





# Mistake

*on the function in therapy of the mistake*

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# Giovanni Morelli

- Morelli was an Italian physician and art historian who between 1874 and 1876 proposed a new method for the correct attribution of “old master” paintings
- he advised the art historian to focus not on the principal elements of the painting (e.g. face, clothing) but on incidental details such as the lobe of an ear, the shape of fingers, depiction of fingernails, etc,
- that is, unconsidered trifles which every artist executes in their own characteristic way and which the copyist neglects to imitate





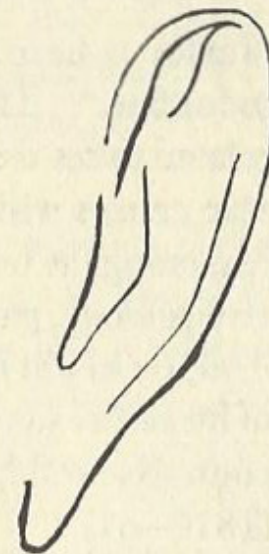
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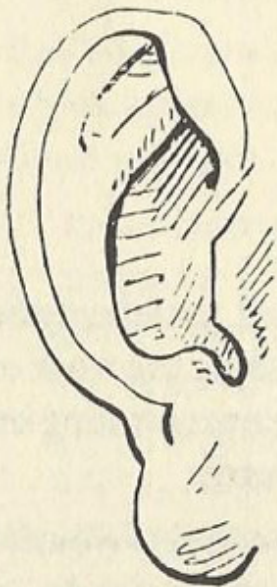
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# Morelli

- his method involved taking details generally considered trivial and unimportant, 'beneath notice'
- he claims these details furnish the key to the correct attribution of paintings
- a note: because something is not what it seems or is said to be does not mean it is a fake - it may simply have been wrongly attributed



# Lacan & *The Purloined Letter*

- Lacan chose his 1955 seminar on “The Purloined Letter” to introduce the collection of his writings - *Écrits* (1966) - whose contents otherwise appear in chronological order.



# *a missing letter*

- "The Purloined Letter" (1844) is a detective story by American author Edgar Allan Poe. It is set in Paris and features the private detective Auguste Dupin
- A letter has been stolen from the boudoir of an unnamed female by an unscrupulous government Minister who has been blackmailing his victim



# *a missing letter*

- The Prefect of the Police calls on Dupin since they have been unable to find the letter
- The police have conducted a detailed search of the Ministerial residence, having even looked behind the wallpaper, under the carpets, probed cushions, examined the tables and chairs with magnifying glasses... and so on
- no letter can be found



# *a missing letter*

- Dupin assumes...
- The Minister still has the letter
- The ability to produce the letter at a moment's notice (blackmail) is almost as important as actual possession, therefore the Minister must have the letter close to hand



# *a missing letter*

- Dupin visits the Ministers residence... In a cheap card rack hanging from a dirty ribbon, he sees a half-torn letter and assumes that must be the letter of the story's title
- It was hiding in plain view
- Dupin is not in the slightest bit concerned with the contents of the letter itself. And Poe does not reveal details of the letter to the reader either. Dupin stays removed, his only reward in aiding the police being the payment



# *Hiding in the Light*

## Morelli, Poe and...

- “It is only shallow people who do not judge by appearances. The true mystery of the world is the visible, not the invisible....” (Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*)
- “Where are the depths concealed? On the surface...”  
Hugo von Hoffmannsthal



# Freud on Morelli

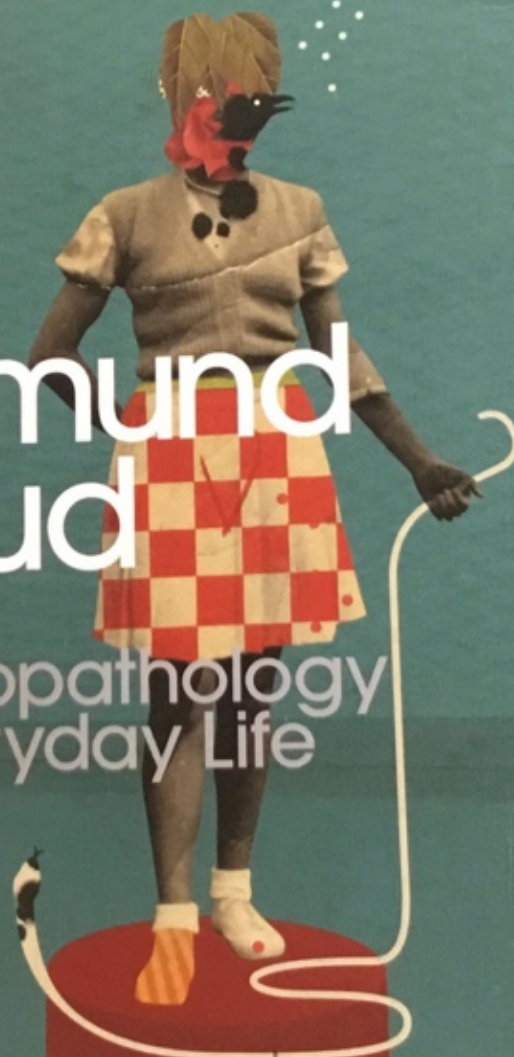
- Freud draws on Morelli's ideas while developing his interpretative method based on taking marginal and irrelevant details as revealing clues - details generally considered trivial, unimportant, 'beneath notice'
- "It seems to me that his method of inquiry is closely related to the technique of psychoanalysis. It, too, is accustomed to divine secret and concealed things from despised or unnoticed features, from the rubbish-heap, as it were, of our observations." (*The Moses of Michelangelo*, 1914)
- ... those despised or unnoticed features are under our nose, all around us, in plain view



# Three Early Volumes

- The Interpretation of Dreams (1900)
- The Psychopathology of Everyday Life (1901)
- Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious (1905)



A stylized illustration of a woman with a bird-like head, wearing a tan short-sleeved top and a red and yellow checkered skirt. She stands on a red pedestal, holding a long, thin, white whip. The background is a solid teal color.

# Sigmund Freud

The  
Psychopathology  
of Everyday Life

MODERN CLASSICS





# the infra- not extra-ordinary

- the mechanism of the mistake is an interruption
- where I make a mistake some repression lies behind it
- the mistake grants a wish that had apparently been abandoned
- the repressed returns as farce - the book is a comedy of errors
- the book is a fabulous catalogue of the kinds of fool we make of ourselves



## *Contents*

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*Translator's Preface* xliii

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## *the local school teacher I*

- The local schoolteacher at a summer resort, a quite poor but handsome young man, persisted in his courtship of the daughter of the owner of a villa, who came from the capital, until the girl fell passionately in love with him and even persuaded the family to give their approval to marriage in spite of the differences in their social position and race.



## *the local school teacher 2*

- One day the teacher wrote a letter to his brother in which he said: 'The girl is certainly no beauty; but she is very sweet, and it would be all right as far as it goes. But whether I shall be able to make up my mind to marry [her] I cannot yet tell you.' The letter was received by his fiancé who put an end to the engagement.



## *the local school teacher 3*

- The schoolteacher's brother was suprised to received a missive full of loving vows.



## *the young girl I*

- A young girl was to be engaged to a young man whom she did not care for. Hoping to bring the two young people closer, their parents arranged a party to be attended by the prospective fiancés.



## *the young girl 2*

- The young girl possessed sufficient self-control to prevent her suitor, who behaved in a very on-coming manner to her, from detecting her antipathy to him.



## *the young girl 3*

- But when her mother asked how she liked the young man, she answered politely: “Oh yes, he’s very *liebenswidrig* [‘repelling to love,’ in error for *liebenswürdig*, ‘worthy of love’].



# *a cock-up 1*

- At the beginning of my work as a therapist I was asked by someone whom I held in high regard, *and what do you do for a living?*



## *a cock-up 2*

- I replied, *I'm a private therapist*
- What I wanted to say was, *a therapist in private practice*



# *a cock-up 3*

- I was so private I had no clients
- Private therapist c.f. private detective or private dick





## Freudian Slip? PM's 'Career Defining' Mix-Up

**sky NEWS**

Sky News – Fri, May 1, 2015



Sky video

### Apparent Slip-Up As Cameron Speaks At Asda HQ

The Prime Minister quickly corrects himself but Labour adviser David Axelrod pounces, ...

[David Cameron](#) has described the General Election as "career-defining" in a slip-up during a question and answer session on the campaign trail.

The Prime Minister immediately corrected himself while speaking at [Asda's](#) headquarters in Leeds, saying it was a "country-defining" election.

But [Labour's](#) press team quickly tweeted: "Revealing Cameron slip up at Q&A - says





# METRO

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## #freudianslip: David Cameron accidentally says he 'resents' the poor in conference speech



Harry Readhead for Metro.co.uk Wednesday 1 Oct 2014 8:42 pm



155



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love that [#FreudianSlip](#) from David Cameron

6:13 PM - 1 Oct 2014



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[#CatOutTheBag](#) [#FreudianSlip](#) David Cameron ? The Conservatives \*resent\* hard working families & young people! The... [fb.me/1mDHiLhJO](https://fb.me/1mDHiLhJO)

12:44 PM - 1 Oct 2014



'This party is the union for the young woman who wants an apprenticeship, for the teenagers that want to make something of their lives – this is who we resent.'

Clips of Cameron's gaffe quickly spread across social media, with users adopting the hashtag [#freudian slip](#) and saying it was a 'revealing' error.

It isn't the first time today that the Prime Minister has found himself trending for the wrong reasons.

Earlier, a mash-up of his conference speech by Cassetteboy spread across Twitter and was called 'the only version of Cameron's speech you need to see.'

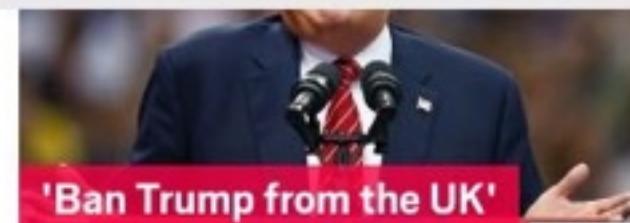


**MORE**

[British Government](#)

[Conservative Party](#)

[David Cameron](#)



**'Ban Trump from the UK' petition passes 250,000**

MPs must now consider debating the issue in the Commons. »



**Britain's war heroes throw medals away in disgust at bombing Syria**

Veterans discarded their medals outside Downing Street. »

**Be our next yes**

[Click here](#)

**NatWest**



# *Mistakes & Gratification I*

- the mechanism of the mistake is an interruption
- where I make a mistake some repression lies behind it
- the mistake grants a wish that had apparently been abandoned



# *Mistakes & Gratification 2*

- mistake, accident, blot, blunder, boo-boo, boob, botch, bummer up, bungle, clanger, cock-up, error, faux pas, fiasco, fluff, forgetting, gaffe, goof, howler, lapse, mislaying, misreading, misspelling, misunderstanding, mix-up, muddle, muff, omission, overlooking, screw-up, slip and stumble.



# *and finally...*

- Through slips of the tongue we discover our own voice, Lacan
- you must pay attention to your nonsense, Wittgenstein
- Honour your mistake as a hidden intention, Eno and Schmidt
- Because something is not what it is said to be, Ma'am, does not mean it is a fake. It may just have been wrongly attributed. (Alan Bennett, *A Question of Attribution*)