Pathologising the Gothic
The Elephant Man, the Neurotic and the Doctor

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By examining the treatment of Joseph Merrick, aka 'The Elephant Man', in the memoirs of the eminent Victorian surgeon, Sir Frederick Treves, we discover an implicit argument concerning the limitations of the theory of degeneracy in the period. Although Treves does not explicitly apply such theories to Merrick, it is the case that they provide a context for his evaluation of Merrick and his medical deformities. Ultimately, Treves's attempts to Gothicise Merrick's body are undermined by his failure to account for Merrick in terms of degeneration. This failure indicates the incoherent nature of such theories, an incoherence which is, in part, represented by Treves's seemingly obsessive drive (which appears as an epistemological imperative) to make Merrick conform to narrative patterns. By examining how Treves uses fictional narratives, such as the Gothic and romantic fiction, we can see how aesthetics and science are closely related. Treves also gives an account of apparently 'typical' neurotic behaviour through a narrative impersonation of a neurotic woman. 'Her' fears are peculiarly Gothic ones of incarceration and threatened male violence, and they are fears which indicate how scientific practice institutionalised male power in the period. That is to say that we can read Treves's memoirs both as a document which reveals the particular flavour of the Gothic discourse at the end of the nineteenth century and as a critique of medical practice.

First I want to look at three quotations, all made by doctors, and all of which concern personal encounters with Merrick in the 1880s. The first is from D. G. Halstead's memoirs, Doctor in The Nineties (1959):

The Elephant Man was the product of one of those ghastly genetic mutations which, once in a million times, results in some science-fictional monster instead of a normal human being.

This second is from Sir Wilfred Grenfell’s memoirs, A Labrador Doctor (1920). Grenfell writes of Merrick:
A special room in a yard was allotted to him, and several famous people came to see him – among them Queen Alexandra, the Princess of Wales, who afterwards sent him an autographed photograph of herself. He kept it in his room, which was known as the ‘elephant house’, and it always suggested beauty and the beast.¹

The third comes from Sir Frederick Treves’s *The Elephant Man and Other Reminiscences* (1923). Treves writes of his first meeting with Merrick that:

The thing arose slowly and let the blanket that covered its head and back fall to the ground. There stood revealed the most disgusting specimen of humanity that I have ever seen. In the course of my profession I had come upon lamentable deformities of the face due to injury or disease, as well as mutilations and contractions of the body depending upon like causes; but at no time had I met with such a degraded or perverted version of a human being as this lone figure displayed.²

What is surprising about these quotations is that they are all made by doctors. That Merrick is not discussed in medical terms but, rather, is perceived as a monster from science fiction (Halstead), or as a beast (Grenfell) or is described in tones of moral outrage (Treves), indicates the limits of a medical language which cannot account for deformity in strictly medical terms and which instead slips into a more properly Gothic discourse concerning the horrors of monstrosity. What these descriptions also evidence is the need to plot Merrick into literary narratives, science fiction, romance, and the Gothic. The reason for this, I believe, is that the failure of a medical discourse concerning pathology is related to a failure to link Merrick to wider discourses concerning health, especially those discourses which read pathology as the indicator of social degeneracy. Before discussing this I want to sketch in some biographical details drawn from Merrick’s own brief autobiographical document.²

Merrick was born in 1862 in Leicester. He states that he went to school until his mother died when he was aged 12. His father subsequently married the landlady of their lodgings, who treated Merrick cruelly and forced him to find work, which he did, rolling cigars in a cigar factory until he was 15, when the progress of his deformities meant that he could no longer continue. He gained a peddler’s licence which enabled him to sell, but he found that people would not buy from him and despite some assistance from an uncle, he fell into poverty and entered Leicester Union Workhouse in 1879, where he stayed intermittently until 1884 when he approached Sam Torr, proprietor of the Gaiety Palace of Varieties, and began his career as a sideshow exhibit. He was subsequently exhibited in London by another showman, Tom Norman, and it was whilst being exhibited in a shop near the London Hospital in 1884 that he was first encountered by Frederick Treves. Treves subsequently displayed Merrick at the Pathological Society of London, and wrote up his observations in a paper entitled ‘A Case of Congenital Deformity’ for the journal *The Transactions of the Pathological Society of London*, which was published in March 1885.⁴

In many ways Merrick would seem to conform to theories of degeneracy mapped out in the period by a range of scientists and social theorists such as
Lankester and Kingsley (ideas subsequently developed by Nordau and Lombroso). Degeneration was a highly fashionable theory, and to some degree provided a catch-all explanation for a variety of social ills including urban decay, the economic and political decline of the nation, and a perceived decline in sexual morality. By the 1880s the idea that urban conditions were creating the possibility of degeneracy became linked to wider medical and political concerns related to the social and physical health of the nation. To this end an analysis of degeneracy opened up all kinds of questions about cause and effect and how the health, particularly of the urban poor, could be improved. In 1888, for example, at the height of the Ripper murders in the Whitechapel area, it was the barbaric condition of the East End slums which was perceived as having created the context in which the murders could occur. That this link between environment and health collapses in the case of Merrick is perhaps surprising given that Merrick’s life of poverty and institutional care illustrates all of the elements which had been linked to a perceived decline in the mental, moral and physical health of the nation. That Merrick cannot quite be made to fit this model can be seen in Treves’s account of Merrick’s deformities in his paper on Merrick from 1885. It is one in which the idea of cause and effect breaks down, a breakdown which leads to Merrick’s reconstruction as a truly Gothic subject.

In his paper Treves argued that Merrick’s deformities were composed from a series of minor pathologies which had escalated in a grand manner. What we find is that Treves’s description of Merrick is just that, a description. Treves merely itemises the presence of a range of deformities but can find no explanation for their presence. It is a display of deformity but to no purpose other than to display that deformity: no medical knowledge is produced. The problem with Merrick is that he is, medically speaking, overdetermined. He is unique. His biological make-up cannot be explained through an analysis of heredity – he comes from nowhere and goes nowhere. If a medical language fails then another mode of description takes its place, and in Treves’s Reminiscences the language is one of moral outrage, monstrosity and public display. Merrick might not signify anything for medicine but he is forced into meaning in other ways.

So, the question arises, what does Merrick demonstrate if not a medical notion of pathology? I believe that one answer to this lies in the illustration which accompanied the piece. This is an illustration at odds with his display at a gathering of doctors which preceded Treves’s article. Merrick’s body was subject to deformity in all areas except two. One was his left arm, and the other was Merrick’s genitals, which in the illustration are concealed beneath a loincloth.

Remembering that this is a medical journal, and that he has been seen anyway at a meeting of the London Pathological Society, one wonders why there is a need for such coyness unless it is to hide the norm and pathologise the Other. Merrick crosses the street, displayed as a Freak on one side and as a medical curiosity on the other, but in cultural terms he has not really gone that far. So why the problem with Merrick’s sexuality? If he comes from nowhere biologically (theoretically) speaking, and goes nowhere then sexuality should hardly be an issue. But what horrifies
Treves is the possibility that Merrick might have sexual urges, and it is this concern which tips Treves's narrative over into a Gothic idiom which reworks Gothic notions of the monstrous. What is central to this issue of a Gothic narrative is the status and function of aesthetics. It is how Merrick is portrayed which plays an important part in Treves's representation of Merrick and in his initial interpretation of him.

What we witness is how crucial a rôle a Gothic aesthetic plays in Treves's emphasis on a language of theatricality. It is a language which exists independently from theories of degeneration (i.e., it is about openly displaying not secretly hiding).
The emphasis on issues of representation and Merrick raises, as we shall see, interesting questions about the textual and pictorial reconstructions of Merrick, ones which, for Treves, capture an aspect of his identity that science overlooks.

We first encounter this issue of representation in Treves's account of his discovery of Merrick. When Treves went to see him being displayed in the shop across the road from the London Hospital, he first had to pass through a curtain on which there was an elaborate painting of Merrick. Treves noted in his Reminiscences that 'This very crude production depicted a frightful creature that could only have been possible in a nightmare' (1). He goes on to say that 'This fact – that it was still human – was the most repelling attribute of the creature' (1–2). It is this language of the fantastic which Treves also applies to his first sighting of Merrick, who was warming himself over a brick heated by a Bunsen burner. He writes of Merrick: 'It might have been a captive in a cavern or a wizard watching for unholy manifestations in the ghostly flame' (3). Merrick is then made to take off his blanket, and what we witness is the disintegration of Treves's language when confronted with what becomes a bizarre chimera. Treves employs a comparative language which refers to Merrick's 'cauliflower-like skin' (5), his 'Thumb [which] had the appearance of a radish' (5), some flesh which hangs from his chest as 'like a dewlap suspended from the neck of a lizard' (5), and in a move which takes us away from the non-human, he describes Merrick's left arm as 'delicately shaped ... covered with fine skin and provided with a beautiful hand which any woman might have envied' (5). That Treves sees Merrick as caught up in a field of representation is additionally suggested by his claim that Merrick leads a life of seclusion similar to that of 'the Man with the Iron Mask' (6). Additionally the cloak which Merrick wears in order to disguise his deformities was something which Treves describes in theatrical terms, claiming 'I had only seen such a garment on the stage wrapped about the figure of a Venetian bravo' (6–7). It is this model of Merrick which in aesthetic, rather than biological terms, conforms to Kelly Hurley's claim that in the period 'the Gothic represents human bodies as between species: always already in a state of indifferentiation, or undergoing metamorphoses into a bizarre assortment of human/not-human configurations'.

Treves tries to move beyond a purely Gothic language, one which is here prone to dispersal, in order to supplant it with a more coherently deployed model of romance which can contain, through parody, Merrick's threatening sexuality. However, before Treves effects this break with a Gothic idiom he implicitly accounts for his relationship with Merrick in terms which gloss the relationship which the creature has to Victor Frankenstein in Mary Shelley's novel. Firstly, Treves sees Merrick as a composite being, and secondly, Treves sees it as his mission to bring Merrick back to life by introducing him to a world of 'civilised', good bourgeois values from which Merrick had inevitably been excluded. Treves writes:

To secure Merrick's recovery and to bring him, as it were, to life once more, it was necessary that he should make the acquaintance of men and women who would treat him as a normal and intelligent young man and not as a monster of deformity. (20)

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Treves's *Reminiscences*, like Shelley's novel, devotes some space to the consideration of the shaping of character. Treves provides a speculative, synoptic account of Merrick's childhood which resembles that of the creature in *Frankenstein*:

He had had no boyhood. He had never experienced pleasure. He knew nothing of the joy of living nor of the fun of things. His sole idea of happiness was to creep into the dark and hide. (16)

Moreover, Treves discovers that Merrick, like Victor's creature, is reasonably well read, and like the creature in *Frankenstein* who is unable to distinguish between histories and fictions, understanding *Paradise Lost* as a true history for example, Merrick is also unable to distinguish between reality and romance. Treves notes:

He had read a few stories and some elementary lesson books, but the delight of his life was a romance, especially a love romance. These tales were very real to him, as real as any narrative in the Bible [which he also read], so that he would tell them to me as incidents in the lives of people who had lived. (14–15)

Merrick might confuse fiction with reality but then Treves, in his search for a language which can represent Merrick, does this as well. In effect he moves from a Gothic discourse which was associated with Merrick's early life and his sideshow career, to one in which romantic fiction governs Merrick's experience of the world. It is an experience which Treves seems to have been keen to encourage, and it is this which takes us back to the suppressed Gothic narrative found in the article of 1885. There it was the case that Merrick's genitals were coyly concealed under a loincloth. What was truly monstrous for Treves was what he found in the painting of Merrick; that the 'fact - that it was still human - was the most repellent attribute of the creature'. To this end Treves suppresses the evidence of the norm by focusing on deformity. This concealed Gothic narrative of monstrosity informs the doctor/patient scenario here, but Treves again conceals this by mapping on a chaste narrative of romantic fiction. Treves writes that Merrick possesses 'some of the tempestuous feelings of a man' (15), and that 'He was amorous. He would like to have been a lover' (29), although Treves makes sure that all of this becomes sublimated through romantic fiction. In effect he uses the romantic narrative in order to keep in check the Gothic narrative. For Treves this becomes strangely efficacious; Merrick bursts into tears when introduced to his first female visitor, and thereafter 'He must have been visited by almost every lady of note in the social world' (22). This inspires Merrick to indulge in rôle-play. He asks Treves for a silver-fitted dressing-bag (containing brushes, a comb, razors, a toothbrush, a shoe-horn and a cigarette-case) for Christmas. Thus equipped by Treves, 'Merrick the Elephant Man became, in the seclusion of his chamber, the Piccadilly exquisitive, the young spark, the gallant' (27–8). He continues, 'the bag was an emblem of the real swell and of the knockabout Don Juan of whom he had read' (28). In effect, in becoming a mock dandy, he is removed from the terrain of Gothic monstrosity and transposed to a more controllable one of bourgeois inclusion, one in which Merrick's allegedly troublesome desire becomes refigured through parody. This
image-making constructs Merrick along the desired chaste lines supported by Treves who goes on to speculate:

He fell in love - in a humble and devotional way - with, I think, every attractive lady he saw. He, no doubt, pictured himself the hero of many a passionate incident. (29)

But this is all that this is: conjecture on Treves's part. In making Merrick conform to notions of the society for he pushes Merrick over into another discourse which feminises him. Earlier he had mentioned how Merrick's left arm was like that of a woman's. He also claims that 'He showed himself to be a gentle, affectionate and lovable creature, as amiable as a happy woman, free from any trace of cynicism or resentment, without a grievance and without an unkind word for anyone' (17).

Here other loincloths are deployed by Treves. If we move beyond this concealment we can glimpse that the real problem is related to the failure of a scientific, and somewhat Gothic, language of degeneracy. Merrick resists any attempt to coherently define him in these monstrous terms, and to this degree he helps to identify a failure within these scientific claims for certainty. He comes to represent that which science cannot touch, but also identifies how the terms of that science, especially the marginalisation of a sexuality that might reproduce deviancy, are carried over into another, romantic, medium in order to extend its censorious moral vision. In doing so the example of Merrick helps to highlight the fragility of the claims for scientific certainty in the period. Hurley writes: 'classificatory schema are merely functional, artificial rather than natural, and anomalous phenomena are abominable because they throw into relief the provisionality of the categories they confound' (25). That Treves acknowledges that there were, for him, two different types of Merrick is registered in his closing comments: ones which again take us back to the idea of a Gothic narrative which is supplanted by a romantic one. It is one which Treves organises around a body/soul divide:

As a specimen of humanity, Merrick was ignoble and repulsive; but the spirit of Merrick if it could be seen in the form of the living, would assume the figure of an upstanding and heroic man, smooth browed and clean of limb, and with eyes that flashed an undaunted courage. (37)

This move from monster to romantic lead identifies (through displacement) the provisional nature of categorisation in a scientific discourse which sublimates its practice and its fragility into literary and theatrical terms, ones which only serve to demonstrate its problematic construction of otherness. It is Treves's attempt to relocate the scientific idea of deviancy into a chaste romantic discourse of non-sexual love which effects the very denial of sexuality that the loincloth articulates. The failure of science becomes victoriously concealed beneath an alternative romantic language, the very presence of which only points towards the inability of science to account for the anomalous in scientific terms.

Treves plays these issues out in relation to models of gender. The attempt to sanitise Merrick's desires is constructed through an implicit reconfiguration of Merrick's sexual persona. By turning him into a dandified fop Treves enters into that
highly ambiguous domain of gendering which was later to be explored by sexologists such as Havelock Ellis and Edward Carpenter. To some degree these sexologists are drawing on an already available discourse associated with homosexuality. It is these debates of the 1890s which evidence some confusion about the function of gender in relation to biological sex. For Carpenter, and to a degree Ellis, the confusion arises because it is possible for a masculine man to be homosexual and for a feminine man to be heterosexual. To some degree this is to get ahead of what Treves is imposing on Merrick, but Treves’s reconstruction of Merrick as a dandy, and his hints at a biologically female presence (the girlish left arm) anticipate these debates about the complicating factor of gender. It is this complicating factor which is evidenced in Treves’s move from a male Gothic idiom to a female romantic one. As we have seen, Treves’s narrative is full of evasions, especially about sexuality, and consequently the issue of sexuality is partially, because problematically, concealed. The failure of science is thus complicated by the presence of this issue of gender and its relationship to science.

That Treves is concerned with the failures of science and that he links this failure to a problematic imposition of gender through a narrative of romance is an idea pursued elsewhere in his Reminiscences. In a chapter entitled ‘A Cure for Nerves’, Treves takes on the persona of a nervous, neurotic woman. It is through this inhabitation that Treves explores both science and the masculine culture which underlies medical practice. He also extends this into a wider critique of other forms of patriarchy, especially marriage (there are, incidentally, striking similarities between this narrative and Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s The Yellow Wallpaper).

The nameless narrator of ‘A Cure for Nerves’ explains the nature of her ailment: her apparently uncontrollable fears when confronted with the seemingly mundane aspects of everyday life. She also describes her encounters with various doctors and the lack of sympathy which she receives from them and from her husband. Towards the end of the narrative she is placed in a nursing home where she is forced to undergo a complete bed rest and where she is put on a diet designed to increase her strength. It is whilst at this nursing home that an operation is conducted on a woman in a room above the narrator. The patient nearly dies through loss of blood, some of which spills onto the floor, pierces the ceiling and drops onto the narrator’s coverlet (or at least so she imagines, as the narrative is ambiguous on this point). The narrator gains strength from this moment, and sees in the woman a rôle model of courage and fortitude which she strives to emulate, and so a cure, of some sorts, is effected.

However, the focus of the narrative is on the lack of support which the narrator receives from both the medical profession and on the nature of her ailment. It is the feelings associated with her illness which pushes the narrative over into a Gothic narrative of despair. She, for example, associates her feelings with a series of images concerning incarceration. In trying to explain the nature of her ailment she draws a parallel between herself and (in a moment of gender confusion) the feelings of a condemned man waking on the morning of his execution: ‘I know the
cold sweat that breaks over the whole body and the sickly clutching about the heart that attend such an awakening, but doubt if any emerging from sleep can be really worse than many I have experienced.' What is of significance here is not just this feeling of Gothic doom, but also how it reworks, through the image of the condemned man, a hostility towards male culture. This is in part provoked by the insensitivity of her husband when confronted by her feelings of discomfort in public places ('It is useless for my husband to nudge me and tell me not to make a fool of myself' [75]), but also by doctors who suggest that the proper conduct of wifely duties should provide a sufficient corrective. One doctor 'said that what would cure me would be a week at the washing tub' (77).

What this testifies to is the failure of the medical profession to properly investigate the nature of what is perceived to be a specifically female malady. One doctor who had appeared sympathetic suggested that she visit a doctor abroad and provided her with a letter of introduction. The narrator fails to undertake this journey and subsequently reads the letter, only to find that it contains idle consideration of each other's golfing handicaps and that she is relegated to the postscript where the 'kindly' doctor writes:

The lady who brings this is Mrs. ———. She is a terrible woman, a deplorable neurotic.
I need say no more about her, but I hope you won't mind my burdening you with her,
for she is the kind of tedious person who bores me to death. However she pays her fees.
(78)

Her husband, far from sharing in her outrage, sends the letter back to its author 'because he thought the memoranda about the golf handicaps would be interesting for him to keep' (78).

The dismissive way in which the narrator is treated indicates how the masculine discourse of medicine functions as one aspect of patriarchy, one augmented by the institution of marriage. Additionally, medicine is defined as an element of clubbable gentlemanly experience, one which is built around the exclusion of women. It is this type of relegation of female experience which Treves is, at least ostensibly, trying to rectify. It is this experience of marginalisation which in turn explains why the narrator imagines herself as incarcerated and obscurely punished for her condition: a symbolic incarceration which is subsequently literalised when she is placed in the care of the nursing home. What we find is that the narrative is, as was the account of Merrick, edged by a language of Gothic horrors which appears to come from the failure of medicine to conduct itself in a scientific fashion. This means that the dilemma faced by the narrator concerns the site where these feelings of horror are generated.

The narrative is ambivalent about where danger lies. The narrator initially sees it as being specific to her disease, but later considers that it is masculinity which is in some way to blame. It is this idea of a dangerous masculinity which Treves had seen in the case of Merrick, whereas here it is moved from the apparent margins of biological anomaly to the centre of institutionalised masculine culture, as represented both by the medical profession and the duties of the wife. It is these Gothic
images of imprisonment which are translated into images of direct male assault when the narrator tries to construct an image which illustrates her fears about surgery, fears provoked in the nursing home by the thought of what the woman in the room above her has to endure. The narrator writes of these fears that 'It must be as if a man knelt upon your chest and strangled you by gripping your throat with his hands' (80).

These representations of incarcerated and murderous men are Gothic reworkings of the wider horrors generated by a masculinist culture which depends upon the subjugation of the feminine. The narrative ultimately establishes a debate about who has the greater right to feel fear. It is a debate inaugurated by the arrival of the soon-to-be-operated on woman, in which the narrator realises:

I now began to learn that there were others who were in worse plight than myself. I, on the one hand, had merely to lie in bed and sleep. They, on the other, came to the home with their lives in their hands to confront an appalling ordeal. I was haunted by indefinite alarms; they had to submit to the tangible steel of the surgeon’s knife ... Compared with me these women were heroines. (81–2)

It is this image of female courage which enables her to supplant the Gothic narrative which had so far edged her fears, although the reasons for this edging are in part due to the masculine culture of threat to which such fears refer. 'A Cure for Nerves' thus experiments with narrative devices in ways familiar from the account of Merrick. With Merrick, a world of male Gothic terrors is displaced by a narrative of chivalry. In Treves’s account of the neurotic woman it is a female Gothic narrative which is more properly developed. It is this type of narrative, one focused on female resistance to images of incarceration, which is developed through the narrator as she comes to perceive the failings of the masculine world. It is these associations with failure which also accrue to the account of the operation on the woman who becomes the narrator’s rôle model.

Initially there is optimism with the arrival of 'the great surgeon of the day' (82) and 'I knew when the surgeon and his assistants arrived, for I heard his voice on the stair. It was clear and unconcerned' (84). In contrast to this is the woman who is waiting to undergo the operation. She is seen in terms which echo the narrator’s vision of the condemned man used earlier:

What of the poor soul who was waiting? She also would be looking at the clock. Three minutes more and she would be led in her nightdress into this chamber of horrors. (84)

In keeping with the Gothic discourse which defines the woman, the narrator hears a series of moans as the woman is chloroformed. However, something goes wrong in the operation and one of the doctors is forced to hastily retrieve something from another building in order to staunch the flow of a burst blood vessel. The blood drips onto the floor and the narrator notices in 'expressionless horror' that 'a small patch of red' appears on her own ceiling. It is this moment which is replete with Gothic images of fear and loathing, but which also functions as a baptism of blood. The narrator notes of the patch of blood,
It became a deeper crimson until at last one awful drop fell upon the white coverlet of my bed. It came down with the weight of lead. The impact went through me like an electric shock. (87)

The feelings of revulsion escalate as the narrator becomes immobilised by fear. She recounts that:

Another drop fell with a thud like a stone. I would have hidden my head under the bedclothes but I dared not stir. As each drop fell on the bed the interval came quicker until there was a scarlet patch on the white quilt that grew and grew and grew. I felt that the evil stain would come through the coverings, hot and wet, to my clenched hands which were just beneath, but I was unable to move them. My sight was now almost gone. There was nothing but a red haze filling the room. (87)

The narrator loses consciousness and regains a new, empowered sense of herself. She becomes cured because, 'It was absurd to say that I could not walk in the street when that brave woman had walked, smiling, into that place of gags and steel' (88). The narrator has to go through a Gothic narrative in order to effect this. She has to move beyond a medicalised Gothic discourse in order to find a practical example of a model of fortitude, one which stands in opposition to a medical profession which had, it seems, very nearly bungled the operation. This demonisation of medicine is closely related to these issues about gender. The Gothic plays an important part in this as it not only captures the narrator's sense of her own plight, but also illustrates the failings of medicine.

What we have seen is that in these chapters Treves refocuses attention on the deficiencies of scientific practice. In his account of Merrick it is the case that models of degeneracy could not be mobilised with any meaningful efficacy. The Gothic language of the discourse of degeneration was thus supplanted by a more successful model of containment which could be found in romantic fiction. In 'A Cure for Nerves', there is no attempt made to mobilise this pseudo-scientific language of the degenerate, although there is an obvious parallel between the plight of the narrator and the scientific model of neurotic attribution in the late nineteenth century. What links the two chapters is their reliance on a Gothic language and an exploration of how it is possible to circumvent that language by replacing it with more optimistic and, significantly, non-scientific discourses associated with chivalry. With Merrick the application of this language lampoons his alleged amorous intent, but with the female narrator we can see a development of some aspects of the female Gothic through images of escape and optimism, images which are based on the refutation of all kinds of masculine experience and institutional structures such as marriage and medicine.

What is striking from these two examples is how medicine is related to non-medical discourses because medicine itself is seen to fail as science. Medicine in Treves's Reminiscences is tainted by a range of issues concerning gender, sexuality and representation. What is important in this is not only the exposure of medicine as the site where a range of ideological forces meet, but also how what is important is related to what is shown and what cannot be shown. In 'A Cure for Nerves', this
importance is related to the voice given to the narrator. It is an attempt to let speak
that which is rendered silent by a medical discourse which does not want to
acknowledge such marginalised voices. It is also about trying to find a form of
expression which exists beyond the Gothic, and moving beyond the Gothic dis-
course of the late nineteenth century means to move beyond a masculinist dis-
course. It is by making these connections that Treves exposes the precise way in
which the Gothic, and the medical discourse of the time, is inflected by a range of
gender issues during the period.

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Notes
1 Frederick Treves became renowned for his pioneering surgical work on appendicitis.
   He was surgeon-in-ordinary to Queen Victoria, and was knighted, in 1901, for his ser-
   vices to the Royal family. These services included removing the appendix of Edward
   VII the day before his scheduled coronation in June 1902. See Michael Howell & Peter
   163–7, for an account of Treves’s professional career.
4 Frederick Treves, ‘The Elephant Man’ in *The Elephant Man and Other Reminiscences*
   (London: Cassell, 1923), pp. 1–37, p. 3. All subsequent quotations are taken from this
   edition. Page numbers will follow in parentheses.
6 Frederick Treves, ‘A Case of Congenital Deformity’, in *Transactions of the Pathological
   Society of London*, XXXVI (March 1885), 494–8.
7 For a comprehensive account of degeneration see Daniel Pick, *Faces of Degeneration: A
8 For an account of this see Judith R. Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of
9 Kelly Hurley, *The Gothic Body: Sexuality, Materialism, and Degeneration at the fin de
   siècle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 10. All subsequent quo-
   tations are taken from this edition. Page numbers will follow in parentheses.
10 Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein: or The Modern Prometheus* [1831] (Harmondsworth: Pen-
    guin, 1985), p. 175.
11 Edward Carpenter, *The Intermediate Sex* [1896] (London: George Allen and Unwin,
   1916), see pp. 16–38.
   69–89, p. 72. All subsequent references are to this edition and are given in the text after
   quotation.
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