



The Evolution of Feeling-dominated Response in Norman N. Holland's Theory of Literature

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Nicholas O. Pagan

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Abstract

Early in this essay I unearth a similarity between Norman N. Holland's reader-response theory and responses to literature by the English essayist William Hazlitt, and I briefly trace some similarities and differences between Holland's approach and that of David Bleich and Stanley Fish. Drawing attention to a shift in Holland's work from concern with how we read literature toward questioning why we read literature, I point out that this helps to explain why Holland turned to neuroscience. Referring in particular to more recent essays and to his magnum opus *Literature and the Brain* I argue that Holland's major insights into the question of why we read literature are to be found in what he says about the interplay between the brain's right and left hemispheres. I conclude, however, that such insights also problematize the emphasis on feeling-dominated response that has been a feature of Holland's work since the beginning.

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