'NOTHING YOU CAN TAKE FROM ME WAS EVER WORTH KEEPING': INTERTEXTUALITY AND SURVIVAL IN *SUNRISE ON THE REAPING*

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Abstract: *This paper aims to explore the intertextual complexity of Suzanne Collins's 2025* Sunrise on the Reaping*, the second* Hunger Games *prequel. In addition to providing Haymitch Abernathy with a compelling backstory, the novel establishes further connections between the plots and protagonists of the other volumes, as well as between the dystopian universe of Panem and a wide range of literary and philosophical texts. The paper intends to investigate the ways in which the four epigraphs reflect the novel's indebtedness to the works of Hume, Blake and Orwell, identify the various other literary, musical and political echoes that pervade the text, ranging from ancient epics to real and fictional protest songs, and elaborate on the intertextual dimension of the protagonists' personalities. Its ultimate goal is to highlight the extent to which, far from merely tying a number of loose narrative threads, this fifth instalment adds further layers of depth to the series' premise and the identities of its characters.*

Keywords: *dystopia; Haymitch Abernathy; identity; Suzanne Collins;* The Hunger Games*;*

Eagerly awaited by an ever-expanding fandom since its 6 June 2024 announcement, *Sunrise on the Reaping* shares its three-part, twenty-seven-chapter structure with the *Hunger Games* trilogy volumes and adds a further set of thought-provoking epigraphs to the corpus initiated by the franchise's older prequel, the 2020 *Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes*. The odds in favour of at least one of them being reaped from 18th-century Scottish philosophy had been high from the very beginning; indeed, Collins's acknowledgement of the inspiration drawn from David Hume's "idea of implicit submission" (Jack) should have been specific enough for scholarly readers to pinpoint its exact source well ahead of the novel's publication. The third and lengthiest of the four excerpts prefacing Haymitch's Quarter Quell challenge quite appropriately belongs to the opening paragraph of Part I, Essay IV ("Of the First Principles of Government") of *Essays, Moral, Political, and Literary*, Hume's 1758 compilation of political analyses:

> "Nothing appears more surprising to those, who consider human affairs with a philosophical eye, than the easiness with which the many are governed by the few; and the implicit submission, with which men resign their own sentiments and passions to those of their rulers. […] It is therefore, on opinion only that government is founded; and this

> maxim extends to the most despotic and most military governments, as well as to the most free and most popular." — David Hume

Sixteen-year-old Haymitch, a begrudgingly-submissive subject of the particularly despotic and military government of Panem, first has occasion to ponder on the rationale of this status-quo in the wake of the tributes' failure to take advantage of their "four to one" numerical superiority over the Peacekeepers overseeing their training and stand up to them with the arsenal of weapons at their disposal: "Why do we let the Capitol brutes rule us? Because we're cowards? Because we're stupid?" (*SotR* 105)

Plutarch's question – "Why do you submit to it all?" – is followed by a careful assessment of the factors tilting the scales in favour of the governed and the governors respectively; whilst acknowledging the Capitol's military technology, Plutarch clearly feels that the "sheer difference in numbers... district to Capitol" (*SotR* 105) should prompt more citizens to reject the Capitol's conditions:

> 'I see the hangings and the shootings and the starvation and the Hunger Games. […] And yet, I still don't think the fear they inspire justifies this arrangement we've all entered into. […] 'Why do you agree to it? Why do I? For that matter, why have people always agreed to it?' (*SotR* 106)

Having planted this particular seed of doubt in a relatively receptive mind, Plutarch goes on to turn his Humean phrase of choice into a personalized slogan for rebellion – "No more implicit submission for you, Haymitch Abernathy." (*SotR* 199) – that his reluctant champion embraces and betrays in relatively quick succession: "Turns out I was built for implicit submission, head to toe, through and through, inside and out." (*SotR* 258); "I think of the moment with the knives in training, of the country as a whole, and how we just keep submitting to the Capitol's rule." (*SotR* 302); "I want to scream out the truth. […] But I just sit there, mute and radiating implicit submission." (*SotR* 342)

The salient reminder of the pitfalls of cause and effect from Hume's *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* – "That the sun will not rise tomorrow is no less intelligible a proposition, and implies no more contradiction, than the affirmation, that it will rise." – featured as the fourth and final epigraph provides both the philosophical core of Haymitch's last argument with Lenore Dove and the novel's title:

> '[…] the reaping's going to happen no matter what I believe. Sure as the sun will rise tomorrow.' […]

> 'Well, there's no proof that will happen. You can't count on things happening tomorrow just because they happened in the past. It's faulty logic.' (*SotR* 10-11)

Over the course of his Hunger Games experience, Haymitch shifts from someone essentially unable to picture the sun "rising on a world without a reaping" (*SotR* 11) to the kind of person "capable of imagining a different future" (*SotR* 378) that the resistance needs. Notwithstanding his defeatist conclusion – "I am living proof that the Capitol always wins. I tried to keep that sun from rising on another reaping day, I tried to change things, and now everybody's dead." (*SotR* 377) – Lenore Dove's final request ultimately overrides the unavoidable side-effects of survivor's guilt and trauma: "Don't you... let it... rise... […] on the reaping." (*SotR* 366-367)

Haymitch's journey moreover provides yet another illustration of the degree to which the gradual transformations undergone by the protagonists of *The Hunger Games* corroborate the views on the perpetually changing self outlined in Hume's *Treatise of Human Nature* (Michaud 201). His metamorphoses are in fact considerably more varied and abrupt than those affecting Peeta and Katniss, as the sixteen-year-old ironically "born on reaping day" (*SotR* 1) and forced to become the man of the Abernathy family while still a child finds himself taking on scores of additional identities after being cast as "replacement" (*SotR* 25) tribute in the wake of Woodbine Chance's brutal execution. Within a matter of weeks, Haymitch transitions from "puny long shot" and unlikely "victor material" (*SotR* 60) to "the hero of the moment. The star of Panem. The victor of the Quarter Quell" (*SotR* 340), from the young "looker" with bright "gray Seam eyes" (*CF* 197) preserved for posterity by the Capitol's archival footage to the "wild-eyed scarecrow in Capitol evening wear" (*SotR* 369) that returns in time to witness the obliteration of his family, and over a longer period of time to the "paunchy, middle-aged man, who […] staggers onto the stage" (*HG* 20) during Katniss and Peeta's 74th Hunger Games reaping.

Given the extent to which the Capitol and the Party alike rely on disinformation and strife to rule Panem and Oceania respectively, it seems particularly appropriate that the first epigraph should feature one of the most insidious aspects of propaganda outlined in George Orwell's 14 March, 1942 diary entry: "All propaganda is lies, even when one is telling the truth. I don't think this matters so long as one knows what one is doing, and why." Just as significantly, the second one, also highlighting the underrated potential of maliciously wielded veracity – "A truth that's told with bad intent, / Beats all the lies you can invent." – reflects the revolutionary vision of a poet Orwell himself regarded as more attuned to "the nature of capitalist society" (*Selected Essays* 23) than most Socialist politicians.

By no means confined to the paratext, Orwellian echoes abound in the novel, ranging from the "huge banner of President Snow's face" (*SotR* 15), reminiscent of the posters tacked to the wall of Victory Mansions, to the way in which the arena, shaped "like a giant eye" (*SotR* 347), evokes the "Big Brother is watching you" slogan and the ominous sense of uncertainty surrounding the ubiquitous cameras: "It's impossible to tell when they're watching […] But it will all be recorded." (*SotR* 93) Much like Winston Smith, Haymitch wonders whether his memory is the only viable one left in the country – "Does no one remember?" (*SotR* 346) – and has "no way of knowing whether [he is] being watched at any given moment" (Orwell 3), unless he avails himself of the relative privacy of pockets of forgotten time such as District 11's Justice Building attic, "the only spot […] that isn't bugged" (*SotR* 336) and as such the Panem equivalent of the "shabby little room above Mr Charrington's shop" (Orwell 136).

Likewise, lines 53-54 of William Blake's 1803 *Auguries of Innocence* fulfil a dual function, introducing a central theme and hinting at the wealth of poetic fragments interspersed throughout Haymitch's unexpectedly lyrical prose. Much in the same way in which the only verse epigraph of *The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes* prepares readers for a considerably more thorough induction into the poetry of William Wordsworth than a mere stanza of "The Tables Turned," Blake's intriguing couplet anticipates the juxtaposition of authenticity and pretence, innocence and corruption that inevitably characterises all District 12's collisions with the Capitol and prompts expectations of further incursions into Romantic poetry. Haymitch's fascination with every single aspect of Lenore Dove's identity and background provides him with an ample repertoire of Covey melodies, including the one he tentatively sings to the "four baby chicks from District 9" (*SotR* 156):

> Ah Sun-flower! weary of time,
> Who countest the steps of the Sun:
> Seeking after that sweet golden clime
> Where the travellers journey is done. (*SotR* 155)

In addition to representing a moving nod to District 9's fields of sunflowers and its tributes' explosive tokens, the first half of Blake's "Ah! Sun-flower" also enriches the novel's intertext with reminders of "radicalism, and the importance of nature" (Womack) and hints of completed quests and the "possible destination after death" (*SotR* 206) featured in Poe's "The Raven," Lenore's explanations and Burdock's funeral song. Had it also been included, its second stanza would have provided even subtler echoes of future and past identities, foreshadowing Haymitch's despondency following the loss of his love – "Where the Youth pined away with desire," (Blake 5) – and

simultaneously commemorating the mysterious disappearance of Wordsworth's Lucy Gray in a snowstorm and her District 12 namesake at the hands of a young Coriolanus Snow, as well as their posthumous survival across decades of music and literature:

> And the pale Virgin shrouded in snow:
> Arise from their graves and aspire,
> Where my Sun-flower wishes to go. (Blake 6-8)

Far from being confined to the works of the three writers featured in the novel's paratext, the intertextual scope of *Sunrise on the Reaping* surpasses that of other *Hunger Games* volumes and includes, in addition to the full poems and songs, excerpts and analyses of canonical texts and song lyrics pervading *The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes* and making briefer appearances in the trilogy, concrete glimpses of books and libraries and considerably more numerous instances of intertextual behaviour. Apart from explaining Plutarch's familiarity with millennia-worth of history and culture ranging from ancient Rome to the Dark Days in the original trilogy, the sight of the "thousands and thousands of volumes" (*SotR* 123) in the Heavensbee library occasions interesting insights into the various characters' relationship with the printed word. Having already noted that the identity of each of the "haughty people in fine, old-fashioned clothes" in the paintings lining the walls of Plutarch's marble fortress seems attached to an object "meant to define them" (*SotR* 122), Haymitch engages in a number of momentous conversations under the watchful eyes of "an old man with a white beard holding out an open book" (*SotR* 123). Not only does Plutarch introduce Trajan, the original owner of the library, as the only useful ancestor in the Heavensbee family tree, deplore the Capitol's limited consumption of printed content, and assert his faith in the scholarly vestiges of the past – "Everything you need to know about people is right here in this room" (*SotR* 124) – but he also goes on to confirm his erudition and unsettle Haymitch by joining him in a recitation of Lenore Dove's name poem: "I guess, with all these books, her poem could be here. But for him not only to have read it, but memorized it, unnerves me. I don't like her name in his mouth." (*SotR* 125)

President Snow's bitter comments suggest a comparatively shallow appreciation of books as mere status symbols – "Look at them all. Survivors. During the Dark Days, people burned books to stay alive. We certainly did. But not the Heavensbees." (*SotR* 130) – belied by two of his other *Hunger Games* incarnations, the "small, white-haired man" (*CF* 17) engrossed in the pages of a book that Katniss unexpectedly encounters in her victors' village study and the little boy brought to tears by the sight of "picture books — […] he'd pored over with his mother — reduced to ashes" (*BoSaS* 5). It is also

quite interesting to contrast the Snows' decision to surrender "innumerable volumes of books […] to the fireplace to keep the family from freezing to death" (*BoSaS* 5) with the never mentioned but nonetheless very likely sacrifices behind the Covey collection, "ancient things with cracked leather bindings and paper delicate as moth's wings. The family treasure." (*SotR* 123)

Haymitch's own reverence for the words of the past stands out as an extension of his love for a girl whose identity is inextricably linked with literature from the very beginning of their relationship: "there she was […] a small clothbound book in her hand" (*SotR* 6). Such is the strength of this association that, rather than prompting further cynical musings on the human cost entailed by the Heavensbees' wealth, the "towering shelves" of "floor to ceiling" books conjure up memories of the very devotion he appears to have internalised: "This room is Lenore Dove's dream come true. A world of words to wrap herself up in. Each book's as precious as a person, she says, as it preserves someone's thoughts and feelings long after they're gone." (*SotR* 123)

Named "half for the dead girl […] in this old poem" (*SotR* 6), Lenore Dove Baird belongs to a clan of once nomadic artists intent on safeguarding the literary legacy of distant centuries through all the means at their disposal, from treasuring the occasional book to adapting and perpetuating the lines of old poetry in the lyrics of their songs and naming their children after the characters of the manifold ballads in their repertoire. The "small, secret graveyard" hidden deep into the woods reveals that the intertextual connection established at birth transcends death, its "beautifully carved headstones" (*SotR* 372) marked not with names but with snippets of poems: lines 31-32 of Christina Rossetti's "Maude Clare" for Clare Ivory, lines 57-60 of William Wordsworth's "Lucy Gray" for Lucy Gray and lines 27-30 of Edgar Allan Poe's "The Raven" for Lenore Dove, the last of the Baird girls.

Sunrise on the Reaping thus confirms the Coveys' unofficial status as custodians and champions of literary texts that would otherwise be confined to the largely neglected libraries in the Capitol and remain perpetually unavailable to the inhabitants of the districts. In this capacity they bear a certain resemblance to the drifters Guy Montag eventually joins in *Fahrenheit 451*, people whose original identities are relinquished in favour of book titles and authors' names: "'I am Plato's Republic. […] We are also Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.'" (Bradbury 194) Bradbury's exiled intellectuals have perfected a method that enables them to "recall anything that's been read once" (194) and pass the books on to their children "by word of mouth" (196), while the Covey set literary texts to music, availing themselves of its mnemonic potential, celebrate them through their naming convention and even engrave them on tombstones.

Haymitch's love for Lenore motivates him not only to contribute to the Covey corpus of source materials but also to participate in their oral tradition; quite significantly, the most precious gifts he offers her are "a small volume of poems by the long dead [some of which] made it into songs" (*SotR* 124) and a festive rendition of her name song:

> I know every word of the song, since I learned it for Lenore Dove's birthday last December. It wasn't that hard, it being what she calls an earworm, meaning it sticks in your head whether you want it to or not. It's true, the thing's addictive, rhyming and repeating in a way that dares you to stop, all while telling you a haunting story. (*SotR* 54)

A staple of ballad composition and therefore a likely feature of at least some of the Covey melodies, Poe's trochaic octameter helps explain the grasp the poem appears to have on the protagonist's memory and adds further urgency and unease to the already tense moments when its lines make brief yet hauntingly hypnotic appearances, "the claustrophobic world-weariness" emanating from its "near-interminable lines" (Strachan and Terry 104) representing a perfect match for the disquieting atmosphere of the Games and the numerous forms of confinement inflicted on the tributes.

As Haymitch tries to reach for Lenore Dove "across the miles" traversed by the Capitol-bound train, an echo of "her voice singing a piece of her poem, her name song" (*SotR* 54) ensures lines 25-30 make their first, tantalizing appearance in Chapter 4. In the course of debating the exact nature and amnesiac effect of nepenthe (and showcasing their literary knowledge in the process), Haymitch and Plutarch engage in a tandem recitation of line 83:

> "You mean, like 'Quaff, oh quaff this kind nepenthe...'?"
> Plutarch's eyebrows shoot up in surprise. He completes the line. "'... and forget this lost Lenore!'" (*SotR* 125)

While trying to practise keeping watch, Haymitch jerks awake from a drowsy recollection of Lenore Dove's rendition of lines 3-5 to the confusing sounds of a visitor of his own replicating their content in his current reality: "Was that a tapping? Or did I dream it? […] someone's definitely rapping at my chamber door." (*SotR* 143)

In the aftermath of the unexpected telephone conversation arranged by Plutarch, Haymitch finds himself once again snapping awake from dreams of his love; this time, the additional complications of their respective predicaments result in further intertextual engagement with the text, with word-for-word recitation of key verses being accompanied by synopsis and literary identification:

> I keep dreaming about Lenore Dove, then snapping awake.
> Her name song's hitting way too close to home. In it, a guy loses the love of his life, Lenore, and he's going crazy for missing her. Then this big old raven shows up at his house and won't leave and whenever he asks the bird anything, it just says "Nevermore" — which, as you can imagine, just makes him crazier. […]
> If there is anything after the life I'm about to lose, will I be with her again? Like the guy in her song, I'd sure like to know. But the Raven isn't giving the answer either of us wants to hear. (*SotR* 205-206)

A similar instance of poetry invading the protagonist's thoughts and adding further questions to his rapidly growing list of anxieties occurs at the beginning of Chapter 19 (and the novel's third and final part), following the volcanic eruption which signals the failure of his attempt to sabotage the Games:

> Oh, Lenore Dove, how did it all come to this? The moaning wind conjures up the cabin by the lake last winter, her birthday, the best gift ever... me singing her song, which I am beginning to hate... […]
> Nameless here in this world. Dead and gone as I am about to be. Will I be her lost one for evermore? Will she be haunted by me for the rest of her life? (*SotR* 259)

However, the full scale of the poem's grasp on Haymitch's mind and of his identification with its distraught narrator only becomes apparent in The Poster's final chapter, following the ultimate punishment inflicted by the Capitol and the loss of his own "rare and radiant girl" (*SotR* 246). Chapter 27 features a full chronological rendition of "The Raven," this time divided into nine two-stanza instalments (one line for each defeated district) and scattered throughout the grim account of the protagonist's first six months as a victor:

> The nightmare always starts with me feeding her that gumdrop. […]
> That's when the music kicks in, her name poem, her song, careening around my brain like a runaway train. […]
> The raven. The unforgiving songbird. Repeatedly reminding me of President Snow's crystal-clear message to me on my homecoming. That I will never get to love anyone ever again. Nevermore. (*SotR* 367-368)

By this stage of his narrative journey, Haymitch's identity seems to have been reduced to a harrowing combination of nightmares, guilt and

obsessively recirculating lines of poetry, singling him out as an extreme illustration of the category of survivors Granger describes as "nothing more than dust-jackets for books, of no significance otherwise" (Bradbury 196); "forever trapped in [his] chamber" and "desperate to forget" (*SotR* 380), he carries out a process of erasure that surpasses the Capitol's arson, burying the flint striker in front of Lenore's headstone and working on forgetting the voices, faces and laughs of all his lost loved ones. The empty shell left in the wake of his formerly multifaceted personality and the "dull and flat" language, "stripped of the color and music of yesterday" (*SotR* 380) that takes the place of his once vibrant and intertextually-rich idiolect facilitate a seamless transition to the slurring cynical wreck readers remember from the opening chapters of Katniss's account and furthermore confirm the extent to which the construction of each individual self relies on "bits and pieces of history and literature" (Bradbury 195).

Throughout his narrative arc, Haymitch's speech and thoughts showcase the imprints left by Lenore's poetic and musical background on his own use of language: not only does he repeatedly refer to Lenore herself as "rare and radiant" (*SotR* 246, 363, 381) but he uses other Poe-inspired adjectives to describe his bleak mood as the Quarter Quell draws nearer: "We eat supper in silence, each occupied with our own dreary thoughts. Dreary. Lenore Dove taught me that word. It's in the first line of her song." (*SotR* 140); "Snatches of sleep breed nightmares, and the dawn finds me weak and weary, like the guy in Lenore Dove's poem." (*SotR* 315) The already mentioned interaction in Plutarch's library contains yet another illustration of Haymitch's literary vocabulary and evidence of his belief in the superior status of the written word over the oral tradition, as well as glimpses of his future descent into addiction:

> 'It's called nepenthe,' says Plutarch. 'You probably haven't heard of it."
> You'd be wrong there, Plutarch. Not only have I heard of it, I know it from the poem that gave my love her name. […]
> 'Of course, it's unclear in the poem if nepenthe's the liquor or the drug added to the liquor,' he continues.
> I remember having this same discussion with Lenore Dove. […]
> 'I think the important part is it makes you forget terrible things,' I say.
> 'Exactly. I'm sure this is just a poor imitation. Grain alcohol colored with berries. In the old days, it actually contained morphling, but the stuff was so addictive it was banned. May I ask how you know that poem, Haymitch?'
> 'Everybody knows it in Twelve.' That's a big lie, but I want him to think we all learned it in a book, like he did. (*SotR* 125)

Even more interestingly, the exchange adds yet another beverage inspired by classical antiquity to the *posca* mentioned in *The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes*, this time an updated Capitol version of the wine laced with "drugs to take all pain and rage away, / to bring forgetfulness of every evil" (Homer 4.221–222) Helen prepares in *The Odyssey*, and goes on to provide an example of botanical intertextuality when Plutarch introduces Haymitch to the carnivorous nepenthes in his conservatory.

Although apparently confined to this single reference, the intertextual connections between *Sunrise on the Reaping* and the Homeric epic can be argued to run deeper, from Haymitch's dark curls, resilience and cleverness, dissimulation skills and ability to establish alliances to the loss of his companions to monstrous perils and the way in which the success of his quest depends on the whims and interventions of his godlike enemies and helpers in the Capitol. Similar points can be made about the ways in which the 50th arena, a *locus terribilis* disguised as a *locus amoenus*, evokes the lushness of Calypso's island and the land of the Phaeacians, and about the thematic centrality of *nostos* to his evolution: during his first minutes as a tribute, Haymitch feels not so much afraid as "homesick" (*SotR* 30) and it is the idea of home rather than mere survival that dominates his thoughts; as in the case of ancient Greek literature, his homecoming has both a literal and a metaphorical dimension and, while he succeeds in the physical sense, his return to District 12 is defined by the destruction of his family home, the death of those dearest to him and the gradual obliteration of his former identity.

By the end of the novel, the comparatively obscure term seems firmly established as a key word in Haymitch's post-victory vocabulary, referencing not the rosy liquor of the Capitol but the lethal rotgut sold by old Bascom Pie, the only human being he speaks to "when [his] nepenthe runs low" (*SotR* 381). Haymitch's obsession with one of its literary sources moreover confers a sense of circularity to Plutarch's arc, ensuring that the word makes both its first and its final appearance in the course of a private conversation between two characters already familiar to the audience as key figures in the Second Rebellion: "'Respite and nepenthe,' I mutter into my bottle. Plutarch yanks it from my hand." (*SotR* 377)

Whilst clearly dominated by "The Raven," Haymitch's idiolect also incorporates snippets of Covey songs and so, it later transpires, does Maysilee Donner's, as both the former's allusion to Lenore's questionable paternity – "her pa's always been something of a mystery." (*SotR* 8) – and the latter's fond recollections of her dead grandmother – "She used to say, if I was afraid, 'It's okay, Maysilee, nothing they can take from you was ever worth keeping.'" (*SotR* 303) – echo a song that Lucy Gray Baird played at her own reaping and Lenore Dove Baird kept alive. The plan Haymitch and Maysilee

bond over and the slogan they use to encode their rebellion – "paint our own posters" (*SotR* 292) are also based on the words of someone gone but not forgotten, the protagonist's father's last piece of advice to a former female tribute: "Don't let them paint their posters with your blood. Not if you can help it." (*SotR* 50)

Haymitch's first poster, the explosion that floods the computerised brain of the arena, is celebrated through a defiant rendition of a seditious song Leonore Dove delivers in the novel's opening chapter, right before their brief tryst in the Meadow:

> This is my poster. […] I dance around the berm, bellowing the first thing that comes to mind for all of Panem to hear. A song too dangerous to sing —
> They hang the man and flog the woman
> Who steals the goose from off the common,
> Yet let the greater villain loose
> That steals the common from the goose. […]
> I jump up and down hollering, 'We got it back! We're getting it back!' (*SotR* 253)

Quite apart from featuring the birds that Haymitch and Lenore raise at different stages of life but faithfully emulate until their respective ends – "Like the geese, we really did mate for life." (*SotR* 382) – the song represents an important link between real and fictional history. Based on an English folk poem aimed at enclosure legislation (Little 92), it highlights the striking similarity between the predicament of District dwellers, forced to surrender their resources and sacrifice their children to appease the greed of the privileged few in the Capitol, and the plight of the thousands of villagers deprived of "their centuries-old right" and "reduced to abject poverty" (Merritt 16) through Acts of Parliament often initiated by ambitious landowners.

While this song, meant to send a powerful message to the Capitol, marks an important shift in Haymitch's evolution and overturns the carefully constructed persona previously presented to audience and Gamemakers alike – "A rascal, not a rebel." (*SotR* 228) – Haymitch's musical repertoire also contains pieces that serve the dual purpose of connecting him to his distant and recent past and helping him survive. Thus, his actions during his first hours in the arena – as well as his emphasis on the need to avoid the blood bath at the Cornucopia and "find a source of water" (*HG* 138) as Katniss and Peeta's mentor – are guided by the "strange little song" (*SotR* 99) one of his own mentors had made up to keep track of her priorities in the 49th arena. Later on in the Games, the nursery rhyme running through Maysilee's head inspires yet

another piece of military strategy, this time meant to make a stand against the Capitol:

> I try to fall asleep, but Maysilee's earworm has given me a brainworm... ladybug... fire... the flint striker... no, the blowtorch... fear... fly away.... The pieces spin around in a tornado, then cling together like long-lost lovers. And I know exactly how we're getting through that maze. (*SotR* 293-294)

Perhaps more so than any other instance in which Haymitch draws inspiration from a text, his ability to turn a "silly song from [their] childhood" (*SotR* 294) into a lethal plan of action, so reminiscent of the Capitol's own tendency to design deadly weapons inspired by the most innocuous items, singles him out as an independent thinker and a more dangerous opponent than his repeated defeat might indicate.

As is only to be expected from a government whose means of exercising power include grotesque mutations and distortions of the truth, the Capitol's forays into intertextual identity construction results in the creation of a doppelgänger meant to simultaneously punish two sets of transgressors – the defiant District 12 tributes and an unnamed girl's District 11 family – and gloss over Haymitch's exposure of its weaknesses in the course of the opening parade. The girl President Snow conjures up to take the place of a prematurely killed tribute is an almost perfect replica of the original, yet neither the advanced plastic surgery nor the torture and drugs employed to brainwash her can create more than a body double and take in those who knew and loved the real (Louella) McCoy:

> She sure looks like Louella. Same size, same height. Heart-shaped face, big gray eyes, long dark braids. Her fingernails are bitten down and there's a scar on her forehead that matches the one the real Louella got falling off our cistern. […] She checks every box.
> But this isn't Louella. […] this girl lacks Louella's essence. […]
> 'My name is Louella McCoy. I'm from District Twelve.' (*SotR* 135)

Initially treated with suspicion and revulsion by a terrified Haymitch and a disgusted Maysilee, fake Louella is quickly recognized as a mere victim of the Capitol's cruelty and granted both protection – "'Whoever she is, I guess she's ours now,' says Wyatt." – and an alternate (but still intertextual) identity: "'But I can't call her Louella.' […] 'How about Lou Lou?' suggests Maysilee. 'I used to have a pet canary by that name.'" (*SotR* 139)

Maysilee's readiness to assign this unknown girl the name of a songbird whose very captivity, so harshly condemned by Lenore Dove,

probably saved it from the sinister fate befalling such creatures in mining districts, both acknowledges Lou Lou's vulnerability and confirms Maysilee's own horror of being mistaken for another human being. First introduced as a reflection of her "identical twin sister" (*SotR* 19) Merrilee, a perfectly symmetrical half of the "mirror image that the Peacekeepers tear in two" (*SotR* 32), Maysilee is revealed to begrudge the matching outfits her mother favours and, by extension, the ones inflicted by the Gamemakers: "'Do we have to go around dressed like triplets?' asks Maysilee. 'It was bad enough being a twin.'" (*SotR* 95) This early recognition of her need for individuality – "Maybe she loads up on the jewelry because it's the only way she can be herself." (*SotR* 96) – is reinforced after her death, when the boy who had carefully arranged dead Louella's braids and wiped "a drop of blood from her cheek" (*SotR* 77) pointedly refrains from engaging in any such final rites in order to protect another dead girl's agency: "Maysilee leaves the world the way she wanted, wounded but not bowed. I think about cleaning her up, but this is her final poster, and I won't tidy it up to make it easier for those monsters in the Capitol to sleep tonight." (*SotR* 308)

Weeks after the deaths of Louella, Lou Lou and Maysilee, doppelgängers haunt both Haymitch's waking hours and his sleep, ranging from his failure to correctly identify the surviving sister attending her twin's funeral – "I look up and see my ally, wearing her District 12 black, and start for her. 'Maysilee!' […] Not Maysilee. Merrilee. Like as two peas in a pod." (*SotR* 358-359) – to the echoes of the Party's victory over Winston Smith's perception of reality reverberating across his nightmares:

> The strangest visit involves Louella and Lou Lou, dressed in identical outfits, sitting across the table from me while I peel and eat a bowl of hard-boiled eggs. 'Which of us is which?' they ask me. But the Capitol has won. I can't tell them apart. (*SotR* 353)

While the trauma of the Games' aftermath is too fresh for Haymitch to consider any other possibility beyond his complete defeat, the apparent failure to distinguish between the latter duo ultimately confirms his earlier recognition of their similar status as victims of a system he needs to fight: "For a moment, the two merge, Lou Lou and Louella. She's just one pigtailed kid I've known her whole life, and I would do anything to spare her this." (*SotR* 232) Far from detracting from Katniss's individuality, the apparently patronizing nickname ultimately assigned to her is less indicative of the physical similarities between the daughter of Haymitch's former best friend and "Louella McCoy, [his] sweetheart of old" (*SotR* 381) than of a renewed determination to protect a girl from the Seam from the horror of the Games.

Haymitch's intertextual inclinations also guide his gradual evolution from tribute to victor and it is interesting to note that both his real persona and the one he constructs for the benefit of his Capitol audience borrow elements from a wide range of identities. His rebellious spirit manifests through occasional bouts of parody, ranging from the darkly ironic appropriation of Effie's catchphrase – "It's just one big, big day." (*SotR* 346) – to his defiant rephrasing of the Snow family motto: "Newcomers land on top." (*SotR* 327) The "three-piece suit with a rakish vest embroidered with cocktail glasses" (*SotR* 174) selected from the "Trinkets' wardrobe" (*SotR* 192) provides him with the perfect outfit for a rascal, inspires him to "double down on the bootlegger angle" (*SotR* 176) and even adds an element of empowerment to a largely diffident personality: "Makes me feel a little more dangerous, slipping into their skins tonight." (*SotR* 177) In the course of his interview, memories of the reckless youth whose place he took in the reaping prompt him to "let a little of that Chance attitude slip in" (*SotR* 189) and deliver the cynical lines the Gamemakers eventually decide to record for posterity: "I don't see that it makes much difference. They'll still be one hundred percent as stupid as usual, so I figure my odds will be roughly the same." (*SotR* 189; 343)

Haymitch emulates Maysilee's behaviour long before his dislike of her turns to respect and even love, choosing her haughty indifference over his own uncontrolled reactions – "I go all Maysilee Donner, turning my back and walking over to look out the window." (*SotR* 50) – and goes on to celebrate her life and death and mark the loss of tributes who meant something to him by displaying a multitude of tokens, the very practice he disparaged during their first hours together:

> I remove her blowgun and one of her necklaces — the copper medallion with the flower — as a reminder of her strength.
> I've got my own jewelry collection now, what with District 9's sunflower, Wyatt's scrip coin, and Lenore Dove's warring songbird and snake. (*SotR* 308-309)

This last gesture echoes a form of sartorial intertextuality readers are likely to have already noticed in Lenore Dove's outfits, recognizing in her "faded green dress" and "ivory ribbon" (*SotR* 8), but above all in the "snips of color, a bright blue handkerchief peeking from her pocket, a raspberry ribbon stitched inside her cuff" concealed in her "faded overalls and shirts" (*SotR* 7) glimpses of clothing previously worn by Lucy Gray and Maude Ivory. Haymitch himself follows a similar line of thought after watching a "girl in a rainbow of ruffles" perform in one of the specially curated selections from old Hunger Games and accurately identifying her as District 12's solitary victor: "I think about the bits of color Lenore Dove adds to her wardrobe, the bright blue, yellow, and

pink. Are they scraps from this girl's dress? A way to keep her memory alive?" (*SotR* 336)

Haymitch's description of "The Ballad of Lucy Gray Baird," the song Coriolanus Snow's female tribute chose to perform on interview night (not to be confused with Wordworth's "Lucy Gray," the inspiration behind her name and yet another song in the Covey corpus), as a "a familiar tune with unfamiliar words" (*SotR* 335), as well as the secrecy surrounding this particular victor throughout District 12 indicates that the Covey were even more careful than the Capitol in terms of deciding which aspects of her history to erase, adapt or preserve. Readers are likely to recognize a particularly moving example belonging to this latter category in Burdock Everdeen's musical tribute to the dead:

> You're headed for heaven,
> The sweet old hereafter,
> And I've got one foot in the door. […]
>
> The mockingjays, who nest in the surrounding trees, fall silent as he continues:
>
> I'll be along
> When I've finished my song, […]
>
> The song, suggesting our separation is only temporary, consoles the heart. Lenore Dove would approve, I think. The mockingjays do, because they pick up the melody and make it their own. (*SotR* 359-360)

Originally performed in the midst of an arena filled with venomous vipers by a tribute whose life seems about to end, the song fulfils multiple narrative functions beyond providing mourners with some degree of comfort and closure: it references a belief in an afterlife only familiar to those conversant with the words of old songs and books, it showcases the unique ability to silence the birds and inspire the mockingjays that drove a merchant's daughter to run off with a coal miner (*HG* 296) and eventually helped their child become the face and voice of a revolution and, on a more sombre note, it sets the scene for the ascent to heaven of yet another songbird.

While all the songs featured throughout the text enrich its intertextual complexity and layers of meaning, the true musical backbone of the *Hunger Games* series is the forbidden song that "surfaces unbidden" (*SotR* 351) during Haymitch's homebound train journey:

> Strange things did happen here
> No stranger would it be
> If we met up at midnight in the hanging tree.

> Strange things indeed. A dead man calling out. His ghost. No, Lenore Dove said it was a bird. Birds. […] Is that what makes the song dangerous? Immortalizing those wayward mutts in a song? […]
> Or is it the Capitol hanging someone who was likely a rebel? […]
> Maybe Lenore Dove and I will hang together. (*SotR* 352-353)

The only Covey song featured in all *Hunger Games* instalments, originally composed by Lucy Gray Baird following the hanging of a rebel and used to convey a secret message to her former mentor, kept alive and passed on by Lenore Dove and then Burdock Everdeen, "The Hanging Tree" haunts and torments the representatives of three generations, raising questions and eliciting tentative speculations and interpretations from Coriolanus Snow, Haymitch Abernathy and Katniss Everdeen. It reinforces the power of memory by surviving the test of time and even finding its way "into Peeta's muddled consciousness" (*M* 209), it confirms Clerk Carmine's belief that "music can be a bridge […] between people" (*SotR* 69) by bringing an estranged girl and a hijacked boy closer to one another and drawing connections between the executions of Arlo and Woodbine Chance, between the first and last female victor of District 12. Having defied and outlived decades of Capitol censorship and provided the resistance with its own revolutionary anthem in the film adaptation of *Mockingjay*, it moreover inspires the doubly-intertextual slogan – "NO CAPITOL, NO HANGING TREE! […] a rebel play on the Capitol's propaganda. NO CAPITOL, NO REAPING!"– that prevents a defeated and suicidal Haymitch from betraying his final vow: "This is Lenore Dove's work. Her sign. Her message to me now. Her reminder that I must prevent another sunrise on the reaping. […] With that, she condemns me to life." (*SotR* 374)

Quite understandably given its entirely despondent tone, the words of "The Hanging Tree" are absent from the epilogue and Haymitch's final thoughts echo the lines of two other songs:

> I'm not sure I'll be here in the old therebefore much longer. […]
> I know one thing, though: The Capitol can never take Lenore Dove from me again. They never really did in the first place. Nothing you can take from me was ever worth keeping, and she is the most precious thing I've ever known. (*SotR* 382)

Albeit brief, these glimpses of "Nothing You Can Take from Me" and "The Old Therebefore" ensure that music builds yet another bridge between the present and the past, the living and the dead, confirming Haymitch's enduring devotion to Lenore Dove and also keeping her mysterious Covey precursor alive. It could be however argued that the true scope of the intertextual

connection between the trilogy and its second prequel and of Haymitch's victory over his trauma is provided by his written tribute to the dead through contributions to Katniss and Peeta's memorial book:

> […] when Burdock's page came up, I had to mention him showing me the grave. And I felt compelled to tell them about Maysilee Donner, former owner of the mockingjay pin. […] Before I knew it, they all came tumbling out: family, tributes, friends, comrades in arms, everybody, even my love. I finally told our story. (*SotR* 382)

The fact that the very tribute who felt certain that he would forget most of his allies and enemies – "I will never remember all of their names." (*SotR* 85) – mentions every single one of them in his narrative, whilst also reestablishing "agency for a multitude of forgotten children" (Ann 67) he was forced to mentor and indirectly answering Lenore Dove's despondent question – "poor little bird… who will sing your songs now?" (*SotR* 76) – confirms the extent to which oral transmission and written records, music and literature, bards and scholars, creators and audiences and most types of textual interaction can generate their own forms of resistance and means of survival, hopefully keeping the spectre of dystopia at bay.

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