

## A bloodied bond: Fly River heads and body image in Beatrice Grimshaw's colonial landscapes

Clare McCotter\*

*Department of Languages and Literatures, University of Ulster, Northern Ireland*

In a paper published previously in the *Irish Studies Review* I discuss the anthropomorphic features of Beatrice Grimshaw's landscapes in relation to colonial fears of the unknown. Following on from this I argue in the present work that this trope, ubiquitous in colonial literature, is exacerbated in Grimshaw's oeuvre by a body image or body image tendencies associated with penetrability, the foundations of which would have been laid long before she first saw the delphinium skies of the south. Grimshaw's body image, her realisation of her own physicality, is the primary focus of this essay. Drawing on the research of psychologists Seymour Fisher and Sidney E. Cleveland, I explore Grimshaw's conception of body boundaries, the boundaries of the touristic self and the indigenous Other. Such an analysis requires an examination not only of the body, and its extension – dress, but also of physical terrain, the spaces and places, landscapes of the past and the present, home and the away, within which these cartographies of flesh and bone move.

**Keywords:** pacific; body image; body armour; clothes; anthropomorphic landscapes; boundaries; penetrability; travel-writing; fiction; space and place

This bond doth give you here no jot of blood;  
The words expressly are, a pound of flesh:  
Take then thy bond, take thou thy pound of flesh  
(*The Merchant of Venice*, IV. I. 306–8)

### Introduction

While it is not an easy task to remove exactly one pound of flesh from the human body, it is surely a more difficult one to extract a portion, pound or otherwise, of our largest organ without spilling a single drop of blood. When Irish novelist and travel writer Beatrice Grimshaw<sup>1</sup> purchased a fleshy representation of the human head during her travels on Papua's Fly River in 1926, blood had indeed been spilled. Although posited by Grimshaw in her fourth and final travelogue, *Isles of Adventure* (1930), as a 'curio' (87),<sup>2</sup> the ultimate signified of this acquisition was a real, violated body, a body in pain. During her travels in the Pacific Islands (1904–07), and during her long stay in Papua (1907–34), Grimshaw collected indigenous body parts as touristic souvenirs. When describing her visit to the Vanuatuan Island of Malekula in her first travelogue *From Fiji to the Cannibal Islands* (1907) Grimshaw writes: 'Malekulan skulls are considered rather valuable curios in these days and it is hard to obtain one. I succeeded however, in getting a native of Sou'-West Bay – never mind how – to procure one for me out of the temple' (191).<sup>3</sup>

---

\*Email: [claremccotter@hotmail.com](mailto:claremccotter@hotmail.com)

Later in the same text, whilst discussing her stay on Tanna, Grimshaw states: 'I wanted to get a thigh bone as a curiosity. It could not have hurt the gentleman that had been a *rôti* of, and it would have been very valuable to me' (212). This attempt is unsuccessful, but Grimshaw does secure a female thigh bone (the individual apparently having been murdered and cannibalised) on this island. Given to her by a missionary, she says that she wanted it 'as a memento of Tanna', going on to add 'rather a ghastly souvenir it must be confessed' (223). When visiting the Sepik, one of Papua's larger rivers, Grimshaw purchases another femur bone, this one fashioned into 'a long slender weapon' (*Isles of Adventure*, 64). Like the bony fragments which she obtained in other regions, the Fly River heads were remnants of suffering, markers of a frequently violent end which Grimshaw, seemingly without any qualms, commodified.

In what follows, I argue that Grimshaw's engagement with these fragments of the human form, and many of her landscape representations, are indicative of certain concerns regarding body image. In a paper published previously in *Irish Studies Review*<sup>4</sup> I discuss the anthropomorphic features of Grimshaw's landscapes in relation to colonial fears of the unknown.<sup>5</sup> Following on from this, I argue in the present work that this trope, ubiquitous in colonial literature, is exacerbated in Grimshaw's oeuvre by a body image or body image tendencies associated with penetrability, the foundations of which would have been laid long before she first saw the delphinium skies of the south. Grimshaw's body image,<sup>6</sup> her realisation of her own physicality, is the primary focus of this essay. Drawing on the research of American psychologists Seymour Fisher and Sidney E. Cleveland, Grimshaw's conception of body boundaries, the boundaries of the touristic self and the indigenous Other, are explored. Such an analysis requires an examination not only of the body, and its extension – dress, but also of physical terrain, the spaces and places, landscapes of the past and the present, home and the *away*, within which these cartographies of flesh and bone move. It is argued below that Grimshaw's predilection for indigenous body parts and also her landscape representations (including representations of dwellings) are indicative of a body image characterised by boundaries that are conceptualised as ill-defined, penetrable and insubstantial. The landscapes focused on most closely in this paper are estuaries, geysers, islands and caves. The first three are discussed in relation to the penetration of outer physiological boundaries; caves, on the hand, constructed by Grimshaw as analogous with female reproductive anatomy, are considered in relation to the penetration of a deeper internal space. An ambivalent site, the cave in Grimshaw's fiction and non-fiction is a source of potential wealth and a source of death. Its penetration represents a most serious boundary collapse. I argue that in an attempt to establish definite lines of physiological demarcation, Grimshaw projects the deep feelings of fragmentation and penetrability, present throughout her work, onto the bodies (body parts) of indigenous people. This was a process that required endless repetition. Moreover, it is one which Seymour Fisher and Sidney E. Cleveland associate with a particular type of response to the Rorschach ink-blot test.

### Barriers and penetrable boundaries

In their research into personality and body image in response to Rorschach ink-blot tests, Fisher and Cleveland identified two variables: 'Barrier' and 'Penetration of Boundary'.<sup>7</sup> In the course of their analysis of responses made by individuals with psychosomatic illnesses Fisher and Cleveland established clear connections between the aforementioned variables and body image. Among respondents with high Barrier scores they identified an explicit awareness of body boundaries, of the body as differentiated, contained, protected by an outer barrier, a barrier that was not an obstacle<sup>8</sup> but rather a positive enclosure, a cover capable of holding and retaining its contents. When observing the abstract ink-blot images, people with high Barrier scores<sup>9</sup> tended

to interpret the shapes which they viewed as objects imbued with a capacity to cover and conceal. Examples of such objects are clothing, helmets, wigs, animal hides, any carapace, and also places which could offer shelter and protection such as houses, caves,<sup>10</sup> islands and 'enclosed openings in the earth'.<sup>11</sup> People who tended to have high Penetration of Boundary responses had a very different, less assured, body image. Among this group, boundaries were characterised by 'weakness, lack of substance and penetrability'.<sup>12</sup> Individuals with less positive body images tended to associate the ink blots with 'images that involve the penetration, disruption, or wearing away of the outer surfaces of such things';<sup>13</sup> 'modes or channels for getting into the interior of things or for passing from the interior outward to the exterior',<sup>14</sup> 'images that involve the surface of things being easily permeable or fragile'.<sup>15</sup> Relating to both the physiological and the environmental, examples of such responses included images of bodily orifices, physiological penetration, physiological decay, fragmentation and collapse.<sup>16</sup> Environmental responses included thresholds, for example windows, doorways, soft mud, mud that you can step through, bottomless abyss, and geysers spurting up out of the ground.<sup>17</sup> While Fisher and Cleveland's initial control group was made up of individuals with psychosomatic illnesses, their later research identified Barrier and Penetration responses indicative of the aforementioned body image types in groups which manifested no psychological or physical conditions. In what follows, I examine Fisher and Cleveland's findings in relation to Grimshaw's purchase of indigenous body parts as touristic souvenirs and her representations of specific landscapes and the people who inhabit them. For although the spaces and places depicted in her texts were not produced in response to ink-blot tests they nevertheless demonstrate many recurring themes and obsessive ruminations which are richly redolent of the images associated with Fisher and Cleveland's Penetration of Barrier response. Fisher and Cleveland's work is used in this paper to demonstrate how Grimshaw's landscape representations are informed by a body image or body image tendencies which conceptualise the skin as a sac which fails to protect and contain, an insight into the mind of the colonial tourist which helps to explicate her construction of the Other as a site of fragmentation and collapse, as a head severed from a body.

### **'No jot of blood': sealing flesh on the Fly**

When Mollie Lett interviewed Beatrice Grimshaw in her home in Papua's capital, Port Moresby, she commented on her host's collection of 'interesting curios',<sup>18</sup> stating that: 'The preserved human heads are worthy of mention'.<sup>19</sup> The heads that have been 'cured into leather' are from the Fly River region of Papua. It appears that Grimshaw first received a Fly River head in the coastal town of Daru. Discussing this incident in *Isles of Adventure*, Grimshaw states: 'This river I was to visit a little later, acquiring for myself more than one of the remarkable curios described above' (87). Grimshaw ascended the Fly in 1926 on the government oil-launch *Laurabada*.<sup>20</sup> In her account of this journey she is quick to express her enthusiasm for the area's preserved heads: 'Fly River preserved heads are famous all over New Guinea, and the natives of Lake Murray are perhaps the ablest exponents of the art to be found in any part of the Fly River system' (126):

The Lake Murray taxidermist, in possession of a suitable corpse, removes the head, at the same time stripping off a large part of the skin from the neck and the shoulders. He opens the scalp at the back, removes the bones of the head, and smokes and cures the skin, converting it into thick soft leather. This he stuffs out into an extraordinary shape, half human, half animal, lacing up the split at the back and the base of the neck with strips of cured skin that are exactly like porpoise-hide bootlaces. After stuffing it is painted all over black, ornamented with white and red; the nose is elevated by the means of a piece of bamboo, and the open mouth filled with white stones to represent teeth. Long locks of fibre representing hair are fastened on; sometimes feathers are added. (126)

When the people of Lake Murray approach the *Laurabada* their canoes are filled with various types of artefacts which they want to trade, but these items are simply listed. The beautiful paddles, for example, 'curiously carved and painted' (125), engender neither curiosity nor description; neither do the arrows, of which we are told 'every one [is] a work of art' (126). Grimshaw is interested in the human head, in particular the process of preservation, a process which stabilises the highly ambiguous space of the corpse. The liminality – static/kinetic, here/away – of the corpse is neutralised; the radical mobility of death – decay, decomposition, seepage – is bypassed.<sup>21</sup> Dried into leather the head is then refilled with unidentified material and securely sealed, thus resembling a stopped container. Once the head has been purified and stuffed, the back and base are closed in a seeming attempt to render its contents immutable. Relevant to this desire for an impenetrable head is Julia Kristeva's ruminations on '[t]he corpse (or cadaver: *cadere*, to fall)',<sup>22</sup> and the process of life/death which gives birth to it:

These body fluids, this defilement, this shit are what life withstands, hardly and with difficulty, on the part of death [...] Such wastes drop so that I might live, until from loss to loss, nothing remains in me and my entire body falls beyond the limit – *cadere*, cadaver.<sup>23</sup>

Life is dependent on the constant movement of body fluids beyond the boundaries of the skin, 'until from loss to loss, nothing remains'.<sup>24</sup> Once the Lake Murray head is cleared of organic material, flow and seepage are no longer possible. The head has become a receptacle, one, however, which highlights its own fragility. Dependent upon a flayed body, the head italicises the instability of boundaries. For despite the fact that the skin is now leather, and therefore presumably stronger than it was in its original form, it nevertheless has a very noticeable laced-up seam. This is a covering that can easily be opened and removed. The head signals the skin's function as a protective barrier, while underscoring its potential failure to perform this role. When Grimshaw describes the purchasing of indigenous body parts as touristic souvenirs in *Isles of Adventure* she is locating death at the body of the Other. In contrast to the horizontal fragment before her, Grimshaw is the vertical onlooker surveying death at a distance, death taking place at the body of the Other. Viewing the head, Grimshaw is confirming her position as survivor, a survivor who is a unified whole.<sup>25</sup>

All the body parts which Grimshaw purchased were skeletal remains, all except the Fly River head, which appears to have interested her more than the rest. I do not know how many Fly River heads Grimshaw possessed, but as Lett's interview confirms, a single purchase failed to satisfy. According to Freud, that which the psyche deems anxiety-provoking frequently engenders repetition.<sup>26</sup> The compulsion to repeat is an attempt to establish mastery, to assert control over that which threatens. When Grimshaw acquires a Fly River head, and then acquires another, she is not only affirming her position as survivor but also the integrity of her body boundaries; her skin as an intact barrier. The head is an attempt to fix disunity, fragmentation and penetrability at the body of an objectified racial Other. The severed head, as stated, is identified by Fisher and Cleveland as a definite Penetration of Boundary response. And as we shall see, in Grimshaw's fictional writing the head is portrayed as a penetrable site long before she visited the Pacific:

Moore's skull was literally split in two; the white edges of bone gleamed horribly among the brown hair, and the blood rushed out through the matted locks, gluing them together, and darkening all the grass about the shattered head. (213)<sup>27</sup>

This quotation is taken from Grimshaw's first novel, *Broken Away*, published in 1897 when she was working as a journalist in Dublin. Alfred Moore, a writer whose work has taken a downturn, develops a mental illness which leads him to believe that his brain has been stolen by another writer, the novel's hero, Stuart Revington. As a result, Moore tries to murder his literary rival, but is himself killed in the process. Moore's body boundaries, particularly with regard to the

head, are ill-defined, a conception of self as a penetrable site which is reflected in the landscape where the murder takes place:

They walked along silently until the gorge of which Stuart had spoken was reached. It was a curious place, more like a little *canōn* than anything else. The sides were very steep and rocky – almost perpendicular [...] The bottom was marshy. (191)

Moore's death takes place in a *canōn*. Not a typical feature of Irish landscapes, this deep gorge is evidence of heavy surface erosion, a surface that has been worn away, a surface that is malleable and penetrable; one which, like the 'marshy bottom', indicates unstable boundaries. This was one of the first descriptions in Grimshaw's writing of a fundamentally unstable landscape. It would not be the last. In her travel writing this focus on penetrable space would reach its apogee in her descriptions of the great Papuan estuaries.

### Estuaries and abjection

Grimshaw first discussed Papua's estuaries in two articles written for the *Wide World Magazine* in 1909. After entering the 'mouth of the great Purari River',<sup>28</sup> she states:

There is something wicked about the scenery of the Purari delta; it needs no thought of mysterious, man-eating villages, hidden somewhere in the tangles of the colossal river-maze, to cast a gloom over these empty water-spaces, that dark forbidding sky, that dead, breathless silence and immobility of every smallest stalk and leaf. The delta has a personality, if ever a river or its surroundings had, and its spirit is sinister. ('Into Unknown Papua', 392)

The villages, capable of consuming the intruder, are 'man-eating' (392). And they are built 'half upon the water and half upon the mud – one cannot say land, for there is no land hereabouts, only black slime, mixed with mangroves, reeds, and poisonous looking water-plants' (393). In *The New New Guinea* (1910), after describing how she fell off a 'rickety bridge' (139) into the mud, Grimshaw says that if someone had a similar accident when no one else was present, he or she could be 'suffocated in the slime below' (140).<sup>29</sup> A great sucking force, the estuary is a penetrable landscape, one which can also penetrate. Mud can invade physiological orifices. Lacking a meaningful boundary, it is essentially an opening, a place where the surface is the same as that which lies beneath, where the chthonic is exterior, where even the architecture appears to embody a digestive tract. Describing the *dubus* or temples in a delta town called Maipua, Grimshaw writes 'It was as if a herd of colossal water-monsters had just that moment left the depths of the river and flung themselves down upon the mud and slime, their jaws agape to swallow houses, people, canoes and all' ('Into Unknown Papua', 394). In *The New New Guinea* the Maipuan temples are compared with 'an alligator lying full length and open-jawed on the bank' (128). In a similar vein the idols in these Maipuan temples are described as having 'large red eyes, made of the rind of some fruit, and immense gaping mouths which could easily have engulfed a man' (*The New New Guinea*, 143–4). Of the Maipuan themselves Grimshaw says that they 'filled their mouths with chewed betel-nut, that looked exactly like blood, staining lips and teeth a hideous crimson, they were as devilish-looking a set of gentry as you might find in a year's wanderings' (134). According to Grimshaw, the Maipuan are offspring of the Purari mud: 'The Purari mind is transparent enough at some times, though at others dense and dark as the mud of the swamps that breed it' (145). In this image both the landscape and its inhabitants are abjected. Describing the abject, Julia Kristeva states that 'it is something rejected from which one does not part'.<sup>30</sup> Producing unease or even nausea, the abject at its most obvious is that which we conceptualise as dirt and contagion, that which must be cast off but from which distance can never be maintained. Kristeva iterates 'it is thus not lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules.

The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite'.<sup>31</sup> A worrying interspace that challenges the boundaries of the self; that threatens the dichotomy between inside and outside, abjection is 'above all ambiguity'.<sup>32</sup> Dissolving boundaries, the estuary is a landscape of the *between*: its mud and slime is a mixture of land and water; its fluvial stasis is a concatenation of river and sea. It is this assault on lines of demarcation, this composite mingling of disparate parts, which Grimshaw appears to find disconcerting:

For miles and miles about the low dark green line of coast the sea is insipidly fresh and hideously yellow, with the tremendous outpour of river water [...] It is thick to look at; there is no transparency in the livid flood, and every ray of light is cast back into the sky as from a brazen mirror. (*The New New Guinea*, 122)

The meeting of river and sea creates a navigational no-man's-land. For an entire morning the government launch is stranded in searing heat. Described as 'hideously yellow' and motionless, Grimshaw's estuary is a place of stagnancy and decay. Creating an inert mingling, the mouth of the river empties its contents into the sea. And the sea enters it, pursuing, at times, a furious inland trajectory as an unbridled 'river bore' (*Isles of Adventure*, 143). Oral and anal, an entrance and an exit, the mouths of Papua's great rivers are places which ingest and expel.<sup>33</sup>

### **Penetrating boundaries: geysers and bottomless pits**

According to Fisher and Cleveland, orifices which ingest and expel are suggestive of Penetration attributes. Fisher and Cleveland associate such representations – substances gushing from openings in the earth, openings which can also swallow – with the Penetration variable, and therefore with a body image that is less than stable. Grimshaw is fascinated with landscapes which offer the promise and the threat of violent emissions from the earth's centre; commenting on the Tanna volcano in her first travelogue she writes: 'For more than an hour I stayed on the summit, watching the crater with a fascinated fear that seemed to expunge both time and fatigue' (*From Fiji to the Cannibal Islands*, 234). Grimshaw is contemplating 'the bottom of all things' (234), and threatening as that might seem, the alternative would be more disconcerting: a realisation that there was no bottom, no final strata. This is a possibility which Grimshaw confronts during her tour of New Zealand, a trip described in the concluding chapters of her second travelogue *In the Strange South Seas*. As we have seen, Fisher and Cleveland specifically mention geysers spurting out of the ground in relation to the Penetration of Boundary factor. And while it would be difficult to ignore geysers in New Zealand, Grimshaw appears to have been interested in very little else.

Throughout the journey her attention is focused, to a remarkable extent, on mud holes, steam holes, old volcanic eruptions, geysers, in fact, any type of fluvial disturbance. These are landscapes which both terrify and fascinate. These are fragile surfaces, constantly fissuring, tearing, being undermined from below. Grimshaw tells of the disaster of 1886 when the great Tarawera erupted, annihilating 'New Zealand's most cherished natural wonder – the peerless Pink and White Terraces of Rotomahana' (336) and leaving deep, open wounds on the landscape. Grimshaw states that this 'eruption was caused by the falling in of the lake bottom' (340).<sup>34</sup> But at least the lake had a bottom; attempts to plumb the Waimangu geyser revealed: 'In the centre, where the great throat of the geyser opens up, no bottom could be found' (342). These are unstable landscapes: neither the foundations nor the surface can hold that which they are supposed to contain. No substance has a place because there is nothing to keep it in its place, just a bottomless void, and a thin rippling surface that is barely a surface:

It is a dangerous task, even with the aid of a guide, to pick one's way about this stretch of ground, for it is nothing but a crumbling honeycomb of boiling-water ponds, and narrow ridges as brittle as piecrust [...] The earth is choked and clouded with steam, the ponds roar and bubble about our feet,



the blow-holes rumble. The ground is full of raw cracks, old and new, and as our small party steps over one of these, on the way back, it is seen to be visibly wider than it was on the previous coming. (339)

A challenged boundary, like a skin that is worn, friable, and heavily ulcerated, this filigree of fine tissue seems poised and ready to crumble. It is a scarred and pock-marked landscape, one which appears to have already begun the process of decomposition. And indeed this is how the central character in Grimshaw's novel *My Lady of the Island* (a young man, who, like the author, is more interested in travel than his family's textile factory)<sup>35</sup> describes an active volcanic island:

Glance to the right of them and you will see an ugly sight: a low, mischievous-looking crater, with its lip broken down towards the sea; a crater that lies like an ulcer on the face of the land, crusted with livid yellow and death-grey among the springing green. (152)<sup>36</sup>

With its 'lip broken down towards the sea' the crater is a gaping mouth, one which can ingest, and expel with great force.

### Caves and the feminine

In contrast to these penetrable and penetrating landscapes, Fisher and Cleveland identify places and spaces which are indicative of boundaries, barriers and protection. While all buildings are designated Barrier responses, only a few specific types of dwelling get special mention. One of these is the cave. While not strictly speaking a house, the image of the cave nevertheless suggests a habitable space, thus calling to mind Freud's comment: 'The only typical, that is to say, regularly-occurring representation of the human form as a whole is that of the house.'<sup>37</sup> And the 'house' at the centre of Grimshaw's novel *Conn of the Coral Seas* (1922) is a quintessentially female place, an underground cave. This cave was discovered by Stephen Conn, the novel's hero. Describing its entrance as a 'hole' and 'just a sort of crack, with a big stone lying almost over it',<sup>38</sup> Conn states that he found the cave by accident whilst he was chasing a beautiful butterfly 'with gold wings, and scarlet spots in the middle of them, set round in black velvet' (163). Strongly suggestive of the female pudenda, with its opening lying flat on the ground amid 'a tangle of creepers' (163), this portrayal of the cave is probably as close as Grimshaw's landscape representation comes to the erotic. When Conn and Deirdre, the novel's central female character, enter the cave together for the first time the experience is depicted as climactic:

He held her hand; she felt him sinking down through the earth [. . .] 'Take one step forward, and let yourself go.' She did with utter faith [. . .] There was an instant of sickening, unsupported drop, and then Conn's arms, catching her knees, springing upward to her waist, and letting her down with ease of perfect strength, upon an invisible floor. She could not see him; she could feel him very near. The breast of his silk shirt brushed against her face. She felt that they had left the world; it was as though they had died, and were alone together in ultimate space. She read his mind as if he had spoken; she knew that he read hers, and that the thought between them was the same. 'Lord, my Lord!' were the words that welled up, unspoken in her heart. (153-4)

Once the couple drop through this 'hole' in the earth where the 'creepers [are] trained over' (164), they find themselves 'standing in a good-sized cave' where 'no openings could be seen' (155). But there are openings in the cave, small cracks, invisible to the eye, which 'Loose pearls. Beautiful pearls' (165) seep through after there has been 'stormy weather outside' (164). In the acetylene flare of Conn's lamp, Deirdre sees these pearls strewn around the floor of the cave. The image of the shower of white pearls penetrating the cave wall is redolent of penetrative sex, ejaculation, the release of semen. The first time, in fact on all previous occasions, when Conn enters the cave he is alone. The cave is his secret, his property which he guards jealously: 'I keep the stone on it and the creepers trained over it; the devil and all his angels couldn't find it if

I didn't choose' (164). The pearls are the source of Conn's great wealth. None of the other islanders know that the cave exists; Conn decides who may or may not enter it.

In this novel Grimshaw presents a space very obviously analogous with female anatomy as a passive receptacle that can be penetrated at will by one man who is its sole possessor. The fecundity and great wealth of this place lie only in what is brought in from the outside. Of the cave itself we are told 'It seemed the commonest and most uninteresting of coral limestone caves, white-walled, seamed with cracks and pockmarked with small hollows' (160). Its value is realised through the act of penetration; its harvest is that which is produced in another dimension, the ocean bed. Fisher and Cleveland identify the cave as a Barrier response. The latter also include 'references to things being covered or concealed' and 'enclosed openings in the earth'.<sup>39</sup> Grimshaw's representation of the cave therefore suggests Barrier attributes on more than one level. And yet, while evoking the notion of containment this cave simultaneously suggests penetration. The trailers which conceal the opening to the cave can be got through, and the stone which covers the entrance can be moved: 'I pulled off the stone' (163). Protecting and penetrable, the caves in Grimshaw's fiction are ambivalent sites.

This is particularly evident in *Conn of the Coral Seas*, and also in Grimshaw's 1917 novel *Kris Girl*:

Do you know that unpleasant dream in which the earth gives way underneath you, and lets you down a gigantic drop, at the end of which you awake gasping? In broad daylight that dream happened to me. The earth gave way and I went down through a smother of greenery, crashing and smashing, snatching at things that gave way and slithered through my hands, until I came to a stop with a heavy bump upon a mass of decayed vegetation. (233)<sup>40</sup>

Like the aforementioned tourists in New Zealand, Jack Garden, narrator of *Kris Girl*, finds himself in a landscape where the ground is giving way under his feet. He is marooned on an isolated island which has a complex system of underground caves whose entrances, hidden under a network of vines, lie on the surface of the earth:

We had not taken five steps before I put my foot on an apparently sound piece of earth, slightly veiled in creeper, and plunged straight through it into another cavern. This time I knocked myself about a great deal; I was bleeding from head and knee when I got out. (234)

Twice this disappearing surface is referred to as a 'nightmare' (236). However, as well as being a source of danger<sup>41</sup> the caves also provide refuge from the local villain. Nevertheless, they are not experienced in any real sense as secure, bounded spaces. When forced to hide in them, Garden and his companions, believing them to be sea caves, are in constant fear of drowning. Grimshaw first discussed sea caves in an article (her earliest signed prose publication) entitled 'In the Far North', a piece promoting tourism in County Antrim, which appeared in *The Bedford College Magazine* in 1891.<sup>42</sup> Clearly a landscape which she found compelling, Antrim's limestone caverns provide the setting for much of the pivotal action in her second novel, 'A Fool of Forty', serialised in *The Social Review* in 1898 when she was living in Dublin. Dark receptacles with seemingly fleshy interiors, these wave-wrought chambers, like the caves in her Pacific fiction, are strongly suggestive of female anatomy:

In the midst of the weeds stood up jagged, cruel rocks spotted and slashed with crimson sea-anemones, as though the heavens had rained down gouts of blood and shreds of gory flesh, through the rift that yawned far above in the darkness of the lofty roof. (366)<sup>43</sup>

Describing the motion of the water in one of the other caves, the narrator states 'The sound rose and fell with resistless force, sighing like the great Earth-Mother herself, through the arches of the long sea-halls' (366). A penetrable space, this cave is associated with the maternal and with death. There is a portal in its roof known as the Priest's Hole, and it is here that the novel's heroine, Theodora, kills her rival by accidentally propelling her into the orifice. This incident



takes place during a storm when the Atlantic, caught in a narrow channel, belches through the opening with tremendous violence. According to Fisher and Cleveland, such representations suggest a body image characterised by boundaries that are conceptualised as ill-defined, penetrable, and insubstantial. As evidenced by her representations of the cave, it is clear that Grimshaw's concern with penetrability was not restricted to the outer dermal boundaries of her body; internal sites, in particular the uterus, are also conceptualised as penetrable spaces, spaces where poorly defined boundaries failed to contain and protect. While it is true that Grimshaw's conception of the physical self would have been impacted upon by the strangeness of the journey,<sup>44</sup> it is evident that this body image did not spring suddenly to life amid the amethyst and azuline landscapes of Oceania. 'A Fool of Forty' was Grimshaw's second novel, written before she left Ireland for the Pacific; in it we see that she was drawn towards landscapes which could ingest and expel, landscapes which suggest a specific conception of the physical self, long before she encountered the geysers and mud holes of New Zealand, and the soft, clinging, penetrable sleet of Papua's estuaries.

### The estuary and polymorphous perversion

Describing the estuary in her romantic adventure *Kris Girl*, Grimshaw states that 'It had the colours of decay, corpse-yellow and livid green, and it shone with a slimy, sickening glitter' (149). In Grimshaw's estuary, death is inextricable from slime and glitter. Grimshaw conceptualised the estuary, at least its inhabited regions, as being all but synonymous with 'mud and slime' ('Into Unknown Papua', 394). In *The New New Guinea* the beach at Goari Bari is 'black mud' (228); the communal house in the same village is built on 'a bed of black swamp' (230). In Maiparé, another delta town, the communal house leads out 'into the depths of unknown, slimy, swampy thickets' (248), a place 'where the mud-crabs crawled by millions in the slime, and the poisonous green bush clustered low on the black quagmire of the land' (250). Describing the Goari Barian village of Dopima in the *Wide World Magazine* Grimshaw says that it 'turned out to be an extremely ugly and dirty town, perched on stilt-like legs amidst an ill-smelling black morass' (475). According to Grimshaw, the delta looks and smells bad, characteristics which she also attributes to its inhabitants. Commenting on the Goari Barians in *The New New Guinea* she states: 'They were the ugliest crowd I had yet seen in the country' (223). Later they are described as 'an ill-made, ugly-looking set of ruffians, and not at all healthy-looking' (234). The delta people are also associated with dirt: 'a long, brown, filthy arm' (225), 'at least half a hundred unclean heathen' (225). One individual, whom Grimshaw christens Willie, is picked out for special attention because of the 'extreme dirtiness of his person' (227). When Grimshaw depicts Willie as needing instruction on how to wash his hands she is reducing the Goari Barian to the level of a child, a dirty child, the Other as ancestor and infant.<sup>45</sup> An attempt at infantilisation is also evident in the following description:

I do not think I shall ever forget the spectacle of a dozen sturdy cannibals sprawling on their hands and knees in the mud and reeds, trying to pick up about an ounce of small embroidery beads that someone had let fall into that hopeless tangle. (*The New New Guinea*, 233)

Crawling on hands and knees, uninhibited, unconcerned about either cleanliness or the possibility of their body boundaries being penetrated by the semi-solid mass, this image depicts a return to the mud patch, home of the polymorphously perverse infant.<sup>46</sup> This is the pre-genital Freudian child at the anal stage of development. At this stage the infant, un-gendered and only beginning to be under the sway of the ego, experiences the excretory process as erotic. Eros is present in the stimulated mucous membrane of the rectum,<sup>47</sup> but so also is thanatos. For it is now that the infant encounters the first falling away of a part of his or her own body, the first slow falling, until from drop to drop nothing remains. Cadaver: *cadere*, to fall.

Erotogenic and deathly, excrement engenders anxiety. During the nineteenth century this disquietude crept into the open. As urbanisation accelerated at an unprecedented pace the disposal of human waste became an increasing problem, the social body was fast becoming a cause for concern.<sup>48</sup> In his seminal work *The Tourist*, Dean MacCannell argues that the popularity of tours to the Paris sewers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was fuelled by a desire to locate social cohesion.<sup>49</sup> This urge to inspect the underbelly of the city was not simple curiosity concerning the new method of waste disposal. It indicates a type of collective anxiety, a fear of infection, a need to make sure that the faeces produced by the great metropolis could be controlled, could be kept out of sight, and out of reach, something which singularly failed to happen in nineteenth-century Dublin.<sup>50</sup> Commenting on 'the increase in population in Dublin from about 175,000 in 1813 to some 250,000 in 1850', Emmet Larkin says that the 'influx was mainly from the poverty-stricken countryside' causing Dublin to become 'another pool of Bethesda'.<sup>51</sup> Such acute poverty resulted in a notoriously high death rate in the Irish capital: 'In 1879 the rate of mortality in Dublin was 35.7 per 1,000, massively higher than in London (23.6), Glasgow (22.4) or Edinburgh (21.3)'.<sup>52</sup> While no single factor associated with poverty can be blamed, poor sanitation was undoubtedly a crucial determinant. One of the foremost experts in this area was Beatrice's cousin, Dr Thomas Grimshaw, a man who visited many 'fever nests' in Dublin, expressing grave concern about the prevalence of wet faeces in or close to dwelling houses.<sup>53</sup> In a document published in 1879, the Chief Medical Officer, Charles Cameron, also voiced similar concerns, describing the ashpit in many lanes and courts as a 'mere cesspool, containing a semi-liquid putrefying mass'.<sup>54</sup> Difficult to manage, difficult to contain, semi-solid waste was considered the most dangerous. And it was pervasive, a product that all of inner Dublin would have been able to see, and certainly able to smell as the narrator in Grimshaw's novel *Broken Away* makes clear: 'Fog in the city; a thick dry summer haze that had crept up from the evil-smelling Liffey, and tarnished all the beauty of the June morning, making its splendour look dingy, dusty, and tawdry, along the busy streets' (90). For even after the sewage system was renovated, and water closets (which frequently became blocked even in middle-class residences) were introduced in many areas in the 1890s, the city's raw sewage was still pumped into the Liffey. Beatrice Grimshaw lived and worked in Dublin throughout the 1890s. When she left Ireland at the end of the century she was leaving behind the excremental accumulation of decades. It was a double departure, for what the body in motion leaves behind in the metropolis is also what it deposits in the tourist destination, what it leaves behind once again. But the abject can never be cast off. It travels well. And that Dublin river with which Grimshaw was so familiar, that huge open sewer, a mixture of solid matter and liquid waste that emitted a terrible stench, a malodorous place of mud and slime, appears to have travelled with her to the Pacific, permeating her representation of Papua's estuaries.

It is to the estuary that Hugh Lynch, the central character in Grimshaw's 1911 novel *When the Red Gods Call*, flees following his release from jail. Hurt by Stephanie Hammond, Lynch leaves white society behind, and retreats to the Purari delta. Commenting on this decision he states: 'I am not the kind that commits suicide, physically, but I committed it morally, when I went out into the wilderness for good, and I maintained, and still maintain, that I had ample reason' (*When the Red Gods Call*, 341).<sup>55</sup> Lynch posits a synonymity between the estuary and moral suicide, yet it is made clear that he must work because the: 'necessities wanted by the white man who has not "gone native" in his retirement, cannot be procured for nothing' (341). Lynch has not 'gone native'. As proof of this, Grimshaw posits his participation in commerce. Commodity fetishism is keeping him out of the mud, as indeed is his separation from the indigenous population, something that is rigorously emphasised:

I would sit on my veranda, above the water, with the currents from the channels outside swirling among the twenty-foot piles, under the house, and see the last rays of the evening light disappear from the darkening agate-green of the inner lagoon that held my tiny island in its secret heart, and hug myself to think how safely I was concealed. (341)

Lynch's house suggests a longing for definite boundaries: 'The ladder to the veranda was of lawyer cane, and I could draw it up and down at will, making the house at any moment into a complete fortress' (341–2). Lynch has created a fenced fortress in the mouth of the Purari River. Situated within an enclosed lagoon, his home, like his body, which is heavily muscled and extensively tattooed, is doubly bounded.<sup>56</sup> His choice of habitation indicates a desire for very definite boundaries, boundaries that are not easily transgressed. Lynch refers to his home as 'my tiny island', and, as we have seen, Fisher and Cleveland designate islands as Barrier responses.

### Islands and the first house

Set in the South Seas, there are, as one would expect, numerous images of islands in Grimshaw's travel writing and fiction. However, in texts containing detailed descriptions of landing scenes, Grimshaw's islands tend to be highly penetrable spaces. Like the caves in *Kris Girl*, they are feminised spaces which embody both protective and, as the following quotation from Grimshaw's 1924 novel *Sands of Oro* illustrates, destructive potential: 'And the spirit of the island, daughter of Wilderness and World's End, lawless, lovely, with sweet lips dripping poison, looked down on them and laughed' (*Sands of Oro*, 162).<sup>57</sup> The narrator in Grimshaw's novel, *The Wreck of the 'Redwing'* (1927), also associates islands with the feminine: 'They are like some women who give, yet never give all; who, just through that, continue to hold you' (107).<sup>58</sup> But it is in the aforementioned novel *My Lady of the Island* that the connection between woman and seemingly contained island topographies is most evident: 'It was her father. He called her Isola Bella because he said Banda was an *isola bella* – that's Italian, you know; it means "beautiful island," and she was born there' (70). In the following, Isola, and the island after which she was named, come together in chromatic harmony:

[S]he wore a pale-green dress, like leaves, instead of the all but universal tropical white. I remember I noticed that particularly, also the leaves in her hair, worn, I think, instead of a hat, to protect her from sun-stroke, but looking nevertheless, like an Oread's woodland crown. I saw as she came nearer, that her face, under the leaves, was like – what was it like? [...] Why, it was like the blossoms of the nutmeg tree, carved ivory, pale and warm; and the eyes were the colour of the nutmeg's fruit – deep-hidden, rich black stone. There was no colour at all in the cheeks, but the lips were red – it may have been my fancy, yet I think not – with the very redness of the crimson mace that lay scattered among the ivory flowers on the ground. (50)

As Isola Bella blends with leaf and bole, island and woman become synonymous. The female body is naturalised to the point of invisibility, and later in the text, when the narrator unravels Isola's secret, it too is constructed as a penetrable space. As Rod Edmond and Vanessa Smith state: 'In post-Freudian terms, islands readily become the territorial expression of both the ego and the body.'<sup>59</sup>

Attracting the restless and the reticent, the scurrilous and the scholarly, the sense of barrier and containment evoked by the notion of the island frequently proves false in Grimshaw's fiction.<sup>60</sup> In Grimshaw's who-done-it, *Murder in Paradise* (1940), for example, the demarcated space of the island becomes a death-trap. A disparate group of travellers come to Nadi Island looking for escape but instead they discover a murderer in their midst. Marooned on Nadi, the island becomes their prison, and like all prisons it negates the asylum of a truly personal space. This precarious, paradoxical place, locked and unlockable, secure and utterly lacking in security, engenders a desire for a door that can be bolted from the inside: 'Before her, suddenly rose the vision of the exclusive guest house [...] She had felt it oppressive, narrow. "But heavens", said Sharlee to herself, "it was so tight and safe! I could like being there – now"' (210).<sup>61</sup> The guest

house is where Sharlee lived with her aunt. While it is made clear that this girl is not short of material possessions there is nevertheless a void in her life: 'she had not, since she was six years old and her parents died, possessed a home' (205). This sense of rootlessness is something which Sharlee shares with the other travellers on the island: 'He did not say, "Go home." Like himself, like Jasmine, like Carryman, like Della, Sharlee had no home. Neither here nor anywhere else on the round world. A pack of lost dogs the lot of us he thought' (217). Sharlee lost her home when she was just six years of age; Grimshaw's family was dispossessed of Cloona House when she was seven. Situated at Dunmurry, on the outskirts of Belfast, Cloona was important to Grimshaw. She mentioned it in interviews throughout her life; and when she died (1953) in the poor section of Saint Vincent's hospital in Bathurst, New South Wales, a photograph of Cloona was one of very few personal effects. Grimshaw had carried this image across the Pacific: her first home present in the many homes that she came to occupy. The first house is the first postpartum carapace. Grimshaw lost this shell at an early age. It was replaced by a peripatetic lifestyle as her family moved to France and then back to the North of Ireland where they occupied various addresses in the years that followed. This pattern continued when Grimshaw emigrated to the Pacific. I have argued elsewhere that the hierarchy of inhabiting which Cloona inscribed indicates two possible preoccupations: rootedness and movement.<sup>62</sup>

When one considers the dwellings which Grimshaw commissioned in Papua a third preoccupation emerges: the desire for barrier and containment. Grimshaw's first home in Papua, the first which she owned, consisted of 'a house built on three huge war-canoes, moored in the sea'.<sup>63</sup> Commenting on this residence, Grimshaw states: 'I loved that house until it became the meeting place for crocodiles who lived in the surrounding shallows and bellowed like bulls at night.'<sup>64</sup> Suggesting a yearning for a definite barrier, Grimshaw's nautical home is a man-made island. When its boundaries are ruptured by rowdy reptiles she moves to an actual one. Called 'Coralands', Grimshaw's second home in Papua, the second to be built from her own designs and specifications, was 'on the top of a high narrow promontory that ran far out into the loveliest of Papua's coral seas' (*Isles of Adventure*, 208). This house, situated on Sariba Island, two miles from Samarai Island, intimates a desire for enclosure and containment. The same is also true of 'Marana' (daylight), Grimshaw's next architectural venture. Although built on the Papuan mainland, Marana's location in the 'heart of the forest' (210) evokes a similar need for barrier. This is not realised; the forest wall is penetrable. It is pierced by grief. Grimshaw leaves her plantation because of 'Misfortune – not mine – and death that followed it' (210). For Grimshaw, Marana's luciferous centre is perpetually dimmed by 'the memory of sadness' (218). Twenty miles inland, the final house which Grimshaw commissioned in Papua bespeaks inaccessibility as fluently as the first three. A cottage of timber and iron, it was 'set on the lip of a precipice that overlooks the famous waterfall at Rona' (217). After twenty-seven years in Papua, Grimshaw retired to Australia. Her first home there was at Kelso, a village near Bathurst. Rather than a wooden house and a dusty small town street, Grimshaw purchased 'Wayside'. A solitary holding positioned on top of a hill, it had been the Bathurst Military Barracks:

Nearly 100 years ago it had been erected by convicts to withstand the attacks of aborigines, who were particularly wild in this area. The walls are two feet thick and composed of solid rock. Miss Grimshaw is, possibly, the ablest commandante ever to grace the fortress. From her impregnable heights she is guardian of Kelso and the undulating plains that spread out below her in all their panoramic beauty.<sup>65</sup>

Whether 'moored in the sea', in the 'heart of the forest', on a 'narrow promontory', on 'the lip of a precipice' or on 'impregnable heights', Grimshaw's homes all evoke the notion of barrier, the notion of containment and enclosure. This longing for crystalline boundaries which envelop is perhaps most clearly expressed by Grimshaw during a visit to the Isle of Pines:

Among the pines, green secret little glades, shut out from the noise and tumble of the reefy sea; glades that wake an aching desire to close oneself into them, see only pines and sky, and keep, for a long time, company with the best of friends – one's self. (*Isles of Adventure*, 282–3)

Grimshaw is yearning for a retreat into the self, a movement towards an introverted topography facilitated by an arboreal embrace, an enfolding within a skein of pine, a skein of bark skin.

### Clothes: a second skin

When Grimshaw was travelling in the South Seas, bark cloth, which she mentions frequently in her writings, was a very popular form of covering among indigenous people. Clothing is an extension of the body; as J.C. Flugel argued in 1930, it 'possesses the quality of an externalised



Figure 1. Beatrice Grimshaw (n.d.). State Library of New South Wales. Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW.



skin with its hygienic and erotic functions, as well as that of an ambulant house with its protectiveness, decorativeness and modesty'.<sup>66</sup> As we have seen, Fisher and Cleveland identify clothing as a Barrier response. While there is no shortage of references to clothing in Grimshaw's texts, I would argue that her clothed – frequently meticulously clothed – representations do not imply a confident approach to body boundaries. As is particularly evident in her Dublin journalism, there is a sense of anxiety surrounding her engagement with dress; any slippage appears to harbour myriad dangers.<sup>67</sup> During the 1890s Grimshaw worked as a journalist on R.J. Mecredy's *Irish Cyclist* and *The Social Review*. In her columns in these publications she is frequently scathing of women cyclists who fall below her sartorial standards.<sup>68</sup> At times she adopts a haranguing tone when addressing those who do not follow her impeccable lead.



Figure 2. Beatrice Grimshaw (n.d.). Australian Handbook, October 1926.



Some idea of Grimshaw's dress sense can be constructed from existing photographic portraits, the majority of which have been included in this paper. One photograph that is especially useful for our purposes here, including, as it does, characteristics common to them all, is Figure 1. In this posed studio image we see Grimshaw bedecked in a rather elaborate costume of heavy satin with a richly embroidered bodice. Creating a layered effect, the lower half of the



Figure 3. Beatrice Grimshaw (n.d.). State Library of New South Wales. Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW.

dress is covered three-quarter way round with a net over-skirt, an effect replicated on the upper garment by the addition of the shawl. In Figure 6 the shawl is removed from the shoulders and held in front of the lower body, covering most of the thigh area. In Figure 4, showing Grimshaw seated on the veranda of her house in Port Moresby, the subject is wearing another fairly



Figure 4. Beatrice Grimshaw. *The Australian's Woman's Mirror*, 30 March 1926.



THE AUTHORESS, MISS BEATRICE GRIMSHAW, WHO  
HERE DESCRIBES HER ADVENTUROUS JOURNEY  
INTO THE INTERIOR OF FIJI.

*From a Photo. by Le Faivre.*

Figure 5. Beatrice Grimshaw. *Wide World Magazine*, 1909.

elaborate, and for the climate, cumbersome-looking garment, which also creates a layered effect as there seems to be some type of heavily fringed accessory, perhaps a shawl or scarf, hanging over Grimshaw's left shoulder. Commenting on the Jewish prayer shawl, Rabbi Arthur A. Feldman has described it as 'The amnion in which the Jewish man is reborn each morning when he wraps himself in it.'<sup>69</sup> In a paper which explores the origin of body coverings, Angel Garma argues that clothes 'express simultaneously the individual's personality and the influence of environment or the mother.'<sup>70</sup> She states: 'Originally, as coverings for the body came into general use, it may be assumed they were, at least in part, unconsciously equated with maternal protection – ultimately with foetal membranes.'<sup>71</sup> Made up of the amnion and the chorion, the membrane, as Garma states, is a 'double skin', something which, as we have seen, the heavily muscled and tattooed Hugh Lynch appears to have been trying to construct around his body, and



Figure 6. Beatrice Grimshaw (n.d.). State Library of New South Wales. Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW.

something which Grimshaw's layered garments also evoke. Garma, following Freud,<sup>72</sup> has demonstrated that in many cultures a child born partially covered with placenta is considered extremely fortunate. In English this covering is referred to as the 'lucky caul', in Scots the '*sealy how*'. Garma argues that 'The hat, and other "cephalic trophies", had a similar evolution. Their origin and prototype was the "lucky hood" (*Glückshaube*), the caul with which some infants are born.'<sup>73</sup> As has been stated earlier in this paper, Fisher and Cleveland identify the headdress as a definite Barrier variable. And while not an obtrusive characteristic in Grimshaw's portraits, 'cephalic trophies' are nevertheless present. In Figure 1, barely distinguishable in this copy, Grimshaw is wearing a fine tiara, in Figures 2 and 4 quite large hair slides are *in situ*, which, considering the length of her hair in these photographs, seem somewhat superfluous; in Figure 3 there is a small hair ornament close to Grimshaw's left temple, and one above her right ear; in Figure 6 she is wearing a large broad-brimmed hat; in Figure 5 Grimshaw's hair is undecorated, but the style, dramatic even by Edwardian standards, is decidedly expansive in dimension. In two of these photographs Grimshaw is holding large peacock feather fans – excellent screens which facilitate an immediate, if only partial retreat – creating once again another layer in her ensemble, another barrier between the self and the outside world. In Figures 1, 2 and 3 that most primordial of coverings makes an appearance; in Figure 2 Grimshaw is wearing a fur coat, in Figure 3 she has added a fur trim to her dress, and in Figure 1 she is standing on a leopard skin. Fisher and Cleveland identify distinctive animal skins, like that of the leopard, as definite Barrier variables. Rather than pointing up solid body boundaries, the inclusion of these items in Grimshaw's portraits suggests a desire to actively create boundaries, to create definite, although subtle, barriers between the self and the outside world.

With his musculature and tattoos, Hugh Lynch also appears to need a barrier. Perhaps it is fair to say that rather than having a double body armour, Lynch's 'skin' is triple layered, the third layer being his clothes: 'Yes, I used to shave, and got Kari to cut my hair, and she washed seven clean shirts a week for me, and I wore a tie, and shoes and socks too' (*When the Red Gods Call*, 29–30). Appearing to believe that identity can be snared within the knot of a neck tie, Lynch, labouring manually on a tropical island from dawn until dusk, wearing a shirt and tie, exemplifies colonial paranoia: 'I hadn't knocked about the South Seas for nothing, and I knew what's the end of dressing in pyjamas, and going uncombed and barefoot' (30). Prompted by a fear of race change, this rigid dress code is being used to create a barrier between self and Other. This is also true of Lynch's inaccessible habitats. His house on Clare Island, ransacked and burned to the ground, like so many houses in Grimshaw's fiction,<sup>74</sup> proved to be a highly penetrable space. Sold to clear debt, his first home in Ireland was an equally ineffective barrier. As was Grimshaw's first home, Cloona House. What followed for Grimshaw was a stream of properties; in the Pacific increasingly inaccessible places strongly suggestive of a desire for barrier – for enclosure and containment. That the quest continued until she was a very old woman indicates that this need was probably never realised. Moving from 'Wayside' to a house in Oberon, to rooms above a bar, to a locked ward in Saint Vincent's Hospital, some ingredient in the mortar of her homes always seemed to be missing. For Grimshaw, houses were largely places to be left. Likewise, Hugh Lynch is no novice when it comes to departures. He surrenders Clare Island and also his stronghold in the lagoon, a home surrounded by a rampart designed to separate him from the oral/anal space of the estuary and the Other within it. Lynch must leave this fortress and venture into the mud in order to save Stephanie Hammond from a head-hunting group. When he does it becomes clear that despite fortification between himself and the estuary, the mud was only ever one step outside, and he has had contact with it: 'I had been two years in the Delta now, and had become almost as active in the swamps, on occasion, as the natives themselves' (360). Oral and anal, cannibalistic and excretory, home of the polymorphously perverse infant, and the ancestor, the delta mud must be abandoned; the romantic plot is



dependent upon it. But the marks of the estuary are difficult to remove. Following her rescue from the delta's inhabitants, the first thing that Stephanie does, like a true Grimshaw heroine, is rearrange her personal appearance:

She had taken a sky-blue flannel shirt of mine out of the box and put it on. She had, in some miraculous way, removed most of the stains of the mud from her skirt. She had piled her curly hair high on her head, and bound it with a gay silk tie – mine also. (362–3)

'[M]ost', not all, of the stains are removed. The mud cannot be totally eradicated. It is the mark of a landscape, like so many in Grimshaw's expansive oeuvre, that eschews the notion of definite barriers, barriers between the above and the below, between the interior and the exterior. These landscape constructions, as stated, suggest a body image or body image tendencies characterised by a belief that one's body boundaries are ill-defined, by feelings of penetrability and fragmentation. In Grimshaw's writing, however, this is not how she presents her body; these traits are invariably projected on to the numerous others who wander through these works.

### The penetrable other

The Other in Grimshaw's travel writing is a highly penetrable body: 'Three ribs were splintered, and two of them driven into the lung, wounding it seriously. The liver had been ruptured by the shock of the bullet, and protruded through the opening, a ghastly, gangrenous mass' (*From Fiji to the Cannibal Islands*, 219). We are also told 'of one other woman up in the hills, who had died not long before, after living more than a week with all her face shot away' (219); moreover, of 'the many men going about with crippled and shattered limbs; of the twenty corpses, some buried, some eaten, that had been living human creatures only a few weeks before' (219). These people are from the island of Tanna in Vanuatu. Their bodies are in pieces as a result of gunshot wounds. While there are exceptions, broken bodies in Grimshaw's Pacific writing are primarily those of indigenous people, people who have been the victims of shark attacks, firearm injuries, decapitation, flaying, cannibalism, and skin disease: 'The terrible disease, too, had set its



Figure 7. Beatrice Grimshaw's unmarked grave.



well-known marks upon every countenance [...] all the faces had the gross, thickened, unhuman look that leprosy stamps upon its victims' (*In the Strange South Seas*, 239). Contemplating these people whose body boundaries are in imminent danger of collapse, Grimshaw confirms the integrity of her own surface. She depicts herself as being surrounded by a barrier that is intact. Unlike the people whom she is viewing, people apparently viewing her with admiration, she has a 'smooth pale face' (*In the Strange South Seas*, 239), a face that has not even been touched by the Pacific sun, never mind disease, a face that has travelled but that shows no signs of the journey. Her body is enclosed; it has definite boundaries: a healthy skin, and 'a gown fastened in about the middle, and the most remarkable yellow shoes, and a ring, and a watch' (239). The residents of the Molokai at Penrhyn, like the Fly River heads and skeletal remains which she purchased, are helping Grimshaw to shore up a positive conception of self, one which connotes definite boundaries, one which implies the presence of a unified whole, one which is dependent upon a fragmented Other. Evoking a resurrection trajectory, European remains, unlike their indigenous counterparts, are usually treated with a degree of reverence in Grimshaw's work. This is evident in her travel writing. In *The New New Guinea* she gives an account of a 1909 expedition to the Aird estuary organised by J.H.P. Murray, the Lieutenant-Governor of Papua. The primary aim of this excursion, which Grimshaw joined, was to recover the bones of two missionaries, James Chalmers and Oliver Tompkins, who had been killed there seven years earlier. We are told that the Governor succeeded in getting possession of the bones and that 'The *Merrie England* conveyed them to the London Mission Station at Daru, where the representatives of the Mission saw to their decent burial' (237). Undermining the very foundations of the 'civilising mission', the treatment of these remains, in contrast to those of indigenous people, implies a teleological design: 'the resurrection of the body and life everlasting'.<sup>75</sup> White men's bones, it would seem, cannot rise very far in the delta mud.

In this paper, I have argued that the bones of black men and of black women are used by Grimshaw in an attempt to shore up a positive conception of the physical self. Drawing on Fisher and Cleveland's work on body image, it has been shown that Penetration variables are a forceful presence in Beatrice Grimshaw's descriptions of specific landscapes and their inhabitants. According to Fisher and Cleveland, such descriptions are indicative of a body image characterised by boundaries that are conceptualised as ill-defined, penetrable, and insubstantial. In an attempt to establish boundaries, the feelings of fragmentation and penetrability, present throughout Grimshaw's work, are projected onto the bodies (body parts) of indigenous people, a process that required endless repetition. In the end all boundaries crumbled for Beatrice. Figure 7 is a photograph of her grave.<sup>76</sup> While her neighbour, Ms Honeyman, has a surround, a cover, a marker and even, after half a century in the ground, a bunch of African daisies, Beatrice's grave is an unmarked, borderless patch of brown earth, a sad, very quiet, very naked little grave.

### Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Kathleen McCracken for reading and commenting on an earlier version of this paper. Thank you to Patricia Bartlett for proof reading this paper. Thanks to the Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW for permission to publish figures 1, 3 and 6. This paper is for Diane and Patsy O'Hagan.

### Notes

1. For biographical information relating to Beatrice Grimshaw see my doctoral dissertation: McCotter, 'Colonising Landscapes and Mapping Bodies', 18–65.
2. Grimshaw, *Isles of Adventure*, 52. All further references to this text will be given in the body of the paper.

3. Grimshaw, *From Fiji to the Cannibal Islands*, 223. All further references to this text will be given in the body of the paper.
4. McCotter, 'Woman Traveller/Colonial Tourist', 481–506.
5. For a discussion of colonial fears of unknown landscapes, landscapes that could engulf the intruder, see McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, 21–31.
6. Commenting on body image, Fisher and Cleveland have stated 'Body image is a term which refers to the body as a psychological experience, and focuses on the individual's feelings and attitudes toward his own body' (Fisher and Cleveland, *Body Image and Personality*, x).
7. Fisher and Cleveland, *Body Image and Personality*.
8. Fisher and Cleveland make it clear that their use of the term barrier is not intended to refer to 'an obstacle or obstruction' but rather 'any limit or boundary' (Fisher and Cleveland, *Body Image and Personality*, 58).
9. *Ibid.*, 59.
10. *Ibid.*, 61.
11. *Ibid.*, 60.
12. *Ibid.*, 58.
13. *Ibid.*, 61.
14. *Ibid.*, 62.
15. *Ibid.*
16. *Ibid.*, 61–3.
17. *Ibid.*, 62–3.
18. Lett, 'Miss Beatrice Grimshaw', 8.
19. *Ibid.*, 9.
20. For a discussion of Grimshaw's journeys on Papua's Fly and Sepik Rivers see McCotter, 'Seduction and Resistance', 81–97.
21. For a discussion of Grimshaw and the death drive see McCotter, 'Islanders, Tourists and Psychosis', 1–18.
22. Julia Kristeva, *Power of Horrors*, 3.
23. *Ibid.*, 3.
24. *Ibid.*
25. This conception of self as a coherent, autonomous, unified entity is, of course, an illusion. As Lacan reminds us, it is one of 'the *méconnaissances* [misconstructions] that constitute the ego'. Lacan, *Écrits*, 6.
26. Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, 14–15.
27. Grimshaw, *Broken Away*, 191. All further references to this text will be given in the body of the paper.
28. Grimshaw, 'Into Unknown Papua', 391.
29. Grimshaw, *The New New Guinea*, 64. All further references to this text will be given in the body of the paper.
30. Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 4.
31. *Ibid.*, 4.
32. *Ibid.*, 9.
33. For further discussion of landscapes imbued with a capacity to consume in Grimshaw's travel writing see McCotter, 'Nurses, Fairytales, Cannibals', 125–39.
34. Grimshaw, *In the Strange South Seas*, 237. All further references to this text will be given in the body of the paper.
35. For a discussion of the influential role played by Grimshaw's family in the development of spinning and weaving industries in the North of Ireland see McCotter, 'Colonising Landscapes and Mapping Bodies', 18–22.
36. Grimshaw, *My Lady of the Island*, 152. All further references to this text will be given in the body of the paper.
37. Sigmund Freud, cited in Fisher and Cleveland, *Body Image and Personality*, 30.
38. Grimshaw, *Conn of the Coral Seas*, 163. All further references to this text will be given in the body of the paper.
39. Fisher and Cleveland, *Body Image and Personality*, 60.
40. Grimshaw, *Kris Girl*, 233. All further references to this text will be given in the body of the paper.
41. In Grimshaw's 1907 novel *Vaiti of the Islands* caves are once again associated with female anatomy and death. The treasure that Vaiti and her cousin are seeking in the underground chamber is a collection of 'curious skulls' (58). But in order to reach it they have to traverse a huge chasm. In doing

so Vaiti's cousin falls and is consumed by an underground monster. Contemplating this limitless, boundary-less space of infinite depth, which is suffused with a foul smell, causes Vaiti's own body to void: 'Vaiti made no answer, but stood leaning up against the wall of the tunnel, both hands pressed against her chest. In a moment she was violently sick' (58). With her back against the wall and her hands pressed to her chest Vaiti appears to be trying to establish body boundaries, confirming a map of the self. And also, by applying pressure to her chest, she seems to be trying to prevent the expulsion of the internal flow. She fails; abject, ambiguous, the contents of her stomach refuse to follow the correct trajectory. As has been stated, Fisher and Cleveland designate a mouth that is used for intake or expulsion, and bottomless pits, as being indicative of Penetration responses. Grimshaw's depiction of Vaiti vomiting at the side of a bottomless abyss, having witnessed an underground monster swallow her cousin, is a powerful Penetration image. Grimshaw's caves, combining hope (possible or actual riches) and death, are ambivalent sites.

42. Grimshaw, 'In the Far North'.
43. Grimshaw, 'A Fool of Forty', 366. All further references to this text will be given in the body of the paper.
44. See McCotter, 'Bodies of De/composition', 81–106.
45. Re: castaways and mud see Woods, 'Fantasy Islands', 141.
46. For a discussion of mud, masculinity, the polymorphously perverse infant and island topographies see Ibid.
47. Freud, *An Infantile Neurosis*, 84.
48. See Hardy, 'Dust Piles and Damp Pavements', 112–123.
49. MacCannell, *The Tourist*, 57.
50. See Lyons, *Ireland since the Famine*, 277–8.
51. Larkin, 'Foreword' to *Dublin Slums*, ix.
52. Prunty, *Dublin Slums*, 74.
53. Thomas Grimshaw, 'Remarks on the Prevalence and Distribution of Fever in Dublin', in *Thomas Wrigley Grimshaw*, <http://www.grimshaworigin.org> (accessed 4 May 2005).
54. Charles Cameron, cited in Prunty, *Dublin Slums*, 81.
55. Grimshaw, *When the Red Gods Call*. All further references to this text will be given in the body of the paper.
56. For a discussion of Lynch's body armour see McCotter, 'Bodies of De/composition', 81–106.
57. Grimshaw, *The Sands of Oro*. All further references to this text will be given in the body of the paper.
58. Grimshaw, *The Wreck of the Redwing*, 107. All further references to this text will be given in the body of the paper.
59. Edmond and Smith, Editors' Introduction to *Islands in History*, 4.
60. In *When the Red Gods Call*, Hugh Lynch's island home is ransacked and razed to the ground. A similar fate befalls Herod Pascoe's steal-lined, island fortress in the *The Wreck of the Redwing*. In *Conn of the Coral Seas*, the eponymous hero's well-fenced island retreat is broken into by a group of bandits.
61. Grimshaw, *Murder in Paradise*, 218. All further references to this text will be given in the body of the paper.
62. McCotter, 'Maintaining a Wide Margin'.
63. Grimshaw, 'How I Found Adventure', *Blue Book*, April 1939, 3, <http://pulprack.com/arch/000107.html> (accessed 17 May 2004).
64. Ibid.
65. Anon., *Sydney Morning Herald*, 'Women's Supplement', Monday 13 February 1939.
66. J.C. Flugel, cited in Garma, 'The Origin of Clothes', 184.
67. For a discussion of clothes and Grimshaw's Dublin journalism see McCotter, 'The Geometry of Innocence Flesh on the Bone', 6–10.
68. See Grimshaw, 'The Lady Cyclist', *Irish Cyclist*, 12 January 1898, 525; Grimshaw, 'The Wheelwoman', *The Social Review*, 30 July 1898, 81.
69. Rabbi Arthur A. Feldman, cited in Garma, 'The Origin of Clothes', 190.
70. Garma, 'The Origin of Clothes', 184.
71. Ibid.
72. See Freud, 'From the History of an Infantile Neurosis', 99–100.
73. Garma, 'The Origin of Clothes', 187.
74. See n. 60.
75. These words are from the 'Apostles' Creed', a prayer with which Grimshaw as a convert to Catholicism would have been familiar.

76. Susan Gardner states that she commissioned a headstone for Grimshaw. Gardner, "'A 'vert to Australianism'". It was not erected. Thanks are due to Diane and Patsy O'Hagan for undertaking the long drive to Bathurst Cemetery in order to obtain this information.

### Bibliography

- Edmond, Rod and Vanessa Smith. Editors' Introduction to *Islands in History and Representation*, 1–18. London: Routledge, 2003.
- Fisher, Seymour and Sidney E. Cleveland. *Body Image and Personality*. New York: Dover, 1968.
- Freud, Sigmund. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. *The Standard Edition*. Vol. XVII, 1920–22, ed. James Strachey, 7–66. London: Hogarth, 1971.
- . 'From the History of an Infantile Neurosis'. In *An Infantile Neurosis and Other Works*. *The Standard Edition*. Vol. XVII, 1917–19, ed. James Strachey, 99–106. London: Hogarth, 1971.
- Gardner, Susan. "'A 'vert to Australianism': Beatrice Grimshaw and the Bicentenary'. *Hecate* 12 (1987): 31–68.
- Garma, Angel. 'The Origin of Clothes'. *Psychoanalysis Quarterly* 18 (1949): 173–90.
- Grimshaw, Beatrice. *Broken Away*. London: John Lane, 1987.
- . *Conn of the Coral Seas*. New York: Macmillan, 1922.
- . 'A Fool of Forty'. *The Social Review*, 19 November 1898.
- . 'A Fool of Forty'. *The Social Review*, 3 December (1898).
- . *From Fiji to the Cannibal Islands*. London: Thomas Nelson, 1917. First published 1907.
- . 'How I Found Adventure.' *Blue Book*, April 1939, 3. <http://pulprack.com/arch/000107.html> (accessed 17 May 2004).
- . 'In the Far North'. *The Bedford College, London, Magazine*, December 1891, 10–13.
- . *In the Strange South Seas*. London: Hutchinson, 1907.
- . 'Into Unknown Papua'. *Wide World Magazine*, 1909, 387–97.
- . *Isles of Adventure*. London: Herbert Jenkins, 1930.
- . *Kris Girl*. London: Mills & Boon, 1917.
- . 'The Lady Cyclist'. *Irish Cyclist*, 12 January 1898, 525.
- . *Murder in Paradise*. Sydney: New Century Press, 1940.
- . *My Lady of the Island*. London: Cassell, 1933. First published as *Red Bob of the Bismarcks*. London: Hurst & Blackett, 1915.
- . *The New New Guinea*. London: Hutchinson, 1910.
- . *Sands of Oro*. London: Hurst & Blackett, 1924.
- . *Vaiti of the Islands*. London: George Newnes, 1916. First published 1907.
- . 'The Wheelwoman'. *The Social Review*, 30 July 1898, 81.
- . *When the Red Gods Call*. London: Moffat, Yard, 1911.
- . *The Wreck of the Redwing*. London: C. Arthur Pearson, 1929.
- Hardy, Ellen, 'Dust Piles and Damp Pavements: Excrement, Repression, and the Victorian City in Photography and Literature'. In *Victorian Literature and the Victorian Visual Imagination*, ed. Carol T. Christ and John O. Jordan, 112–113. London: University of California Press, 1995.
- Kristeva, Julia. *Power of Horrors: An Essay on Abjection*. Trans. Leon S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia University Press, 1982.
- Lacan, Jacques. *Écrits*. Trans. Alan Sheridan. London: Tavistock, 1977.
- Larkin, Emmet. 'Foreword' to *Dublin Slums 1800–1925: A Study in Urban Geography* by Jacinta Prunty, ix–x. Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1998.
- Lett, Mollie, 'Miss Beatrice Grimshaw.' Article rejected by the *American Magazine* 1935, 8. Lett papers, Ms. 2039, box 4, folder 11. National Library of Australia, Canberra.
- Lyons, F.S.L. *Ireland since the Famine*. Glasgow: William Collins, 1973.
- MacCannell, Dean. *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class*. New York: Schocken Books, 1976.
- McClintock, Anne. *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and the Colonial Contest*. London: Routledge, 1995.
- McCotter, Clare. 'Bodies of De/composition: Leprosy and Tattooing in Beatrice Grimshaw's Fiction and Travel Writing'. *Hecate* 33 (2007): 81–106.
- . 'Colonising Landscapes and Mapping Bodies: Imagining Tourist Space & Place in Beatrice Grimshaw's Travel Writing.' PhD diss., University of Ulster, 2005.
- . 'The Geometry of Innocence Flesh on the Bone'. *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change* 5 (2007): 106–27.

- . 'Islanders, Tourists and Psychosis: Doing Time in Beatrice Grimshaw's Travel Brochures'. *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change* 4 (2006): 1–18.
- . 'Maintaining a Wide Margin: The Boat as Home in Beatrice Grimshaw's Travel Writing'. In *The Traveling and Writing Self*, ed. Marguerite Helmers and Tilar Mazzeo, 97–115. London: Cambridge Scholar's Press, 2007.
- . 'Nurses, Fairytales, Cannibals: Constructing a Nationalist Narrative in Beatrice Grimshaw's Papuan Landscapes'. *Irish Feminist Review* 2 (2006): 125–39.
- . 'Seduction and Resistance, Baptism and "Glassy Metaphorics": Beatrice Grimshaw's Journeys on Papua's Great Rivers'. *Hecate* 32 (2006): 81–97.
- . 'Woman Traveller/Colonial Tourist: Deconstructing the Great Divide in Beatrice Grimshaw's Travel Writing'. *Irish Studies Review* 15 (2007): 481–506.
- Prunty, Jacinta. *Dublin Slums 1800–1925: A Study in Urban Geography*. Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1998.
- Woods, Gregory, 'Fantasy Islands: Popular Topographies of Marooned Masculinity'. In *Mapping Desire*, ed. David Bell and Gill Valentine, 126–48. London: Routledge, 1995.

Copyright of Irish Studies Review is the property of Routledge and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.



Copyright of Irish Studies Review is the property of Routledge and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.