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Abstract

Research on literary, or literary-like creativity in everyday discourse has tended to
foreground production: from a textual focus on everyday poetics to a broader
appreciation of creative discursive practices. In responding to a recent special issue of
Applied Linguistics on ‘Language creativity in everyday contexts’, Ronald Carter
commented (2007: 600): ‘A clear requirement now is to embrace not simply the
producer but the receiver of creative processes’. This paper is, in part, designed to
answer this call.

The paper draws on evidence from a British Arts and Humanities Research Council
(AHRC)-funded project on The Discourse of Reading Groups. Reading groups – people
who meet together in a variety of contexts to discuss contemporary fiction and other
literary texts – provide a useful focus for the study of everyday literary reading.
Reading is, here, analysed as a local, contextualised practice, in contrast both to the
ideal or implied reader evident in textual literary analyses and to more recent
experimental studies of literary reception (cf Swann and Allington 2009). In the
paper, I shall discuss some ways in which reading groups creatively and
collaboratively produce interpretations of literary texts. More generally, I shall
consider the potential of a discursive approach to literary reading.

References

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