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Student Presentation, Eng101
Psychoanalytical Criticism (9/30/05)

Psychological Criticism

- Relates text to events in author's life
 - ex: poem about sister may imply secret incestuous feelings
- Question why author wrote text, even upon receiving their answer
 - Real reason may actually be hidden in back of author's mind
- Psychological Ideas
 - Isolation: Separating one's own emotions from an unpleasant situation
 - Dad's dead, but I can't worry about it, I got a game on Sunday
 - Intellectualization: Analyzing a situation instead of reacting to it
 - Friend was in a car crash, I'm looking into how unsafe SUV's are
 - Repression: Choosing to "forget" what is displeasing
 - So I broke my leg, doesn't mean anything to me
 - Projection: Attributing one's own emotions to someone else
 - I'm not jealous, I think she is though
 - Displacement: Shifting one's own emotions to someone else
 - Don't want to talk about my brother, I'm worried about Mom
 - Denial: Conjuring a false reality to suppress the true reality
 - I graduated from Harvard two years ago, I never dropped out
 - Reversal: Turning an emotion around
 - I'm not overreacting, you are
 - Reaction Formation: Behavioral pattern that continues to reverse the truth
 - I've been working here for so long, even after they put me in the basement

Freud's Article: Fetishism

- Fetishes in men are a result of a form of castration anxiety
 - A form of Reaction Formation
 - Brought about when a young boy finds the absence of penis on his mother, and the next inanimate object he focuses on becomes the center of a fetish later in life
 - Fetish created to preserve extinction of boy's penis
 - Acts as substitute for boy's belief in a penis on his mother, which he still believes in the back of his mind

Applying Psychological Criticism: A Narrow Fellow in the Grass (pg. 206)

- Seems to be talking about a snake
 - Original title was "The Snake" (added in by an editor, not Dickinson)
 - Narrow fellow = snake
 - "Grass divides..." = snake moving through grass
 - "...Boggy Acre" = ideal place for a hiding snake
- Why's the speaker a boy? (Source: Norton Anthology: American Literature Book C)
 - Religion was an essential part of Dickinson's education
 - Reference to Jesus or Adam perhaps
 - Older brother, Austin, was one of her closest friends
 - Women still segregated during this time
 - Favorite poet that was alive in her time was John Keats
- What does the phrase "Zero at the Bone" mean?
 - Stanza's second-to-last line is "Without a tighter breathing"

- Possibly talking about the effects of venom
- No more meat after reaching the bones
 - doesn't seem right since snakes crush their food and swallow it whole
- First 2 lines in final stanza are "But never met this Fellow, Attended or alone"
 - Speaker never actually saw the snake, either alive or dead
- Possible meaning behind poem
 - Some people are forgotten with time
 - 3rd line, 1st stanza, "You may have met Him-did you not..."
 - Grass = masses of people you may know
 - "It wrinkled, and was gone" = see their face for a moment, but then forget
 - Final stanza, "But never met this Fellow" = don't remember them
 - Many of Dickinson's friends married and moved away during her lifetime
 - may have felt like she was left and forgotten by them