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ARTICLE

'Routinely Herded Grief Can Never Feed the Livingsmothered'—Modes of Inarticulacy as Resistance in Maggie O'Sullivan's *murmur*

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This exploratory article considers Maggie O'Sullivan's 2011 poetry sequence *murmur: tasks of mourning* and the possibilities that are opened out for the text if it is read as an elegy. Through close analyses of selected passages from the sequence, the article will argue that O'Sullivan uses modes of inarticulate expression as a form of resistance against an institutionalized conception of mourning as the linear progression from a space of crisis to one of recovery. Further, it will explore how the text offers inarticulate modes of expression as a counterpoint to the rationalized and bureaucratized language which such conceptions promote. Beginning with a contextualization of the text within O'Sullivan's body of writing more broadly, the article will examine the ways in which O'Sullivan explores modes of articulacy and their relation to the grieving body; and how these relate to patterns of harm and partial recovery which are present within the work. Finally, it will examine how *murmur*'s refusal of monolithic interpretation operates as a further resistance to the notion of mourning as a linear progression; a resistance which gestures towards an understanding of recovery as continuous and continually shifting.

Keywords: Elegy; Maggie O'Sullivan; Inarticulacy; Mourning

The subtitle of Maggie O'Sullivan's 80-page visual poetry sequence *murmur: tasks of mourning* (2011) indicates that it is situated within a context whereby mourning is understood as a set of duties to be completed, while the title signposts the sequence's investigations into—and incorporation of—modes of inarticulacy and incoherence. If we read the colon in the title as performing the grammatical function of preceding an expansion, definition or description, then on the basis of the

title it would seem that O'Sullivan is drawing an explicit connection between a mode of inarticulacy (murmur: a softly-spoken or almost inaudible utterance) and mourning understood as a set of tasks to be completed; in other words the former consists of the latter, or the latter is the logical consequence of the former. However, a close analysis of the sequence reveals the possibility that O'Sullivan is offering these two elements—modes of inarticulacy; and the idea of mourning as a set of tasks to be completed—in opposition to one another. With this in mind, we might read the colon as performing a logical function whereby the sequence explores the relational connections between the two. Indeed, the sequence's incorporation of forms of inarticulate, hesitant and disrupted expression (such as the howl, the scream, the stutter, and the murmur) might be read as performing a resistance to the notion that mourning is structured as a set of tasks to be completed. Such a conception of mourning implies that it would move in a linear fashion from a space of crisis to one of recovery. O'Sullivan's forms of inarticulacy seem to work against this implication, offering a counterpoint to the reason-based and bureaucratized language that this notion of mourning promotes. This article will explore, through in-depth analysis of some key passages in the text, the various ways in which *murmur* negotiates a space of mourning and, in doing so, how it gestures beyond the idea of mourning as a set of tasks to be completed.

To situate *murmur* within O'Sullivan's body of writing more broadly is no easy task, since it is materially rich and incorporates a range of innovative poetic modes. In places (for instance, in both iterations of 'premonitions and return') it employs some of the irregular punctuation of *A Natural History in 3 Incomplete Parts* (1985), such as a use of strokes, sporadic capitalization, underlining and full stops in place of grammatical spacing; as well as the use of repetition in a mirrored double-page spread. It incorporates both the dotted ellipses used extensively in *From the Handbook of That & Furriery* (1986), and the long dashes used in *States of Emergency* (1987), while its visuality has much in common with *all origins are lonely* (2003), for instance in its use of a purple, magenta and yellow colour scheme and the inclusion of crayoned boxes, pictoral fragments and paint strokes. In 'premonitions and return,' and 'would

a yellow do?' the words are laid out sparsely, often centrally down the page, in a manner that is formally reminiscent of *States of Emergency* or *unofficial word* (1988); while the breathless run-on syntax of 'below,' though unpunctuated, resembles the long prose sections of *A Natural History*. Broadly speaking, one might say that *murmur* is aesthetically typical of O'Sullivan's work in that it employs a fragmented, disrupted syntax punctuated with ellipses; and in that it employs occasionalisms, neologisms, archaic spelling and compounded words. Moreover, thematically speaking, while O'Sullivan's body of writing often tends to combine organic, domestic/industrial, and corporeal imagery, *murmur* seems to focus more heavily on the latter—the visceral, the sensory, and the surgical—than earlier sequences, perhaps because of its emphasis on exploring the effects of grief upon the body.

murmur is not the first of O'Sullivan's sequences to deal with themes of mourning, elegy, loss or commemoration. *tonetreks* (1975–1977) includes an ekphrastic poetic interpretation of Edvard Munch's painting 'Melancholy,' and an elegy addressed to Arshile Gorky, which ends with an image of his suicide in Connecticut in 1948.[1] *A Natural History in 3 Incomplete Parts* includes sections titled '(<u>for my mother</u>)' and '(<u>for my dad</u>).' The former splices together natural imagery with corporeal fragments ("limpet. mandible", "Spinal Rose"); domestic symbols ('bannister,' 'twine ragging lamp'); occasionalisms or neologisms ('mezzlar,' 'sedgey,' 'leadley,' 'Brackeen'); and archaic word-forms ('ludge,' 'Redempting'); while the latter—formatted in landscape on the subsequent page with full stops and strokes between each word—has a more compressed layout, and incorporates more violent imagery ('Fractured.lard/Fractured.leg'); allusions towards sexual abuse within the Catholic church ('Gruff. ecumenical. stirring/Postillion') and furtive gestures ('crept,' 'flitting,' 'skite,' (which means both a sudden blow and to dart swiftly), 'slunk'), alongside images that also combine natural, corporeal and domestic elements ('boot-nail/mutton-vestment,' '<u>JAR</u>/Dogrose,' 'poplin. clog/poplin.<u>crow</u>/jowl/<u>crow</u>').[2] *Concerning Spheres* (1982) and *Un-Assuming Personas* (1985) are both dedicated to the memory of her mother, who died in 1981. The former sequence includes a three-page poem titled 'For my Mother,' which likewise combines natural, domestic and corporeal imagery

('ammonite keys,' 'luminary/womb drachm of gull/crustacean'); with abbreviated or
compounded words ('slipsound,' 'beatn,' 'itsnogood').[3] The latter sequence, divided
into sections marked 'HER' and 'HIS,' incorporates a broken syntax of impressionistic
lists: natural and synthetic objects are depicted alongside parts of the body ('primi-
tive eye,' 'rib's profane cryptograph,' 'nearest limb,' 'light & sweet skin') and forms of
movement ('furtherING,' 'mergence,' 'rotation,' 'oscillation') as a means of mapping
out the spatial, figurative, and gender-inflected relations between the female and
male figures.[4] *murmur*, which was written between 1999 and 2004, makes no men-
tion of the subject of its mourning, though its references to the living ('the living
strain,' and 'livingsmothered')[5]; to a coffin[6] and to a shroud[7] gesture towards the spe-
cific loss of a person who has died, rather than a mourning which is more abstract. As
such, it might be useful to consider the text as a kind of elegy. To do so is not to sug-
gest that this is the only way in which the text might be read: *murmur* is a rich, sub-
stantial and complex poetic sequence, and its incorporation of fragmented syntax,
repetition and inversion refuses such definitive or absolute readings. Nonetheless, to
read it in this way opens out certain hermeneutic possibilities for the text, which this
article will aim to address and explore.

Repetition, Fragment, Elision—A Note on Historical Conceptions of Female Grief Speech

Before discussing O'Sullivan's use of inarticulate modes of expression within what
may be considered an elegiac text, it is perhaps necessary to address the way in
which, historically, female mourning has often been dismissed as inherently inarticu-
late, incoherent, or unintelligible. This belief has roots in conceptions of the classical
Greek lament, a feminized part of the funerary ritual which would have incorporated
inarticulate expressions such as passionate wailing and keening. It also has roots in
Aristotle's conception of melancholy in *Problemata*—which implied that women, as
inherently 'colder in nature,' are likely to become 'dull and stupid' if in a melancholy
state, as opposed to men who, full of 'hot black bile' would become 'loquacious'.[8]
This idea is reproduced in Robert Burton's 1621 text *Anatomy of Melancholy*, which
depicts female melancholia as 'irredeemably inarticulate.'[9] Such conceptions have

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led, as Anne Carson points out in 'The Gender of Sound,' to an embedded cultural understanding of female mourning as a 'disorderly and uncontrolled outflow of sound—[…] shrieking, wailing, sobbing, shrill lament, […] eruptions of raw emotion in general.'[10] Similarly, Juliana Schiesari highlights that, while so-called 'melancholic' men are traditionally afforded the literary capacity to express their grief in a 'rational' and therefore 'truthful' way (for instance via the codified tropes and conventions of the patriarchal elegiac tradition), the vocalization of female melancholia has been 'relegate[d] […] to an inexpressive babble.'[11] For this reason, O'Sullivan's use of inarticulate modes of expression in *murmur* should not be read as representing any *essential* quality of female mourning. Rather, they might be better understood as signifying a *reclaiming* of inarticulacy from within this problematically-gendered space, as a means of working against established male traditions, such as, for instance, the rational, reason-driven and linear conception of mourning promoted by psychoanalytical stage-models; or the heavily-codified generic conventions of traditional elegy.

Further, in a discussion of inarticulacy and its relation to mourning and loss, it is perhaps also necessary to touch upon Julia Kristeva's theoretical perspective on female melancholy, which conceives of inarticulacy as a quality inherent within the language of women's mourning. In *Black Sun*, Kristeva considers grief-speech as *characterized* by inarticulacy. It is 'repetitive and monotonous,' with sentences which are 'interrupted, exhausted, [that] come to a standstill.' It is embodied by 'broken logical sequences' which eventually sink 'into the blankness of asymbolia or the excess of an unorderable cognitive chaos'.[12] She conceives of melancholic speech as filled with 'long and frequent silences,' and as comprising 'syntactic structures' which are 'characterized by nonrecoverable elisions'.[13] In her view, articulations of mourning are intrinsically underdeveloped and impeded; they represent a language in regression. It may be tempting to draw parallels between Kristeva's description of repetition, 'broken logical sequences,' and elisions and the use of these elements as aesthetic characteristics in *murmur.* However, Kristeva's conception of loss is problematized by its focus on the figure of the mother, which in her view is a 'death-bearing she-Gehenna' (a destination of the wicked in Judeo-Christian and Islamic scripture), and

a 'bloodthirsty Fury,' the killing of which is required in order to counter feelings of melancholia or grief.[14] She also perceives of this 'matricidal drive' as 'more difficult, if not impossible' for women because of their unconscious adoption of the maternal body/self.[15] Within this theoretical framework, then, the possibility of fulfilling a figurative matricide in order to recover from melancholia is one which seems only to be afforded to men. As Schiesari argues in *The Gendering of Melancholia*, Kristeva's conception of the female melancholic allows only one of two positions: one in which she is understood as intrinsically 'inarticulate and insufficiently differentiated,' or one in which she 'must be the aggressor' within a 'murderous rhetoric of violence against women.'[16] This limited choice, she argues, 'is nothing more than an alternative between different modes of complicity within a male order.'[17] To read *murmur* through a Kristevan lens, then, would risk subscribing to—in Schiesari's words—the 'narrow set of possibilities available to women under patriarchal law.'[18] Moreover, since Kristeva understands repetition, fragment and elision as inherent characteristics of melancholic or grieving speech, to read *murmur* according to this theoretical framework would risk erroneously eliding O'Sullivan's creative agency; it would presume that these characteristics are inherent within all female mourning, rather than creative and aesthetic choices made within the sequence's composition. Indeed, to read *murmur* according to Kristeva's conception of grief-speech—as a kind of 'asymbolia' or 'excess of an unorderable cognitive chaos'—would be to speciously imply that the text cannot be comprehended, or that the words within it have no symbolic significance, which simply is not true: *murmur* is a text full of meaning and symbolic significance, which offers a vast range of hermeneutical possibilities to the reader.

'Routinely Herded Grief'—Modes of Inarticulacy as Resistance

At first glance, the title of *murmur: tasks of mourning* seems to gesture towards a correspondence between inarticulacy and a culturally-constructed understanding of mourning as a set of tasks to be completed. However, close analysis of the text reveals ways in which the sequence might be read as working against such conceptions of mourning. For instance, in the first iteration of 'premonitions and return,' O'Sullivan

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introduces three double-page spreads featuring a series of roughly-penned squares variously filled with paint, or marked with crayoned glyphs and symbols.[19] These boxes appear to distort or parody the idea of mourning as a set of tasks which must be completed. They caricature bureaucratic or administrative form-filling processes, while the crayoned symbols—each of which transgress the parameters of the boxes— imply an inability or refusal to contain mourning within such limited frames. In this way, we might read the boxes as implying that such conceptions of mourning are reductive or overly-institutionalized.

Such resistances to bureaucratized conceptions of mourning recur throughout the sequence; for instance, a prose section in 'below' includes the phrase: 'officialese sow cause proclaim/**BODYTEXT** micro routinely herded grief can never feed the/ livingsmothered & riddled with howl marked in the ractiseof the tongue gash'.[20] O'Sullivan appears to criticize the use of institutionalized language ('officialese') in the context of mourning, and the way that such language spreads and promotes humanist principles of reason ('sow cause'). The phrase 'micro routinely herded grief can never feed the livingsmothered' appears to question the idea that grief can be subjected to systems of order and structuring: 'micro' implies *micro*management, while 'routinely' implies procedure and 'herded' implies a form of paternalistic control. In this way, the passage suggests that understanding mourning according to principles of control, structure and authority will be unable to offer any form of nurture ('feed') for the living. Further, depicting the bereaved as 'livingsmothered' implies that such bureaucratic frameworks—which seek to micromanage responses to grief using institutionalized language (e.g., psychoanalytical jargon or buzzwords)—have a stifling, oppressive, or overpowering effect.

As the passage continues on the following page, this language becomes one of authority and control: 'the language of command of management/judicial that struggle as it owns outright owes toting hypodermic all the rooms are behind/a door that only our household can use.'[21] Institutionalized language, then, is related to the administration of law ('judicial') which requires effort ('struggle') to maintain absolutely ('as it owns outright'); and which is under moral or financial obligation ('owes').

In this way, we might understand the use of bureaucratized language within the context of mourning as a means of social control which is bound to systems of regulation, ethics and capital. Periods of mourning are often considered theoretically dangerous because they represent a time in which re-ordering is performed and values are re-established. In *The Ritual Process,* Victor Turner suggests mourning is a period which lies 'between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial.'[22] Likewise, in *Constructing Death,* Clive Seale argues that within the space of mourning, 'hierarchies and rules that govern normal social conduct may be broken more readily.'[23] In *Purity and Danger,* Mary Douglas suggests that this space is also one of agency, since there is power 'in the inarticulate area, margins, confused lines, and beyond external boundaries.'[24] Institutionalized language which promotes an idea of mourning as a set of tasks to be completed might thus be understood as an integral means of regulating dissent within a community. With this in mind, we might read this passage in *murmur* as signposting this same idea: that the institutionalized language of mourning is an instrument of social regulation. The addition of 'toting hypodermic' suggests that the institutionalized language carries within it medical or clinical connotations; or alternatively, that it conveys a message which is uncritically accepted by the receiver. In this way, we might read the passage as implying that the medicalized adoption of institutionalized language within the context of mourning reflects a social requirement for it to be 'managed' in a particular way; that it must follow 'commands.' The subsequent phrase 'all the rooms are behind/a door that only our household can use' might thus be read as a movement against this social 'management' of mourning, potentially signifying a gesture of retrieval in which mourning is transferred from a regulated public space into the realm of the personal.

Further resistances to the idea of mourning as a set of tasks to be completed occur at the opening section of 'below,' which includes the phrase 'cause ways abridged under the sign of lament solitude marks the/line.'[25] Here 'cause' might indicate the origin of a loss, or alternatively the humanist principles of reason and logic; while 'ways' implies both method and possibility. Read together (as 'cause-ways') it

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denotes paths which signify linear progression. These paths are 'abridged' (cut short)
by the 'lament' which is presented as a 'sign.' As a 'sign' of the lament—rather than
the lament itself—we might read this as a gesture towards elegy, as a poetic form in
which mourning is translated into language. This 'sign' is nonetheless responsible for
abridging the 'cause' and the 'ways' (or 'cause-ways'), and as such curtails, condenses
or abbreviates movements of rational or linear progression. We might in turn read
this as implying that articulations of mourning such as the lament (which in classical
terms would have incorporated inarticulate modes of expression such as screaming,
crying, the violent beating of the body, and the tearing of clothes[26]) cannot be struc-
tured according to rational frameworks or structures of progression. They cannot be
subjected to principles of logic, reason or linearity, and as such should not be under-
stood as a simple movement—via tasks to be completed—from one space (of crisis) to
another (of recovery).

Stutt ERR, Scream, Howl—Modes of Inarticulacy and their Relation to the Body

murmur offers modes of inarticulacy as counterpoints to the use of an institutional-
ized 'language of command' or 'management' within the context of mourning; a lan-
guage which follows rational, linear patterns of progression. The stutter in 'would a
yellow do?' for instance, operates as a mode of *dis*articulation, both in the sense that
it disrupts the flow of words and the formation of clear and distinct meanings; *and*
in the sense that the words are literally severed in two within the text.[27] Presented as
'Stutt ERR,' the word is broken down into its component parts, dislocating meaning,
foregrounding notions of error, and performing its own vocalic impairment. This
*dis*articulation is also enacted upon other words within the section, for instance,
in 'ill-/umination' and 'dis-/solution.' *Dis*articulating words in this way produces a
tension between the meaning of the word as a whole, and the meaning of its frag-
mented components. The 'stutt ERR' opens up plural possibilities for reading words
within the text, incorporating space for meaning to go astray or 'ERR.' For instance,
'illumination' becomes a radiance or elucidation that is associated with notions of
harm, sickness or bad omens ('ill'), while 'dissolution' becomes an act of severance

or splitting that operates as a means of solving a problem ('solution'). As a result, images of clarity and lucidity of expression take on negative connotations, while images of separation, disintegration and dispersal take on positive ones. In this way, O'Sullivan privileges disjointed, fragmented and impeded modes of articulation over those based on reason, logic and rational syntaxes.

Alongside the stutter, O'Sullivan incorporates the scream as a key mode of inarticulacy within the sequence. As an inarticulate expression of extreme emotion or pain, the scream represents grief in its immediacy, beyond structures of language and notions of restraint or control. The phrase 'nil by scream' in 'would a yellow do?' thus implies an expression of extreme emotion that is restricted within a medicalized space: punning on 'nil by mouth'—the medical instruction in which patients are forbidden to ingest food or drink—the scream becomes a bodily necessity (like eating or drinking), which is prohibited for the sake of a patient's 'health.'[28] As the psychologists Wortman and Silver point out, the belief that mourning is a process which 'unfolds in a particular way,' allows those whose mourning responses do not 'conform to these expectations' to be judged as reacting 'inappropriately.'[29] The reason-based, bureaucratized conception of mourning as a linear set of tasks to be completed promotes a prescribed set of mourning protocols and parameters which enable certain responses to loss—in particular inarticulate modes which make others feel uncomfortable—to be deemed 'inappropriate,' or 'excessive.' As a result, controlled and restrained articulations of mourning are perceived as 'healthy,' while uninhibited, inarticulate expressions are considered 'pathological.' We might thus read O'Sullivan's 'nil by scream' as operating in resistance to a bureaucratized conception of mourning which discourages—and allows restrictions to be placed upon—uninhibited articulations of emotion.

Inarticulate modes subjected to constraint is a theme which reiterates throughout the text. For instance, the previously-discussed prose section in 'below' continues as: 'livingsmothered & riddled with howl marked in the ractiseof the tongue gash.'[30] In this phrase, the howl performs bodily damage, firstly in that it has 'riddled' or perforated the living(smothered) body, and secondly in that it is 'marked'— marred or

sullied—by the damage it enacts upon articulation, here depicted as a mutilation of the articulatory muscle ('tongue gash'). The bodily damage depicted here is reflected within the text's form: the words *practice* and *of* are forced together in a collision which affects graphemic loss (an elision of the 'p'). Thus, within the context of a 'routinely herded grief'—a grief subjected to principles of structure and control—the howl carries with it a capacity for physical harm. Similar restrictions on inarticulate expression are explored in the phrase—in the opening of 'below'—which reads, 'the pearl answers to the fugitive mired/wash across the scream marbleized cursive collisions.'[31] Here the pearl (later in the same passage depicted as 'gut pearl') implies value, viscerality, and extreme vulnerability: if something is *gut*ted, it is stripped, emptied, eviscerated, ruined. In this sense, it might be understood as signifying the body, or more specifically, the grieving body. Answering to the 'fugitive mired wash across the scream,' the grieving body responds to—or is subservient to—an erosive force which is exerted upon its inarticulate expression of extreme emotion (the scream). Just as in the phrase 'nil by scream,' an inarticulate mode of expression is subjected to restriction or suppression: 'wash across' implies a movement of washing away or covering up. In this instance, the grieving body's capacity for inarticulacy is erased by a force which is beyond—or evading—authority ('fugitive'), and is murky or stalled/hindered ('mired'). The 'marbleized cursive collisions' which follow this erosive force imply a form of controlled expression (text written with a running hand) which is smashed together ('collisions') and fossilized or petrified ('marbleized'). This might be understood as another way of gesturing towards the idea that principles of verbal or textual control are incompatible with the grieving body's articulation of mourning; they submit such linguistic expression both to a calcifying rigidity ('marbleized') and an exertion of force ('collisions'). We can see this movement literally enacted within the text, in which words run into one another, colliding and conjoining, or breaking up and dispersing (for instance, in the previously-discussed '*ractiseof*'). If read as a whole, the second clause within the above phrase implies that these 'cursive collisions' (as a form of controlled expression) embody the erosive force by which the scream (an inarticulate mode of expression) is washed across, or

concealed. Read in this way, the text appears to signpost that a grieving body—in articulating mourning through controlled forms of expression—risks obscuring or eliding extreme emotions which cannot be articulated through language. Grief in its immediacy is expressible only through modes of inarticulacy, such as the scream.

Modes of inarticulacy are also tied with movements of damage and renewal within the text. The second iteration of 'nil by scream,' in 'would a yellow do?' for instance, is immediately followed by '- screamed-in sliver to the/wired foetal heart.'[32] Here the scream is inverted: rather than an expulsion of sound, it becomes an inhalation or a movement of drawing the (in)articulation inwards. Echoing tensions of meaning enacted in the *dis*articulation of 'in/gestage' which occurs later on the page, the scream is incorporated (or ingested) into the body where it occupies a space of growth and development ('gestage'/'foetal'). In this way, the scream takes on a fragile and (pro)creative nascence within the body. However, as a 'sliver,' the scream is also a broken piece of something larger; a fragment of grief that is sharp and therefore capable of damage. The proscription signified by the 'nil by scream'—in which uninhibited inarticulate modes of expression are forbidden—forces the scream inward into the body, where it may grow and develop, but also generate bodily harm.

'Savaging Salvaging'—Patterns of Harm and Recovery

The double-movement in which a mode of inarticulacy (such as the scream or the stutter) has both the potential for generative properties and for somatic damage is a recurrent motif within the text. This is further evidenced in the sequence's recurring phrase 'savaging salvaging body (text).'[33] The repeated phrase gestures towards the idea that articulations of mourning carry both a capacity for recovery ('salvage') and a risk of damage ('savage'). Within the text, the salvaging movement and the savaging one are inextricable: a possibility of retrieval (salvaging) cannot be achieved without enacting a form of harm (savaging). This might be read in several ways; firstly, as applying to the grieving/writing body. In an interview with Charles Bernstein, O'Sullivan describes writing as a 'body-intensive activity' in which '[t]he whole body is engaged in the act of writing.'[34] If, as this quote implies, the process of writing for O'Sullivan involves a blurring of distinctions between writer and text, then this

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savaging/salvaging double-movement might be understood as that which is enacted upon the body of the writer in the process of writing. The poetic articulation of mourning performs a retrieval (a 'salvaging' of the writer, through the text), that also enacts a violence ('savaging') upon the grieving body. On the other hand, it might also be understood as applying to the body of the lost other: in attempting to recover the elegiac subject through language, they may be figuratively 'retrieved' through the text ('salvaged'), but this text figuratively stands in for the lost other's corporeal materiality; it takes the place of—and as such, elides—their material body (a 'savaging'). Mandy Bloomfield's analysis offers a third possibility, in which it is the *text* that is the 'suffering body,' or that which is salvaged/savaged.[35] If, for O'Sullivan, the distinctions between writer and text are blurred, then each of these interpretations is equally plausible; the savaging/salvaging dynamic might be understood as one in which writer, text *and* lost other are all subjected to both a violence (savaging) and a form of recovery (salvaging).

Though much of the text appears to operate in resistance to an institutionalized conception of mourning as the progression from a space of crisis to one of recovery, the repetition of a savaging/salvaging dynamic within *murmur* implies that O'Sullivan does not reject notions of recovery altogether. In an interview with Redell Olsen, she states that the page is a 'place of damage, savagery, pain, silence: also a place of salvage, retrieval and recovery.'[36] Crucially however, O'Sullivan's double-movements of damage and healing within the text do not always reach that space. For instance, among the crayoned boxes in the first iteration of 'premonitions and return,' a fragment reads: 'vigil turned ---/excrescen$_{=ce}$.'[37] The word 'vigil' signifies the devotional act of witnessing which operates as a documentative act of care towards the deceased, and as such might be understood as a 'salvaging' of the lost other. Moreover, it represents a religiously-codified 'task' of mourning. Within the text, however, this act becomes an 'excrescence'; a pernicious growth which is symptomatic of corporeal damage (a 'savaging' of the body). Rather than moving from crisis towards recovery (savaging to salvaging), in this instance the text moves, inversely, from a space of potential recovery to one of illness or bodily harm (salvaging to savaging).

Here, *murmur* resists and undermines a consolation narrative which move in a linear fashion from crisis to recovery. Indeed, in places *murmur* appears to critique narratives of consolation which adhere to such linear patterns. For instance, in the opening section, the phrase: 'vertical soliloquies -------/pacing gamut's/'belatedness' ('s 's -----/accrude,' appears to criticize, and even ridicule, the traditional elegiac mode in which a grieving lyric 'I' recounts the loss of an other according to linear narrative patterns that move neatly from crisis towards recovery.[38] '[V]ertical soliloquies' gestures towards linear structure ('vertical') and a lyric mode of address ('soliloquies'), which—in their movement (or 'pacing')—traverse either the full range, or the musical scale ('gamut') of, 'belatednesses.' In other words, the convention of articulating mourning in a rational, moderate and linear fashion embodies every possible nuance ('gamut') of that which is too late ('belatednesses'). It is worth noting that the term *belatedness* is often employed within elegy scholarship to signify how elegy is always, inherently, too late in its articulation.[39] The use of quotation marks around it implies reported speech, suggesting that the term 'belatednesses' is not the writer's own. This has several implications: either O'Sullivan is distancing herself from the term as one which she is recounting from elsewhere; the quotation marks imply an ironic or mocking tone; or the word is presented as one which is not entirely to be trusted. The repetition of apostrophes and the letter 's' which follow the word 'belatedness' suggests plurality—it is an abundance of belatednesses—while their position within open parentheses might suggest a theatrical aside or stage whisper. Any derisive tone implicit within the word's usage here is intensified by the addition of the word 'accrude': these are *belatednesses* which are accumulated or amassed (accrued) like commodities. The misspelling lends additional critique by incorporating the word *crude*: it is an accumulation which is depicted as somehow obscene or indelicate. Read in this way, the passage appears to imply that narratives of consolation which adhere to linear patterns operate as a crude amassing of rigid ('vertical') monologues ('soliloquies') which are absurdly preoccupied with their own lateness.

In sum it would seem that for O'Sullivan, mourning is *not* coherent, linear or manageable, and so cannot—or should not—be subjected to syntaxes or categories

which depict it as such, and this not only includes the bureaucratic and institutional-
ized language used in the context of mourning, but also the consolatory narratives
which seek to moderate the aesthetics of mourning; and the codified customs of
religion (for example, the vigil), which operate as another way of instructing how
mourning should be managed. Equally, neither should articulations of mourning be
read in a coherent, linear or manageable way. As *murmur* suggests, it is 'not raked
up geometry' which can be understood according to precise formulae.[40] Instead,
O'Sullivan depicts a mourning which operates as a continual double-movement that
incorporates space both for forms of bodily damage (savaging) and for a kind of par-
tial recovery (salvaging).

'Dis-accretion Stitching/ed': Damage and the Imperfect Recovery of the Text

In the first iteration of 'premonition and return,' the sequence incorporates two crum-
pled and creased square clippings of text which have been torn in half and then sewn
back onto the page with large cross-stitches.[41] We might read these stitched texts as
embodying the savaging/salvaging dynamic which characterizes O'Sullivan's explo-
ration of mourning: the paper is torn, furrowed and folded over in places (savaged);
and it has subsequently been flattened out and stitched onto the page (salvaged).
They exemplify a partial, imperfect or makeshift form of recovery; a hand-crafted
textual surgery in which the damage—intersecting tears, folds and creases—remains
visible. This damage prohibits a coherent linear reading of either text—both of which
appear to be largely the same, though torn in different places—although several leg-
ible phrases reflect the idea that only a partial or makeshift form of recovery is pos-
sible for the grieving body. To begin with, there is 'chain crate ilate cracking theorum':
'chain' implies a causal chain or sequence, while 'crate' implies packing up objects as
if to stow them away, to transport them, or store them. This might in turn be read
as indicating the institutionalized conception of mourning as a sequential progres-
sion from crisis to recovery; in which the act of clearing out the belongings of the
lost other is an integral part; or in which the mourner is encouraged to conceal or
'stow away' their feelings. 'ilate cracking theorum' gestures towards an exception to

a mathematical rule for calculating partial integration. This suggests that, if the construct of mourning-as-linear-progression is the rule, *murmur* embodies an exception to that rule. It seems to imply that the integration of loss can only ever be partial; and that the understanding of mourning as a linear progression is just one of several ways in which it might be conceived.

Further, the phrase 'peregrinations levied stoop' firstly implies a long and meandering journey, which again might be read as gesturing towards the conception of mourning as a linear movement or progression. However, the word 'levied' suggests the imposition of a tax, fee, or assessment. This seems to imply that, if mourning is a journey, it is one which exacts a toll upon the mourner. The word 'stoop' implies either the act of bending the body forwards; or a lowering of dignity. If mourning is a journey which exacts a toll, then it is one which manifests within the body as a posture denoting age, disappointment, or shame. Thus, if mourning is a journey, it is one in which the mourner experiences irreparable damage; if they arrive at a space of recovery, they will not be physically the same as when they started out.

The phrase '[e]rasures askew body distress' reinforces both the implication that an act of erasing or clearing away traces (such as, for instance, traces of the lost other); or the erasure of emotion involved in suppressing certain articulations of mourning, can effect physical harm upon the mourner. These forms of erasure—which underpin an institutionalized conception of mourning as a linear progression—evoke a sense of being off-balance ('askew') and lead to 'body distress'. This is further echoed in the phrase 'inroads of rupture delirium': 'inroads' implies progression but also a hostile incursion or a forced encroachment; while 'rupture' signifies breakage; and 'delirium' denotes a disordered state of mind. Thus, mourning conceived as a linear progression—a journey from crisis to recovery—operates as an intrusion or violation of the grieving body, effecting breakage and disturbance to brain function.

Several other phrases also reflect the damage and partial recovery which the torn and sewn text embodies. For instance, in 'flayed black surgical gesture mouthing hoop & skidder,' the word 'flayed' implies a stripping away of the skin, while 'surgical gesture' indicates either a movement of precision, or an invasive gesture which is

intended to treat an injury or wound. This suggests that, while mourning may enact
bodily harm upon the mourner, the procedure which attempts to heal that harm car-
ries within it another form of damage; one which has stripped away protective layers
leaving the mourner vulnerable and exposed. Further, this gesture of supposed heal-
ing is 'mouthing hoop & skidder,' implying that it speaks in an empty or disingenu-
ous manner ('mouthing'); that what it articulates is circular or repetitive, or signifies
a simple cry or call ('hoop'); and that it has a precarity or instability ('skidder', that
which skids). We might discern from this, then, that recovery is not a genuine, stable
or fixed space. This is reflected in phrases such as 'collision leaking species moor-
ing,' 'states ravined pebbley,' and 'skidder gorse collision leak,' each of which gesture
towards porosity ('leak,' 'leaking'); harm ('collision,' 'gorse'); and precarity ('skidder,'
'ravined pebbley,' or prone to slippage). In *murmur*, a space of recovery is instead one
which incorporates the potential for further damage.

In the phrase 'raw sutures tongue's,' this damage is effected directly upon the
articulatory organ, in the same way that damage is embodied by the text on the
page: the tongue bears painful ('raw') marks ('sutures'), just as the text bears crude
('raw') stitches ('sutures'). Moreover, this phrase gestures towards the modes of inar-
ticulacy which recur throughout the sequence: painful stitches on the tongue will
impair articulation. This inarticulacy is further reflected in phrases such as 'skin sobs
of a stutt ERR' and 'scream of drowning vocalic.' In the former, 'skin sobs' depicts
mourning as a visceral experience, and one which is inherently inarticulate. Further,
the skin not only 'sobs,' but 'sobs of a stutt ERR': it uses one inarticulate form of
expression to represent another. This doubling of inarticulate modes of expression
likewise occurs in the latter phrase: 'scream of drowning vocalic' implies that the
'scream'—an inarticulate mode of expression—is comprised of 'vocalic,' or inarticu-
late vowel sounds, which are 'drowning' or overwhelmed, obscured or submerged.
We might read this as implying that the body essentially mourns inarticulately; or
that one inarticulate form of expression precipitates another. Alternatively, we might
read it as implying that recovery, as represented by the 'sutures,' enacts an impair-
ment upon articulation: upon the tongue; upon the skin (which in turn enacts its

own inarticulate expression of mourning); or upon modes of vocalization which the body uses to express mourning, which are themselves already forms of inarticulacy.

Further corporeal damage is demonstrated in the phrase '(pearlized) breath entire shardfuls.' As part of the respiratory process required for the body to function, the word 'breath' gestures towards the condition of living. Placing it alongside 'entire shardfuls'—which implies sharp fragments or splinters—might then suggest not simply that the act of breathing is painful, but the very fact of living or surviving the loss of another is experienced as corporeal pain. It echoes the '- screamed-in sliver to the/ wired foetal heart,'[42] in 'would a yellow do?' in which the act of breathing becomes the act of screaming, and as such the scream becomes a process necessary for bodily survival. Further, 'breath' is integral to the act of articulating. As such, if the 'breath' is composed of 'shardfuls,' then the ability to articulate will be impaired, just as in the phrase 'raw sutures tongue's.' The addition of the word 'pearlized' (which appears only in the torn text of 32v) implies that the 'breath' has been treated so as to give it a lustre, like mother-of-pearl; it has been modified in order to make it aesthetically pleasing. This might be read as gesturing towards the way in which a conception of mourning as linear progression discourages modes of articulation which are considered socially unacceptable. Further, it might be read as signposting the way in which elegy, as a poetic form, traditionally requires that the poet make of their loss something aesthetically beautiful.

These various implications which the torn and sutured texts embody are, to some degree, condensed within the phrase 'dis-accretion stitching/ed.' 'Dis-accretion,' separated from its prefix, presents the possibility of accumulation alongside its undoing. It operates as a movement of resistance against the accumulation of layers or matter; a counterpoint to the cohesion and integration that a notion of perfect recovery implies. The word 'stitching/ed,' like the aforementioned 'surgical gesture,' implies a movement towards recovery; it is an attempt to heal. However, the stroke which conjoins together two tenses of the verb 'stitch' gives the word both a past and a present: they *have been* stitched, but they are also still *in the process of* being stitched. Recovery, then, is not a static space, as a bureaucratized conception

of mourning-as-progression might imply. In *murmur*, it is instead a constant process with no discernible end-point; a continuous—and continuously shifting—procedure which the mourner must perform.

Fragments from these two torn and sutured texts recur and reiterate throughout 'would a yellow do?'—the section which follows—as if they had been cut up, rear-ranged, and interspersed within other fragments of text. As such, the sequence has an echoing quality, as though repeating itself through varying iterations, each time in a slightly different order. Bearing this analysis of the two torn and sutured texts in mind, we might read this repetition and recurrence in various ways: as the regis-tering of continual irreparable damage and distress that mourning effects upon the body; as the record of a process of calculation for how to partially integrate loss or grief; as an enactment of the multiple inarticulate modes of vocalization with which the body inherently mourns; or as a persistent movement against cultural param-eters which advocate that mourning should be articulated in a linear way according to principles of reason or aesthetics. Moreover, it is through these persistent repeti-tions and variations that the sequence refuses stasis, stability or fixity of meaning. In this way, we might also understand it as textually embodying the mourner's continu-ous—and continuously shifting—performance of imperfect recovery.

'Mocks me decipherERRS': Against Monolithic Readings of the Text

Peter Middleton has called O'Sullivan's use of linguistic innovation in her poetry 'Adamic,' in the sense that it undertakes a process of 'naming.'[43] Leaving aside the heavily-gendered implications of this adjective—in which the process of naming is understood as a 'masculine' act—this seems at odds with the inarticulate modes of expression in *murmur* which, rather than taking part in a process of 'naming,' might be better understood as performing a kind of 'un-naming,' or rather, a disruption and defamiliarization of rational language structures. *murmur*'s defamiliarized language refuses to be read in any singular way, instead allowing a plurality of possibilities for drawing meaning from the text; and operating as a movement against rational read-ing practices which—just as institutionalized conceptions presuppose a mourning

which follows a linear progression from crisis to recovery—presuppose that the act of reading involves a unilateral process of interpretation from which a distinct and singular meaning is derived.

A close reading of the sequence's opening section reveals the text's resistance to, and refusal of, such monolithic readings. *murmur* begins with a gathering—a 'catching' and a 'convocation'—which implies both a grasping movement, and a tentative or hesitant coming together of people.[44] The word *convocation* derives from the Latin *convocare* meaning 'to call together,' comprising the prefix *com-* (meaning 'together') and *vocare* ('to call,' from *vox* meaning 'voice'). Convocation can also signify a calling together by summons rather than by choice, in which case this gesture of gathering might evoke a bringing-together against one's will. As such, *murmur* begins with a vocalic articulation—a *calling* together—but one which might be understood as connected to or linked ('tie[d] in with') a movement of either grasping, ensnaring, or apprehending ('a catching'). This articulation is further complicated by the contiguity of the lines 'snipe/Paring ------/and Assembley ----------'. Since there is no archaic spelling of the word 'assembly' in this way, O'Sullivan's misspelling suggests that she has made an adjective of it—the *convocation* is 'assemble-y'; it is like, or has the quality of, that which assembles. As such, this might mean that it *resembles* a gathering or collection, though it might also suggest that it resembles a resembling (since *assemble* also signifies to liken or compare), which would imply that the *convocation* is a simulacrum or a mise-en-abyme of resemblances; a mere *representation* of a coming-together. Finally, as a noun, the word *assemble* signifies a military drumbeat which signals an order to stand at arms. This might imply that the *convocation* is, in addition, highly regimented and strictly controlled. Moreover, brought into contiguity with both *snipe*—which connotes both a criticism (to snipe) and an impossibility (as in 'going on a snipe hunt'; a fool's errand)—and *paring*—which signifies a cutting away, or a reduction in size that takes place in successive stages—the convocation, as a performative articulation and a gesture of calling together, also brings with it implications of artificiality ('assembley'), harsh assessment or impossibility ('snipe') and harm or diminishment ('paring').

In the next line the *convocation* becomes a 'luteous b-o-o-m-i-n-g ------/shuffle.' The word *luteous* implies a deep orange-yellow colour, from the Latin *luteus* meaning golden-yellow; or a firm cement or mud, from the Latin *lutum* meaning clay. As such, it might signify either a pigment, or a protective coating (to *lute* is to coat with clay to protect against fire). The word *booming*—here elongated with hyphens in order to draw out the sound—might mean both a loud, resonant noise, or a prosperity (as in a *booming* economy). As such, the word *convocation* potentially acquires both colourful ('luteous') and sonorous ('booming') qualities, as well as implications of wealth ('booming') or security/protection ('luteous'). The word *shuffle* additionally implies a shambling movement or a repositioning, and as such gestures towards something which is awkward or unstable. The *convocation*, then—as a gesture of calling-out or being-called—carries with it implications of protection and flourishing ('luteous booming'); instability ('shuffle'); criticism ('snipe'); curtailment ('paring'); and resonance ('booming').

The text does not allow itself to be read in any singular way; rather, it permits a plurality of possibilities. Further, the compounding of the words *decipher* and *ERR* in the lines at the bottom of the page ('cleave the tide, cleave the breath ------/(or howl i lean in to the crying ear…)/mocks me/--- decipherERRS'), implies that any attempt to *decipher* the text in this way— to convert it into a rational language in order to derive concrete or absolute meanings—is an error. In this way, 'decipherERRs' operates as a warning against attempts to formulate monolithic readings of a work: if your intention is to 'decipher' the poem according to rational modes of reading, you will 'ERR' in doing so. This is not to imply that there are no ways of reading the poem, but rather that the text offers no *definitive or concrete* interpretation. As Isobel Armstrong states of O'Sullivan's work, '[i]t is always possible, but ultimately unhelpful, to 'translate' linguistically innovative poetry back into the classical philosophical dualism of self and world, to give it a narrative and mimetic coherence.'[45] As such, the attempt to derive distinct or absolute meanings from *murmur* might be understood as missing the point of the work, which not only actively resists singular readings, but adopts modes of inarticulacy in order to work against conceptions of mourning as easily articulated, easily categorized, or easily interpreted.

The inclusion within the sequence of the word 'accrude' might also be read as a rejection of traditional hermeneutical practices, in which a text is deciphered in order to derive a singular meaning.[46] Within conventional reading practices, each word is read and understood according to its contiguity with other words within a phrase or sentence, and in this way meaning is accumulated (or accrued). As such, the misspelling might gesture towards the idea that to read *murmur* in this way will offer inexact, inaccurate or inelegant (crude) interpretations. This echoes the 'deci-pherERRs' in the opening sequence: *murmur* is a text which refuses to be read in a conventional, linear way. O'Sullivan's use of inarticulate modes of expression defa-miliarizes traditional language structures and destabilizes meanings, and as such *murmur* ultimately undermines attempts at such conclusive interpretation. Not only would reading the text in this way miss the point of the work, which operates in resistance to traditional ways of reading and articulating, but attempts to retrieve (or 'salvage') definite meanings from the text might also be understood as performing a kind of interpretative violation (or 'savaging'), imposing upon the text the very same kind of systematic order and rigid conventions which it explicitly works against. With this in mind, it is interesting to return to the phrase 'dis-accretion stitching/ed' in the torn and sutured texts in the first iteration of 'would a yellow do?'[47] The word *dis-accretion* represents the very opposite of the gesture of coming-together implied by *convocation*, and also the opposite of the growth and increase implied by *accrude.* As such, the *dis-accretion* might not simply be a movement against the notion of perfect recovery which a bureaucratized conception of mourning-as-progression implies, but also a movement against the idea of absolute interpretations of a text. Perhaps, like the imperfect recovery of mourning, interpretation is not a static space, but rather a continuous process with no discernible end-point; a continuous—and continually shifting—procedure which the reader must repeatedly undertake.

'Luminanting Mercuries'—Towards Some Tentative Conclusions

Although this analysis of *murmur* has sought to outline and examine some of the ways in which it might be read as a resistance to institutionalized conceptions of mourning as a progression from crisis to recovery—and the bureaucratized language and forms of articulation these conceptions promote—it is not the intention of this analysis to suggest that these resistances are by any means the *only* objective of the work, or the only meaning which might be drawn from it. Rather, this article offers just one possible way of interpreting what is a highly complex poetic exploration of mourning and loss, and one which permits many interpretations. Moreover, it is important to stress that *murmur* is deliberately working against such conclusive readings. In this way, parallels might be drawn between the act of reading and interpreting *murmur,* and the 'luminanting mercuries' in 'premonitions and return': though it may offer various forms of light (many interpretations of the text are possible), these illuminations are inherently mercurial (their meanings are protean, volatile, and unstable).[48]

murmur's privileging of inarticulate modes of expression—the scream, the howl, the murmur and the stutter—not only offer a means of working against the institutionalized conception of mourning as a set of tasks which might be completed, and the bureaucratized language which it promotes. As forms of speech through which pain is articulated *beyond* language, these modes of inarticulacy also represent mourning in its immanence and immediacy, as a raw and visceral experience that cannot be expressed in rational terms. In this way, the articulacy of *murmur* derives, paradoxically, from its exploration of *in*articulacy: the scream, the howl, the stutter etc., express what language cannot. They are modes of expression that operate beyond the parameters of rational, restrained and linear forms of articulation. Rather than representing inarticulacy as an essential or inherent quality of female mourning—as a Kristevan reading might permit—*murmur* instead implies that the grieving body operates beyond language, and because of this, mourning cannot be adequately articulated within rational and reason-based frameworks. To restrict

mourning within these parameters is an error, and one which puts the body of the writer, the body of the text *and* the body of the lost other at the risk of harm. With this in mind, *murmur* might be understood not so much as an *in*articulate text, but rather as one which is *hyper*articulate: firstly, in that it pushes notions of articulation to their very limit, beyond linguistic, syntactical and hermeneutical boundaries, and secondly, because it explores what 'articulacy' might mean beyond frameworks of logic and reason.

Bloomfield has argued that O'Sullivan's work 'aspires to expand upon the usual modes of writing, saying and reading' in order to 'bring about an active engagement […] with the economies of making meaning.'[49] In its transgression of linguistic and syntactical paradigms, *murmur* can certainly be said to expand upon traditional modes of articulating mourning. However, rather than to 'bring about an active engagement' with 'economies of making meaning' the sequence might alternatively be read as operating in resistance to—or undermining—those economies. In its reclaiming of inarticulate modes of expression, *murmur* performs what might be understood as a disruption and interruption of the 'economy of making meaning' that operates within established patriarchal conceptions of mourning. In its resistance to monolithic meanings and its disruption of traditional reading practices—as well as in its performative investigation into the potential violence that articulating mourning may perform upon writer, lost other and text—*murmur* signposts the intrinsic failures of the 'usual modes' employed for 'writing, saying and reading' mourning; modes which are unable to adequately articulate the extreme emotions which loss elicits, and as such, incorporate the potential for harm. In this way, *murmur* might be understood not so much as 'expand[ing]' upon these 'usual modes' as overthrowing them, and the 'economies of making meaning' upon which they depend.

Competing Interests

Notes

1.   Maggie O'Sullivan, *Body of Work* (Hastings: Reality Street, 2006) p. 13 and pp. 22–23.

2.   Ibid. p. 87 and p. 89.

3.   Ibid. pp. 45–47.

4.   Ibid. pp. 55–67.

5.   Maggie O'Sullivan, *murmur: tasks of mourning* (London: Veer Books, 2011) has no page numbers. Beginning with the title page after the preface as leaf 1, I have numbered the subsequent pages adding recto and verso (r and v). These references occur on p. 20v, p. 21r and p. 56v; and p. 75r and p. 78v.

6.   Ibid. p. 22v, p. 58v and p. 75r.

7.   Ibid. p. 78v.

8.   Aristotle, *Problemata*, trans. E.M. Forster, ed. William David Ross (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1927) [Online] http://archive.org/stream/workstranslatedi07arisuoft#page/n327/mode/2up [Last accessed 30.07.16) pp. 332–333.

9.   Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy 1577–1640,* Ed. Thomas C. Faulkner, Nicolas K Kiessling, Rhonda L. Blair, J. B. Bamborough and Martin Dodsworth (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989) p. 249.

10.   Anne Carson, *Glass, Irony and God* (New York: New Directions, 1995) p. 126.

11.   Juliana Schiesari, *The Gendering of Melancholia: Feminism, Psychoanalysis, and the Symbolics of Loss in Renaissance Literature* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992) p. 15.

12.   Julia Kristeva, *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989) p. 33 and p. 51.

13.   Ibid. p. 34.

14.   Ibid. pp. 28–29.

15.   Ibid. pp. 28–29.

16.   Schiesari, *The Gendering of Melancholia* p. 92 and p. 80.

17.   Ibid. p. 92.

18.   Ibid.

19.   O'Sullivan, *murmur.* The section discussed here appears first on p. 14v and continues to p. 19r, reiterating again on p. 23r, p. 59r and p. 62v).

20.   Ibid. p. 75r and again on p. 76v and p. 78v.

21.   Ibid. p. 76v.

22.   Victor W. Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969) p. 95.

23.   Clive Seale, *Constructing Death: The Sociology of Dying and Bereavement* (London and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998) p. 65.

24.   Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London, Reading and Fakenham: Pelican Books, 1970) pp. 116–118.

25.   O'Sullivan, *murmur* p. 74v.

26.   See Margaret Alexiou, *The ritual lament in Greek tradition* (London and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1974) pp. 4–6 and p. 12 for more on this.

27.   O'Sullivan, *murmur* p. 39r, and across p. 39r and p. 40v.

28.   Ibid. p. 39r and p. 41r.

29.   Camille B. Wortman and Roxane Cohen Silver, 'The Myths of Coping with Loss' in *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology,* 57.3 (1989) 349–357 (p. 349).

[30] *murmur* p. 75r, repeated on p. 78v.

[31] Ibid. p. 74v.

[32] Ibid. p. 41r.

[33] This phrase occurs throughout the sequence, first as 'savaging salvaging body' on p. 10v, and as 'savaging salvaging BODYTEXT' on p. 14v.

[34] Maggie O'Sullivan and Charles Bernstein, 'Writing is a body-intensive activity: Close Listening with Maggie O'Sullivan' in *Jacket2* [Online] jacket2.org/interviews/writing-body-intensive-activity [Last accessed 30.07.16].

[35] Mandy Bloomfield, 'Maggie O'Sullivan's Material Poetics of Salvaging in *red shifts* and *murmur*' in *The Salt Companion to Maggie O'Sullivan*, ed. Chris Emery (Cambridge: Salt Publishing, 2011) pp. 26–27.

[36] Redell Olsen, 'Writing/Conversation with Maggie O'Sullivan' in *The Salt Companion to Maggie O'Sullivan*, ed. Chris Emery (Cambridge: Salt Publishing, 2011) p. 204.

[37] O'Sullivan, *murmur* p. 18v.

[38] Ibid. p. 6v.

[39] See, for instance, R. Clifton Spargo, *The Ethics of Mourning: Grief and Responsibility in Elegiac Literature* (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 2004) pp. 136–142; and David Kennedy, *Elegy* (Abingdon, Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2007) p. 14.

[40] O'Sullivan, *murmur* p. 56v, p. 57r.

[41] Ibid. p. 30v and p. 32v.

[42] Ibid. p. 41r.

[43] Peter Middleton, ''Ear Loads': Neologisms and Sound Poetry in Maggie O'Sullivan's *Palace of Reptiles*' in *The Salt Companion to Maggie O'Sullivan*, ed. Chris Emery (Cambridge: Salt Publishing, 2011) p. 100.

[44] O'Sullivan, *murmur* p. 3r.

[45] Isobel Armstrong, 'Maggie O'Sullivan: the lyrical language of the parallel tradition' (2004) in *Women: A Cultural Review*, 15: 1 (2004) 57–66 (p. 61).

[46] See O'Sullivan *murmur* p. 6v.

[47] Ibid p. 30v and p. 32v.

[48] Ibid. p. 13r, reiterated on p. 70v.

[49] Bloomfield, 'Maggie O'Sullivan's Material Poetics' p. 30.