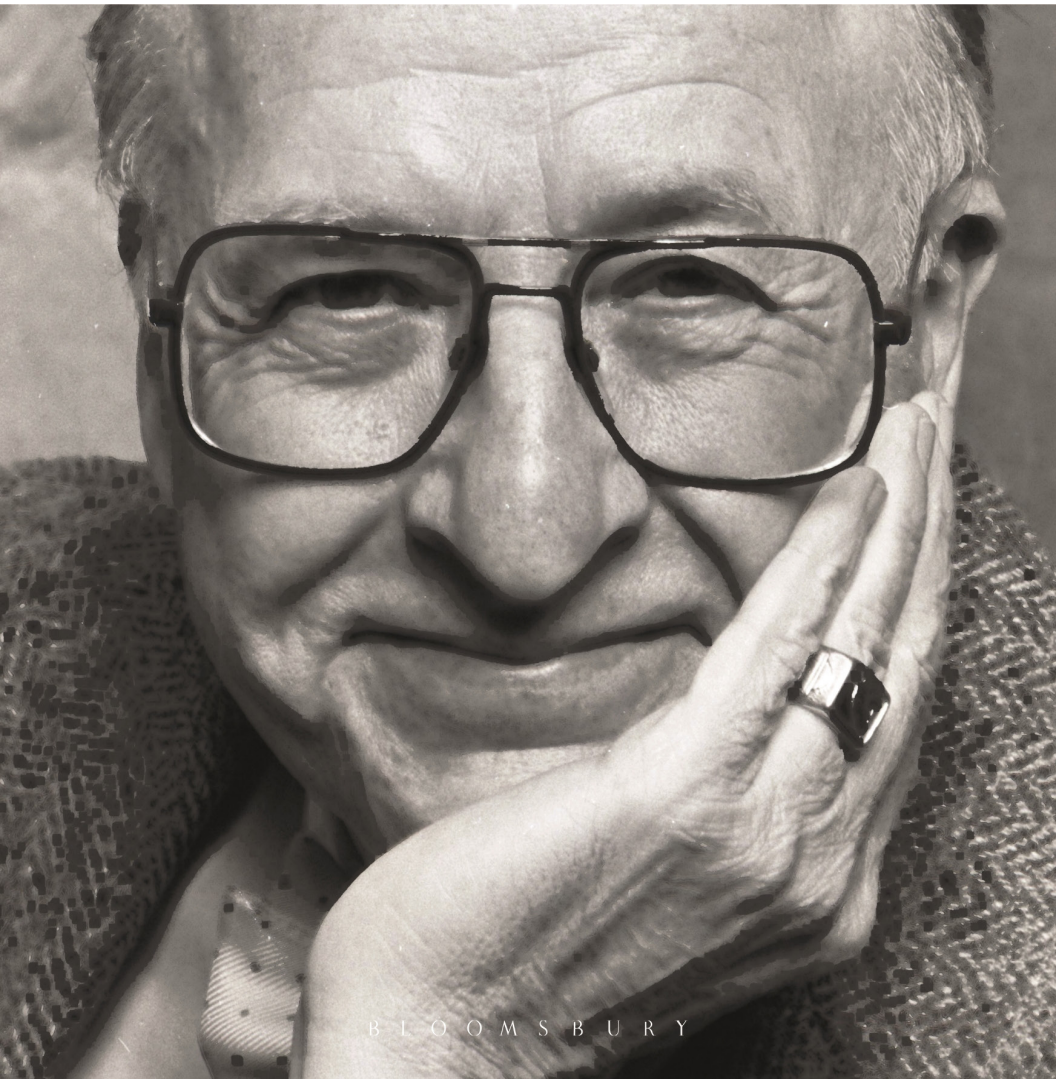
Psychoanalytic Horizons

Norman N. Holland

The Dean of American Psychoanalytic Literary Critics

Jeffrey Berman



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Norman N. Holland

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Norman N. Holland: The Dean of American Psychoanalytic Literary Critics by Jeffrey Berman

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The Dean of American Psychoanalytic Literary Critics

Jeffrey Berman
Foreword by Murray M. Schwartz

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For Julie, once again

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Acknowledgments

"Norman Holland's Importance to Me" was first delivered as a talk at the twenty-fifth International Conference on Psychology and the Arts in Lisbon, Portugal, in 2007. My discussion of Holland's *Death in a Delphi Seminar* appeared in a shorter and slightly different form in *Psychoanalytic Books* 7 (1996): 385–91.

I am deeply grateful to Murray M. Schwartz, Norman Holland's closest colleague and lifelong friend, and currently the editor of *American Imago*, the journal founded by Sigmund Freud and Hanns Sachs in 1939, for reading the entire manuscript, sharing his impressions with me, and writing the foreword. I've known Murray for over forty years and greatly respect him as a teacher-scholar. Special thanks to David Willbern, Holland's Buffalo colleague, who sent me a remarkable first-person account of sitting in on the Delphi seminar in the 1970s. David also sent me an eye-opening document Holland gave to his students in 1975, "About Me," his most self-disclosing statement—one that he never imagined would appear in print. "About Me" casts much light on the contrast between Holland's public confidence in his training analysis and his private doubts about its impact on his life and work. "About Me" also deepens the mystery of his childhood.

Laura Keyes Perry, one of Holland's doctoral students with an interest in genealogical research, sent me fascinating information about his parents. I'm also grateful to Holland's former colleagues, students, associates, and friends for contributing to the "Legacy" chapter: Kathy Bahr, Wendy Creed, Emily Fox-Kales, Dianne Hunter, Claire Kahane, Nelly G. Kupper, Cecilia Beecher Martins, Burton Melnick, Laura Keyes Perry, Robert Sprich, Ives Thoret, Richard P. Wheeler, David Willbern, and Meg Harris Williams. John Holland and Kelley Holland read the entire manuscript and shared with me their impressions of reading about their father's work.

I'm deeply indebted to Peter L. Rudnytsky not only for including this book in Bloomsbury's Psychoanalytic Horizons series, which he coedits with Mari Ruti and Esther Rashkin, but also for his meticulous reading of the manuscript. Holland's colleague for more than twenty years at the University of Florida, Peter challenged me with his more critical perspective on the man and his work and pushed me to show how Holland's psychoanalytic insights deepen our understanding of literature. I am also grateful to Peter for suggesting that I invite Holland's children to read and respond to my portrait of their father and for not letting me rest until I found Elizabeth

Zetzel's disguised case history of this "outstanding professional" in her Spanish-language paper.

I'm grateful to the "anonymous" reader of the manuscript who turned out to be Sander L. Gilman, distinguished professor of the Liberal Arts and Sciences as well as professor of psychiatry at Emory University. Like Norman Holland, Sander is the leading American figure in his own domain, psychoanalytic cultural criticism. Bernard J. Paris, Holland's trusted University of Florida colleague, died before he could read my manuscript. Bernie's insights into literature, particularly literary character, have indelibly shaped my own thinking.

As with my other books, I would not have been able to conduct my research without the invaluable help of the entire Interlibrary Loan staff at the University at Albany. Thanks to Timothy Jackson, Angela Persico, and Glen Benedict for fulfilling scores of interlibrary Loan requests. Special thanks to Paul Mosher for helping me locate Zetzel's case study of Holland.

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Finally, I owe the most to Julie, to whom this book is dedicated. She has helped me in every imaginable way on this and my preceding books. She alone knows the full extent of my gratitude to her.

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Foreword

Murray M. Schwartz

Norman N. Holland's writings are known throughout the world and in many languages, but until now we have not had a comprehensive account of his multifaceted career as a psychoanalytic literary critic, a theorist of human identity, and a driving force in psychoanalytic education. Jeffrey Berman's *Norman N. Holland: The Dean of American Psychoanalytic Literary Critics* gives us this account, and more. With clarity, judicious summary, and careful evaluations, we are led from Holland's personal and professional beginnings through the evolution of his major works in all their interdisciplinary richness. Berman pays tribute to Holland's collegiality (many testimonies are included) but does not avoid examining Holland's personal limitations or the critical controversies in which he engaged in defense of his central preoccupations.

Although his theoretical formulations changed with developments in psychoanalysis and critical theory over half a century, Holland remained a humanist devoted to scientific and holistic methods of representing the unifying aspects of literary texts and personal experience. He was fascinated by "the way in which one person is like no other person" (p. 316), as he put it in *The I*, his magnum opus and his most comprehensive yet most neglected book. His earliest, prepsychoanalytic writings utilized the objectivizing methods of the New Criticism. *The Shakespearean Imagination* remains a model of reading for the central configuration that makes each play uniquely cohere. By the mid-1960s, he had turned to the practice of "applied psychoanalysis," summarizing the entire history of psychoanalytic writing about Shakespeare in *Psychoanalysis and Shakespeare* and, in *The Dynamics of Literary Response*, developing a model for revealing core unconscious fantasies that give rise to literary expression.

In the 1970s, there came a crucial turn in his thinking, as "reader-response" became his central preoccupation. What remained constant was his desire to articulate the thematic center of individual expression, the theme-and-variations by which he could explain how each individual enacts her or his style of being as we read or write and live through our personal idiolects within the dialects of shared cultures. He found his theoretical anchor in the speculation about infantile development proposed by the psychoanalyst Heinz Lichtenstein in *The Dilemma of Human Identity*. One of Holland's

finest examples of this turn is his close reading of the poet H.D.'s personality and writing in *Poems in Persons*, a prime example of Holland's own style, accessible for a general audience and specialists alike.

Articulating "identity themes" is not a neutral activity, as Holland recognized. As a paradoxical intersubjective process, "theming," or one person's interpretation of another, is subject to the limitations of language and may be experienced as a form of recognition or of misrecognition. Berman's sensitive account of Holland's novel, *Death in a Delphi Seminar*, explores both the great acuity of Holland's intellectual style and his aversion to empathic relating.

Holland was himself paradoxical in several ways: generous yet parsimonious, self-revealing yet emotionally guarded, inclusive yet oppositional, as in his arguments with "The New Cryptics," his name for more philosophical psychoanalytic and critical styles in *The Critical I*. His generosity supported many academic colleagues and generations of students in America and abroad. His deep learning in several fields enlarged the spaces of intellectual discourse, all the way to his last book, *Literature and the Brain*, which seeks the biological structures underlying literary experience. He left us scores of interpretations of his early and continuing interest in classic films, *Meeting Movies* and *A Sharper Focus*. Within the constraints of his own identity, his curiosity transcended the confines of many academic fields.

Unlike many in the pantheon of major critics, Holland promoted egalitarian communities of scholarship and teaching. The Center for the Psychological Study of the Arts that he founded at the State University of New York at Buffalo in 1970 encouraged an authentic sharing of ideas among students and faculty from numerous disciplines, and sponsored critical teaching of psychoanalysis and its uses. In 1983, when he moved to the University of Florida, Holland together with Bernard Paris founded the Institute for the Psychological Study of the Arts to serve these purposes. Even in retirement, he created a popular film study club among his peers. The most lasting legacy, however, is the PsyArt Foundation (psyart.org), which Holland established with his wife, Jane, in order to extend the teaching of psychology and the arts in perpetuity. *Norman N. Holland: The Dean of American Psychoanalytic Literary Critics* tells a full story of how this lawyer's son defied his father's wishes in order to follow his own unique path while also putting the skills of the father to lasting, generative use.

Introduction

In his last book, *Literature and the Brain*, published in 2009, Norman Holland cites the Harvard developmental psychologist Howard Gardner's distinction between importance in one's "field" and importance in one's "domain." Importance in one's field, Holland suggests, means "professional activities like speaking at conferences, getting grants, giving public readings, dealing with publishers, or finding an agent." Importance in one's domain, by contrast, means becoming a "'must,' someone whose work, be it poetry or physics, a neophyte entering the field must study" (298).

Norman Holland (1927–2017) was unquestionably the leading American figure in his domain, psychological approaches to literature, "lit-and-psych," as he called it. Anyone interested in literature and psychoanalysis *must* study his work. Long known as the dean of American psychoanalytic literary critics, Holland produced an enormous body of scholarship that appeals to both neophytes entering the domain and advanced researchers, many of whom have been influenced by his writings. For half a century Holland raised crucial psycholiterary questions about how we read. Of all the major literary theorists, he most closely allied himself to both psychoanalysis and science—a complex alliance insofar as psychoanalysis has its tangled roots in science and art.

Toward the end of his career Holland embraced neuroscience, a field understood by few literary critics. "When we raise psycholiterary questions," he asserts in *Literature and the Brain*—"why do we enjoy, how do we empathize—then we humanists put ourselves in much the same position as the neuroscientists. For them, even more than for the humanists, the ultimate goal is the discovery of mind. What is it? How does it work? How did we get it?" (11).

Holland was a controversial, often polarizing figure, awakening strong and at times intensely ambivalent feelings in his readers. For this reason, it remains a challenge to write a book about him.

I have never written about Norman Holland, apart from reviewing one of his books. Full disclosure requires me to admit that I cannot write about him objectively—not merely because objectivity does not exist but because of my complicated history with him. Our relationship began disastrously. I was a senior at SUNY-Buffalo in 1967 when I requested a meeting with him. He had arrived a year earlier as the chair of UB's expanding English

department. My mentor, Len Port, with whom I had taken several courses and developed a close friendship, had been hired as a lecturer in 1963 with the understanding that he would be appointed an assistant professor once he completed his doctoral dissertation, a study of the American literary critic Edmund Wilson. Len awakened my early passion for psychoanalysis, and it was in his freshman English class that I met the woman I later married, Barbara. When Len's three-year contract was not renewed because he didn't complete his degree, I asked Holland to extend his contract for another year. "Asked" is probably the wrong verb: "implored" or "demanded" would be more accurate. Regardless of the verb, I'm now struck by my hubris at the time. So was Holland, for I recall that he corrected my diction: in our conversation, I had used the word "relegate" when the proper word, he lectured me, was "subordinate"—or vice versa. The two words still confuse me!

Because of or, more likely, despite my request, Len's contract was renewed for a year, but he never did finish his dissertation, and he lost his job. His life began to spiral out of control. Barbara and I were married on August 11, 1968, when I was a second-year graduate student at Cornell. Two weeks later, on Labor Day, I received a telephone call from Len, from his parents' apartment in Brooklyn, telling me that he was in the process of killing himself. His suicide was devastating to Barbara and me. I needed a scapegoat, and Holland was an easy target.

Len's death compelled me to study psychoanalysis because it offered, both then and now, the best explanatory system to understand suicide. I wrote my doctoral dissertation on the theme of suicide in Joseph Conrad's life and fiction; it was published, heavily revised, in 1977 as *Joseph Conrad: Writing as Rescue*. After receiving my PhD in 1971, I taught for the next two years at Cornell as a lecturer until I received an offer from SUNY-Albany (now called the University at Albany), where I have remained my entire teaching career.

Holland reentered my life in the late 1970s, during my bruising tenure experience. In recommending against tenure and promotion, the personnel committee concluded that my scholarship revealed a "fundamental deficiency" in my ability "to handle literary texts." The verdict was shattering because it confirmed my worst fears about myself: that I was indeed intellectually inferior, unqualified to be a college teacher. I ultimately prevailed in receiving tenure and promotion, thanks in large part to strong outside letters of support, including one from Holland, who mailed me a photocopy of the evaluation he had sent to the university personnel committee. Bad father had become good father!

Holland's support turned out to be crucial. It is no exaggeration to say that without his endorsement I might never have received tenure, which meant, in effect, abandoning hope for an academic career. During my sabbatical

in 1980, I began studying psychoanalysis in New York City at the National Psychological Association of Psychoanalysis (NPAP), the first nonmedical institute in the country, founded by Freud's student, Theodor Reik. (Freud wrote *The Question of Lay Analysis* in 1926 in support of Reik, who was not allowed to practice psychoanalysis in Vienna because he lacked a medical degree.) I studied at NPAP for three years, not to become an analyst but to deepen my understanding of psychoanalysis for my teaching and scholarship.

"Norman Holland's Importance to Me"

On the occasion of Holland's eightieth birthday, in 2007, I was one of two people (the other was Murray Schwartz) who honored him at the twenty-fifth International Conference on Psychology and the Arts in Lisbon, Portugal. Here are excerpts from my talk:

> For the past forty years Norman Holland has been the Dean of American psychoanalytic literary critics. He was one of the first proponents of reader-response criticism, the theorist of readers' identity themes, and the author of a baker's dozen of books that have become classics in the field. In addition, he is the creator and moderator of PsyArt, the online Literature and Psychology listserv that has over one thousand subscribers, and the guiding force behind the annual International Conference on Literature and Psychology, in which we are all happily participating. More than anyone in the country, indeed, the world, he has insisted that if psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic literary criticism are to survive, they must be based on good science rather than on speculation.
>
> I never had the pleasure of taking a course with Norm when I was an undergraduate at SUNY-Buffalo in the early 1960s, but I found myself drawn irresistibly to his writings when I was in graduate school and began experimenting with psychoanalytic criticism. His groundbreaking work on reader-response criticism and identity theory awakened my own interest. His commitment to psychoanalytic pedagogy inspired me thirty years ago to ask my students to write a weekly Freudian diary. He has been a role model for me both professionally and personally.
>
> I have learned so much from Norm's books. To begin with, I learned that studying psychoanalysis is a lifelong passion, one that requires not simply an understanding of Freud's writings but also an awareness of the historical evolution of psychoanalytic theory. Norm has insisted that as important as a reading knowledge of psychoanalysis is, it is not enough.

One must explore one's own unconscious processes and, if one has the time and money, to undergo a personal analysis. He has also encouraged us to be aware of developments in related fields, such as clinical psychology, biology, and now neuropsychology, all of which he has eagerly and systematically studied. Though trained as a New Critic, he was one of the first truly interdisciplinary literary critics. As he writes in *Holland's Guide*, "in my experience, the more you study psychoanalysis per se, especially clinical psychoanalysis, the better psychoanalytic criticism you will write. It is a mistake to read only psychoanalytic literary criticism and then try to practice it." (3)

Reading Norm's books, I have learned to value clarity. His conversational prose style makes him accessible to scholars and nonscholars alike. He writes with wit, verve, and urbane intelligence. He often writes about polymaths, but he is one himself: his interdisciplinary knowledge is extraordinary, but he is never showy. Long opposed to "lit-crit" jargon, he writes with a transparency that is never condescending or reductive. He uses his knowledge not to demolish opponents but to show them how conflicting theories can be synthesized. His own theories are controversial, and he has long been a lightning rod for the opponents of psychoanalysis, yet he remains a model of scholarly grace in his argumentation. He always speaks respectfully of his opponents, and he goes out of his way to credit those from whom he has learned. I have never encountered a more generous scholar.

"Immature poets imitate," T. S. Eliot quipped; "mature poets steal." I have stolen many of the statements Norm makes in his books, such as "when psychoanalysis is good, it is very good; when it is bad, it is horrid." I regularly tell my students, echoing Norm, that "all knowledge is personal knowledge." At psychoanalytic conferences I politely but firmly avoid talks on Lacan, finding from experience that a diet on what Norm calls "French Fried Freud" gives me heartburn. I have always appreciated Norm's heartfelt dedication of each book to his beloved Jane; I dedicate my books to my beloved Barbara, who was my muse in life and now in death.

I want to end on a note of respectful disagreement with Norm. "One repays a teacher badly if one remains only a pupil," Nietzsche observed wryly, and I think that Norm has never sufficiently appreciated the role of the teacher in general or his own teaching in particular. And here I want to draw a parallel between the therapist-patient and the teacher-student relationships. The existential psychiatrist Irvin Yalom states in his masterful 2005 novel *The Schopenhauer Cure* that "*It's not ideas, nor vision, nor tools that truly matter in therapy.* If you debrief patients

> at the end of therapy about the process, what do they remember? *Never* the ideas—it's *always* the relationship. They rarely remember an important insight their therapist offered but generally fondly recall their personal relationship with the therapist" (62–3). Yalom makes a similar observation in *Love's Executioner*: "It's the relationship that heals, the relationship that heals, the relationship that heals—my professional rosary." (98)
>
> The same is true about education. Students remember best those teachers who have made a difference in their lives, who have encouraged and supported students rather than simply imparted knowledge to them. Were it not for Norm's professional endorsement of my work, I might not have received tenure in the late 1970s. What I will always remember about Norm is not his publications, as important as they are, but his confidence in me, a confidence that I desperately needed at the time, and that I have tried to instill in my own students.

I realize, in retrospect, that the tone of my remarks is not only celebratory but also perhaps panegyrical, as if Holland had already passed into the darkness of history. Eulogies, someone once said waggishly, are best delivered when the subject is still alive and can appreciate effusive praise. Holland was, of course, very much alive: he and Jane were beaming during the two talks honoring his birthday. Every word I expressed was heartfelt. I tried to convey my deep admiration for Holland's work without sounding like a disciple, which I never was. And yet a psychoanalytically oriented writer who asserts that every word is "heartfelt" must be suspect—another example of my complex history with Holland. Was my tribute an opportunity to praise Holland or bury him? As he himself admits in his penultimate book, *Meeting Movies*, published in 2006, a "hard truth from psychoanalysis" is that even "our most profound love includes its opposite, something quite unlovable, hatred, fear, malice, spite, envy, competitiveness." We need to accept the ambivalence of love, he reminds us: "we carry it on to our last sigh" (94).

There was a special irony about my tribute to Holland on his eightieth birthday, for when Freud was honored on his *seventieth* birthday, he made a comment that nearly every psychoanalytic scholar, including Holland, has quoted without being able to cite the precise source of the quotation, as I point out in a footnote in my 1985 book, *The Talking Cure:*

> In his famous essay "Freud and Literature," in *The Liberal Imagination*, Lionel Trilling writes: "When, on the occasion of the celebration of his seventieth birthday, Freud was greeted as the 'discoverer of the

> unconscious,' he corrected the speaker and disclaimed the title. 'The poets and philosophers before me discovered the unconscious,' he said. 'What I discovered was the scientific method by which the unconscious can be studied.'" (32)
>
> Virtually every psychoanalytic literary critic, including myself, has dutifully cited Trilling's words but, since he does not footnote the quotation, it has been hitherto impossible to track down the source. Even after I systematically read all of Freud's writings and correspondence, I still could not locate the quotation. Nor were the other psychoanalytic critics with whom I spoke able to solve the mystery. Did Trilling fabricate the saying? Just when I began to think so, I located the source of the quotation. A physician named Philip R. Lehrman, Professor of Neurology and Psychiatry at Columbia University, wrote an essay called "Freud's Contributions to Science" appearing in the Hebrew journal *Harofe Haivri,* vol. 1 (1940), 161–176. Trilling apparently took the quotation from this article. . . . According to Lehrman, Freud made the remark in Berlin in 1928 to a Professor Becker, the Prussian Minister of Art, Science and Education. (*The Talking Cure*, 304, n.40)

A Paradoxical Figure

One encounters in Holland's work many paradoxes. He was a scholar committed to reader-response criticism who nevertheless remained fiercely private about disclosing anything personal about his life—his upbringing, his relationship to his parents, his religion, his earlier academic degrees in electrical engineering from MIT in 1947 and law degree from Harvard in 1950, and his medical crisis when he was in his sixties. There's no reason a literary critic must be self-disclosing, but reader-response criticism is by its nature highly personal, and Holland's willingness to disclose his identity theme as a reader stands in stark contrast to his refusal to reveal anything about his private life. Only in *Meeting Movies*, published when he was seventy-nine, did he publicly let down his guard. Another paradox was his lifelong struggle between critical monism, the belief in the possibility of an objective reading of a text, and critical relativism, the recognition of the subjectivity of reading. Another paradox was that Holland's early books showed little interest in psychoanalysis, but when he emerged as a psychoanalytic literary critic in his third book, he was among the most faithful upholders of Freudianism, an orthodoxy that changed slowly, often imperceptibly, over the years. Another paradox was Holland's belief that a teacher could use psychoanalysis in the

classroom as an explanatory system, a way to discover a reader's identity theme, without mobilizing the power of the talking cure as a therapeutic (or, occasionally, a countertherapeutic) force—a paradox that is most evident in *Death in a Delphi Seminar*. Still another paradox was that beneath his warm geniality and charm was an intellectual aggressivity that could be fiercely combative, something I did *not* comment on in my talk. Nor did I comment on Holland's wariness of empathy, which, like Freud, he did not have in abundance.

In writing a book about Norman Holland's psychoanalytic literary criticism, I am reading him with my characteristic identity theme, that of a mid-septuagenarian who, driven by Freud's repetition-compulsion principle, returns repeatedly to a fraught time in my early professional life, a half-century ago, that proved impossible for me to understand. Freud's repetition-compulsion principle, as Holland often suggested, does not reveal a "death instinct" but rather the attempt to master a traumatic experience, to relive it again and again to achieve control over it. Holland is thus associated with two of the three harrowing events of my life: my mentor's suicide and the near-loss of my job (the third was Barbara's death from pancreatic cancer in 2004 at age fifty-seven). Writing about him reawakens these troubling memories.

One of the driving forces behind my teaching and scholarship, I noted in "'The Grief That Does Not Speak': Suicide, Mourning, and Psychoanalytic Teaching," published in the same edited volume, *Self-Analysis in Literary Study* (1994), in which Holland also has an essay, is a "reparative fantasy in which, by attempting to 'rescue' fictional characters, I replay my discussions with Len and strive for a more positive outcome" (43). The suicide has irrevocably changed my life, recalling Feste's words in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*: "Any thing that's mended is but patched." Writing the first book about the significance of Holland's psychoanalytic literary criticism, I hope to introduce his scholarship to readers who may not yet be familiar with his work. He is a "must-read," as I attempt to show in the following pages. A book on Holland is also a study of twentieth-century American psychoanalytic literary criticism, a subject of vital importance to the psychoanalytic community he did much to create.

Throughout this book, I can hear two distinctly different voices coming from me, the personal voice, when I talk about "Norman Holland's" importance to me, and the scholarly voice, when I discuss the significance of "Holland's" achievement. Both voices, the personal and the scholarly, reflect my complicated feelings toward the man and his work. These two voices conjure up my many different feelings toward him, fear, and anger when I was an undergraduate, affection, admiration, and trust years later.

The Plan of This Book

Throughout this study I take a chronological approach to Holland's work, showing the continuities and discontinuities of his thinking. I comment on all 15 of his books (which have been translated into 13 languages) and many of his nearly 250 scholarly articles published in popular and professional journals. (A bibliography of his work is available at http://users.clas.ufl.edu/nholland/bibliog.htm.) Holland sometimes reverses positions, not always telling us about these reversals. He usually writes in character, emphasizing rationality, agency, and self-control, no surprise for a person who believes in the consistency of identity themes, but sometimes he startles us by writing out of character. He has his share of blindnesses, as we all do.

Chapter 1 focuses on Holland's early non-psychoanalytic books, *The First Modern Comedies* and *The Shakespearean Imagination*. Both works reveal that he was steeped in the assumptions of New Criticism, explication de texte, the dominant theory of literary criticism at the time. His comments on psychoanalysis in these two books are largely negative and dismissive, making his "conversion" to psychoanalysis a few years later improbable. His lifelong interest in science, however, can be seen in these early writings. He raises a question in *The Shakespearean Imagination* that appears in many of his books: can a fictional character be treated like a real person? His initial answer is a thunderous no, yet he changed his mind about this question, and his final answer, nuanced and persuasive, appears in his last book.

Chapter 2 shows how Holland transformed himself into a psychoanalytic critic with the publication of *Psychoanalysis and Shakespeare*, which represents a sea change in his thinking. *Psychoanalysis and Shakespeare* is not exactly a recantation of *The Shakespearean Imagination*, published only two years earlier, but it shows striking differences in methodology and theoretical assumptions. The book inaugurated Holland's career as the leading American psychoanalytic critic of his age, but his vision of Shakespeare could not be more different from that of Harold Bloom, who used psychoanalytic theory to formulate the century's most influential theory of poetic creativity, the anxiety of influence. Holland and Bloom were neither academic friends nor rivals; instead, they lived in parallel universes, each imbued with different understandings of Freud's legacy.

Chapter 3 highlights *The Dynamics of Literary Response*, the beginning of Holland's career as a psychoanalytic literary theorist. The book for which he is probably best known, *The Dynamics of Literary Response* was the outgrowth of his long personal analysis with Elizabeth Zetzel, an event that became a turning point in his life. He applied the insights he had gleaned about himself, particularly the role of fantasies, desires, fears, and defenses, to

construct a new model of reading. Holland's personal analysis was the source of his new self-knowledge, but his analysis was based on the psychoanalytic assumptions of the 1950s and 1960s, assumptions that would soon be called into question and in some cases repudiated by later psychoanalytic theorists, including Holland himself. He confesses to a bias in *The Dynamics of Literary Response*, an intense desire for intellectual understanding, a hint of his reliance upon "intellectualization" that is a crucial element of his identity theme.

Chapter 4 explores *Poems in Persons* and *5 Readers Reading*, where Holland develops a reader-active rather than a text-active or bi-active model of reading. He drew inspiration from the 1961 article "Identity and Sexuality" by the Prussian-born psychoanalyst Heinz Lichtenstein, who had moved to Buffalo where he became the only practicing analyst at the time. Holland's painstaking research for the two books was based on prolonged interviews with several undergraduates who offered their free associations to selected stories. The result of this unprecedented empirical research convinced Holland that reading was a far more subjective act than anyone had imagined. Both the first edition of *Poems in Persons*, published in 1973, and the revised edition, published in 2000, discuss the poet H.D., who was analyzed by Freud and later wrote about her experience. Holland's discussion of H.D.'s identity theme was not well received by feminist scholars, however, in part because of his reliance upon Freud's discredited idea of "penis envy." In *5 Readers Reading* Holland offers his own identity theme, but he fails to comment on the obsessional nature of his hyperrationality, an obsession that recalls Freud's discussion of the obsessional personality that characterizes, I believe, Holland himself.

Chapter 5 looks at Holland's playful essay "Re-Covering 'The Purloined Letter'" as well as the three books he wrote in the 1980s: *Laughing*, *The I* (retitled in 2011 as *The I and Being Human*), and *The Brain of Robert Frost*. By this time he was no longer an orthodox Freudian, having distanced himself from some of psychoanalysis's problematic views. Criticizing Lacanian and deconstructive critics' reliance on outdated Saussurean linguistics, Holland became a lightning rod for poststructural theorists; he returned fire with fire, never fleeing from heated debate. He was still wary of self-disclosure in the 1980s, but he made one revelation, about his temperamental need for parsimony, that casts additional light on his own identity. *The I* demonstrates Holland's keen insights into F. Scott Fitzgerald's identity theme, that of a "promising writer" who is always disappointed. *The Brain of Robert Frost* shows how psychoanalysis and cognitive science bear upon literary criticism—and how the insights of brain research, still in its infancy, help us understand the act of reading.

Chapter 6 examines Holland's writings in the early 1990s. *Holland's Guide* presents readers with an intellectual roadmap of the growing field of literature and psychology. Unlike other bibliographical tools, it contains succinct and lively outlines of all types of psychoanalytic approaches. The breadth of the book is impressive, covering Freudian and Jungian psychoanalytic criticism, feminist psychoanalysis, and psychoanalytic film criticism. The authoritative tone of *Holland's Guide* contrasts the embattled tone of *The Critical I* in which Holland, regarding himself almost as a solitary voice in the wilderness, criticizes Lacanians and Derrideans for their assault on the humanistic self.

Chapter 7 discusses Holland's unlikely transformation into a fiction writer. His science fiction story "A Cyberreader Defends" betrays the fear that Lacanians have severed his "lifeline," leading to a professional and perhaps personal crisis, fear over the validity of identity theory. Set in the near future, the story contains two characters who engage in a spirited debate over academic politics, a young female professor, "Norma," who is worried about not receiving tenure, and her colleague "Norbert," a grumpy elderly scholar who has been marginalized by French Fried Freud. "A Cyberreader Defends" was the warm-up for the postmodern murder mystery *Death in a Delphi Seminar*, where Holland ingeniously shows how reader-response theory helps to solve a crime—two crimes, as it turns out. The inspiration behind Holland's only novel was the "Delphi seminar" that he co-taught with Murray Schwartz at SUNY-Buffalo. There are, however, striking differences between the real and fictional Hollands, as we discover from a document curiously titled "About Me."

Chapter 8 turns to Holland's most autobiographical work, *Meeting Movies*, where he boldly reveals for the first time his free associations, thus allowing us new insight into his identity. He traveled far out of his comfort zone in offering these free associations. And yet, in contrast to other literary scholars who have written about psychoanalytic self-disclosure, including David Bleich, Bernard J. Paris, Daniel Rancour-Laferriere, and myself, he admits almost nothing about his adult life. Nevertheless, *Meeting Movies* remains a notable achievement, an example of how a film critic's identity theme shapes his interpretations and evaluations of cinema.

Chapter 9 considers Holland's last book, *Literature and the Brain*, where he charts new territory for literary scholars. Less interested in how we read literature than in why we read, he turns to the burgeoning field of neuroscience for explanations. He returns to the old question of whether to treat fictional characters as if they are real people, and gives us a new answer based on neuroscientific research. Most of the questions Holland raises in *Literature and the Brain* have only partial and provisionary answers, but his pleasure in reading literature and his intellectual curiosity remain beyond question.

Literature and the Brain is an eloquent swan song, a tribute to a man whose intense rationality never prevented him from feeling or expressing joy.

The final chapter, the most personal, includes my correspondence with Holland in the late 1990s, when he contemplated "rational suicide" following a diagnosis of lung cancer in 1991. I don't know how seriously he considered suicide, but fortunately his cancer never spread, and he lived another twenty years, dying at the age of ninety, fulfilled deeply in love and work. I include my correspondence with Holland after his wife died in 2015 as well as Murray Schwartz's announcement of Holland's death in 2017.

In the conclusion I consider Holland's vast legacy, particularly his efforts to create a digital psychoanalytic community that would welcome everyone interested in the relationship between psychology and the arts. I include the comments of Holland's former colleagues, students, and friends who reveal his significance to them. John Holland and Kelley Holland had strikingly different relationships with their father, highlighting different aspects of his personality.

Throughout my study I discuss Holland's closest colleagues, including Murray Schwartz, Bernard J. Paris, and Leslie Fiedler, as well as his fiercest critics, Frederick Crews, David Bleich, and Jonathan Culler. A book about Norman Holland is also a study of American psychoanalytic literary criticism; accordingly, I have tried to mention his contemporaries and students who made their own distinctive contributions, including Christopher Bollas. Whenever possible, I relate Holland's evolution as a psychoanalytic literary theorist to new developments in psychoanalysis. Although my study is not biographical, I try to interweave the story of Holland's life and his work. Bennett Simon's statement about another interdisciplinary academic, Jonathan Lear, is no less true of Holland: "Good interdisciplinary work is not for the faint of heart. To be good it takes discipline and work" (155).

Surprises

Reading Holland's fifteen books systematically for the first time, from the beginning of his long career to the end, I've been repeatedly surprised both by the continuities and discontinuities of his work. It's fascinating to see his sudden emergence as a psychoanalytic scholar, sprung, fully grown, like the goddess Athena from Zeus's forehead—only in Holland's case, he erupted from Freud's head, or brain, armed for academic battle, citing chapter and verse from the *Standard Edition*. Holland *never* seriously criticized Freud, though over the years he subtly distanced himself from the more objectionable aspects of psychoanalytic theory. It's instructive to see how he writes about

other scholars, friends and foes alike. And it's startling to learn from "About Me" that he had doubts about the value of his personal analysis.

Holland could be an intellectual provocateur, and sometimes he was taken aback by the reception of his work—and on more than one occasion he struck back. He identified closely with Freud, and I suspect that he regarded himself as one of the disturbers of the world's sleep. In light of his radically new theory of reading, I believe that he identified secretly with Freud's observation to Wilhelm Fliess in 1900: "I am by temperament nothing but a conquistador—an adventurer, if you want it translated—with all the curiosity, daring, and tenacity characteristic of a man of this sort" (*Letters to Fliess*, 398). In studying Holland's writings, I sometimes found myself muttering to myself, "Yes . . . but," transported back into time, half a century earlier, when I was an inarticulate college senior, encountering an intimidating department chair who left me tongue-tied.

1

Writing Non-Psychoanalytically

The First Modern Comedies and *The Shakespearean Imagination*

Holland never wrote a memoir, but in 1999 his fourteen-page essay "The Story of a Psychoanalytic Critic" appeared in *American Imago*. The essay is not elegiac, as one might expect, but it represents a summing up of his life. He remarks in the opening paragraph that two discoveries shaped his intellectual life and career: New Criticism and psychoanalysis. The second discovery, he admits ruefully, proved the first one wrong, though it would take him decades to realize this.

New Criticism, a form of literary criticism that became popular in the 1930s and flourished until the 1960s, emphasized the organic "unity" of the text. "Always something of a rebel, I came to believe passionately in this way of reading" (246). Holland thought that New Criticism "democratized literature" by freeing it from the grasp of academic authorities who maintained they knew everything about the questionable facts of literary history. "New Criticism seemed to me a high point in Western writing about literature. It still seems so to me, even after several decades of reaction and discrediting. Yes, even though later critics have proved the assumptions of New Criticism wrong, in my eyes, too. We were mistaken, but we did good work, given our premises" (246).

"*Jude the Obscure*: Hardy's Symbolic Indictment of Christianity"

That good work can be seen in Holland's first published article, a study of suicide in Thomas Hardy's 1895 novel *Jude the Obscure*. I find it odd, though, that his first publication was on suicide—odd in that there is often a personal reason why a scholar writes about this subject, as in my own case but apparently not in his. The article appeared in *Nineteenth-Century*

Fiction in 1954, when Holland was only twenty-seven and still a doctoral student at Harvard. The essay is admirable in every way, reflecting the critical sophistication of a much more experienced scholar. I cited the article in my 1990 book, *Narcissism and the Novel*, though I was writing on different issues in *Jude* and arrived at different conclusions. In rereading the article for this book, I was startled to discover that he referred to himself as "Norman Holland, Jr.," a name he did not use in later publications.

Holland began his literary career as a New Critic, as the article demonstrates. "The imagery in *Jude* reveals a unifying meaning that seems to have gone unnoticed" (50), he remarks in the opening paragraph. Arguing for the artistic unity of the novel, Holland disagrees with the critical consensus, as Irving Howe stated it more than a decade later, that the suicide of Jude's son, Little Father Time, is aesthetically flawed: "botched not in conception but in execution: it was a genuine insight to present the little boy as one of those who were losing the will to live, but a failure in tact to burden him with so much philosophical weight" (145–6). Holland cites several scholars, including Magdalene Meusel's 1937 dissertation *Thomas Hardy und die Bibel*, from which he quotes a long paragraph in German, part of which he translates into English. Holland analyzes in depth the characters' names (including the name *Jude*, which means "Jew" in German), the symbolism of Arabella's slaughter of a pig, the characters' attitudes toward sexuality, the allegorical nature of Father Time, and the parallels between the boy's suicide and the crucifixion of Christ. Particularly impressive is Holland's discussion of the recurrent pagan, Jewish, and Christian religious imagery. I have taught the novel dozens of times, but I missed a subtle detail that Holland points out. Phillotson, the novel's Philistine, "calls his wife 'Soo,' the traditional call for pigs, which symbolizes his sexual attitude" (56).

Holland makes at least one statement that can be challenged, the assertion that self-sacrifice is not part of Jude's character. On the contrary: after the young Jude finds out that his mother drowned herself, he attempts suicide in the identical way by walking on a partly frozen pond, a striking example of suicide contagion. As I observed in *Narcissism and the Novel*, the "cracking ice manages to sustain his weight, temporarily thwarting his self-annihilation" (188). Holland also ignores Sue's complicity in Father Time's suicide. When the severely depressed boy asserts, despairingly, that "It would be better to be out o' the world than in it, wouldn't it?", Sue morbidly agrees, instead of reassuring the scared boy that she and Jude love him. And when Father Time expresses the Job-like wish never to have been born, she responds, "You couldn't help it, my dear," heightening his worst fears about himself. Sue's empathic failure triggers his inner violence, culminating in hanging his two young siblings and then himself.

In writing about the theme of self-sacrifice in *Jude the Obscure*, Holland had no particular interest in the theoretical or clinical research on suicide. Nor was he yet interested in how different readers respond to the novel's crucifixion imagery. The closest he comes to offering his own perspective on the novel is in the following instructive sentence. "Hardy is saying through Jude and the others that the only part of Christianity worth saving is not an ideal of sacrifice, but rather the notion that somehow we can make this life under Fate's rule more bearable by love for our fellow men" (57), a statement that reveals Holland's own view of Christianity at the time.

The First Modern Comedies

Holland was only thirty-two when *The First Modern Comedies: The Significance of Etherege, Wycherley, and Congreve* appeared in 1959, an accomplishment that becomes more remarkable in that he had a law degree before beginning graduate study in English. He wasted no time in launching his academic career. He was always a fast, prolific writer. He may have suffered from writer's block in his short-lived career as a poet, as he discloses in *Meeting Movies*, but not as an academic writer.

One could not predict from *The First Modern Comedies* that Holland would emerge as the country's leading psychoanalytic literary critic. Restoration comedy, also called comedy of manners, is English comedy from the restoration of Charles II in 1660 to 1710. It is not a literary period that lends itself to psychoanalytic theorizing, mainly because the plays are filled with stock or "humor" characters. Even the non-humor characters are two dimensional, lacking in psychological complexity. Holland presumably chose to study this literary age because of his lifelong interest in humor. His primary concern in discussing three Restoration comic writers, George Etherege, William Wycherley, and William Congreve, is to study the "intricate art" of their plays, not to make "moral, sociological, or aesthetic judgments about them" (*The First Modern Comedies* 208). Examining eleven comedies, Holland argues that they deal primarily with the contrast between appearance and nature. This may appear to be an overly general theme, but he explains why it is useful. "Both language and action represent human conduct split under the pressure of conformity into a visible, social appearance and a personal, private nature. Folly is the confusion of the two; wisdom is their separation and balance" (37).

Holland opens the book with a chapter called "Ground Rules" in which he rejects the prevailing view that Restoration comedy is immoral. "The purpose of literature is to me simply pleasure, the pleasure of