

## **Seduction and Resistance, Baptism and 'Glassy Metaphorics': Beatrice Grimshaw's Journeys on Papua's Great Rivers**

Beatrice Grimshaw was born at Cloona House, Dunmurry, on the outskirts of Belfast in 1870. Influential in the development of spinning and weaving industries in the north of Ireland the Grimshaws were a prominent family in Belfast throughout much of the nineteenth century. For a young girl growing up at this time Beatrice received an expansive education: private tutors; a period at the Pension Retailaud, Normandy; secondary education at Victoria College, Belfast; a year at Bedford College, London, followed by another at the Queen's University of Belfast. Grimshaw's parents had hoped that their daughter would become a lecturer in classics at a women's college, but the young Beatrice had other plans. After sending R. J. McCredy, the proprietor of the Dublin based publication, *Irish Cyclist*, an anonymous letter signed 'Belsize' in 1891 expressing her interest in cycling and journalism, Grimshaw became an occasional contributor to the magazine. She appears to have been made a permanent staff member in 1892, writing at that time under the pseudonym Graphis or, simply, 'G'. Appointed to the post of sub-editor in 1893, her rise through the ranks of this otherwise all-male magazine was rapid. Also in 1893, while continuing to write for the *Irish Cyclist*, Grimshaw joined the staff on the magazine's sister publication, the *Social Review*. She was with the paper a relatively short period of time, approximately two years, when she was promoted to editor. After almost a decade spent meeting weekly deadlines, Grimshaw moved to London where she worked as a free-lance journalist and immigration promoter. But she could not settle in there. From her early days in Dublin she had harboured a desire to see the Pacific.<sup>1</sup> And in 1904, on commission from the *Times* (London) and the *Daily Graphic* (London), she arrived for the first time in the South Seas. During the forty nine years which followed she would exhaust numerous type-writers in various locations across Oceania as she produced travelogues, travel brochures, political pamphlets, much journalistic copy, plus copious amounts of long and short fiction. With a large readership in the English speaking world Grimshaw was one of the best known writers working in popular fictional genres during the first decades of the twentieth century. Stating that 'new and strange things are the chief happiness of life' (*Isles of Adventure*, 34), Grimshaw was also a passionate traveller. Both before and during



her long residency in what is present-day Papua New Guinea (1907–1934) she spent periods travelling to various island groups in the Pacific.<sup>2</sup> Throughout this time Grimshaw also travelled extensively within Papua itself.<sup>3</sup> In 1936 Grimshaw retired to Kelso, a village on the outskirts of Bathurst, New South Wales, where she continued to write well into her seventies. She died in Bathurst in 1953.

Having found records kept by her London agent, Susan Gardner describes Grimshaw as a 'colossal contemporary influence'.<sup>4</sup> Some indication of the popularity of her writing is evidenced by the numerous editions and translations of her works,<sup>5</sup> and also by the fact that even during the Depression an American magazine was prepared to pay her one thousand dollars for a story.<sup>6</sup> Writing for such publications as the *Daily Graphic*, the *Sydney Morning Herald*, the *Times*, the *National Geographic*, and the *Wide World Magazine*, Grimshaw was also a prolific journalist. Frequently interviewed when she went on one of her round-the-world trips, which usually included a visit to her London publisher, she was a celebrity in her day. However, Grimshaw's influence is not restricted to her own period. I have demonstrated elsewhere how she played a major role in the production of tourist space and place in the Pacific.<sup>7</sup> And perhaps this is where her real importance lies for us today. Her *oeuvre* is not the preserve of solitary researchers; its influence is still reverberating strongly in touristic discourses pertaining to the region.<sup>8</sup> In the introduction to her book, *Victorian Women Travellers*, Dorothy Middleton states: 'Travel was an individual gesture of the house-bound, man dominated Victorian woman'.<sup>9</sup> This view of Victorian and early twentieth-century women travellers as solitary figures, breaking free from the domestic arena to undertake journeys which, as 'individual gesture[s]', kept them rooted in what was ultimately the private sphere, remains pervasive. Frequently dismissed as eccentrics and globetrotteresses or hailed as proto-feminists, as Sara Mills recognises criticism has tended to position these women outside the imperial sphere and thus as disconnected from the production of imperial knowledges.<sup>10</sup> Born out of a colonial context, the development of tourism in the region was dependent upon an imperial presence in the South Seas. A confluence of discourses of travel, geography and ethnology, Pacific tourism is an imperial knowledge. And Beatrice Grimshaw contributed to the construction of its various parts in no small measure.

As well as writing thirty one novels, eight volumes of short fiction, plus hundreds of other short stories published in



magazines and newspapers,<sup>11</sup> Grimshaw also wrote two travel brochures: *The Islands Of The Blest* (date of publication uncertain) and *Three Wonderful Nations* (date of publication uncertain).<sup>12</sup> In these texts, landscape and ethnological descriptions are used to facilitate the development of two distinct genres of tourism<sup>13</sup> in the South Seas: beach combing escapism in the eastern Pacific, and ethnic tourism in the more western islands.<sup>14</sup> Grimshaw's production of tourist space and place, however, is not confined to her travel brochures. In her 1907 travelogue *From Fiji To The Cannibal Islands*, for example, Grimshaw's prose, ostensibly directed at prospective settlers, is also used to fuel tourism in Fiji.<sup>15</sup> Describing the potential of land for livestock and crop farming Grimshaw is constructing an imperial geography of Fiji, but these landscape descriptions do not speak exclusively, or perhaps even primarily, to an audience intent on immigration. For the Fiji which Grimshaw is promoting is as much about tourism as it is about settlement. The descriptions of her horseback journey through the centre of Fiji, which she also discusses in *Three Wonderful Nations*, are used to promote both settlement and ethnic tourism on the island group.<sup>16</sup> Many of Grimshaw's other journeys function in a similar manner. Even when addressing prospective settlers she is still actively involved in the production of tourist space and place because she is a tourist interacting with the landscape that surrounds her, and because she is producing landscape descriptions that have the potential to engender tourism in the region. In the account of her travels through the Vanuatuan forests and also those relating to her journeys up the great Papuan rivers, the seeds of ethnic and adventure tourism in the Pacific are being sown. Grimshaw is laying the foundations for genres of tourism that would explode in popularity in the latter half of the twentieth century, reaching new heights in the twenty-first. A recent Channel 4 programme, which has relevance here, is *Surviving Extremes*.<sup>17</sup> One episode documented a tourist's journey through the swampland surrounding some of Papua's most notable estuaries, a landscape which Grimshaw first made known to a large readership over ninety years ago. In another television series, BBC's *Tribe*, the programme on Papua opened with a description of the landscape as an immensity which still contains many 'blank spaces'.<sup>18</sup> This was a common trope in colonial writings about Africa but, as far as the island continent was concerned, Beatrice Grimshaw did more than any other writer in the first half of the twentieth century to develop and disseminate this image of the Papuan landscape. It is



a representation that is found throughout her fictional and non-fictional texts.<sup>19</sup> In her constructions of tourist space and place Grimshaw produced landscape descriptions, racialised and gendered cartographies of the Pacific which continue to have influence today. Sometimes this influence is obvious, as in the case of the web-site promoting tourism on Norfolk Island which quotes from *From Fiji To The Cannibal Islands*, or the web-site promoting business and tourism in Papua which discusses the cottage that she built at Rona Falls and also her love of the Sogeri district.<sup>20</sup> Today Grimshaw's voice is still far from silent.

In his landmark text, *Orientalism*, Edward Said has stated that 'there is no use pretending that all we know about time and space, or rather history and geography is anything other than imaginative'.<sup>21</sup> Commenting on the advances evident in positive historical and geographical endeavour in Europe and the United States, Said goes on to add, 'Yet this is not to say that they know all there is to know, nor, more important, is it to say that what they know has effectively dispelled the imaginative and historical knowledge that I have been considering'.<sup>22</sup> Beatrice Grimshaw laid no claims to having produced ethnologies or geographies, nevertheless her many accounts of the ethnological Other and her landscape descriptions would undoubtedly have been accepted and absorbed as such by a wide readership. It is possibly here among the popular genres which Grimshaw exploited that we find imaginative ethnologies and geographies at their most pervasive, influential, resilient — in short, at their most difficult to dispel. In this paper, which focuses on Grimshaw's travel writing, I analyse her representation of the landscapes surrounding two of Papua's largest rivers, the Fly and the Sepik. I examine her attempts to construct these waterways as conduits for colonial advance, arteries of the nation which unfold narratives of linear progress. As the title of this paper suggests, landscapes are not static entities, constantly in motion, they are more than capable of talking back. Particular attention will therefore be paid to the dialogic relationship that develops between Grimshaw and the spaces with which she engages. Tourist space and place incorporates not only physical terrain but also body space, the body of the touristic self and the body of the ethnological Other. How Grimshaw interacts with this Other, how she attempts to mark the indigenous people whom she encounters on these journeys as her own is a central concern of what follows.

In her third travelogue, *The New New Guinea* (1910), Grimshaw's engagement with the great Papuan rivers had been



restricted to her travels in the Purari and Aird estuaries. This situation changed in April 1923 when Grimshaw, in the company of some priests from the Papuan Catholic Mission, travelled up the Sepik. Her account of the initial stage of this journey focuses, to a large extent, on the commercial potential of the landscape with regard to settlement,<sup>23</sup> and also its capacity to sustain the indigenous population.<sup>24</sup> Human existence, indigenous or colonial, is nearly always ineludible in Grimshaw's landscapes. She is concerned with the interaction of land and people, especially how the former supports the latter. Therefore, the commoditisation of the landscape in the opening page of this narration comes as no surprise:

There is oil somewhere along its course — not yet located; there is gold; there is a seventy-mile stretch of sago, and hundreds of miles of wild sugar-cane. Tobacco is grown by the head-hunters of the middle river in such quantities that stray traders buy it by the ton, the quality of the leaf being good enough for white men to make into cigars. (*Isles of Adventure*, 37)

The Sepik which Grimshaw constructs is not simply a river; it is also a potential conduit for colonial development. Describing the river as the 'backbone of the Mandated Territory' (82), Grimshaw tries to inscribe it with a narrative of linear progress, stating, in the final paragraph<sup>25</sup> of her account of this trip, that:

The unused sago that rots and drops into the stream will feed hungry thousands. The gold and oil that have not yet been prospected will come into use, and with them, perhaps, the coal that has already been whispered about. Big ships will steam up the great water-way where now the stately egret walks in solitude ... (82)

She is converting the Sepik into a power line that will feed the masses and fatten the imperial exchequer.<sup>26</sup>

But the Sepik is not an economic power line, either metaphorically or otherwise. When exploiting physiological analogies in their descriptions of rivers, writers have, for obvious reasons, tended to favour the bloodstream<sup>27</sup> — frequently depicting major rivers as the arteries of the nation. Grimshaw opts instead for the vertebral column, running from the head of the body/water-head to the abjection of the anus/estuary; it is a metaphor that underpins the impossibility of projecting a developmental trajectory on to these rivers. Progress does not lead to abjection. Describing the abject, Julia Kristeva explains that 'it is something rejected from which one does not part.'<sup>28</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>29</sup>

A worrying interspace that challenges the boundaries of the self, abjection is 'above all ambiguity.'<sup>30</sup> Threatening the dichotomy between inside and outside, the abject — in its most obvious manifestation '*corporeal waste*, menstrual blood and excrement, or everything that is assimilated to them, from nail-parings to decay'<sup>31</sup> — is that which is constantly rejected in the endless attempt to protect subjectivity. Whether from without as in Levitical abominations or the interior defilement of the gospels, abjection — always posing the risk of contamination and thus boundary collapse — bespeaks an unholy admixture. It is precisely this sense of indeterminacy and concomitant unease that distinguishes Grimshaw's depiction of Papuan estuaries. Invoking a landscape of abjection these delta typographies are marked by a concatenation of 'unnatural' coming together:

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 the 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)<sup>32</sup>

The mingling of river and sea creates a 'hideously yellow' zone that is neither fresh nor brine; viscous and opaque the opening of the Purari river is an oral/anal cavity marked by stagnancy and decay. The outward flow is disrupted, creating a 'great yellow flood' that is 'over half a mile wide, in places fully ten miles inland'(125–6); the boundaries between inside and outside have been eroded. Movement of any kind is difficult in Grimshaw's estuaries; they are landscapes where mobility is seriously impaired:

We reached the river mouth when the tide was nearly low and boldly made the attempt. It failed. The steamer, though drawing less than nine feet of water, struck fast, and it became evident that we had at least got to spend the day where we were. (122)

The situation does not improve on land:

Walking about in a Purari delta village is not an easy performance. The whole town is built in the mud — black, thick,



ill-smelling slime, half land and half water, cut up by numberless canals and streams of all sizes. (139)

In this topography of glutinous quagmires, movement is confined to a system of bridges 'and if you fall off one when nobody is about you may very well be suffocated in the slime below' (140). That is if you are white: 'It is said — with how much truth I cannot tell — that many of the natives of the Purari delta can support themselves in this slime by a kind of half-swimming, half-paddling motion, and can even get about in it, like mud-turtles' (140). The Maipuan, we are told, 'live in mud almost as much as an alligator' (128); Grimshaw posits this ambiguous space of alluvial deposits 'half-land half-water' as their natural element. The Purari delta people, she states, not only live in slime they are *of* it: '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).<sup>33</sup> Indeterminate like the black mud and viscid flood, both landscape and inhabitants are abjected.<sup>34</sup>

For Grimshaw, Papua's estuaries are spaces of abjection, spaces where linearity is defeated in the presence of fluvial reflux. These rivers do not flow boldly to the sea. They turn back on themselves, disrupting boundaries and creating glissades of ambiguity. This is something that is particularly true of the Fly:

The bore is the victory of the sea over the river; when it sweeps up the Fly [ ... ] driving back for awhile the river-water, it builds a terrace right across from bank to bank, from three to eight or nine feet higher than the level in front of it. (*Isles of Adventure*, 143/4)

Turning rapidly, this roaring river reflux shatters the illusion of linear progress. A guest on the government oil-launch *Laurabada*, Grimshaw ascended the Fly in February, 1926. The party with whom she was travelling included Papua's colonial Lieutenant-Governor, Hubert Murray, and a group of indigenous police officers. In contrast to her description of the Sepik, Grimshaw does not appear to have any urge to translate the Fly into an economic power line. From her arrival she seems to be at one with the river: 'This night we lay swaying gently to the pull of the Gulf tides, quiet, cool, and at peace. The Fly was welcoming us kindly' (*Isles of Adventure*, 111). Embraced by the rhythms of the tidal stream both river and travellers are in mutual motion. Grimshaw is enthralled by the landscape, a landscape that is both seductive and resistant. She describes how '[o]n the rivers, where transport is simpler, the perils of rising and falling water, shoals, snags and rapids, forbid all lingering' (119). There is no aggressive desire for



mastery here, in any case it would be impossible: 'It is fatally easy to lose your boat up a Papuan river, and the loss of your boat means the loss of everything, not excluding life ...' (119). Aware that she and her party are largely at the river's mercy, Grimshaw appears to appreciate its spirit, even its magnificent violence. In the concluding lines of her chapter on the Fly she states:

The Fly took one more 'lick' at us before we left; for the holding-ground was bad, and the ship dragged all of five miles, and it was more good luck than anything else that found us safely afloat next morning. She is a wicked river, but a beautiful river, and wonderful beyond all telling! (145)

A landscape of seduction and resistance, it is the Fly that gets the final word.

Grimshaw's interaction with a variety of disparate landscapes is, as stated, more often than not, influenced by the capacity of the space in question to support human life. But on the apparently uninhabited Middle Fly she simply asserts that man 'does not rule here. Man, on the Middle Fly, matters less than the least of the crocodiles that sleep, insolent, undisturbed, upon endless mud-banks' (114). When signs of human presence start to re-emerge along the river banks, however, Grimshaw is quick to comment on what she sees as an absence of domesticity: 'They were pathetic, those deserted camps, the temporary resting-places of a driven, scared people, who live — if it may be called living — in constant fear of murder' (117).<sup>35</sup> This comment leads into a brief discussion of head hunting practices in the area. Then, on the following page, perhaps as a response to her dismay at nomadic architecture, she attempts to feminise and domesticate the bush: 'tremendous forest trees hung all over with what looked exactly like pink silk stockings — trees yellow-green, feathery, fluffy, like the quaint little border plant one used to see in old-fashioned gardens, called Prince's feather' (118). The terrain is then likened to a 'tropical hothouse' (118), but the Victorian cult of gardening makes only a fleeting appearance. Grimshaw's interest in it, like her critique of nomadic accommodation, is brief and half-hearted. Her concern with the domestic is decidedly lacklustre on this trip. It is the landscape itself which appears to be speaking loudest, especially at sunset:

At night we anchored in a wide elbow of the river, surrounded by high forest. No tongue could tell the glory of the sunset on the splendid stream, the exquisite, nameless greens of reeds and cane and tall bamboo; and no words known to any human language could express the strange, drugging peace that crept about one's



mind, fascinating, hypnotising, winding the spell of the wild places ever closer and closer. (121-2)

This is a topography of seduction which is sensuously drawing Grimshaw in: "These edges of earth, these mysterious places "at the bank [sic] of beyond," call in a way incomprehensible to those who have never known them. They are as perilous as precipices, or deep seas. They have the same allure' (122). When the sun rises, a vision of colonial settlement suddenly materialises. Perhaps it is an effort to palliate against enticement:

new vistas of what seemed like the loveliest of green meadows, planted with groves of graceful foliage; bright lawns running down from ramparts of forest; sometimes a view of distant spreading fields that seemed all ready for the plough, fair, quiet, civilised ... (122)

A projection of the colonial mind or a remarkably illusory landscape, the wilderness or its nemesis, either way the image is dramatically ephemeral. Grimshaw writes: 'It was all a mirage. The meadows, the lawns, the fields, were nothing but marsh, mud sometimes, and sometimes water covered with long deceptive grass' (122). Confined to the government launch, this is a part of the landscape from which whites are excluded. Grimshaw claims 'natives can pass over it in their gliding canoes cut out of a single log ... but white people here had never been away from the river, and, for the present, were not likely to go' (123). And Grimshaw, taking an uncharacteristic turn, does not seem to mind.

A remark towards the start of her narration of this voyage indicates that Grimshaw is interested in 'the matter of settlement on the Fly' (110), yet it is rarely mentioned. Her discussion of government plans for the area is restricted to approximately two paragraphs (139), which are largely concerned with missionary work, not settlement. Colonial exploits are not Grimshaw's primary concern in her account of this journey; she is not in any hurry to see changes on the Fly. Nevertheless, this does not mean that the imperialist will to possess is absent. It is palpably present, embodied in the European mythology of discovery. Commenting on the imperial preoccupation with discovery and naming, Anne McClintock states: 'The imperial act of discovery can be compared with the male act of baptism. In both rituals, western men publicly disavow the creative agency of others (the colonized/women) and arrogate to themselves the power of origins.'<sup>36</sup> McClintock goes on to say: 'Like baptism, the imperial act of discovery is a surrogate birthing ritual: the lands are already peopled, as the child is already born.'<sup>37</sup> And, as we shall see, it was not only men who



displayed a will to discovery/possession within colonial contexts. In the account of her journey on the Fly, Grimshaw swiftly draws attention to her status as the first white woman to travel up the river. This is something that she takes pride in and, as her following comment about Lake Murray (a lake on the upper Fly) shows, she has clearly been checking the facts: 'all in all, the white people who had seen it at the time of my visit [numbered] only seventeen — the seventeenth white person, and first white woman, being myself' (*Isles of Adventure*, 116).<sup>38</sup> She also points out that at the time of her visit she is the only white person to have seen both the Fly and the Sepik. Grimshaw is writing herself into the imperialist birth of Papua, especially the birth of the great river regions.

She is a 'discoverer', her 'find' on this trip — the women of the Fly: 'A sight that excited and amazed the (Papuan) police extremely was something not seen before on the Strickland (a tributary of the Fly); something that peered timidly out of the forest, and retreated, coming back to gaze again — a woman' (121). Grimshaw is in little doubt as to why the woman appeared; she iterates: 'Probably the sight of myself on the bow of the boat had brought her out' (121). A similar 'find' is made on Lake Murray. Grimshaw states: 'So far as I know, the women of the lakes had not been seen by any previous party, of the very few parties who have visited Lake Murray' (132). Grimshaw goes on to add that the women who had been hiding in their canoes when the government party arrived at their village 'could not be induced to land until I went down and showed myself' (133). The birth of the nation is incomplete if only one sex is delivered; Grimshaw is the self-appointed mid-wife at the birth of the other. Named, or rather renamed, after the Lieutenant-Governor with whom Grimshaw had been friends since her arrival in Papua, it is on Lake Murray that she most strenuously tries to mark as her own the women of the region. She describes how she:

put a white singlet on one of them to the accompaniment of wild yells from half the tribe — the woman herself seemed entirely indifferent. I also offered her a small looking-glass, holding it before her face, but neither she nor the other women seemed to have any idea of what it was; plainly they had never seen such a thing before. (134)<sup>39</sup>

This is not the first time that a baptism with calico is enacted. In her account of her earlier trip on the Sepik, Grimshaw described how she gave a piece of blue loin-cloth to a child rescued by the missionaries from an ethnic group presumably intent upon his



destruction. The boy responds by flinging his original garment, 'a little strip of fur' (59), into the river, before tying on 'the new magnificence [and] looking at himself in wonder' (59). The reference to fur is interesting because Grimshaw had earlier stated that the boy was wearing 'breech-cloth' (58); now we are being told that his original garment was fur. This may be a mistake, or alternatively Grimshaw may have thought that the removal of fur — the most primordial of coverings — from the child's body would have helped to emphasise what she sees as a process of change. Grimshaw describes how she won the child's confidence with 'pats and strokes' (60), stating that it was like 'taming a little wild beast' (60). The boy is referred to as Monkey,<sup>40</sup> and Grimshaw claims that before long he was 'obediently answering' (59) to this new name. His expression, however, remains 'stunned' and 'dead' (60). But once contact is made with people who speak his language and he learns that the missionaries are not going to kill him the 'black despair' (60) leaves his eyes and he becomes 'a real boy again' (60). Re-clothed, re-trained, re-named, the surrogate birthing ritual is complete — the child has been reborn.

Unlike this incident with the child, in which she simply played a part, Grimshaw lays full claim to the 'discovery' of the Lake Murray women. She believes that it was her presence which drew them from the shadows into the glare of imperial history. And it is she who will officiate at their initiation into that history. This time, however, the cotton casts no spells. The child may have been delighted with the gift, but the individual who is the focus of the adult ceremony remains 'indifferent'. Covering the woman's breasts with a vest, Grimshaw obscures her reproductive potential. But her ability to sustain life is a power that lies outside the control of colonial authorities. Whether seen or unseen it is a force that remains indubitably *there*. Grimshaw, perhaps believing that the newly invested woman will want to inspect her seemingly transformed self, presents her with 'a small looking-glass' (134). This, she asserts, will give the women of the group an opportunity to see themselves 'a hundred times better than in the clearest, darkest pool' (134). Grimshaw offers the women an identity that is small, compact, framed and portable: 'you could carry it about with you at all times, though you couldn't carry pieces of Lake Murray, which had been your only mirror hitherto' (134). It is an identity that is built upon the products of imperial capitalism, an identity that is severed from place, disconnected from the great river, and the women of Lake Murray appear to be decidedly unimpressed. Grimshaw believes that their lack of interest in the



gift stems from their inability to understand its function. She does not consider that the narrow contained image she offers may hold no allure. Grimshaw believes that prior to her visit Lake Murray was the group's mirror. If this were true, if the Lake Murray people had sought their reflection in what Henry Thoreau called 'the earth's eye',<sup>41</sup> then the image depicted therein would have been highly fragmentary, constantly moving, constantly changing. Moreover, unlike the acutely individualistic self-image contained within the frame of a hand mirror, the image in the lake would have reflected place and possibly one or many faces in that place, an identity that was clearly relational. Recent research has shown that vision is a culturally specific phenomenon. Studies of eye movements have demonstrated definite differences between Westerners and people from East Asia:

That is, North Americans attend to focal objects more than do East Asians, analyzing their attributes and assigning them to categories. In contrast, East Asians have been held to be more holistic than Westerners and are more likely to attend to contextual information and make judgements based on relationships and similarities.<sup>42</sup>

Context and background, a holistic approach to seeing which incorporates landscape, is not possible with a small hand-mirror. The image which Grimshaw offers the Lake Murray women is highly individualistic. For people living in complex social groups, as these women did, identity tends to be more relational than it is in western societies which reify the individual. It is also possible that among the Lake Murray residents subject formation was not closely connected with vision at all, for it is difficult to capture an image on the surface of a lake. Looking for this elusive trace frequently means nothing to see. And perhaps nothing is what the Lake Murray people wanted to see, a possibility Grimshaw cannot conceptualise. Despite their lack of interest in the mirror, she states: 'All the same, I left it with them, being reasonably confident that feminine vanity would show the way to its use before very long' (134). She goes on buoyantly to add 'One can imagine the competition for the possession of that glass later on, when not only the women, but the men, had realised that you could see yourself in it a hundred times better than in the clearest darkest pool' (134). And yet, despite this upbeat mood Grimshaw concludes: 'It was a rather *barren* [my italics] visit on the whole' (134). Grimshaw 'discovered' the Lake Murray women, but this is not a surrogate birthing ritual; in the instance of 'discovery', discovery itself is erased. By rejecting the mirror the women of the



lake are not only rejecting colonial commodities and thus, the putative superiority of the white imperialists, but also a construction of the subject which is inscribed in the 'symbolic register of resemblance and analogy.'<sup>43</sup> Commenting on western configurations of the subject Homi Bhabha maintains:

What is profoundly unresolved, even erased, in the discourses of poststructuralism is that *perspective of depth* through which the authenticity of identity comes to be reflected in the glassy metaphors of the mirror and its mimetic or realist narratives.<sup>44</sup>

No doubt with the Lacanian mirror stage in mind, Bhabha states:

This image of human identity and, indeed, human identity as *image* — both familiar frames or mirrors of selfhood that speak from deep within Western culture — are inscribed in the sign of resemblance.<sup>45</sup>

When Grimshaw holds the mirror before the faces of the Lake Murray women and they do not appear 'to have any idea of what it [is]' (134) the 'analogical relation unify[ing] the experience of self-consciousness'<sup>46</sup> is ruptured. Demonstrating no 'compulsion to believe when staring at the object'<sup>47</sup> their identity 'exceeds the frame of the image, it eludes the eye'.<sup>48</sup> This colonial encounter as Grimshaw states is 'barren'; for if the identity of the Other lies beyond a visual framework how can the devouring eye of the white imperial subject find it? How therefore can it continue to be the Other? How can the imperialist continue to be subject?

In this paper I have argued that Beatrice Grimshaw was actively involved in the production of an imperial knowledge: tourism in the Pacific. And that, far from silent today, Grimshaw's voice is still reverberating in touristic discourses pertaining to the region. A confluence of discourses of travel, landscape and body space, Grimshaw's constructions of tourist space and place are not confined to the pages of her travel brochures, nor indeed to the descriptions of coral sands and turquoise seas which abound in her works. They incorporate the mud and slime of the estuary and the seductive and resistant stretches of the Fly on which she travelled in 1923. Grimshaw was a colonial tourist, a subject position which she used as a means of italicising individuality, as a means of decisively separating herself off from that which she conceptualised as the herd — whether it be the metropolitan crowd or, paradoxically, for someone who produced two tourist brochures, fellow tourists. Tourist space and place, as stated, is a coming together of geographical and ethnological discourses. In Grimshaw's writing, the body of a racialised, ethnological Other is frequently translated into a touristic sight/site. With regard to her



own tourism Grimshaw often uses indigenous people to shore up subjectivity, which in many cases has been destabilised by the liminality of the journey and also by specific landscapes; travel can both affirm and undermine the subject. But the text is not a closed system of signification; representations can and do rupture the frames within which they have been positioned. In Grimshaw's travel writing this is perhaps most strikingly displayed in her interaction with the Lake Murray women who refuse the contained and ocularcentric identity into which Grimshaw tries to deliver them. Like the landscape with which they are at one, they demonstrate their ability to talk back while maintaining a velvet silence.

Clare McCotter

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> See the opening autobiographical chapter of Grimshaw's travelogue, *Isles of Adventure*. Beatrice Grimshaw, *Isles of Adventure* (London: Herbert Jenkins, 1930), pp. 11–36. All further references to this text will be given in the body of the paper.

<sup>2</sup> In *Isles of Adventure* Grimshaw describes trips undertaken in the late twenties to Java, New Caledonia and the Solomon Islands. See *Isles of Adventure*, pp. 219–288.

<sup>3</sup> See for example *Isles of Adventure*, pp. 37–198.

<sup>4</sup> Susan Gardner, "A 'vert to Australianism'" Beatrice Grimshaw and the Bicentenary', *Hecate*, 12 (1987), p. 60.

<sup>5</sup> Susan Gardner states that *When the Red Gods Call* 'was issued in a dozen various editions, half-a-dozen translations and nearly as many serializations over a period of two decades.' Susan Gardner, 'For Love and Money: Beatrice Grimshaw's Passage to Papua' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Rhodes University, 1985), p. 2. I have recently come across a Dutch translation of *Nobody's Island* on-line.

<sup>6</sup> See [unsigned article], 'Explorer, Tobacco Grower, Novelist. Beatrice Grimshaw's Remarkable Career', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 February 1939.

<sup>7</sup> Clare McCotter, 'Colonising Landscapes and Mapping Bodies: Imagining Tourist Space and Place in Beatrice Grimshaw's Travel Writing' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Ulster, 2005). See also: Clare McCotter, 'Islanders, Tourists and Psychosis. Doing Time in Beatrice Grimshaw's Travel Brochures', *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change*, 4 (2006), pp. 1–18.

<sup>8</sup> See in particular that section of chapter two in my doctoral thesis which deals with photographic images in Grimshaw's travel brochures. 'Colonising Landscapes', pp. 129–149.

<sup>9</sup> Dorothy Middleton, *Victorian Lady Travellers* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965), p. 4.

<sup>10</sup> Sara Mills, *Discourses of Difference: An Analysis of Women's Travel Writing and Colonialism* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 23.



<sup>11</sup> Grimshaw's bibliography is best viewed as a work in progress. During my own research I came across *El Frida*, her first work of prose fiction, previously unmentioned in other bibliographies, in the Linen Hall Library in Belfast.

<sup>12</sup> Beatrice Grimshaw, *The Islands of the Blest* (Dunedin: Union Steam Ship Company of New Zealand, date of publication uncertain). Beatrice Grimshaw, *Three Wonderful Nations* (Dunedin: Union Steam Ship Company of New Zealand, date of publication uncertain).

<sup>13</sup> See: McCotter, 'Islanders, Tourists and Psychosis', pp. 1–18.

<sup>14</sup> According to Valence Smith, ethnic tourism is 'marketed to the public in terms of the 'quaint' customs of indigenous and often exotic peoples'. Smith, 'Introduction', *Hosts and Guests. The Anthropology of Tourism* ed. V.L. Smith (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989), p. 4. In ethnic tourism the bodies of Indigenous people become touristic sights/sites.

<sup>15</sup> For a full discussion of *From Fiji to the Cannibal Islands* and planter interests/commissions see Susan Gardner, ' "A 'vert to Australianism" Beatrice Grimshaw and the Bicentenary', pp. 31–69.

Like many writers who exploit popular forms Grimshaw was acutely conscious of audience or rather audiences. There is an authorial presence, an 'I' emerging from the various, sometimes conflicting, subject positions which she occupies, moving through these texts. Commenting on authorial presence, Roland Barthes has stated:

To give a text an author is to impose a limit on that text, to furnish it with a final signified, to close the writing. Such a conception suits criticism very well, the latter then allotting itself the important task of discovering the author (or by its hypostases; society, history, psyche, liberty) beneath the work: when the author has been found, the text is 'explained' — victory to the critic. Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', in *Image Music Text*, trans. By Stephen Heath (London: Fontana Press, 1977, p. 147).

But the text only becomes a closed system of signification if the author is posited as a unified, fully recoverable, fully knowable entity, an entity not only fully knowable to the reader/critic, but also to the authorial 'I'. This is precisely what the author is not. Our engagement with that which constitutes an 'I' in any text is always partial, always contingent. But perhaps more so in travel writing where subjectivity may be undermined and disrupted by the journey. A collection of souterrains and slippery surfaces, a text is no more under the total control of an author than it is under the total control of a critic.

<sup>16</sup> Beatrice Grimshaw, *From Fiji to the Cannibal Islands* (London: Thomas Nelson, 1907), p. 193.

<sup>17</sup> *Surviving Extremes*. 'Swamp Irian Jaya'. Dir. Andrew Palmer. Presenter: Nick Middleton. Production: Keo Films. Channel 4, 26 March 2005.

<sup>18</sup> *Tribe*. 'The Kombai People'. No Dir. Producer: Jonathan Clay. Presenter: Bruce Parry. BBC, 17 January 2005.

<sup>19</sup> In Grimshaw's writing the boundaries between the two are frequently blurred. For example, narratives discussed in the travelogues at times resurface in the fiction.

<sup>20</sup> These web-sites can be found at <<http://guide.nf/people.html>> and <<http://www.com/forum>>

<sup>21</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin Group, 1995), p. 55.

<sup>22</sup> Said, p. 55.

<sup>23</sup> See *Isles of Adventure*, pp. 37–38.



<sup>24</sup> See: *Isles of Adventure*, pp. 39–41.

<sup>25</sup> Although many topics are discussed in between, this chapter has a circular quality: it begins and ends on a strong colonial note with Grimshaw describing the commoditization of the landscape.

<sup>26</sup> Recognising the changes that this would mean for the people of the region, Grimshaw, in a moment of pre-emptive colonial nostalgia, regretting the passing of that which has not passed, asserts 'I am glad I shall not be there. I like my head-hunters as they are' (*Isles of Adventure*, 82).

<sup>27</sup> Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (London: HarperCollins, 1995), p. 261.

<sup>28</sup> Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay On Abjection* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), p. 4.

<sup>29</sup> Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, p. 4.

<sup>30</sup> Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, p. 9.

<sup>31</sup> Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, p. 70.

<sup>32</sup> Beatrice Grimshaw, *The New New Guinea* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1910), p. 122. All further references to this text will be given in the body of the paper.

<sup>33</sup> As Stephen Greenblatt argues 'It has become clear that every version of an "other", wherever found, is also the construction of a "self"'. (Stephen Greenblatt cited in 'Introduction', *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, ed. by James Clifford and George E. Marcus (London: University of California Press, 1986, pp. 2–3). My focus in this paper is Grimshaw's river journeys. I have already discussed what her engagement with the indigenous people of the Purari delta may tell us about her attempts to construct a 'self' elsewhere. See Clare McCotter, 'Spatio-Temporal Liminality: Releasing the Imaginative in Beatrice Grimshaw's Spaces Between', *Tourism & Literature: Travel, Imagination & Myth, Conference Proceedings CD ROM*, eds. Mike Robinson and David Picard (Sheffield: Sheffield Hallam University, 2004), ISBN 1 84387 0853.

<sup>34</sup> As I have argued elsewhere, Grimshaw's engagement with race is not monolithic. See: Clare McCotter, 'Maintaining a Wide Margin: The Boat as House in Beatrice's Grimshaw's Travel Writing', *The Travelling and Writing Self*, eds. Marguerite Helmers and Tilar Mazzeo (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Press, forthcoming)

<sup>35</sup> In *Totem and Taboo* Freud selects the Australian Aborigines as a means of comparison with the West because they have been described 'by anthropologists as the most backward and miserable of savages'. For Freud backwardness is inextricable from the nomadic lifestyle: 'They do not build houses or permanent shelters; they do not cultivate the soil; they keep no domestic animals except the dog; they are not even acquainted with the art of making pottery' (Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, London: Ark Paperbacks, 1983, p. 2). As I stated, Grimshaw is dismayed by the nomadic architecture which she witnesses on the Fly, but as she progresses up stream to Lake Murray she becomes much more accepting, recognizing, unlike Freud, that it does not indicate a lack of civilization:

Here the people are too nomadic to undertake the work of heavy building. Their constructive abilities seem to find expression in feather-work, carving, and especially the decorating of heads — all of which arts they carry to remarkable perfection, considering the absence of decent materials and tools. A true artist is the Lake Murray head-hunter; be it canoe-paddle, arrow, club, or head, his



hand adorns whatever it touches, and his sense of form and colour is impeccable (*Isles of Adventure* 131–2).

<sup>36</sup> Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 29.

<sup>37</sup> McClintock, p. 29.

<sup>38</sup> While Grimshaw does not claim to have discovered any new mountain ranges or rivers she states quite emphatically that she was the first woman to visit particular regions of the Fly and the Sepik and appears to be proud of the fact.

<sup>39</sup> It is interesting to note that the trade cotton — the ‘singlet’ — mentioned here is white. In Grimshaw’s fiction there are numerous references to calico but it is usually red, the colour apparently favoured by many Indigenous people in the region. But when Grimshaw is ‘discovering’ the Lake Murray women, the cloth that she has is white. Anne McClintock, drawing on a wealth of photographic evidence, particularly advertisements, states that in the nineteenth century ‘civilisation, for the white man, advances and brightens through his four beloved fetishes — soap, the mirror, light and white clothing.’ (Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*, London: Routledge, 1995, p. 32.)

<sup>40</sup> We are told that ‘Monkey’ is the Pidgin English for child, but within pseudo-scientific discourses of race this sobriquet also indicates origins, a starting point which is always impossible no matter how hard imperialists try to create it. The boy’s acceptance of the symbolic cotton could be read as the birth of a new identity, a birthing ritual in which a part has been played by both Grimshaw and the priests. But this is not a starting point; the boy has a *life before* which lives on in his present and future, a place which the Europeans can never fully access.

<sup>41</sup> Thoreau cited in *The Poetics of Space* by Gaston Bachelard, trans. by Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), p. 210.

<sup>42</sup> Hannah Faye Chua, Julie E. Boland, and Richard E. Nisbett, ‘Cultural Variation in Eye Movements During Scene Perception’, *PNAS*, 102 (2005) [www.pnas.org/cgi/doi/10.1073/pnas.0506162102](http://www.pnas.org/cgi/doi/10.1073/pnas.0506162102) [accessed 20 October 2005] (12629–12633)

<sup>43</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 48.

<sup>44</sup> Bhabha, p. 48.

<sup>45</sup> Bhabha, p. 49.

<sup>46</sup> Bhabha, p. 49.

<sup>47</sup> Richard Rorty cited in *The Location of Culture* by Homi Bhabha (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 49.

<sup>48</sup> Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 49.



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