

MELANCHOLY OF HAYMITCH ABERNATHY IN SUZANNE COLLINS'S *SUNRISE ON THE REAPING*

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ABSTRAK: Novel *Sunrise on the Reaping* (2025) karya Suzanne Collins menggambarkan dampak psikologis kekerasan dan kehilangan yang dialami Haymitch Abernathy di bawah kekuasaan otoriter Capitol. Penelitian psikoanalisis terdahulu tentang duka (*mourning*) dan melankolia telah mengkaji berbagai karya sastra, tetapi novel ini belum pernah dianalisis menggunakan teori tersebut. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis gejala melankolia pada Haymitch sebagai akibat kekejaman Capitol serta proses yang membawanya keluar dari kondisi tersebut. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan studi pustaka sebagai teknik pengumpulan data. Data primer berupa narasi, dialog, dan tindakan tokoh dalam novel, sedangkan data sekunder berupa buku dan artikel yang relevan. Data dianalisis menggunakan teori psikoanalisis Sigmund Freud tentang duka dan melankolia. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Haymitch mengalami melankolia setelah ibu, adik laki-laki, dan kekasihnya, Lenore Dove, direnggut darinya oleh Capitol. Gejalanya meliputi mimpi buruk yang berulang dan menyalahkan diri sendiri, menarik diri dari orang-orang terkasih, kecanduan alkohol, pencarian makam Lenore Dove, halusinasi tentang hantu yang menuntut balas, serta kewajiban membimbing para peserta (*tribute*) yang tewas setiap tahun. Haymitch keluar dari melankolia setelah kurang lebih 25 tahun, ketika Katniss Everdeen dan Peeta Mellark mengakhiri *Hunger Games*. Temuan ini menegaskan bahwa pelepasan libido dari objek yang hilang merupakan proses yang panjang dan bertahap. Penelitian ini memperluas penerapan teori Freud pada fiksi populer dan menunjukkan bahwa kekuasaan otoriter dapat menimbulkan trauma personal yang berkepanjangan.

KATA KUNCI: *psikoanalisis; Sigmund Freud; Sunrise on the Reaping; trauma*

ABSTRACT: *Sunrise on the Reaping* (2025) by Suzanne Collins portrays the psychological impact of violence and loss experienced by Haymitch Abernathy under the authoritarian rule of the Capitol. Previous psychoanalytic studies of mourning and melancholia have examined various literary works, but this novel has not yet been analyzed using the theory. This study aims to analyze the symptoms of melancholia in Haymitch as a result of the Capitol's cruelty and the process through which he emerges from this condition. The study employs a qualitative method with library research as the data collection technique. The primary data consist of the narration, dialogue, and actions of the character in the novel, while the secondary data consist of related books and articles. The data are analyzed using Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory of mourning and melancholia. The findings show that Haymitch experiences melancholia after his mother, younger brother, and lover, Lenore Dove, are taken from him by the Capitol. The symptoms include recurring nightmares and self-blame, withdrawal from loved ones, alcohol addiction, a search for Lenore Dove's grave, hallucinations of vengeful ghosts, and the obligation to mentor tributes who die every year. Haymitch emerges from melancholia after approximately 25 years, when Katniss Everdeen and Peeta Mellark bring the *Hunger Games* to an end. These findings confirm that the detachment of libido from a lost object is a long and gradual process. This study extends the application of Freud's theory to popular fiction and shows that authoritarian power can produce prolonged personal trauma.

KEYWORDS: Sigmund Freud; psychoanalysis; *Sunrise on the Reaping*; trauma

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INTRODUCTION

Sunrise on the Reaping is the second prequel novel in The Hunger Games trilogy by Suzanne Collins. Collins is an American author who began her professional career in 1991 as a scriptwriter for children's television programs on Nickelodeon. She gained worldwide recognition through The Hunger Games series, which consists of five novels, including two prequels, *The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes* and *Sunrise on the Reaping*.

First published in 2025 by Scholastic Press, *Sunrise on the Reaping* tells how the generation before Katniss Everdeen lived under the control of the Capitol. The Hunger Games is a cruel contest created by the Capitol, the capital city of Panem, and held every year. A boy and a girl from each of the 12 Districts compete in a deadly fight that is broadcast on television as entertainment. *Sunrise on the Reaping* tells the story of Haymitch Abernathy, who is selected as a tribute from District 12 for the 50th Hunger Games. In the arena, Haymitch and his allies from other districts devise a strategy to destroy the arena by attacking the generator and the water tank beneath it. However, the plan claims lives: Ampert is killed, Maysilee dies, and Wellie is murdered. Haymitch nevertheless succeeds in destroying the generator and is declared the victor after using the force field at the edge of the arena to kill his opponent. He then returns to District 12. There, his lover, Lenore Dove, is imprisoned and his family is killed by the Capitol because Haymitch is considered to have rebelled in the arena. After her release, Lenore eats a gumdrop that has been poisoned by President Snow, and she dies after asking Haymitch to promise that he will one day overthrow the Capitol. Because Haymitch fears that President Snow will harm those closest to him again, he falls into a life of alcoholism and isolation. In the epilogue, set after the main trilogy, Haymitch helps lead the rebellion to destroy the Capitol. He then returns to a quiet life and cares for Katniss and Peeta as if they were his own family.

Through the character of Haymitch, Collins portrays the profound psychological impact of the continuous violence and loss that people experience and witness under a dictatorial central government. Haymitch Abernathy is introduced as a 16-year-old from District 12 who is forced to fight in the Hunger Games arena, witnesses repeated killings, and ultimately has to bear the loss of the people he loves because of the Capitol's repressive policies. Since his victory, Haymitch has lived in the shadow of trauma. This condition illustrates a psychological phenomenon explained through the concept of mourning and melancholia in Sigmund Freud's *Mourning and Melancholia* (1917). In this theory, Freud distinguishes between mourning, in which a person is able to cope with their feelings and let go of the lost object, and melancholia, in which the lost object is not easily forgotten and the path to recovery involves considerable pain and self-hatred.

Several previous studies on Freud's concept of mourning and melancholia and The Hunger Games trilogy and prequel have been conducted. Hardianti (2022), in a study titled *Gangguan Kejiwaan Melancholia dalam Cerpen An Imaginative Woman Karya Thomas Hardy dan Novel Half of a Yellow Sun Karya Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: Studi Perbandingan* (Melancholic Psychological Disorder in Thomas Hardy's Short Story *An Imaginative Woman* and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Novel *Half of a Yellow Sun*: A Comparative Study), aimed to examine the psychological disorders of mourning and melancholia and the destructive effects experienced by the main characters, Ella Marchmill and Richard. The results show that both characters suffer mental disturbances in the form of prolonged depression and abnormal emotions as a result of losing a loved object. In addition, this disorder has destructive effects internally on the main characters

and externally on those around them, such as their husband and children. The study also emphasizes that gender differences influence how they express and cope with psychological suffering: Ella tends to use ineffective strategies such as suicide, while Richard chooses to continue living despite being in a state of melancholia. Next, in their study titled *Mourning, Melancholia, dan Trauma dalam Novel Karnak Kafe karya Naguib Mahfouz* (Mourning, Melancholia, and Trauma in Naguib Mahfouz's Novel *Karnak Café*), Oktarina and Zuhdi (2023) explain that the novel portrays Egyptian society after the 1967 Six-Day War, which suffered deep trauma due to political and social uncertainty. The study uses a psychoanalytic approach and close reading to unpack the characters' psychological experiences, showing that they experience a loss of identity, self-esteem, and love, and feel emptiness and a hollowing of the ego as an effect of that trauma. The findings show that turbulent sociopolitical conditions strongly influence the characters' psychological state and experience of trauma in the novel, which are reflected in their behavior and inner struggles. Thahir et al. (2018) read the Capitol's control over the economy, mass media, and ideology as a reflection of global capitalism. Cenreng and Destari (2025) analyze Finnick Odair and Haymitch Abernathy through the concepts of commodification and youth agency, drawing on *Sunrise on the Reaping* as a primary source. They find that children are commodified for two purposes: entertainment, as in Finnick's case, and government control, as in Haymitch's. Finnick remains a victim of commodification in adulthood, which limits his agency, whereas the adult Haymitch becomes an agent of commodification whose agency is unrestricted. Their study is significant because it turns attention to supporting characters, who are often overshadowed by Katniss Everdeen. However, it reads Haymitch mainly through his function within systems of power, namely the Capitol and the rebels. His inner response to the loss of his family and Lenore Dove falls outside its scope, and the claim that his agency is unrestricted does not account for the psychological effects of those losses. It also sits uneasily with the novel's depiction of nightmares, self-blame, withdrawal from loved ones, and alcohol dependence. Then Utami (2023), in a study titled *Mourning One's Own Mortality: Analysis of Kazuo Ishiguro's Never Let Me Go*, examines how the narration of Kathy, an unreliable narrator, plays a role in the process of mourning and in accepting inevitable death. The results show that Kathy's narration not only reflects an individual's effort to cope with loss and leave the past behind, but also serves as a way for her to accept and mourn her own approaching death. Using a close reading approach and the theory of mourning and melancholia, Utami finds that Kathy's story functions as a coping mechanism and also as an expression of her identity as a clone who is aware of her helplessness in the face of death. More recent studies in Indonesian journals apply the same framework to other characters. Farid (2024) reads Geppetto's grief in a film adaptation of *Pinocchio* as both mourning and melancholia and adds the social setting of a postwar society as a contributing factor. Nugraha et al. (2025) analyze the loss of a loved one as the source of melancholia in the character Jefferson Hope in *A Study in Scarlet*.

Therefore, the character Haymitch Abernathy in *Sunrise on the Reaping* is highly interesting to analyze through Freud's lens of mourning and melancholia, because it offers a psychoanalytic reading of a character like those in the studies above, yet no study has examined this novel using a similar theory. Psychological readings of the series have centered on Katniss Everdeen, whose responses to the Games have been interpreted as post-traumatic stress (Ibrahim & İşçi, 2025). Haymitch, whose suffering unfolds over decades after his own Games, has not received comparable attention. Moreover, unlike the

earlier Hunger Games trilogy, which highlights Katniss Everdeen's struggle in leading the rebellion, *Sunrise on the Reaping* focuses more on how a dictatorial government takes away the people closest to Haymitch because he rebelled in the Hunger Games, and on how this affects his psychology. Based on this, the study focuses on analyzing how the character Haymitch Abernathy exhibits symptoms of melancholia as a result of the Capitol's cruelty, and how he emerges from that process of melancholia.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Psychoanalytic Foundations of the Study

This study draws on Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory, specifically his essay *Mourning and Melancholia*, written in 1915 and first published in 1917. Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis, held that psychological suffering is rarely arbitrary: symptoms, dreams, and compulsive behaviors carry meanings that the sufferer often cannot articulate because their sources lie in unconscious conflict. The essay was written in the middle of the First World War, a period of mass death and collective bereavement, and it addresses a question that remains central to psychology and literary studies alike: why do some people recover from the loss of a loved one, while others remain trapped in a suffering that damages their sense of self? Because the two reactions resemble each other on the surface, as both involve sorrow, Freud examines them side by side to identify what separates ordinary grief from pathological dejection.

Mourning as a Normal Response to Loss

Freud defines mourning as a regular reaction to the loss of a loved person or of an abstraction that has taken the person's place, such as one's country, liberty, or an ideal. Mourning involves profound painful dejection, a loss of interest in the outside world, a loss of the capacity to love, and an inhibition of activity. Freud nevertheless regards these states as normal, and he notes that mourning does not involve a disturbance of self-regard. The mourner knows what has been lost and recognizes that the loss is real.

The central mechanism of mourning is what Freud calls the work of mourning. Reality testing shows that the loved object no longer exists, and it demands that all libido be withdrawn from its attachments to that object. This demand meets resistance, since people are reluctant to abandon a libidinal position, and so the withdrawal is carried out piece by piece, at great expense of time and psychic energy. Each memory and expectation that bound the person to the object is brought up, invested with energy, and then detached. When the work is complete, the ego becomes free and uninhibited again, and the person can form new attachments. Mourning is thus a gradual, painful, but ultimately self-limiting process.

Melancholia as a Pathological Response to Loss

Melancholia resembles mourning in its dejection, its withdrawal from the world, and its inhibition of activity. According to Freud, however, it differs in one decisive respect: a profound lowering of self-regard that expresses itself in self-reproach and self-vilification, sometimes culminating in a delusional expectation of punishment. Whereas the mourner experiences the world as having become poor and empty, the melancholic experiences the ego itself as poor and empty.

Another difference concerns awareness. The melancholic may know whom they have lost, but not what they have lost in that person, so the loss is at least partly withdrawn from consciousness. Loss in melancholia may also be ideal in nature: the object need not

have died but may have been lost as an object of love, for example through a slight or a disappointment. For this reason, melancholia often develops where the relationship was marked by ambivalence, a mixture of love and hostility toward the same person.

Ambivalence, Identification, and the Critical Agency

Freud explains this pathology through several linked processes. First, the person's attachment to the object was established on a narcissistic basis. When the object is lost, the libido is not displaced onto a new object but is withdrawn into the ego, where it establishes an identification of the ego with the abandoned object. In Freud's well-known formulation, the shadow of the object falls upon the ego. From then on, the ego can be judged by a special critical agency as though it were the lost object itself.

Second, because the relationship was ambivalent, the hostility once directed at the object is now turned against the self. Freud argues that the melancholic's self-reproaches are in fact reproaches against a loved object, redirected onto the ego. The ego is thereby both mourned and attacked, which explains why the suffering of melancholia is so persistent and why it can lead to self-destructive behavior. The critical agency that Freud isolates here anticipates what he would later theorize as the superego.

Key Concepts

The analysis in this study relies on the following concepts.

1. *Libido and cathexis*. Libido is the psychic energy invested in objects of love, and cathexis is the act of investing that energy in a particular object, person, or idea. Mourning requires the gradual withdrawal of cathexis from the lost object.
2. *Object loss*. The lost object may be a person or an abstraction, and the loss may be actual or ideal.
3. *Reality testing and the work of mourning*. Reality testing establishes that the object no longer exists, and the work of mourning is the slow, painful detachment of libido that follows.
4. *Ambivalence*. The coexistence of love and hostility toward the same object. In melancholia, this conflict prevents the libido from being withdrawn cleanly.
5. *Narcissistic identification*. The process by which the ego takes the abandoned object into itself, so that the loss becomes a loss within the ego.
6. *Critical agency and self-reproach*. The part of the mind that judges the ego harshly, producing the self-criticism and sense of worthlessness characteristic of melancholia.
7. *Unconscious processes*. Much of the conflict operates outside awareness, so the sufferer cannot fully explain the grief or the self-reproach.
8. *The economic view of libido*. Freud treats both mourning and melancholia in terms of the distribution of psychic energy: the work of mourning absorbs the ego's energy, while the unresolved ambivalent conflict in melancholia drains the ego and impoverishes it.

Resolution of Mourning and Melancholia

Freud emphasizes that neither process is instantaneous. Mourning proceeds step by step and ends when the ego is free again. Melancholia is more obscure, but Freud observes that it too tends to subside after a certain time without leaving gross changes behind, once the conflict around the object has exhausted itself. This point matters for the present study: it supports analyzing not only the onset and symptoms of melancholia but also the circumstances under which it ends.

Later scholarship refined and challenged Freud's distinction. Khanna (2024) traces how the categories of introjection and incorporation relate to mourning and melancholia in analyses of race, gender, and sexuality. Chatterjee (2021) reads Freud alongside Derrida to question whether mourning can ever be completed. Lemma (2024) emphasizes that the fate of the lost object in the mind separates the two states. These perspectives do not replace Freud's framework but sharpen attention to the persistence of the lost object and the conditions under which loss can be worked through.

Relevance of the Theory to the Present Study

The theory is relevant to *Sunrise on the Reaping* for three reasons. First, Haymitch's losses are concrete and traumatic, and they are inflicted deliberately by the Capitol, which raises the question of whether the conditions for mourning exist at all. Second, the novel represents states that correspond closely to Freud's descriptions: recurring nightmares that reenact the loss, self-reproach, withdrawal from others, and self-destructive behavior. Third, the narrative spans decades and ends with a form of recovery, which allows the full course of the condition to be examined.

Accordingly, the analysis uses the following indicators drawn from Freud: (1) persistent dejection and withdrawal from the outside world; (2) inability to detach from the lost object; (3) self-reproach and lowered self-regard; (4) signs of ambivalence toward the lost object; (5) identification with the lost object or its suffering; (6) self-destructive conduct; and (7) evidence of the gradual release of the attachment and the return of the capacity to love and engage with the world. Following Sugiarti et al. (2020), the theory serves as an analytical tool and conceptual framework that guides the identification and interpretation of data on the symptoms of melancholia.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative design, which produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words about the characteristics of an individual, a situation, or the phenomena of a particular group, and which prioritizes the quality and validity of observable data (Moleong, 2001). This design suits the research questions, which ask how a literary character displays symptoms of melancholia and how he emerges from it. Consistent with qualitative inquiry, which interprets meaning in text rather than measuring variables (Creswell & Poth, 2018) The reading follows psychoanalytic literary criticism, which treats a text's representations of desire, loss, and repression as objects of interpretation (Tyson, 2023).

The data are drawn from primary and secondary sources. The primary source is Suzanne Collins's novel *Sunrise on the Reaping* (2025). The primary data consist of narrative elements, namely descriptive narration, dialogue, and actions, that depict melancholia in the character Haymitch Abernathy. The secondary sources are books and articles on mourning and melancholia, together with scholarly articles on the novel and the series, which complement the primary data. Data were selected purposively: only passages relevant to Haymitch's response to loss were included.

As in most qualitative literary research, the researcher is the primary instrument. Freud's essay *Mourning and Melancholia* serves as the analytical framework, and the seven indicators set out in the Theoretical Framework serve as the coding guide. To establish trustworthiness, the study follows the criteria of Lincoln and Guba (1985): credibility is supported by close and repeated reading of the primary text and by

triangulation with secondary sources, and dependability and confirmability are supported by presenting each interpretation together with its textual evidence and page number.

Data were collected through library research, a method that uses documents such as manuscripts and books as the main data source. The procedure was as follows: (1) reading the novel in full to understand the narrative; (2) re-reading to identify and record passages related to loss, grief, self-reproach, withdrawal, and recovery; and (3) collecting secondary literature on Freud's theory and on the novel.

The data were analyzed through the following steps: (1) classifying the recorded passages according to the seven indicators of melancholia derived from Freud; (2) interpreting each passage in light of the corresponding concept; (3) comparing the findings across passages to trace the progression of the condition from onset to recovery; and (4) drawing conclusions in relation to the research questions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section analyzes Haymitch Abernathy's response to loss in *Sunrise on the Reaping* using the seven indicators outlined in the Theoretical Framework. It first establishes the losses and the conditions that obstruct mourning, then examines the symptoms of melancholia, and concludes with the circumstances under which Haymitch emerges from it.

4.1. The Losses and the Obstruction of Mourning

Haymitch's losses begin immediately after his victory. The Capitol punishes his defiance in the arena by killing his mother and younger brother when his house is set on fire to "welcome" him home, and by poisoning Lenore Dove, who dies after extracting from him a promise to bring down the Capitol. These losses come on top of the deaths he witnessed in the arena, including those of Maysilee, Ampert, and Wellie. They are therefore cumulative rather than single events, and each is inflicted deliberately by the same agent.

Freud describes mourning as a labor that depends on reality testing: the mourner must recognize that the object is gone and detach libido from it piece by piece. The novel shows that Haymitch is denied the conditions this labor requires. Lenore Dove's family conceals her grave, so he has no place to confirm and ritualize her death. Snow's threat against anyone he loves also makes attachment itself dangerous, so he cannot safely turn his libido toward new objects, which is the final outcome of completed mourning. State violence thus does more than cause loss. It structurally prevents the normal work of mourning, which helps explain why Haymitch's grief becomes pathological. This argument links the study's psychoanalytic framework to its political setting, and it is where the present reading departs most clearly from analyses that treat Haymitch chiefly as a functional agent within systems of power (Cenreng & Destari, 2025). The Capitol's control over information and ideology, which Thahir et al. (2018) identify as central to its rule, extends to the most private sphere: even the means of mourning are subject to its power.

4.2. Persistent Dejection and Withdrawal from the Outside World

Freud lists a profound painful dejection and a loss of interest in the outside world among the shared features of mourning and melancholia. Haymitch displays both. After Lenore Dove's death he systematically pushes away the people who remain close to him, as the narration shows:

And so, I drive away anyone and everyone who could ever have been considered dear to me. Old neighbors. Hattie. Customers. Schoolmates. Blair and Burdock hang on the hardest. (Collins, 2025)

The narrative explains this as protection, since he believes that distance will keep Snow from harming anyone else. This motive deserves a careful reading. Haymitch's withdrawal is partly a rational response to a real threat and not only a symptom. Yet its cost is the loss of his remaining attachments, and its scope extends well beyond what the threat alone would require. The result is the emptied, inhibited existence Freud associates with these states. The withdrawal also shows how the Capitol's violence extends beyond its direct victims. Even those who survive remain subject to the regime's power, because the fear of further loss shapes how they live.

4.3. Inability to Detach from the Lost Object

According to Freud, the bereaved person clings to the lost object and, in extreme cases, turns away from reality and keeps the object alive through hallucinatory wishful psychosis. Haymitch's search for Lenore Dove's grave and for any sign of her illustrates this refusal to detach:

I go looking for her one night, searching for freshly overturned earth and a new headstone in the graveyard on the hill. The others are there – Ma, Sid, my fellow tributes – but not Lenore Dove. The Covey's crooked house stands dark and silent in the moonlight. I roam around the yard like a stray dog, curl up under her window, yearning for her ghost to find me.

. . . One morning, as I awake half-naked on the green outside my house, covered in mosquito bites, I realize where she must be. . . . I am a man on a mission. For weeks, I wander through the trees, circle the lake, examine the soil under the apple trees, looking for any sign of her. Entreating the mockingjays for a clue to her whereabouts. Calling her name into the wind. The leaves turn scarlet and gold, crunching beneath my feet. "Lenore Dove! Lenore Dove!" I cry, but she doesn't reveal herself. (Collins, 2025)

Within Freud's economic model, this behavior shows libido that remains fully invested in the lost object. Reality testing has established that Lenore Dove no longer exists, but Haymitch does not complete the detachment that should follow. His longing for her ghost to find him suggests an attempt to sustain the relationship by other means. Because the family's concealment of the grave deprives him of the evidence that reality testing requires, his persistence is more than a personal weakness, and it again shows the obstruction of mourning discussed above. Ibrahim and İşçi (2025) likewise read nightmares of the dead in Katniss as a trauma symptom, which suggests that the series consistently represents survivors as haunted by those they lost.

4.4. Self-Reproach and Lowered Self-Regard

Freud identifies the lowering of self-regard, expressed in self-reproach and self-vilification, as the feature that most clearly separates melancholia from normal mourning. Haymitch's recurring nightmare enacts exactly this:

The nightmare always starts with me feeding her that gumdrop. We're in the Meadow, holding fast to each other, her face shining with tears of joy. And I don't check the bag. I never check the bag. Why can't I remember to check the bag? I just lift that bloodred gumdrop to her lips, and there's no stopping

what follows. My realization, her terror, the bloody foam, my pleading with her to stay, her making me promise. (Collins, 2025)

The dream also reveals a displacement of responsibility. The Capitol, which planted the poison, is absent from the scene, while Haymitch occupies the position of the guilty party. The agent of the loss is external and unmistakable, yet his self-accusation attaches to himself. This is the pattern Freud describes: the reproach that belongs elsewhere is redirected at the ego. The question the dream repeatedly poses, why he cannot remember to check, expresses a self-judgment that no reality can refute, since the event cannot be undone. The repetition also shows that the loss has not been processed. It returns each night in the same form, as an unfinished event instead of a past one.

4.5. Ambivalence toward the Lost Object

Ambivalence is the core of Freud's explanation for why melancholia arises where mourning would otherwise occur. In the novel, the relationship between Haymitch and Lenore Dove is predominantly loving, and the text does not support attributing open hostility to Haymitch toward her. The ambivalence evident here is of a particular kind. It lies in the tension between love, which keeps her present in his mind, and the burden of the promise she extracts from him, which ties his survival to a task he cannot yet carry out (Collins, 2025). The hostility in the situation appears to be directed less at Lenore Dove herself than at what her death demands of him. The ghosts that visit him can be read as a figuration of this unresolved conflict:

Now that Lenore Dove has said her piece, other ghosts, filled with hate and rage, visit me in the night. Panache seems to have little to do but hunt me down and Silka thinks I owe her a crown. The terror bleeds into my waking hours. I start sleeping with a knife in my hand. (Collins, 2025)

Their hatred is felt as an accusation that he cannot answer. This indicator is the most interpretive of the seven and should be argued cautiously. The textual evidence supports guilt, accusation, and persecutory imagery more firmly than it supports hostility toward the beloved. The analysis therefore treats ambivalence as a reading of the novel's structure of feeling, not as a fact stated in the text, and it acknowledges that Freud's formulation was developed for cases in which hostility toward the object is more directly evident.

4.6. Identification with the Lost Object or Its Suffering

For Freud, the decisive step in melancholia is that the shadow of the object falls upon the ego, which takes on the object's fate and is then judged as the object would be. The nightmare quoted in 4.3 shows a form of this identification. Haymitch repeatedly occupies the scene of Lenore Dove's death, with her terror, the bloody foam, and her plea, and relives her suffering as if it were his own. His own survival is consequently experienced as a kind of guilt, since he lives while those he loved do not. Identification also extends to the other dead. Maysilee returns to his memory when he finds a rebel slogan sprayed in an alley:

I hit the bottle even harder. Drinking, disappearing into the night, regaining consciousness in the forgotten places of District 12. One morning, at the crack of dawn, I snap awake, shivering, in a back alley in town. I'm staring at a message sprayed in bright orange paint. NO CAPITOL, NO HANGING TREE! It's a rebel play on the Capitol's propaganda. NO CAPITOL, NO REAPING! Tucked away in this alley, a rallying cry beyond the

Peacekeepers' radar. A memory tugs at me. . . . Maysilee in the arena. After she killed the Gamemaker . . . spider silk and her mamaw's song. (Collins, 2025)

Together with the tributes he later mentors, the dead are carried into his psychic life as part of his burden. In Freud's terms, the ego has absorbed not one lost object but a series of them, and this accumulation helps explain the duration and depth of his condition.

4.7. Self-Destructive Conduct

Freud observes that the melancholic's ego, treated as an object, can be driven toward self-destruction. Haymitch's alcohol dependence is the clearest example in the novel. He consumes sleep syrup and liquor to escape reality, yet the escape fails:

. . . I drain the bottles of sleep syrup to escape reality, only to feed her gumdrops in my dreams. (Collins, 2025)

He drinks, disappears into the night, and wakes in forgotten places of District 12 (see the passage in 4.5), and later he begins sleeping with a knife in his hand, a sign that the terror has crossed from the night into his waking life (see the passage in 4.4). This behavior is best read as a symptom of the unresolved conflict and not as an independent problem. The substance is used to anesthetize a pain that cannot be worked through, and in doing so it prolongs the condition. The discovery of the slogan in the middle of his stupor is also instructive. It marks a moment at which his private suffering meets a collective form of resistance, and the memory it brings, of Maysilee in the arena, shows that his personal losses and the regime's violence cannot be separated.

The yearly obligation to mentor tributes adds a structural dimension. Haymitch knows what awaits him: "every year for my birthday, I will get a new pair of tributes, one girl and one boy, to mentor to their deaths. Another sunrise on the reaping". The Capitol thus reproduces his trauma on a fixed schedule, and the phrase "another sunrise on the reaping" captures the compulsion to repeat. Because the source of loss is institutional and recurring, recovery cannot occur by the individual's effort alone.

4.8. Gradual Release of the Attachment and the Return of the Capacity to Engage with the World

Freud observes that melancholia, like mourning, tends to end after a certain time once its conflict has exhausted itself. Haymitch's recovery is consistent with this gradual pattern. The novel presents it as the outcome of a long span, some twenty-five years between the 50th Hunger Games and the events of Katniss and Peeta's Games, and not as a sudden change.

Two features of the recovery stand out. First, it coincides with the fulfillment of the promise Lenore Dove demanded: the Capitol is overthrown with Haymitch's participation (Collins, 2025). The promise had bound his libido to the dead, and its completion offers a form of release that Freud's individual-centered account does not fully anticipate. Second, recovery takes the form of renewed attachment, as in his recollection of Katniss:

A few days after that, Katniss showed up with an old basket filled with goose eggs. "Not to eat, to hatch. I raided a few different nests, so they can breed all right." Never mind that we had roast goose for dinner. She's not an easy person; she's like me, Peeta always says. But she was smarter than me, or luckier. She's the one who finally kept that sun from rising. (Collins, 2025)

Katniss and Peeta become a surrogate family, and the geese, meant to be hatched and not eaten, point to a life oriented toward the future. This is consistent with Freud's view that, when the work is done, the ego becomes free again and can form new attachments. The recovery is nevertheless not total. Haymitch's closing words, that Katniss "finally kept that sun from rising," indicate that the memory of the reaping remains active even as its hold weakens. The novel thus portrays recovery as a lessening of the condition and not as a complete erasure of the past.

4.9. Synthesis and Implications

Across the seven indicators, Haymitch's condition matches Freud's description of melancholia more closely than it matches normal mourning. It includes persistent dejection and withdrawal, an inability to detach, self-reproach out of proportion to his actual responsibility, identification with the dead, and self-destructive conduct. It also ends gradually, after a long time and through new attachments, in a way that supports Freud's view of its limited duration.

Two broader points follow. First, the Capitol's violence works not only through the infliction of loss but also through the destruction of the conditions for mourning, namely a known grave, safe attachments, and freedom from repetition. Authoritarian power in the novel thus produces melancholia as a lasting effect. Second, the findings complicate the reading of the adult Haymitch as an agent whose agency is unrestricted (Cenreng & Destari, 2025). His strategic competence as a mentor and rebel is real, but his inner life during the same period is dominated by loss, guilt, and compulsion. His capacity to act and his psychological injury coexist, and an account of his agency that omits the latter is incomplete.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Haymitch Abernathy in *Sunrise on the Reaping* exhibits melancholia in response to the loss of the people he loves, losses inflicted deliberately by the Capitol. In line with Freud's, Haymitch is unable to withdraw his cathexis from the lost objects, which produces prolonged suffering. The analysis identified this condition through persistent withdrawal from the outside world, an inability to detach from Lenore Dove, self-reproach expressed in a recurring nightmare, identification with the dead, and self-destructive conduct in the form of alcohol dependence. The Capitol's violence also destroys the conditions for mourning, namely a known grave, safe attachments, and freedom from repetition, since Haymitch is made to mentor new tributes to their deaths every year. Authoritarian power in the novel thus produces melancholia as a lasting effect and not merely as an incidental consequence of loss.

Haymitch lives in this condition for some twenty-five years. Consistent with Freud's view that the withdrawal of libido from a lost object is long and gradual, his recovery comes slowly, after Katniss and Peeta bring the Hunger Games to an end and the Capitol is overthrown, fulfilling the promise Lenore Dove asked of him. Katniss and Peeta become a surrogate family, which shows that Haymitch has regained the capacity to form new attachments and to find meaning in life again. The recovery is not total, however, since the memory of the reaping remains active even as its hold weakens.

These findings complicate readings of the adult Haymitch as an agent whose agency is unrestricted (Cenreng & Destari, 2025), because his strategic competence coexists with a psychological injury that shapes his inner life. This study is limited to a single character and to one theoretical framework, and its reading of ambivalence toward

Lenore Dove is interpretive and should be treated with caution. Future research could compare Haymitch's melancholia with that of other characters in the series, such as Katniss or Finnick, or examine it through trauma theory (e.g., Caruth, 1996).

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Author 1: data curation, formal analysis, writing (review and editing); Author 2: conceptualization, methodology, writing.

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The author declares no conflict of interest.

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DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The primary data analyzed in this study are passages from Suzanne Collins's novel *Sunrise on the Reaping* (2025), which is a commercially published work. All passages analyzed are quoted in the article. No new datasets were generated. The secondary sources are cited in the reference list.

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