

TURNING ROAD

(Fiction)

BLUEBEARD IN SHIRLEY HAZZARD'S THE

TRANSIT OF VENUS

(Critical Accompaniment)

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I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary education institution.

.....

(Tristan Stein)

ABSTRACT

This is a thesis comprising two components: a portion of my novella and a dissertation. My work of fiction, *Turning Road*, draws loosely on the *Bluebeard* fairytale, as well as theories of identity and nation, as a means of exploring a young Australian woman's journey to London, a journey which is both symbolic and psychological.

The second component is the critical essay, which considers the extent to which Australian women's expatriate fiction can be read as a variation of *Bluebeard*. Australian women's expatriate fiction has been characterised as a journey involving a doomed love affair with a self-centred male in London.¹ To date, most critical attention on the genre has focussed on the extent to which it employs the Odyssean myth to consider gender and colonial identity. It is my contention that reading *Bluebeard* in *The Transit of Venus* highlights issues of identity and power in relation to gender and nation. Through its central themes of threat, sexuality, secrecy, self-knowledge and seriality, *Bluebeard* warns against prescribed gender roles/relations and limiting identifications, and works towards depicting a new liberating space between contrasting spaces identified as home and abroad.

¹ Diana Brydon, "Buffoon Odysseys: Australian Expatriate Fiction by Women" in *Aspects of Australian Fiction*. Nedlands: University of Western Australia Press, 1990, 76.

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