

Acknowledgments

In July 2019, together with Craig Jordan-Baker, we organised an international conference at the University of Brighton entitled *Powerful Literary Fiction Texts*. This conference sought to promote the exploration of prose fiction texts via an approach that combined reading aloud, close reading and the study of a text's potential effects on readers; in other words, our focus was the reading experience provided by the text. Participants chose short passages to read aloud to the audience before explaining why and how these texts achieved such a powerful impression on the reader. Our aim was to situate such prose excerpts at the centre of attention and to use them as the concrete starting point of any subsequent literary commentary, thus enabling both the 'contributor-reader' and the audience to experience and comprehend them thoroughly.

As this approach proved quite fruitful, we decided not only to organise further *Powerful Literary Fiction Texts* conferences, with the second one to take place in 2020 in Paris, but also to collect and publish a selection of papers from the first event. First and foremost, then, we would like to thank everyone who made these conferences possible and took part in the convivial atmosphere and discussions. We are especially grateful not only to the four keynote speakers — Michael Toolan and Nigel McLoughlin in 2019, and Sandrine Sorlin and Raymond A. Mar in 2020 — but to all the presenters and guests who shared their thoughts, considerations and criticisms, thus contributing not only to the conversations, but also to the chapters of this book.

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