional weight of their circumstances with Kafkaesque nightmares, mentioning the deep anxieties and fears and uncertainties are what characterize their lives.

### **Barriers to Elsa's Resilience and Recovery**

This chapter discusses some psychosocial factors that hinder or reduce the resiliency by which Elsa can bounce back and recover: Elsa's aversion to making a trans-country trip indicates her fear of the unknown. The uncertainty and hazard of such a trip can evoke fear and apprehension, which will make it hard for her to come up with firm decisions in the face of adversity. Elsa's thinking that she would never be able to manage to live alone reflects an inner feeling of self-doubt and weakness. These negatively self-conceived images will depress her potentials for confidence and strength, making it difficult to face challenges and to care for her children. Interpersonal processes are the processes and relations that happen between at least two different people. 'Support systems' are the person's ties and means of providing and receiving help, and inspiration.

Elsa's fears of exploring a new environment alone highlight the importance of human relations and support networks. Breaking off old bonds and community linkages could heighten feelings of vulnerability and loneliness, therefore making others the object of dependence for Elsa, where one can turn to for emotional and material support. Elsa's apprehensions regarding her capacity to provide for her children bring attention to the intricate dynamics of mother obligation and nurturing. The perceived responsibility of ensuring the welfare of her children may lead to feelings of incompetence and uncertainty, influencing her choices and actions when confronted with challenges.

### **Gender roles and societal expectations**

This section will fill in a few details on how gender norms and cultural expectations inform what can be considered strength and toughness in Elsa's mind. That is, Elsa's belief that she is not strong enough could very well be due to the internalized cultural standards on gendered strength and endurance.

"Forty cents for a day's work. Now she knew why the folks in the camp walked to find work. Gas was already a luxury she could not afford." (Hannah, 2021, p. 185).

The low wages represent how powerless and exploited such people are, a situation that can make individuals feel inadequate, frustrated, and eventually get into despair. For Dust Bowl survivors and their children, such financial deprivation might only serve as a reminder of previous trauma, escalating long-term psychological distress, including both PTSD, anxiety, and depression symptoms. The mention that petrol is a luxury that Elsa cannot afford underscores the practical difficulties people face in accessing resources that sustain life. In the case of the Dust Bowl, where mobility was important for survival, the inability to afford petrol would further isolate somebody while limiting chances of finding employment and support systems.

"They had been in California for less than five months and they had worked as hard as was possible, and Elsa still had less than twenty dollars to her name." (Hannah, 2021, p. 209).

This quote speaks of yet another central theme of financial adversity that depicts the endless battle against poverty facing families like Elsa's. It reminds them of the brutal economic times of that time despite their fighting spirit, that their income is meager. This economic burden would not only be affecting the ability to meet their needs but would also be adversely affecting their psychological well-being. The struggle to make ends meet can lead to feelings of despair, worry, and helplessness among the survivors of the Dust Bowl and their legacy. This reminds of the misery and uncertainty they were undergoing during the time of the Dust Bowl and which account for long-term

psychological trauma resulting in post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, and depression. However, the novel calls out for community support in the face of adversity.

### **Financial Adversity and Mental Distress**

This phrase emphasizes further that Elsa and her family had financial difficulties, but they tried. Elsa and her family admitted that this picture inspired them because they were never the kind of persons to get tired of it. Elsa has stayed in California for less than five months and is left with under twenty dollars. It, therefore, means an eternity of economic despair that ignites the seriousness of obsession that Dust Bowl survivors must live with. The endless representation of such a financial burden in the novel shows exactly how economic difficulty translates into lasting psychological trauma and it explains factors leading to lasting psychological consequences like PTSD, anxiety, and depression.

This environmental disaster adds on to what is laid on human beings and families. Consequently, it led to hopelessness, anxiety, and desolation about the effort that one would endure in the name of attaining some financial standing, no matter how hard that is. The financial burdens of Elsa's family bring out the significance of interdependence and mutual aid within communities. Dust Bowl survivors would be relatively low-income but would still operate on communal support systems to carry them through when money got tight and offer them emotional support.

Universal Themes of Resilience: Although Elsa's ingenuity and resilience chronicle the Dust Bowl, such is applicable to contemporary people that face environmental catastrophes. The ability to adapt to adverse conditions, rely on community support, and create new ways of finding solutions are several universal themes that go beyond the history of a particular period. By comparing the stories of people in *The Four Winds* and those of survivors of environmental disasters that exist at present, researchers will get to know more about the long-lasting trauma that remains in human psychology and ways in which resilience enables to face adversity surrounding human beings throughout history and across different backgrounds.

"The good, God-fearing folk of California don't care about a baby's life, I guess." (Hannah, 2021, p. 228).

From *The Dust Bowl*, the determination to take matters into Elsa's hands and the unfortunate outcome of her endeavor increases her feelings of guilt and moral suffering, adding to the already predominant helplessness and hopelessness experienced by the survivors. Emotional aftermath of medical trauma is exemplified by Jean's pregnant wife, who a doctor refused needed surgery by a doctor during the Dust Bowl. This incident has shown a great deal of emotional trauma that results from medical emergencies of the time. Such a situation, when reinforced by a lack of proper medical facilities and the insensitivity of the powerful, increases helplessness and hopelessness in the Dust Bowl survivors, thus creating long-lasting psychological suffering.

This is the very inciting incident in the story that would push the characters into the borderlands of their very own mortality and into an extended confrontation with the existential question: life and death due to the failed operation. They find comfort and meaning in acts of bravery and compassion, that Elsa would try to save Jean's wife amidst the chaos and pain brought forth by the Dust Bowl. But in the tragic result, it makes them, too, accept their own limitations and the reality they are in, hence leading readers into deep self- reflection and moral evaluation.

Within the framework of my study inquiries, this statement addresses multiple crucial aspects. Psychological consequences are caused by the inability to afford necessities and the prevalence of hunger among Dust Bowl survivors and their families. They find expression in these impacts, from chronic insecurity to depression. Thus, the distinction between necessity and what seems like an apparently dispensable activity, such as cosmetics-making, typifies the psychological price that

people facing hard times and a hostile economy weather.

The capacity to discover beauty and significance during hardship is a shared human encounter that surpasses historical and cultural boundaries. By establishing connections between the experiences of characters in *The Four Winds* and those impacted by present-day environmental disasters, researchers can acquire understanding into the long-lasting psychological consequences of trauma and the mechanisms of resilience that aid individuals in navigating adversity in various time periods and circumstances.

“They'd been in the state long enough to understand Cotton was their lifeblood. Even the children had to pick.” (Hannah, 2021, p. 294).

The passage depicts the significant burden faced by individuals such as Elsa, who initially aspired to secure a brighter future for her children through education, while simultaneously striving to meet their fundamental needs. Elsa has to face the chilling fact that even the children have to work to support the family. The struggle to survive overpowers the yearning for education, hence suffering from financial devastation and disturbance of a normal life, which Dust Bowl survivors had to live with. Such economic difficulty can extend to long-term psychological effects, like anxiety, depression, and even post-traumatic stress disorder, which occurs to the survivors and their offspring. The loss of childhood innocence and the burden of working from such a tender age forms an even more significant psychological impact for a family that is going through times like this.

Despite that, people who live through the adversity of the Dust Bowl communities often rely on community aid and support systems to help face their problems. The knowingness that more people have reached out to help them come to the sense that cotton serves as their main means of living every day. This sense of belonging and cohabiting resilience helps to lessen the psychological impact on the families and in return raises their strength towards facing adversities. The psychological impact of such an economic difficulty is viewed in the Dust Bowl survivors as their forced realization is reached: even children have to work to earn money for the family by picking cotton. This economic stress of theirs led to such a burdened state of mind that they could not have supported their children in education—a thing that results in long-term psychological effects, including anxiety and depression, which may be traced in the survivors and even in their offspring.

In addition, Elsa's mention of "the land we loved turned on us" refers to the deep sense of betrayal experienced by those whose lives were closely connected to the country. It was an ecological destruction and ruined crops and livestock. It was able to break the profound relation of people with their land, thereby leaving wounds that last for generations. The credibility of Elsa's statement is that she is indeed disappointed with the American Dream. The concluding statement of this paper is that the immigration to the Western states in the hope of finding greener pastures has not brought about either wealth or cheer. Elsa assesses the wretched outcomes of wretchedness and want that the people of the Dust Bowl had to confront. This paper discusses further how the cold, hard fact of economic hardship and penury has absolutely shattered the dreams, as well as hopes, of people like Elsa. Elsa's use of the term "greed" may be interpreted as an effort to portray a broader manner of social and economic chasm. The buildup of this paper discusses further how greed and profiteering simply compound more suffering for people who are already in a quandary, thereby making this apparent situation of disillusionment and despair even worse for the people.

Elsa lists the concrete things lost by survivors of the Dust Bowl: jobs, homes, food, the land itself. Further, this paper describes the sense of loss and dislocation, recounting the emotional disaster perpetrated on people and families during the period of the Dust Bowl. Elsa's use of the term "the land we cherished turned against us" creates a sense of betrayal and alienation from setting. This paper goes on further to discuss how environmental disasters impact the psychology of such people for whom the mode of living and identity with oneself are all so interlinked with the environment.

## Conclusion

In her evocatively told novel, *The Four Winds*, Kristin Hannah describes how the Dust Bowl ravaged her characters, really drawing out the psychological effects of environmental disasters through characters such as Elsa and Loreda. We become as much part of the maelstrom the Dust Bowl has brought into their lives as they are, physically and emotionally. For example, the threat of losing one's home and employment, which Elsa faces, leaves one impotent and desperate, akin to the way real-life survivors feel. But in the middle of these storms, Hannah's book is also a celebration of the human spirit. Genevieve and Rose come to their neighbor's aid, offering support and thus portray how a community begins to heal in times of disaster. As Genevieve mobilizes fellow Texans to send help to their less fortunate neighbors, she represents the kind of strength and kindness that has to be summoned from within to rise above adversity. The conclusion emphasizes that *The Four Winds* powerfully portrays the psychological devastation caused by the Dust Bowl, illustrating how environmental disasters generate deep and lasting trauma. Through characters like Elsa and Loreda, the novel depicts feelings of helplessness, displacement, anxiety, and loss of identity—experiences comparable to those of real-life disaster survivors. The psychoanalytic reading highlights how such trauma may manifest in long-term psychological distress, including symptoms resembling PTSD, anxiety, and intergenerational trauma. At the same time, the novel celebrates human resilience. Community solidarity, mutual aid, and social connectedness are shown as crucial mechanisms for healing and recovery. Characters support one another through collective action, demonstrating that shared struggle strengthens communal bonds and fosters resilience. The analysis also underscores the therapeutic role of creativity—music, art, and writing—as coping strategies that help individuals process trauma and find meaning in suffering. Creative expression provides emotional relief, self-understanding, and psychological endurance amid hardship. By drawing parallels between the Dust Bowl and contemporary environmental crises, the study argues that trauma and resilience are universal human experiences. Ultimately, the novel reveals both the enduring psychological impact of environmental catastrophe and the remarkable capacity of individuals and communities to adapt, connect, and rebuild. By exploring these themes in the novel, the current study sheds light on critical psychological effects of environmental disasters and the ways in which individuals and communities navigate and cope with trauma.

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