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Introduction

Life inevitably ends in death, and where death rears its ugly head, grief is sure to follow. It is one of those experiences we all must face one day, whether we like it or not. Still, we rarely stop to consider what methods we use when dealing with grief, what influences and determines our choice of coping mechanism, and what it says about us as individuals. Numerous studies have been conducted to understand how we process loss and what it means to grieve. Elizabeth Kübler Ross, a Swiss American psychiatrist first discussed her model of the “5 stages of grief” referred to also as the “Kübler-Ross model” in her 1969 book *On Death and Dying* concerning people anticipating their death, then extended it to the grieving process in “On Grief and Grieving,” first published in 2005. This is perhaps the best-known model for grieving today, widely referenced to the point of it becoming a cliché. Kübler-Ross’ idea was further elaborated on by other scholars such as Colin Murray Parks’ model made of 4 stages,¹ in 1972 and Ronald W. Ramsay and Rene Noorbergen’s much more complex model, comprised of 6 major stages and several sub-stages² in 1981.

Today it is common knowledge that when somebody is dealing with grief, for example in the case of death which will be the focus of this paper, they need an emotional outlet, a coping mechanism that will get them through the hardest of times. This is true not only when the death has already occurred, but also in anticipation of the approaching death, as we see in Kübler-Ross, whether it be someone else’s or even our own. According to an extensive study on bereavement patterns published by the American Psychology Association in 2002, the actions of the bereaved are predictable based on factors such as attachment style, previous history of depression, and the level of emotional investment with the dead loved one. (Bonanno et al. 1150) And yet, we often fail to understand our own emotions on the subject and our reactions to imminent, past or present death.

Psychological research, however useful it may be, is not ideal if one wants to casually engage with the topic of emotion and grief, in other words, it cannot help an average person to understand themselves. Literature, more specifically poetry, is much more useful for

¹ Numbness, pining depression, recovery (C. M. Parkes 21)

² Shock, disorganization, denial, (searching behaviour, emotional component, desolate pining, despair, guilt, anxiety, jealousy, shame, protest, aggression), letting go, resolution and acceptance, reintegration (Ramsey and Noorbergen 66)

understanding ourselves and the people around us. In *Literature and Emotion* (2018), Patrick Colm Hogan points out that the sizable leap in psychology has now given an explicit, scientific background to what poets have been expressing implicitly for hundreds of years. Said leap is also in no small part the cause of the grooving interest in human emotions, both professional and popular, giving affective literary studies the spotlight that it lacked for so long. In the same book, he describes the most important asset of poetry as always having been the emotional response it elicits from the reader. He brings the examples of Indian, Arabic, Greek and Chinese literary traditions to highlight the global importance of the emotional response on the part of the reader, moreover, he recognises that while the emotional impact has been realized as a key feature of poetry for centuries affective literary studies is a largely underappreciated field (Hogan 16-18). In this sense, poetry has been ahead of the curve when it comes to appreciating emotional responses. For these reasons, it is useful to apply scientific findings to a medium that is more approachable for us and thus also discover something new about the poems and ourselves in the process.

The following paper will examine and discuss the theme of grief in the works of four 19th-century American poets of vastly different backgrounds and personalities: Edgar Allan Poe, Mary Dow Brine, Emily Dickinson and Thomas Bailey Aldrich. The goal of analysing the selected poems is to show a diverse attitude towards grief and different depictions of it. In all four cases, we will see unique and distinctive ways that express the same stages of grief. Of course, this is not the first time the emotions and expressions have been studied in the works of these poets. For example, Adam J. Frank points out in his essay *Symptom and Sensation in Edgar Allan Poe, Emily Dickinson, and Gertrude Stein* that Emily Dickinson was always considered part of the 19th-century literary canon and thus extensively analysed by literary critics and studied in literary circles. Similarly, Edgar Allan Poe has also been at the centre of attention when discussing American literature for a long time. However, both of these prominent writers met criticism for their poems. Dickinson's short poems, often compared to chants as Frank points out, were taken as a sign of repression, and Poe, although considered a pioneer of his time, his repetitive and rigid poetry was seen as a sign of an immature poet and, at the same time, a tortured genius by literary critics. (Frank 2-4)

The idea that Poe was ahead of his time in his poetic expressions is a view shared by other scholars. According to Johnatan Elmer, there was a growing emphasis on aesthetic affection in the 19th century. He states that Poe not only lived in a time when the lines became blurry between high and low culture, letting the concerns of the lower classes into the space of

high-brow art, but he was an exemplary practitioner of this new and emerging mass culture. This mass culture and the mixing of high and low-brow art into one also resulted in the waning desire to follow form and rules, highly relying on the affective experience (Elmer 4-12). This tendency is even more apparent in other authors, like in the case of Emily Dickinson, who placed the heaviest emphasis on conveying meaning and sometimes completely disregarded grammar and formal rules of poetry.

Dickinson's strange approach to poetry was and still is a topic of discussion. As Peter Declan Guy puts it, the only goal of Dickinson's poetry was introspection. She worked according to no convention and only followed her ideas and ideals. There is a constant need to find an underlying truth in her poems. But this seeking of truth was not done on the plain of reality, which Dickinson found disappointing (Guy 8-9). Peter Declan Guy also thinks that Dickinson had no desire for others to understand her. Her disillusionment with reality caused a fragmentation in her sense of self, and this has led her to communicate through her poems in such a manner that is hard to decipher with conventional techniques, as there is no direct communication in her lines, and most of what she writes is at least partially ambiguous. However, since Dickinson did not care about being understood, she seems to have felt no desire to "complete" her poems to make them more understandable (Guy 9-10).

While Poe and Dickinson have been at the forefront of literary attention, since they are regarded as an important part of not only the American but the international literary canon, the same cannot be said about Thomas Bailey Aldrich, much less about Mary Dow Brine. In Aldrich's case, his novel *A Story of a Bad Boy* has been considered for analysis for example from the perspective of childhood sexuality by John W. Crowley and from a more general social perspective by Veronika G. Silanteva. However, his poetry did not get the same treatment, as there is little to no analysis on it readily available, which is not a particularly big surprise when we see his sentiment depicted in his poem "At the Funeral of a Minor Poet". Mary Dow Brine is almost completely missing from the public consciousness it seems, even though she has had an extensive and productive career in poetry and story writing, albeit mostly targeted towards children. Her only widely known poem is "Somebody's Mother", which has sparked some discussion on her hopeful and kind-natured poetry, but not much else is known of her works in terms of literary analysis. Perhaps this will be beneficial for this paper because in this way I could analyse her poem "The Winter of Life" without any preconceived notions and expectations. The same can be said about Aldrich as well.

The paper will be divided into three major sections. The first chapter will be dedicated to theory. This chapter will explain what “affect” in literature means, what the difference between affect and emotion is, and how affective literature is rooted in neuroscience. In the latter half of the same chapter will be a rundown of some known patterns, and the definition of grieving and its role in the nineteenth century. The second chapter will include an analysis of the four poems, each having its dedicated subsection. Each one will include only a short introduction of the author, as the focus is on the poems themselves, and since this paper is not an attempt at psychoanalytic reading, but rather an affective literary reading, the authors themselves pose little interest in this case. This analysis will be helped by the theoretical works already introduced in the first chapter. Finally, the last major section will be a conclusive chapter, which presents the findings and possible future expansions of the topic at hand.

One of the tools I used in analysing the selected poems is identifying the stages of grief in each one. However, since the extent of the present paper does not allow for a thorough application of different bereavement models, and since all models build on the same foundation of the idea of Kübler-Ross, I am going to rely on Kübler-Ross’ model and her description of the stages: denial, bargaining, anger, depression and acceptance. These stages then will be contrasted with the bereavement patterns and other approaches, such as affective literary theory and historical depictions of emotions. Comparing the poets’ methods of depicting grief in their writing and understanding the poetic tools utilised will help us understand how these works achieve their desired effect: sympathy on the readers’ part. By relying on 20th and 21st-century studies in interpreting the complex patterns and habits of the grieving process we can draw a set of possible conclusions about the poets’ bereavement patterns and expressions of grief. This paper will attempt to shed light on how the literary texts transmit emotions and attitudes to the reader by relying on affective language, as well as answer the question of whether contemporaneous depictions of grief are alike.

1. Theory

The goal of this chapter is to offer insights into previous research on the historical depictions of emotions. I have collected several works on the history of emotions, emotions in 19th and 20th-century American literature and the role of emotions in literature as well as the different bereavement patterns. By the end of the chapter, sufficient context will have been provided to understand “affect” as such, the role of affect in our lives and literature, the process of grieving and the 19th-century attitude towards grief, grieving, and the emotional attachment to the past.

1.1 Affect and Emotion

Before explaining what affective literary theory means, first, it is useful to understand why it is effective in the first place. For this purpose, one might do well to look into the science behind affective interactions between people. Affective neuroscience examines precisely this. It asks how and why we (as animals) influence each other to increase our chances of survival. The most important bond from this point of view is that of a child to its parents, and as children grow up, they make other bonds to survive, friends and a family of their own. This is not only imperative for physical survival, but also for mental health as well. Lack of a healthy set of social bonds, stemming from a lack of understanding of social affections, will make a person unable to function in said society (Panskepp 261-262, 265, 275). In either of these cases, we exhibit certain behavioural patterns that help us connect to our peers – we affect them to garner sympathy, to show that we could be of use to each other, and to show affection and loyalty to one another.

The existence of affective neuroscience and its very basic notions outlined in the above paragraph makes it obvious that affective self-expression is crucial for us, but what is “affect” as such exactly? Affect in the literary domain rests upon this scientific foundation. Affect studies and affect theory refer to theories that are concerned with emotional motivation and related phenomena. In *Literature and Emotion*, Patric Colm Hogan defines two different areas of affective theory: one he calls affective poststructuralism, the other affective science. Affective poststructuralism derives from deconstructivism; it proposes that we do not consciously perceive the meaning of language but rather subconsciously make associations and assign meaning. Meanwhile, affective science derives from the previously mentioned field of

neuroscience and its significance is widely recognised in contemporary Western societies (Hogan 12). Hogan states that affective science differentiates between various “affects”: certain characteristics of individuals, actions and circumstances that result in specific emotional reactions and emotional episodes. Some of these “affects” are mood, interpersonal stance, affect disposition, attitude and the Sanskrit word “rasa” translated often to sentiment (Hogan 59-61). These factors assign meaning and emotional responses to words and interactions, and in literature, they induce a predictable reaction in the reader.

Hogan is not the only one by far who is concerned with the study of affect. Margaret Wetherell described affection as “a force and relation between animate and inanimate objects” (Wetherell 2) Thus, in her reading affects are social stimuli or influences which induce emotions or change depending on if the affected subject is human or an object, but at the same time affect itself goes beyond simple emotions. (Wetherell 2-3) Wetherell describes examples of affects working as an influence in a social understanding, by relying on the concept of affective practice. As she describes it, affective practice is an omnipresent force that always pushes for patterns. People experience emotions as a result of an “affect as influence”, but the induced emotion is often not so easy to categorise in terms of happiness or sadness or any easily identifiable common emotion. She goes on to say that when we talk about affect as an influence, the induced state is often more easily described as an imprint, rather than an emotion. She brings up the example of the dancing plague of Strasburg in 1518 when the people of Strasburg started to dance as if possessed and did not stop until they collapsed from exhaustion, thirst hunger or a heart attack after they witnessed a woman, Frau Troffea, dance uncontrollably on the streets. (Wetherell 5-6) In another example, Wetherell illustrates the importance of affective discourse loops, where a community creates a narrative that members “mindlessly” follow, even if it makes no sense to do so. English people’s opinions on migrant families, she argues, illustrate this point. Those who are unhappy with migrant families moving to England say the same reasons as to why: they do not fit in, they have unfair expectations and keep too much of their cultures, not assimilating enough which in turn will change English culture (Wetherell 6-7). A seemingly meaningless practice forms its patterns by organizing actions around itself to create a convention. Affects are made up of layers and layers of emotions, social situations interpretations and practices in her reading. The affective influence of a simple action can spiral so out of control that stopping it is near impossible and can grow to nationwide proportions (Wetherell 13-14, 16).

In simpler terms an arbitrary set of affective patterns determine who we care about and who we ignore. In these examples, affect is the tool of the individual to express a sentiment or opinion implicitly by participating in explicit practices and forms of expression. These explicit practices sometimes have nothing or little to do with the implied meaning but always stem from an unarticulated subconscious need to express, and the implication that people will understand these “codes”. By using these patterns (subconsciously) people express belonging, connection and understanding. “Shared identification makes actions and affect intelligible and forms the basis for the construction of the discursive territory of ‘reasonable’ versus ‘unreasonable’, ‘rational’ versus ‘irrational’, ‘mad’ versus ‘sensible’.” (Wetherell 148) This is why the emotion resulting from an affect depends on a shared understanding and background in a social setting, that is social practice and norms, in a literary setting it is language and form of language, literary devices and symbolism. When we have all the building blocks, we will understand what is being suggested to us by other people or a written text.

Similarly to Wetherell and Hogan editors of *Emotions: A Social Science Reader*, Monica Greco and Paul Stener point out that the turn to affect took place in the latter half of the 20th century. In the introductory chapter, they attempt to draw a clear distinction between what is meant by “affect” and “emotion” by scholars occupied with the subject. They describe emotions as a part of affective life, meaning the current social tendency to rely on emotional responses and the emotional satisfaction of people in media, politics, education and even medical settings (Greco and Stener 30). Emotions can be anticipated and described; they can be understood with the same methods that psychologists use. The affective turn at the end of the 20th-century works started to conceptualize emotions as social constructs (Greco and Stener 37), pointing out that emotions and their expressions are not universal since they change over time and depend on cultures.

The History of Emotions, a book by Jan Plamper on the phenomenon of emotional expressions changing over time, exemplifies this perfectly through an example of an Arabic practice. In the Arab world women who live in arranged marriages cannot express their true opinions about love but instead convey everything in little songs called “ghinnāwas”. These are small haiku-like poems and songs that speak of the real emotions these women have because disrespecting the hierarchy is unthinkable. But this does not mean that what they do express is a lie, both their public opinions and thoughts expressed through “ghinnāwas” should be taken into consideration as two halves of a whole truth and person. In this sense, we can say that poetry is seen as the expression of real thoughts and emotions that cannot be spoken either

because social codes reject it or because they are just not expressible in everyday life (Plamper 102-105).

From the above example, one can infer that emotions as such have no history in the same sense as technology does for example. Emotions are always connected to the same physical effects in the body, they are always a reaction to a certain circumstance. What changes is the conceptualization of emotions (Plamper 32-33). Over time and depending on cultural background the same emotions are expressed differently, and attitudes towards the expression of certain emotions at a certain time change. The history of emotions therefore only exists in the context of an already established historical period, for example in the context of 19th-century social expectations and society itself. In addition to this, it is also a clear example of affective literature. By writing or singing a ghinnāwas Arab women are conveying their emotions in a way that is understood by the listener as a taboo opinion. This also supports Wetherell and Hogan's stance that one needs to be "in the know" to understand the messages, and for the effect of the ghinnāwas to be successful.

The main difference between emotion and affect in this approach is that while emotions are considered superficial affects are regarded as worthy of scientific examination. Those working on the affective turn make great efforts to emphasize that affects are more substantial concepts than emotions, that is to say, affect is a concept that can be conscious or subconscious but is always objective while emotions are superficial and rather belong to the social science rather than psychology. All this to say affect is an objective description, and emotion is a subjective reaction. Greco and Stener also emphasize that the term emotion is a 19th-century addition to the English lexicon, and before that people talked of affections and passions rather than emotions. Essentially, the terms were different or were used differently but the definitions have already existed. First, Antonio Damasio³ used emotion as an objective category in contrast with feelings, which he regarded as subjective (Antonio Damasio *The Feeling of What Happens* 1999, *Looking for Spinoza* 2003). In the works of Brian Massumi and Nigel Thrift, however, affect is used as an objective, scientific concept and emotion refers to subjective feelings. Through this shift, the meaning of emotion changed from objective to subjective, and affection changed from subjective to objective. This shift in terminology is what makes describing these phenomena problematic and often confusing. (Greco and Stener 10-12)

³ Antonio Damasio is a Dutch neuroscientist, head of the Brain and Creativity Institute at the University of Southern California, whose research in neuroscience proved emotions' crucial role in decision-making and social cognition.

From this, it may be concluded, that in the current state of affective science, affect refers to an objective fact that can be studied with psychological methods, while emotions are subjective reactions to observable affects. Affects provide the base of emotional reactions. This change in terminology is the result of scholars consciously inspecting what has been used unconsciously for centuries. Working from the definitions and examples from these four works explored in this chapter thus far I use affect as a term to describe a linguistic tool that elicits an emotional reaction from the reader. This stems from the innate social and emotional nature of humans, that we communicate and influence by using language and actions that elicit an emotional response. In this paper, “affect” will be used to indicate feelings conveyed by the literary texts and “emotion” will refer to the dominant emotions that characterize the historical period.

1.2. Grief

The study by the American Psychology Association distinguished 5 core bereavement patterns among the 205 people surveyed. Among these five, perhaps contrary to what its name might suggest, common grief is the least frequent pattern observed in the people surveyed. Common grief has no special connotations, it is the most “bare bones” grieving process: the individual just progresses through the stages, the motions of grieving without complications. The second pattern is chronic grief, which occurs when the bereaved is dependent on their lost loved one. The more dependent one is on the person lost, the more likely they are to experience chronic grief. If the bereaved has a history of depression, they are more likely to fall into a depressive and melancholic state during grieving. This pattern can last significantly longer than a common grieving pattern. The third pattern, chronic depression holds some similarities with chronic grief. The difference is that in the chronic grief pattern, the individual goes through a significant and debilitating change, while during the chronic depression pattern, individuals show no change in their demeanour, thus preventing them from processing and moving on from the trauma caused by their loss. The fourth pattern identified was improvement during bereavement. This means that the bereaved person feels relief during the grieving period, after the death of their loved one. His pattern is usually preceded by a strained relationship or the hard, painful and emotionally draining final days of the dead loved one. However, this does not mean a lack of compassion, but rather the opposite. People experiencing this pattern feel relief for not having to see their loved one suffer any longer. Finally, the fifth and most common

pattern observed among the surveyed was the resilience pattern. This pattern is possible when the bereaved has accepted the death in advance, has made peace with the inevitable and is ready to move on. This, naturally does not mean the absence of a grieving period, only makes it easier. This pattern is usually combined with a positive outlook on life, and a lack of (or minimal amounts of) regrets (Bonanno et. al. 1150-1155). The act of mourning and the conventions have been studied much earlier too, however, and with a much wider net cast as to what constitutes loss, not limiting it to the loss of a person.

Freud described mourning as the result of losing something important to us like a loved one, liberty, our nation or even an ideal. However, sometimes people take mourning to a pathological level, and at that point, we are talking about melancholia. He also states that while mourning is a healthy process that should not be interpreted as melancholia, the symptoms of which include a significant drop in self-worth and even self-destructive tendencies, and it should be restricted and cured as soon as possible. If a person is left to wallow in his melancholic state for too long, he may even start hallucinating from a self-imposed rejection of reality (Strachey 243-244). In this sense, taking Kübler-Ross' model of grieving into consideration, it may be said that melancholia is the result or symptom of the bereaved remaining in the denial stage for too long.

Another notable difference between mourning and melancholia is that mourning is always a reaction to reality. What this means, is that there is a loss, a bereavement that has occurred in the life of a mourning person, but melancholia is not always preceded by a loss, sometimes it is entirely based on a delusion and self-deprecation. Logically, if there is no loss to process, mourning cannot run its course. If the process has not even started, because there is no tangible reason for it to, but the act and mental state are present, it has no chance of finishing either, thus trapping the "mourning" person in a seemingly inescapable state of grief. It is not as simple as telling the melancholic person that his mourning is unreasonable, and his reaction is out of proportion with the loss or perceived loss, as their being unaware is not the issue. Rather, the main issue is that the melancholic person believes that they deserve to suffer. (Strachey 245-247)

As stated above, a melancholic person will have an endless array of self-deprecating thoughts at his disposal and will reproach himself every chance he gets. But, Freud asks, why does the melancholic person always blame himself for the real or imaginary loss? The simple answer is that it is a front. Melancholia is a mix of mourning and narcissism; the melancholic

person places himself in the “most important” position as the cause of everything. However, every insult directed at himself is always fitting for someone else in his life, but these insults cannot be expressed. In both cases, time needs to pass for the bereaved to heal. Mourning runs its course, but melancholia can only end when the melancholic person runs out of anger toward himself or the loss, or if what was lost is recontextualized as valueless. (Strachey 248-257). This would mean that either way, the goal of grieving is to let go of something. Similarly, different bereavement patterns exist because everyone has distinct emotional reactions to such a strong affective experience as the loss of (or perceived loss) of something precious. This, then, points to the idea that people assign value to other people and experiences, which in turn means that consciously or sometimes unconsciously using affective practices, like language or literature, will transmit this personal value to the listener/reader resulting in an appropriate emotional response.

Dana Luciano calls the body a “measure of memory” because according to her, the body can assess how valuable the past was and still is. The memory of a bygone era or a lost value puts a strain on the body, and this strain is the reason why we grieve what is lost. She points out that the experience of grief has become more important and accepted in the 19th century as a valuable time to be cherished. For this to be the case, two major movements had to be established first: the Enlightenment tradition and Romanticism. The central thought of the Enlightenment is that people are guided by reason and Romanticism focuses heavily on the experiences of the individual. Both intellectual movements place the individual on a pedestal, but for the opposite reason: the Enlightenment emphasizes rationality, while Romanticism emphasizes emotions. As a result of this, the attention has shifted to the two most personal and affective topics in literature: love and grief (Luciano 3-5).

By grieving we acknowledge that time is passing, and we can do nothing to prevent this and for this process, time needs to be set apart, Freud has already established that the most important component of healing from mourning and grief is simply the passage of time. Since grief is only possible for the living, the loss of someone other than ours is significantly more distressing than anticipating our death, as then the surviving person will be forced to endure the aftermath of the loss and be constantly reminded of the past. The importance of understanding grief is reflected in 19th-century mourning manuals. These manuals place grief in the centre of attention, no longer delegated to the margins of consciousness, hidden and shameful (Luciano 1-7). A strong attachment to the past is described here as melancholic longing which was typical of the late 18th and the 19th century and this longing for the past is directly the cause of grief

reaching “mainstream” status so to speak. Intense grief fades, and the immediate past and the memory of the long-gone past are different. Luciano points out the same issue in Freud’s *Mourning and Melancholia* that Hogan has also observed in *Literature and Emotions* (Hogan 28-29), namely, that psychologists and theorists are just catching up to what artists have known since ancient times. (Luciano 13-16).

Luciano calls this 19th-century tendency of clinging to the past itself and giving so much value to those people and things that are gone a form of sentimentality (Luciano 19). Sentimentality is another mindset that has its roots in the late 18th and early 19th century and was and still is very typical of literary and public language and interactions. Mary De Jong, editor of the book titled *Sentimentalism in Nineteenth-Century America* argues that sentimentalism became a dominant ideology in early 19th-century America. De Jong cites Adam Smith who claimed that people can only live in civil communities because of their inherent capability to imagine themselves as other people, in other words, their ability to feel sympathy. (Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, 1759). 18th and 19th-century philosophers and religious figures alike agree that people who have shared sentiments, here referring to feelings and opinions, can form communities and families. Around this time in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, affective language was becoming more common not only in the literary works of the time but also in political and public life as well. Affective or “sentimental” appeals were, and still to this day are, a major tool public speakers use to grow their following. In the 19th century this tendency only just started to form, and the authors were beginning to be more inward-looking than before, drawing on their psyche to write their fiction (De Jong 8-10).

The question arises, naturally: how does one recognise a sentimental text? De Jong has a rather simple answer: you just know it (De Jong 14-15). The entire reason affective texts can exist, and work as intended is because we possess the inherent subconscious knowledge of affective language and practices. When a person is part of a community, literary or otherwise, they are equipped with the necessary tools to decipher the meaning. Again, this all goes back to what Hogan and Luciano both mentioned about psychology studying what the artists of ancient times have already known instinctively. The popularization of such language in the literary scene is the result of a heightened sense of importance attributed to the physical, natural world which in turn resulted in people being more aware of the passage of time. Sentimentalism is the reason the topic of death and grieving became so accepted and typical in 19th-century America.

2. Poems

2.1. “The Raven”

Edgar Allan Poe was born in 1809 in Massachusetts and died in 1849 in Maryland. He is perhaps the best-known American writer of the 19th century and his poem “The Raven” is amongst the best-known poems of American Literature. He published several volumes of poetry in 1827 and 1829, and in 1833 he began to write short stories as well. “The Raven” was first published in the *New York Mirror* in 1845 and brought him immediate nationwide fame. Although overall a successful writer, Poe’s life was far from tranquil. He was a troubled man, expelled from the University of Virginia for his gambling debts, joined the army because of his poor financial situation, then attended the U.S. Military Academy from which he purposefully got expelled in favour of continuing to publish his works. In 1835 he married his cousin, 13 at the time, and on top of all that he had a slight alcohol problem, and some suppose he was addicted to opiates. Overall, it is obvious that he was an eccentric person, which may explain his fascination with the macabre. (Barzun)

The poem I have selected for this paper is “The Raven.” Before diving deeper into the themes in the poem let us give a summary of the “story” at hand. The poem opens with the speaker describing a bleak December night, thinking about his dead love Lenore, as he is trying to take his mind off the sorrow by reading late into the night. Just as he starts to doze off there is a “rapping at his Chamber Door” which snaps him awake. He is surprised by a presumed visitor, as it is the middle of a winter night, but gets up to let the stranger in, however, there is nothing but darkness on the other side of the door. He calls out the name of Lenore, to no avail, and returns to his chamber when the Raven appears at his window. Just as he opens the window, the Raven flies into the room and perches itself on the bust of Pallas that is placed just above the door. This “grim and ghastly” being scares the speaker at first, but its ability to communicate entices him. As the bird sits on the bust’s head, quiet and unmoving, the speaker, his thoughts having returned to his grief over Lenore, starts begging it to erase his memory and ease his burden, to which the Raven simply replies “Nevermore”. He gets the same answer as to whether he and Lenore can reunite in heaven as the bird remains unmoved and quiet, looming over the speaker. His pleas eventually turn into anger, calling the Raven a “wretch” and “thing of evil”, but there is a certain admiration and fear in him too, as he also denotes the bird a prophet, further

emphasizing its otherworldly nature. When all his begging and attacks prove to be ineffective against the Raven, the speaker has no other choice but to accept the loss of Lenore.

Through the events of the poem, one may observe three major symbols. First is the time it is set, nighttime, more precisely midnight, and top of all a winter night. This is rather simple to understand: when one day or year ends, a new one begins, just like when life ends, death begins, the end of something is always the start of something new. The second symbol is the titular Raven itself. The raven was regarded as a mysterious and supernatural being since ancient times, appearing as the messenger of Odin⁴, and also as the animal which (along with two doves) was sent out to look for land in the Old Testament. They have positive connotations in Native American folklore as well.⁵ Nevertheless, today we associate ravens with bad luck, danger and decay. In the present case the Raven carries all of the ancient and modern traits in itself, being a messenger of death, an otherworldly and seemingly all-knowing creature but ultimately helping the speaker come to terms with his loss. The third symbol is the bust upon which the Raven perches: Pallas, the ancient goddess of wisdom. This tells us that the speaker is a learned and logical man, and the Raven sitting on top of the bust represents death and grieving, suggesting that these cannot be tackled with logic and purely rational thinking. The bust's placement above the door also means that since the Raven is sitting on top of the bust, it is impossible to escape the room without both confronting the fact of death and the irrationality of trying to run away from it and this forces the speaker to face his grief.

The actions of the speaker mimic the five stages from Kübler-Ross' model: Denial, when he calls out to Lenore upon opening the door, even though he must know that she cannot be there (stanza 5, lines 4-5), and since it has already been established that he is an intelligent man who values knowledge, he is unlikely to be superstitious. Bargaining, when he pleads with the Raven to erase his memories of his love (stanza 14, lines 3-5) and when he asks whether they could be together again after he dies too (stanza 15 lines 4-5). Anger, upon the rejection of his bargains (stanza 15 line 1, stanza 16, line 1). Depression, which is present from the very beginning when he tries to forget Lenore by reading until he cannot stay awake anymore, in his desperate pleas for peace by forgetting the painful memory of his love's passing, and in his wish for death if that meant they could be together again. Acceptance, a bitter and unwanted

⁴ Odin is the god of both war and death in Norse mythology. Half of the warriors who die in battle are taken to his hall of Valhalla. He is the one-eyed All-Father, who sacrificed his eye in order to see everything that happens in the world. <https://historiska.se/norse-mythology/odin-en/>

⁵ According to "Spirits of the Earth" by Bobby Lake-Thom, both the crow and the raven are helpful spirits that signal health, safety and well-being. They are also one of the few spirits that can pass the barrier between the world of the living and the dead. (Lake-Thom)

acceptance at the very end of the poem, when all else fails and he realises that the grief and the memory of Lenore is something he will never forget:

“And the Raven, never flitting, still is sitting, *still* is sitting
On the pallid bust of Pallas just above my chamber door;
And his eyes have all the seeming of a demon’s that is dreaming,
And the lamp-light o’er him streaming throws his shadow on the floor;
And my soul from out that shadow that lies floating on the floor
Shall be lifted—nevermore!”

This last stanza also encompasses all the stages of grief in itself again, in quick succession line by line: disbelief that the raven is still here, reference to Pallas and to knowledge which could not help him bargain, insulting and calling the Raven a demon, the depressive thought of the shadow and darkness encompassing him, and finally, the acceptance that there is no escape from his emotions.

In “The Raven”, the most important affective factor is the mood of the poem. When reading about a winter night, the reader already forms a preconceived idea in their head about the feelings the speaker might be thinking of. The mood here is dark, cold and lonely. This is established in the first lines of the very first stanza, and it puts every action into perspective from that point onwards. The knock on the door and the arrival of the Raven are both eerie for the same reason: one does not get visitors on a winter night, much less a talking bird. The restricted speech of the Raven might be seen as fascinating in other circumstances, but since the winter night has already conditioned our expectations, the Raven’s speech is otherworldly and threatening. The rapidly changing attitude of the speaker also has a disquieting effect on the reader, we do not know what his next action will be: in one sentence he is pleading with the bird, and in the next, he screams at it, which makes the reader distrust the Raven as well.

The other important affective tool is the melancholia of the speaker. Melancholia is traceable in the speaker’s blaming of himself for the loss of his love. This anger is briefly directed outwards when confronting the Raven. Freud also points out in his essay on melancholia that those who are stuck in such a state can be pushed to hallucinations and intense self-hatred that makes it hard to move on from the melancholic state (Strachey 248-250). In

light of this, his depressive state prior to and following the “argument” with the Raven can be understood as the speaker believing himself to be evil, projecting this belief onto the Raven and then blaming it for not helping him bring his lover back to life. This is why he came up with this outlandish idea in the first place. By the end of the poem, he runs out of anger, the melancholia has run its course, and he is left with accepting Lenore’s death.

Edgar Allan Poe describes grief as “that sorrow which the living love to cherish for the dead.” (Luciano p 4-5). This, if we read the speaker of “The Raven” as a projection of Poe, supports the case for a melancholic speaker. He “loves” this sorrow, because he thinks he deserves to feel it. The living should feel anguish for the past and the dead, and the speaker seems to know no bounds and measure. Furthermore, when he expresses doubt over the Raven staying, thinking it will leave him as well, the Raven replies “Nevermore,” implying that grief and death will remain with him forever (stanza 10). Because of this recurring depressive and possibly melancholic state throughout the course of the poem, Poe’s speaker most likely falls into the category of the chronic grief bereavement pattern. The study by the APA also notes that the most difficult bereavement is the loss of a spouse which is the most common precursor to chronic grief. Furthermore, we can assume that both the speaker and Lenore are young, which, they point out, also heightens the chance of a chronic bereavement pattern. As Dana Luciano has also pointed out, the loss of another person is much more strenuous because the bereaved will have to live with the knowledge of the loss. In other words, the analysis of Poe’s poem from the perspective of affect theory supports the conclusions of the 2002 study by the APA since the longer one must continue living with the loss, the harder it will be to come to acceptance.

2.2. “The Winter of Life”

The second author this paper focuses on is Mary Dow Brine. The case of Mary Dow Brine is much more complicated than that of Edgar Allan Poe because there is not much that is readily available about her life. The exact date of her birth and death are unknown, the most we can know about her is through the lens of her works. She published numerous books for children and collections of poetry as well as lullabies: in these works, she is always concerned with the themes of love, family, life and the passage of time. The motif of the seasons is a returning theme in many of her poems. Her best-known work is “Somebody’s Mother”. “The Winter of Life” was first published in 1886 in a collection of poetry titled *From Gold to Grey: Being Poems and Pictures of Life and Nature*.

Let us start this analysis with a summary of the storyline of the poem first. “The Winter of Life” starts with the speaker recounting walking together with her, presumably, husband on a cold winter day, but neither of them is concerned with the unfriendly weather. The speaker contrasts the cold, grey and dreary winter landscape with the warm love she and her husband share and reminds herself that all sorrow is followed by joy eventually. As they walk side by side, they pass a hill, the graves of the four children who “God had spared but shortly to (their) keeping”. They stop to reminisce for a short while, wishing they could turn back time, but soon her husband soothes and reminds her that although the memory is painful, at least they have no one to say goodbye to here when they are gone, and only happiness to look forward to in their eventual reunion after death. In the next lines, the speaker laments the passage of time as summer turns into winter and twilight changes into nighttime, but despite all, they are happy. The final stanza jumps forward in time, the walk described is far in the past, and she remarks how at the end of the strenuous journey, always at each other’s side, they almost reach their home.

Similarly to the previous poem, the text is built around three major themes and symbols. The first and most important one is the overarching metaphor of the walk, which is a clear representation of life. Through the walk, we see constant allusions to diverse life experiences like love, loss, hardships and good times, the changing of seasons and the constant changing of life’s circumstances. The speaker is not alone on this walk, in her life, she has her beloved with her. The presence of her husband can be equated with love itself, he is what love means to her, and that is the second important symbol of the poem. The relationship she describes is warm and indestructible, full of support and understanding. When they reach the graves of their

children, it is the husband and the love that they have between them that brings her back to the present and stops her from wallowing in the despair this loss caused them. The strongest evidence of the importance of this love can be traced in the line “John had but me, I had but John” in the second stanza which returns in the fourth one slightly altered “For John had me, and I had John”. These lines clearly indicate a mutual reliance on each other and unconditional love for one another, which is crucial for her to move forward in life. Finally, the speaker alludes to a “home” that is always near, but which they can never quite reach. We can see allusions to this home in the second, fifth and sixth stanzas. If we take the word at face value, we could say that the couple walks towards their home, they are returning home after a journey, which can in turn symbolize that after a long life, they are finally ready to settle into their home, which in this case would mean death. Ultimately, the walk they take is equivalent to their lives, and the destination, home is the afterlife.

Grieving in this poem could not be further from the previous example. There are hardly any negative feelings associated with the imminence of death, especially not with the speaker’s death. Here, we can see four of the five stages of Kübler-Ross’ model. Denial and bargaining are present together when the couple stops at the children’s graves. She exhibits this by wishing to turn back time and not wanting to let go of the memories and the sorrow of the memories as if any amount of prayer could bring back what was lost. We see depression, again directed towards her children in the same actions, the fact that this is one of the major events she feels important to mention while describing the walk of life shows that it had a great impact on her. She needs the help of her husband, the support of love, to move on and alone she might not be capable of doing so. The only stage that is directed towards both her children and her is acceptance. The lines “They only wait above us! / Are we not glad no parting waits / Us *here* for those that love us?” help her to accept not only the death of the children but also her death. Ultimately, this poem is about acceptance. We see the thoughts of an elderly woman who has been through everything life has to offer and has no regrets, only cherished memories she can look back on with her husband at her side.

“And thinking o’er that walk today--
When John and I together,
Side close by side, came down the road,
All thro’ the frosty weather--
I think of how, life’s journey trod,
With trust forsaken never,
We’ve nearly reached at night that *home*
Where dwelleth rest forever.”

This last stanza perfectly encapsulates the attitude displayed in the whole poem. The speaker is not only not afraid of but almost welcomes the prospect of imminent death. The journey is all in the past now, it is but a distant memory, and death is imagined as a peaceful place where quote “dwelleth rest forever”. There is no struggle and no pain in these last lines, these are the thoughts of an elderly person who is ready to let go of life.

Although when compared to “The Raven” the setup is very similar, the mood evoked by it is vastly different in “The Winter of Life”. It was already discussed how the poem is different in terms of its attitude towards death, and that attitude defines the dominant affective tool of the poem. In the beginning, we find out that the speaker is not alone, and even though the winter landscape is described as grey and cold, and would be negative on its own, because of this the overall mood is comfortable and positive. Thanks to the speaker’s apparent attitude to her life, the reader is not scared for her either. The most emotionally taxing part of the poem, when they remember their lost children, is negated by the husband’s positive attitude towards their life. The reader understands that there is a mutual unconditional love between the couple. Due to this expressed attitude, I would claim that Mary Dow Brine’s speaker falls into the resilient bereavement pattern, as she is prepared for her death. In this category, we find those who have no regrets regarding their lives and think they have fulfilled what they were able to. The fact that she will die comes as no surprise to the speaker, and, as morbid as it may sound, the fact that her children are dead helps her reach this state. She does not have to leave them behind, regretting that she cannot spend more time with them. One could argue that if she believes in an afterlife she could also believe that her children will eventually follow her and reunite with her after death, which would fit into her belief system perfectly.

2.3. “I felt a Funeral, In my Brain”

Born in 1830 and died in 1886 Emily Dickinson was a rather productive poet, having written over 1800 poems, only a small fraction of which were published in her lifetime. Many of her poems were written for friends in letters and an even greater number for herself. Perhaps because of this, her style is unique and very personal, lacking in polish and adherence to rules and even grammar. Unlike the rest of her family, she did not adhere to strict religious dogmatism and believed in the soul's transmutability. As time went on she became more isolated and started to arrange her poems into booklets, but the purpose of them is not clear as she left no directions regarding her poems, but regardless, thanks to the efforts of her sister the first set of her poems were published in 1890 in a book titled *Poems by Emily Dickinson*. (Habegger)

Her Poem “I felt a Funeral, in my Brain”, first published in 1896, tells a more peculiar story than the previous works looked at in this paper. It starts with the speaker describing the scene of a funeral, with mourners walking around, finding their place in the church to settle down for the service. Then, the speaker describes her agitation with the funeral service, recalling its sound that “like a Drum – Kept beating”. She has enough of it and cannot keep her attention anymore. Then, the people lift the coffin of the deceased, which leaves her feeling inexplicably uncomfortable, she hears nothing but the bells of the church for a while then, silence. The last stanza describes a realization of a great truth, but to make sense of that realization, we must look at the events from a different perspective. While it is not clear who the speaker is and what is happening exactly, perhaps the speaker is present at her own funeral. If we look at the first stanza, specifically at the lines “it seemed / That Sense was breaking through,” it seems that here the speaker is unconscious, or at least not quite conscious. This is probably the body of the speaker, lying in the coffin, “hearing” the people fill up the church for the funeral service. As the service goes on the speaker starts to become agitated and nervous but does not quite comprehend why. In the third stanza, she can hear the commotion caused by the people carrying the coffin out of the church. Then, the sound of bells fills the church, she can hear it, but she cannot feel anything else, as she says “And Being, but an Ear”, and slowly the sounds die down and in the silence, the speaker is left alone and in the last stanza she finally realizes that she is the one who the funeral is for, and as they lower her into the ground she falls deeper and deeper, both literally and mentally and understands that she is dead. The very last line “And Finished knowing – then –” is an abrupt ending to the slow process of realization. Considering this interpretation, we can understand it in two ways. It is the end of the poem, thus there is nothing

after it. We anticipate something after “then”, but there *is* nothing, her story ends because she is dead. Or we might connect the last line with the first one, meaning that she is living this moment repeatedly, stuck in an infinite loop after death. It flows nicely “...then-I felt a Funeral in my Brain...” This interpretation is supported by the fact that, although the poem was published in 1896, it is believed to have been written earlier around the time she lost a significant number of her friends, which might have had a melancholic effect on her and is in support of the idea that this poem is a never-ending loop. In this case, her grief is twofold; she is witnessing death, and each time dies a little herself, thus her grief is directed both outwards and inwards (Habegger).

The poem is organized around the theme of the senses. The speaker is present in two forms, inside her body and outside of it, observing herself from the outside. In the first stanza, she feels the funeral in her brain, meaning she can sense that something is happening, but cannot understand it. Then in the second stanza, she can still sense with her mind, she can hear the service happening around her, and she also hears them lift the box and the heavy steps of the people carrying the “Box”. The last thing she hears is the bells of the church, and after that, she falls into endless silence. In the last stanza, she slowly fades away as she can finally make sense of the events and put the pieces together.

This is a completely different approach to grief from the previous two examples, as the speaker is both the deceased and the bereaved, even though she does not realize it right away. This is a case of unconscious denial, as she simply cannot comprehend that she is already dead. The speaker is confused, only relying on her barely alive senses to understand her situation. By the end, she does not have many choices but to accept her death, which she might have fought longer, maybe she would have had more to think or say about her death, but by the time she comprehends she has no more time and slips out of consciousness forever. This is not specifically about the grieving process really, it is more the lack thereof, the fact of death itself. But we see that her death affects the people around her, people are mourning her at the church, and there is a service, but for her, there is not much to mourn, not much to do in terms of grieving. After the fact you cannot grieve for yourself, you must leave that to the living. If we read the poem from this perspective it is a very neutral depiction of death, there is no fighting, no great peace, in fact, the poem just abruptly ends with a dull realization of facts.

In “I felt a Funeral, In my Brain” the main affect is the sense of confusion. The title is already confusing to the reader because it does not make logical sense to feel a funeral, which

throws us off balance and results in uncertainty. We are placed in the speaker's shoes. We are forced to go through the process of realization and feel the same sense of growing understanding. The speaker does not express herself clearly. Apart from feeling the funeral, she refers to a "Box", "being but an Ear", "a strange Race" and "a Plank in Reason". None of these expressions are immediately recognisable as belonging to a funeral service. It feels as if the speaker is not referring to anything real, her thought process is confusing, which is why it is so hard to figure out what is happening to her. Dickinson's poems are often informed by her desire for death, as Peter Declan Guy points out. He brings up "I felt a Funeral in my Brain" as one example to demonstrate this. (Guy 12) This poem demonstrates a desire for death, not on account of depression or self-destructiveness, but as an ultimate form of knowledge. Death is accompanied by a greater understanding, a sense of finality and completeness. Ultimately, Dickinson seems to believe that the only way to reach her goal of ultimate and complete understanding of self and truth is to die, for in death everything will have come full circle, and she could see beyond the reality we live in. This aligns with my analysis, according to which Dickinson's speaker struggles to understand herself, even if she does not know it is herself that she is trying to understand. Since Dickinson wrote primarily for herself it is much safer to assume her speaker as a projection of herself, conscious or subconscious. She is detached from herself and the process of figuring out what is happening culminates in a final death, which aligns with Guy's idea about Dickinson wanting to know herself and believing that the only way of doing that is by death. Only when the speaker dies can she finally "know".

Dickinson's speaker is in denial for the duration of the poem. If the events of the poem are understood as the speaker finally overcoming the denial and accepting her death, then this would put her into the improvement during bereavement pattern. However, if one were to interpret the last lines as referring to a never-ending loop, connecting back to the first line, then the speaker could not be categorised into a bereavement pattern, as in that case death is perpetual: it does not refer to an end point that could be classified as bereavement. In other words, there is no loss, just a perpetual imminence of loss.

2.4. “At the Funeral of a Minor Poet”

Thomas Bailey Aldrich lived between 1836 and 1907 and was an American poet, short story writer and editor. He left school at 13 and by the time he was 19 years old, he became a junior critic of the New York Evening Mirror. His writing presents a culturally realistic picture of the time and his most popular work, a children’s novel by the title *The Story of a Bad Boy* was the first in having a realistic boy as its main character. His poem “At the Funeral of a Minor Poet” was first published in 1891 in the collection of poems *The Sisters' Tragedy, With Other Poems, Lyrical and Dramatic*. (Britannica, *Thomas Bailey Aldrich*)

“At the Funeral of a Minor Poet” opens with the speech of one of the bearers. We can assume it is not the beginning, the first line starts with a sentence that seems incomplete “. . . Room in your heart for him, O Mother Earth,” The speaker begins (or continues, rather) by calling to Mother Earth saying that this Poet has always sang the praises of nature, always saw the beauty, unparalleled by the artefacts found in the ancient city of “Mycæne”. He then says that the poet was an artist, not an artisan, he did not care about everyday life and duties in his writing. He also points out that the poet was not particularly talented and the ideals he had were never realised in his life, but at least he had something he wanted to achieve. This is contrasted with what he calls the “Zolastic Movement” which in imitation of the French writer Émile Zola, compels all today to describe things realistically and in as unappealing a manner as possible. The speaker thinks that by “making a God of the dull Commonplace” people have forsaken the desire for beauty, and while they try to move away from the idealistic images of God and of “Madonnas”, they set up new idols to worship. He believes that there will come a time long after the death and burial of the poet when people will suddenly recognise the value of his work, but as of now, he lies dead, unappreciated and having lived his life in poverty. In the last lines, the speaker calls to Mother Earth again and asks her to take in the body of the poet.

The poem’s most important overarching theme is that of Nature. It opens and closes with the speaker addressing Mother Earth, connecting the poet to her, as the poet loved nature and all the beauty it had to offer, so much so that he did not even care about man-made things. He was an artist— singing the praises of nature and making art, not an artisan— making objects of utility. For his loyalty and love of nature, he was not appreciated in his time, because of the 19th-century disdain for describing the world as beautiful and for religious ideals. That is the second most important feature of the poem: religious imagery. Here belongs the image of

Beauty, called the handmaiden of God, the image of the Madonna, which refers to any religious depiction of the Virgin Mary, and Mother Earth is also present as a sort of God figure. Towards the middle of the poem, we can see allusions to ancient people and places, like that of “Mæcenas”⁶, Croesus⁷, and the archaeological finds in “Mycæne”⁸, and the speaker laments how the “Zolastics” do not want to know about the beauties of the world, only the “real”. The third major symbol is that of time and the passage of time. There are not only allusions to all these ancient people but in general, we get a feeling that the speaker thinks that the poet was born in the wrong time and that he would do much better had he been born back then, not in the 19th century. The speaker does not look at the present obsession with realism favourably, and that is why he respects the poet, even though he recognises his shortcomings. The rejection of Beauty concerns the speaker, as he is sceptical about this present way of viewing the world as being able to stand the test of time, but he states that Beauty will last, and it has already proven itself to do so. The speaker finds the poet’s efforts to adhere to these old and “outdated” ideals as good and believes that even if it takes thousands of years, someday the poet will be appreciated by others as described in the following lines:

“The world is suddenly conscious of a flower,
Imperishable, ever to be prized,
Sprung from the mould of a forgotten grave.”

In the last lines, the speaker again calls for Mother Earth to “transmute” the poet to “flower and leaf” in her “unending springs”. Here is the fourth and final symbol, the circle of life. Even though the poet has died and may be forgotten, maybe he will be recognised for his efforts later, but he will become one with the very thing he praised. This is true for everyone, once they die, even if they did not want to write about nature and the beautiful, yet it prevails. Ignoring and refusing nature, God and the Beautiful in favour of the “real” may get one recognition in life,

⁶ Referring to Gaius Maecenas who lived between 70 and 8 B. C., was a political advisor to Octavian, an important patron for the new generation of Augustan poets, including both Horace and Virgil. In many languages, his name is an eponym for “patron of arts.”

⁷ Croesus was the wealthy and successful king of Lydia who reigned from 585 BC until his defeat by the Persian king Cyrus the Great.

⁸ Referring to the archaeological site of Mycenae, a ruin of Mycenaean civilization from the 15th -12th century B.C., which played an important role in the development of Greek Civilization, linked to the “Odyssey” and the “Illiad”, the two major influences on European literature. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/941/>

but no matter how much people turn their backs on it they will always belong to Mother Earth and God.

In this poem, the speaker does not so much grieve the poet who died, but rather his ideals. He exhibits the stages of grief in connection to these ideals. While the speaker does not deny the death of the poet, he denies the mortality of his ideals. He is bargaining with Mother Earth herself to take the poet in and make him part of the beauty he sang the praises for all his life. If Mother Earth transmutes the body of the poet into a flower, maybe others in the future will recognise the beauty in the poet, and then his ideals will live on. There is an undertone of anger in the entirety of the poem as the speaker thinks it is unfair that the poet should be disregarded just because he did not follow the ideals of his time, it is unfair that the ideals should die with him. However, there is neither depression nor acceptance to be found here. The speaker ends with bargaining for the life of the ideals and refuses to accept their death. However, he never denied or struggled to accept the death of the poet. In the case of the ideals, however, it is different, and since ideals go beyond human life, perhaps the speaker is not wrong in not accepting their death.

“At the Funeral of a Minor Poet” quickly establishes an air of criticism towards the modern attitudes of the late 19th century. The speaker spends the entirety of the poem lamenting the fact that the ideals of the deceased poet are not appreciated, and this attitude rubs off on the reader, we also see his point of view and take up the anger and the grief for the ideals. We do not need to understand the historical references to see the message: contrasting the old times with the modern ones, criticising the new times and ideals to lift the old ones. The adamant rejection of accepting the ideals’ demise helps the classification of Aldrich’s speaker into the resilient bereavement pattern, although for different reasons than Mary Dow Brine’s speaker. Here, he exhibits a belief in justice, assuming that what he believes in will stand the test of time, even though he regrets the ideals not taking root in the present. However, this is not a personal failing or regret, and he seems to not think it is his personal duty to help the ideals stay afloat. It is also important to note that the speaker is probably in no way attached to the deceased poet, as he exhibits no grief towards his death, thus there is no secondary grieving pattern present.

3. Conclusions

We fear what ends threatens our survival (Panskepp 207), which means we fear death above all else. Being stuck in a state of denial, clinging to the past because we give it too much sentimental value, is the result of the very natural innate fear. If our life and freedom is threatened by an inhibition to our goals, if the goal is life itself too, then we may react with anger and denial. This is best represented in “The Raven” and in “At the Funeral of a Minor Poet”. In “The Raven” the speaker wants to get Lenore back, then forget her, then die, and only when he is inhibited in all of this does he fall back, his anger runs out. In this case, we can say that the speaker may be melancholic, as he is unable to “lift from that shadow”. The speaker of Aldrich thinks the spreading of ideals are inhibited by the death of the poet: he feels threatened by this death of the poet because it came in between the ideals, his goals, and the world. In the other two examples the speaker experiences no inhibition in goals: the speaker of “The Winter of Life” shows a clear understanding of natural hierarchy and rules and thus accepts death and does not see it as a stopping force. Dickinson’s speaker in “I felt a Funeral in my Brain” finds understanding in death, so she is not inhibited in her goal, death allows her to reach her goal. In these last two cases, the death is not of another, which is more threatening and uncomfortable, but their own. Both poems feature a moment where the speaker must face the death of another, the children and a non-existent other person respectively. However, when they start mourning themselves, they find it easy, liberating even.

We saw in *The History of Emotions* by Jan Plamper that a given time and place conditions how feelings are expressed. In 19th-century America expressing grief was not a marginal issue at all. There is no history of grief per se, but there is a constant change and flow of attitudes and ideas. What is allowed to be expressed and how? The questions remain the same, and the answers change, depending on how we ask the questions. 19th-century had an “obsession” with grief and, as the four poems discussed show, literature is a primary tool to express that. Affective language is a common method used by poets, on a conscious and subconscious level as well. This is what Wetherell points out when discussing affective discourse loops and affective practices, and this can easily be applied to literature as well. At the end of the day, literature is about making connections through a common medium.

How we talk about a certain event what we use to express our feelings and how we try to garner sympathy all depend on who we are where we come from and what tools we have at

our disposal. Wetherell described Troffea dancing to express resilience, and the English criticizing the migrants to express national belonging. Similarly, poets write to make others (or themselves) understand the feelings innate to human nature. When we read we must ask, “Why do I feel like this?” and understand that the meaning of words, the associations, and the feelings elicited by a text is not merely a coincidence, but a recognition of patterns that stem from living in a shared society. Patric Colm Hogan describes how affects work and what they are, that affects are arbitrary and innate. You need to be part of a community to know the code system. The language, the culture, and so on. We, for example, understand what the winter of life means when first reading it because we are used to the notion that winter equals death. We are confused when reading “I felt a Funeral in my Brain” because that does not make sense in our code system, but the poem possibly elicits the same, predictable reaction from readers.

Yearning for the past, making sure that we do not forget it, and grieving for what once was is the root cause of grief. It is nostalgia, it is the recognition that time goes on and takes the past away from us and that nothing can last forever. This is the strongest element in the four poems. In “The Raven” the speaker wants to return to the past or would rather die than live on while his love is gone. In “The Winter of Life” the speaker is briefly captured by an overwhelming desire to return to the past where her children are, and when she accepts life she does so because she believes in an afterlife and that she can get back what she lost and can ultimately return to the past in a way. In “I felt a Funeral in my Brain” the feeling of sentimental yearning for the past is weaker than in the other poems, but it is still recognisable in the way the speaker is clinging to her consciousness, to her life. In contrast, in “At the Funeral of a Minor Poet” the speaker is the most sentimental. He goes back to ancient times to express how much better the past was, how the poet was a representative of that, and how it is now gone with him. The loss of something of great value and a time when he cannot return is what makes him angry in the process. In all cases, however, the solution ultimately lies in the acceptance that now we are in the present and what was in the past or what remains in the past cannot be retrieved. This also mirrors how proper grieving should go, according to the various models of grief and Freud as well: going through the motions and then finally moving on. When one stays too long in the past and denies the loss they may end up in a state of melancholia.

The scope of this paper did not allow for an all-encompassing analysis of all the affective elements of the poems. It would be beneficial to consider the form and genre of these poems as well as the syntax and vocabulary in an in-depth manner. The different rhyme schemes and rhythms used in the poem, the role of repetition or lack thereof and the length, number or

absence of stanzas could also provide additional useful information considering the affective power of these works. Comparison with the affective language used in earlier or later eras would also undoubtedly provide significant results, as well as the observation of the evolution of affective language and elements throughout the works of a singular author. Doing so would provide a clearer picture of the evolution of these tools and attitudes on both a personal and a social scale.

There is a preference for the expression of grief and sentimental yearning for the past in 19th-century literature. There is a focus on grief, sentimentality, and death in this period, which is reflected in these poems. Reading these poems can help us overcome difficult situations and help face bereavement of any kind. Even if we do not know what to call it, we may recognise when falling into melancholia because we act like the speaker of “The Raven”. We might remember that the speaker of “The Winter of Life” found comfort in knowing she is not alone in life and will not be alone in death. “I felt a Funeral in my Brain” shows that there is no other way out of the confusion left in the wake of death than that of acceptance, and “At the Funeral of a Minor Poet” exemplifies that yearning for a long-gone period is nothing new and gives hope that what we believe to be right will prevail at the end. It is one thing that these poems make us feel in a certain way, but they can be a guideline on how to handle these emotions when we encounter them in our lives. It is like exposure therapy. If we get used to the idea of loss, in the sense that we see people, either real or fictitious, handle the trauma of grief, we will be able to do so as well. The affective power of poetry is one of the strongest out of all the forms of art when we have the framework to understand it.

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