Performing Rhythm Through Enunciation: Prose Versus Poetry
About Lighthouses

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1. Introduction

Reader-response theories have changed the way literary texts can be studied by introducing the reader as a crucial parameter in the overall appreciation of the power of a text. As a result, it is now commonly acknowledged that a text, whatever its genre, has an influence on the readers it is in theory intended for. However, this rather vague and consensual assumption probably needs probing through an examination of its implications. This entails considering two aspects, the thematic content and make-up of the text on the one hand, its readers on the other hand, but also, and more importantly, understanding how the two sides articulate in the very act of reading. There are many ways of reading, from silently absorbing the words on the page to flipping through a book, to reading aloud. The practice of loud reading was customary in the Middle Ages but it gradually waned and nowadays tends to be confined to reading to children at bedtime or to public readings in the context of commercial or cultural events. Concerning reading itself, whether slow or fast, scholarly or ordinary, all readers are *performers*[1] in so far as reading, whether private or public, is an interpretative gesture as Virginia Woolf so brilliantly demonstrated in *The Common Reader* (see Woolf 1957). As such, it "presupposes an interplay between textual clues and the reader's attribution of meaning" (Nünning 2017: 30). In the case of reading aloud and public reading, the question of the text's potential effects, the pleasure it may provide, and the response it may elicit is further complicated since these aspects are

1 For lack of a better word, since readers do not usually think of themselves as artists.

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filtered by a reader-performer whose voice conveys his or her interpretation to a listener's ear. This hearer is dependent on the pondered interpretation of a text as reflected and mediated by the reader who stands between the printed words and his or her attention. Nonetheless, while it may seem uncertain to foresee and gauge a listener's reactions to an oral performance, it is plausible to anticipate its effects by analysing the reading experience in the first place. In other words, how does a text capture a reader's interest? How does a reader let himself or herself be captivated by a text? What does a listener hear and understand?[2] Part of the answer lies in the emotional potential of a text, "its relation to empathy, perspective taking and persuasion" (Nünning 2017: 39). This is completed by the reader's ability to cultivate his or her inner ear so as to listen to what the text communicates through itself as "a form of words"[3] whose meaning is entrusted to this very reader.

Given this, I posit that, whatever response a text elicits and independently of its genre, its constitutive rhythm is a cardinal element that governs the way it is received. In order to probe this general hypothesis, I propose to investigate the rhythms of a prose excerpt and a short poem whose common topic is the description of a lighthouse, an immobile beacon approached from the shore in both cases and described by a tourist-narrator. My perspective is based on the findings of enunciation and language theorists, such as linguists Émile Benveniste and Antoine Culioli, language theorist and poet Henri Meschonnic for whom rhythm is language, and translation expert Clive Scott, starting from the premise that a creative piece of writing *does* something to both writer and reader who share in the process of assigning meaning to a text. After defining key notions (*enunciation*, *rhythm*, *points of prosodic condensation*) and introducing the texts themselves, I propose to concentrate on the comparison between some passages in the texts that present some affinities as well as syntactic similarities to try and determine whether, and to what extent, prose and verse are identified as fundamentally different, or not, by a hearer when texts are performed.

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2 Put into French, the question is: *Qu'*entend *le public? entendre* meaning "hear" *and* "understand" at once.

3 I borrow the expression from a poem by Derek Mahon: "This [the poem itself] is a circling of itself and you – / A form of words, compact and compromise, / Prepared in the false dawn of the half-true / Beyond which the shapes of truth materialize." (Mahon 2011: 20).

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2. Enunciation, rhythm, points of prosodic condensation

The theoretical notions of *enunciation* and *rhythm* are closely related in so far as they refer to the speech activity and functioning of language positing a subject as "enunciator", at the same time source and product of the enunciative act performed in a specific situation, in and through which an intersubjective space is framed.[4] According to Antoine Culioli, language is grounded in enunciative situations (or '*uttering Situation*') coinciding with "real" or fictitious situations. Situations, text and meaning are constructed through the located interaction of enunciators shifting into a necessary presence (co-enunciators actualized as speakers, and co-speakers/addressees, in other words, poets, writers, narrators, characters, readers and so on[5]). The "text" (or '*utterance*') resulting from this intersubjective interaction bears the traces of its enunciation, that is to say of the cognitive operations (called '*predicative*' and '*enunciative*' operations) through which it is processed, as well as of the impulse that triggered the movement of its enunciation.[6] Hence rhythm, as a primary force, is by necessity congruent with the act of enunciation, and if, as suggested by Meschonnic, it is to be understood as the very organisation of discourse, operating the simultaneous and comprehensive functioning of syntax, prosody and enunciation, it is also, and at the same time, an energy, a "performative event" (Scott 2014: 219). Discourse, or text (poem, fiction, drama, nonfiction), comes alive when enacted through reading, acting, performing. Therefore, rhythm is re-enacted at each performance and actualized as a singular enunciative event, the result of an encounter between text and reader.

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4 The metalinguistic terms used here are the concepts elaborated by Antoine Culioli (1924–2018). His interdisciplinary approach to language and languages including syntax, semantics, lexicon and culture has influenced a whole generation of linguists in France and far beyond. For a faithful and reliable description of the theory and of its conceptual framework and vocabulary, see Groussier 2000.

5 Other frequent terms to denote these are 'locutors' and 'interlocutors', depending on the linguist's cultural background.

6 To put it in other words and account for the choice of the word movement in this context, it can be said that enunciation is an active process originating in some desire or need to express something in relation to a situation that is being constructed at the same time through and by the very process of enunciation. This central point allows a connection with Henri Meschonnic's general Theory of Language whose fundamental axis is rhythm viewed as representing the continuous (and sometimes discontinuous) flow of language (see Meschonnic 1982).

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And so, paradoxically, although we look for its imprints in the materiality of the text itself, rhythm may be perceived not as a property of the text but as an experience including physiological and paralinguistic features such as the quality of the reader's voice and body involvement. The printed word becomes a spoken word and the linear arrangement of the words on the page turns into an embodied utterance. It would probably be misguided to equate the hearer's experience to that of the reader even though the hearer's understanding and his or her appreciation of the text very much depend on the aspects of the text the reader has focused on. These elements may be single words stressed by the reader, clusters of words, text segments, phrases, rhymes, pauses, all of those marked by a specific and striking tone of voice, timbre, pitch and intonational contour. Following David Nowell Smith (2014), I suggest calling them '*points of prosodic condensation*'.[7] As signals, they accumulate syntactic and semantic information, either erasing, or pointing to, the (aural) discontinuities in the flow of words, thus imparting rhythm to the very enunciation of the text.

By surrendering to the pleasure of literature, readers and hearers jointly acknowledge the power of the texts to trigger emotions but also, and probably most importantly, to stir the imagination and seduce the ear. It is usually understood that only literature of the highest order — like poetry, and to most readers poetry belongs to this category — can rouse emotions but one can also derive pleasure from reading a good piece of fiction or journalism, a biography or a memoir, provided that the "crocus" should fill "precisely the space allotted to it", and "radiate a golden glow", to borrow a metaphor from Virginia Woolf (Woolf 1957: 263).[8] On the surface, the prose excerpt and the short poem selected for this contrastive study engage their readers and hearers in quite a different manner. A comparison based on their respective points of prosodic condensation will nonetheless seek to highlight their affinities.

7 To David Nowell Smith, a 'point of prosodic condensation' can be a word or a phrase whose "prosodic density results not simply from phonic patterning, but also from the demands it makes on our interpretive activity as those reading, and voicing, the poem" (Nowell Smith 2014: 34).

8 In a penetrating essay, Woolf gives advice to writers who should be careful to choose their "patrons" wisely since "To know whom to write for is to know how to write" (Woolf 1957: 264). Therefore the fortune of a good piece of writing (a "crocus") also depends on the integrity and good judgement of the "patron" (or, in our modern times, publisher): "[...] the fate of literature depends upon their happy alliance [...]" (ibid.: 266).

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3. Texts, contextualisation and postulations

The prose text is a short extract from *The Rule of the Land: Walking Ireland's Border* by Garrett Carr. Published to wide acclaim in 2017, the book is an account of his journey on foot and by canoe along the entire length of the border that separates Northern Ireland from the Republic. From east to west, Carr's three-hundred-mile journey takes him from the entrance to Carlingford Lough to Donegal and Derry. As a travel essay, it belongs to nonfiction but the book is not so easily classified and is undoubtedly more than a travel essay. Some of the border people encountered on the way could well figure as characters in a novel or in short stories while the border itself is endowed with a life of its own, so much so that it becomes the island's "third state", "a unique realm of its own".[9] Besides, reviewers have praised the literary quality of the writing, admiring a "poet's facility with words"[10] as well as the way the complexity of the subject — including history and geography, political sociology, psychology — is treated at a time when the border takes on a new significance (on account of the Brexit negotiations). As Patricia Craig writes, "He has written a great book about a compelling subject" (Craig 2017), an assertion which can be interpreted as summing up the idea of an effective style impacting readers and hearers alike through the rhythms of walking and discovery. The selected passage can be found at the beginning of the narrative and describes the starting point of the journey, Haulbowline Lighthouse which marks the entrance to Carlingford Lough and seems to look inland towards the west rather than out to sea.

The poem to be contrasted with the prose extract is "A Lighthouse in Maine" by Irish poet Derek Mahon,[11] with a dedication to the American painter Edward Hopper (1882–1967). Originally published in 1982 (see *The Hudson Review* 1982), it was republished in various collections of *Selected Poems* in 1990, 1991 and 1993. It then disappeared from later collections until it reappeared in an altogether different format in *Art Notes* (Mahon 2006) and

9 Blurb on the back cover of the book.

10 The Irish Independent, endorsement on the back cover of the book.

11 The quotations from The Rule of the Land. Walking Ireland's Border are used here as examples for the sake of the analysis. Thanks are due to Peter Fallon and The Gallery Press for kindly permitting to quote the poem "A Lighthouse in Maine" (© Derek Mahon 2011; www.gallerypress.com). The poem can be found online following this link: <https://www.griffinpoetryprize.com/from-art-notes/>. See the reference section at the end of this paper for full bibliographical references.

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eventually in *New Collected Poems* (Mahon 2011). The original poem contains seventeen tercets and no dedication while the last version is a drastically reduced two-stanza poem, each of eight lines of verse. The dedication to Edward Hopper not only makes explicit the painting[12] that influenced the writing of this poem but points to some masked "purifying" process that led to its re-invention or metamorphosis.[13] The event that may have prompted the writing of the poem in the first place (a casual trip and walk to the lighthouse) seems to have receded to the background and a romanticized linguistic and poetic representation of the lighthouse is now foregrounded, turning the seventeen-stanza poem into a two-stanza *ekphrasis*, perceived as it were in a single take in an intersemiotic attempt to match painting and poem. With these notions in mind and considering the reading performance and the audience, three postulates can be examined:

I. the rhythms that contribute to the significance of the texts are inscribed in a similar geopoetical background and a shared apprehension of what a lighthouse represents;
II. the lighthouse's acknowledged significance is construed through and by the enunciation itself including enunciator and coenunciator;
III. orality/'aurality'[14] tends to obliterate the traditional distinction between prose and poetry since rhythm and meaning are at one.

12 "In The Lighthouse at Two Lights Hopper isolated the dramatic silhouette of the 120-foot-high lighthouse tower and adjoining Coast Guard station against the open expanse of blue sky. Set on a rocky promontory in Cape Elizabeth, Maine — though no water is visible in the painting, the architecture is bathed in bright sunlight offset by dark shadows; […] To Hopper the lighthouse at Two Lights symbolized the solitary individual stoically facing the onslaught of change in an industrial society." (Anonymous undated)

13 Derek Mahon is well-known for constantly revising his poems, trimming unnecessary parts, smoothing what he probably considered imperfect, endlessly polishing his verse.

14 The homophonous technical term aurality refers to the aspect of the oral performance pertaining to hearing and listening.

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4. Rhythm and geopoetical context

Unsurprisingly, in both texts[15], the topic of the lighthouse, is introduced *via* its location in space:

Prose text	Poem
Ahead, tall and grey in the sodden atmosphere, *is the border's first monument*. Haulbowline Lighthouse stands off shore. Waves crash at it from all sides. (Carr: 8, emphasis added)	*It* might be anywhere, *that ivory tower* reached by a country road. (Mahon: I, 1–2, emphasis added)

The rhythms of the first two sentences in the prose text and that of the first sentence in the poem creates a space apprehended from a distance that enables the mind to gradually focus on the lighthouse. The distance is materialised by the order of the words and indirect mention of the topic[16] whose designation is delayed in the poem through the choice of a cataphoric pronoun, "it", while its referent, "that ivory tower" (Mahon: I, 1), is placed at the end of the line. The same strategy operates in the prose text with the qualifications "tall and grey" foregrounded and a locative inversion at the end of the first sentence together with the indirect designation of the topic, "the border's first monument", named in the next sentence with, this time, a direct designation, "Haulbowline Lighthouse" (Carr: 8). The movement of the syntax seems to govern the pace of the diction: slow at the beginning ("Ahead, tall and grey in the sodden atmosphere, is the border's first monument" [Carr: 8] // "It might be anywhere, that ivory tower" [Mahon: I, 1]), then faster with the succession of two short declarative statements adjacent to the previous sentence in the prose text and with the enjambement in the poem ("that ivory tower / reached by a country road" [Mahon: I, 1–2]). The space is defined as

15 For convenience's sake, the prose examples from Carr's book will be referred to as Carr, followed by the number of the page in the book, and Mahon's poem as Mahon, followed by the number of the stanza and the number of the line of verse (I, 1–2 stands for stanza I, lines of verse 1 and 2).

16 The topic is actually explicitly named in the title of the poem, "A Lighthouse in Maine". The title acts as a frame for the *ekphrasis* as suggested here and is part and parcel of the poem.

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at once unspecified or indefinite ("It might be anywhere" [Mahon: I, 1]) and fixed or definite (the border [see Carr: 8]).

In geopoetic terms, this space is an in-between, an edge — land's edge or water's edge — expanding both ways inland and out to sea but the point of view from which it can be observed remains the land ("off shore" [Carr: 8]; "reached by a country road / above a bay" [Mahon: I, 2 and II, 15]). The lighthouse (in Maine) at the tip of the land, "shines […] above a bay" (Mahon: II, 15). Haulbowline Lighthouse, in Northern Ireland, although surrounded by the sea, is the beginning of a journey inland along the line that separates Northern Ireland and the Republic ("I think of it as the beginning because this lighthouse […] is a fine spool from which to unwind the border" [Carr: 8]). This location at the end of the road confers to these two lighthouses, and by extension to any lighthouse in the world, an aura which appeals, fascinates and draws people to them. In both texts, those first lines concentrate enough information to be considered as "points of prosodic condensation" in so far as their rather slow diction, following the syntactic arrangement of words, conveys a sense of movement and opening from a fixed point of departure at the edge of the world towards some undisclosed reality. From there a powerful narrative can be unfolded. In other words, a story and a landscape will be gradually revealed extending horizontally — the border as a (story-)line — and vertically — the lighthouse standing as a towering beacon — which is exactly what a text also does, combining the syntagmatic development of sentences and the latent undisclosed possibilities on the paradigmatic axis since the words chosen not only denote but connote impressions and feelings. Moreover, these introductory lines open onto another space, that of the significance of the lighthouse. In both texts, the reader is led into a pragmatic situation on the one hand (how to access the lighthouse), a cognitive and conceptual world on the other hand (what the lighthouse looks like and what it represents) combining movement and fixity. The question here is to try and understand how these two planes are articulated when the text is performed.

5. Enunciation and significance

The first move in the texts is to create an intersubjective situation by directly addressing a co-enunciator-reader. Pragmatically, the reader is given directions while conceptually he or she is communicated a poetic description of

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the building as if he or she were the origin[17] of the perception, particularly so in the poem. Narrator and reader's points of view are superimposed. This is linguistically materialised by the use of the personal pronouns, *I* and *you*, as grammatical subjects of the clauses concerned (as shown in the extracts below), with an ambivalent second-person pronoun, both generic (anybody) and specific (you, as reader):

Prose text	**Poem**
I think of it as the beginning [...] *I* imagine the line as [...] *You* can't stroll around Haulbowline, *you* can barely take a step. The tower completely smothers the rock it stands on. *Paddy and I* slip into the lighthouse's orbit. Currents slap about unpredictably but we paddle closer and experience its immensity. *I* am soaked [...] *I* feel no hurry. There is something comforting about the lighthouse, something paternal about the way it dominates *our* small craft. There is elegance here too, Haulbowline's body tapers out smoothly, granite made graceful. (Carr: 8–9, emphasis added)	*You* make a left beyond the town, a right, *You* turn a corner and there, ivory-white, It shines in modest glory over a bay. Out *you* get and walk the rest of the way. (Mahon: II, 13–16, emphasis added)

In the prose text, the eyes of the reader follow the men paddling towards Haulbowline Lighthouse[18]. It is as if the lighthouse itself were beckoning, attracting the men in spite of the crashing waves. Two short juxtaposed clauses

17 The metaphorical term *origin* combines the idea of the perceiver as agent and source and, at a theoretical level, as a "locator" in relation to which other elements are "located". This *operation of location* is "the basic operation at the root of all enunciative operations" (Groussier 2000: 161). About this operation, Groussier stresses the fact that "the word *location* refers to an abstract operation, location in space being only one among several kinds of location" (ibid.: 167).

18 At the start of his journey, and wherever the border travels open water, the narrator will be accompanied by Paddy (Bloomer), a canoeist, to help him through these stretches. See the opening sentence of the narrative: "We pick up the border from the open sea, approaching it in a twelve-foot canoe" (Carr 2017: 8).

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showcase the occurrences of the pronoun *you* at a strategic initial position introducing the careful approach to the lighthouse in the prose text and swift access in lines 13 and 14 of the poem, and initiating a shifting movement from the viewer to the object viewed. Mentally, in the poem, the reader follows the direction as if he or she were in the car (see Mahon: II, 13–14), then the lighthouse literally appears, facing him or her (see Mahon: II, 14–15). The end of the approach is briskly[19] made on foot (see Mahon: II, 16). In the prose text, the movement centres on the enunciator-narrator, including the two 'actants' ("Paddy and I" [Carr: 9]). As expected in a situation when one is given directions, the words that convey the directions and movement are ordinary words, prosaic in both texts, and meant to reflect the exact situation and location. However, in both cases, a comment interrupts the flow of the directions ("[...] and there, ivory white / It shines in modest glory over a bay" [Mahon: II, 14–15] and "The tower completely smothers the rock it stands on" [Carr: 9]). In the prose text, the enunciator-narrator continues: "[...] There is something comforting about the lighthouse, something paternal about the way it dominates our small craft. There is elegance here too, Haulbowline's body tapers out smoothly, granite made graceful" (Carr: 9) as if the explicit intention to reach the lighthouse needed the help of perceived evidence that it is indeed worth walking or paddling as close to it as possible. These comments ensure the junction between the two planes already mentioned, the pragmatic situation and the mental representation or image of the lighthouse. Their effect is to contain the diction of the reader-performer in an attempt to slow down the physical approach to the lighthouse so as to reassert its strong presence as well as the gradual awareness of its significance.

These passages, which combine conversational and descriptive features, establish the performer in a position empowering him or her to highlight the various enunciative, stylistic and prosodic choices made by the authors. In the two texts, the pragmatic and conceptual planes are intertwined at a discursive level so that a representation with both unique and universal features materialises.

Among enunciative choices, to the dialogic dimension and explicit construction of a fictitious co-speaker can be added an amount of indeterminacy marked by the modal auxiliary 'might' in the poem ("It might be anywhere" [Mahon: I, 1]) — the "Lighthouse in Maine" is representative of any lighthouse

19 As hinted at by the pace of the line characteristically made up of monosyllables. From a poetic point of view, this last line also suggests something of an anticlimax.

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— compared, in the prose text, to an accumulation of descriptive and technical details that make Haulbowline Lighthouse unique in Ireland. Among stylistic choices contributing to a specific representation of either monument is a process of acknowledgment of the strength and solidity of the towering protective figure in the prose text, in spite of the waves that "crash at it from all sides" (Carr: 8), and identification through comparison with a paternal figure, Buddha, in the poem ("It faces every which way with an air / of squat omniscience, intensely mild, / a polished Buddha figure warm and dry [...];" [Mahon: I, 3–5]). As a result, the lighthouse is endowed with the qualities of the character it is identified with ("omniscient", "mild" [Mahon: I, 4], "comforting", "paternal" [Carr: 9]), not without a touch of femininity made of beauty, elegance and grace ("it sits there dozing in the afternoon / above the ocean like a ghostly moon / patiently waiting to illuminate" [Mahon: II, 10–12]). Haulbowline Lighthouse too is a reassuring figure, in spite of its grey colour, immensity and awe-inspiring structure. Here, in the prose text, the rhythm is marked by an alternation between the noun "lighthouse" and its name "Haulbowline Lighthouse" (Carr: 9) and, in the poem by the repetition of the anaphoric pronoun "it" (Mahon: I, 2–6 and II, 9–12, 15–16).

Prose text	**Poem**
There is something comforting about the *lighthouse*, [...] *Haulbowline's body* tapers out smoothly [...] it is easy to imagine *the lighthouse's body* continuing to curve [...] Above the water, the structure is nothing but [...] a mighty stump giving *the lighthouse* a low centre of gravity. [...] *Haulbowline* was designed to deny the sea any bite because even a tiny space between blocks would have been eaten at and widened, weakening the structure, eventually pulling the *lighthouse* down. Without a nook or cranny for waves to pick at, *Haulbowline* has been standing since 1824. (Carr: 9, emphasis added)	[...] Granite and sky, *It* faces every which way with an air of squat omniscience, intensely mild, a polished Buddha figure warm and dry beyond vegetation; [...] (Mahon: I, 2–6) Built to shed light but also hoarding light, *it* sits there dozing in the afternoon above the ocean like a ghostly moon patiently waiting to illuminate. [...] (Mahon: II, 9–12) *it* shines out in modest glory above a bay. Out you get and walk the rest of the way. (Mahon: II, 15–16, emphasis added)

This repetitive music together with the repetition of structural patterns ("there is something comforting [...] something paternal [...] There is elegance

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[...]" [Carr: 9]), the kind of wedge-shaped structuring of the prose, each sentence being solidly fastened to the previous one, each phrase made necessary by the movement of the words, rock against one's ears. As a result, it is impossible not to visualize — and perhaps admire — the two towers, one with its squat appearance, the other one with its tall graceful silhouette solidly anchored to the sea-floor. They have gradually been imparted with durable qualities as if they were invested with a sort of mysterious unalterable existence. They stand there with a mission to fulfil: shedding light but also hoarding it.

6. Orality/"aurality": rendition and voice

So far, I have tried to isolate points of prosodic condensation where enunciative choices operate the synthesis of components to form a connected whole provoking interest, curiosity and admiration. This is rhythm as the very organisation of discourse, involving syntax, semantics and prosody. The question of their recognition as prominent markers when the texts are performed before an audience remains. Indeed, rhythm as an experience of what language does depends on other factors belonging to the non-lexical components of communication ('the paralinguistic'). Is an oral performance helpful in identifying what this partial observation of the texts has so far revealed? Which of the two texts lends itself best to aural reception? There are arguments to decide that it is the poem. Firstly it is much shorter than the prose excerpt since it is made up of two octaves with a total of five sentences, each of them linguistically representing a step in the recognition of the lighthouse. Therefore, it is probably easier to take in, an attentive listener can recognise rhymes and half-rhymes ("sky"/"dry"; "afternoon"/"moon"; "right"/"white"; "bay"/"way"; "tower"/"air"; "glare"/"more" [Mahon: I and II]), and recurring sounds — /ai/ in particular — and, guided by the comparison with the Buddha figure, he or she can form a precise visual representation of the lighthouse. However, if there is movement in the smoothly graceful and fluent rhythm of the lines (owing to the run-on lines) and briskness in the approach to the lighthouse (owing to the monosyllabic line of verse closing the poem), the image formed is fixed and passive, a reminder of the painting by Hopper.

There is movement too in the prose extract, which gives Haulbowline Lighthouse an impressive aura. Whether the response to it is emotional is hard to decide but the fluctuations of the text (see the alternation of narrative

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and comment in the first example, table 1) convey a sense of restless landscape. The lighthouse seems to be constantly at war with the surrounding sea. Built to resist the crashing waves, it nevertheless keeps an eye inland, in the direction of the westerly extremity of the border, the promised end of the journey. It is as if its destiny were part and parcel of the history of the island in its temporal and spatial dimensions. The mixture of observation, information, action, feelings, and imagination evokes a live commentary on television or radio. Unlike the poem, the picture conjured up by the text is not so much a painting as a short documentary film with a descriptive account entirely focused on the monument. In short, in the poem, the lighthouse could be the aim of a short touristic outing; in the prose text, it is the starting point of a journey whose narrative is yet to come. This sole fact contributes to an impression of textual closure in the poem — and this does not imply that the interpretation is bounded — and to the feeling of an opening statement in the prose text. In both cases, the lighthouses have been established as landmarks by and through the act of enunciation and perceived as poetic and emotional boundaries through the vocalised experience of rhythm.

7. Conclusion

What makes a literary fiction text powerful? And what is meant by "powerful"? Raising the questions presupposes that the category a text belongs to makes a difference and that there is no certainty as to what combination of ingredients might warrant recognition of the effective influence of a text on an intended reader. This study has approached the question indirectly by attempting to show that a prose extract from a book classified as non-fiction, thus not claiming to stand as a "work of art", could elicit a reader's response akin to that prompted by a poem. In this particular instance, the same topic and scene (lighthouse and edge of the world), a description from a similar point of view (the monument seen at a distance then approached), and a deliberate significance imparted to the lighthouse through its linguistic representation (a paternal Buddha-like figure) are striking features fostering an active interpretation of the texts. In spite of this, the "common reader" resists too straightforward an assimilation of prose to poetry (or poetry to prose), and deep inside most likely clings to the idea that some texts are more pow-

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erful than others. So "how can we know the dancer from the dance"?[20] The answer may well be found in the *phonation* of the texts, their externalisation enabling the reader to focus on and call attention to both the overall rhythm of the texts (in Meschonnic's sense of a "pattern of enunciation"[21]) and the specific changeable individual rendering of the rhythms that depend on his or her perceptions of the "multi-dimensional field of rhythm as a whole" as Clive Scott suggests (Scott 2014: 219). This is rhythm as an experience that conditions the rendition of the text: "performance ensures the reader's re-inhabitation of polyrhythmy and defines the reader's task not as the identification of the rhythmic possibilities *of a text*, but the rhythmic possibilities *offered by the embodiment of the text*." (Scott 2014: 220, emphasis in original)[22]

When read and performed one after the other, the opening pages of Carr's travelogue, and specifically this short excerpt with its description of the narrator's approach to Haulbowline Lighthouse and Mahon's poem, "A Lighthouse in Maine" release energies beyond the printed page to reach a listener. Through the voice that carries their words, both texts lend themselves to the invention of their respective rhythms as enunciation, questioning — if not erasing — perhaps, too definite a distinction between the prosaic and the poetic.

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20 Last line of verse of the famous poem "Among School-Children" by W. B. Yeats.

21 "Rhythm in meaning, in the subject, and the subject, the meaning, in rhythm establish rhythm as a pattern of enunciation as much as a pattern of speech." ("Le rythme dans le sens, dans le sujet, et le sujet, le sens, dans le rythme font du rythme une configuration de l'énonciation autant que de l'énoncé", Meschonnic 1982: 72, my translation).

22 The term *polyrhythmy* used by Scott is borrowed from Pierre Boulez and refers to "the multiple activity of rhythm across timbre, duration, attack, dynamics, tempo, silence and so on" (ibid.).

23 Derek Mahon, born in Belfast in 1941, died on October 2nd, 2020 at his home in Kinsale, Co Cork.

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