5

“Naples is a Leap”: Time, Space and Consciousness in Shirley Hazzard’s Naples

Sharon Ouditt

The city of Naples, on the Tyrrhenian coast of the Italian peninsula, has a 3000-year history of discovery, settlement and exploitation by Greeks, Romans, Hohenstaufens, Angevins, Aragons and Bourbons. Its visitors over the centuries have marvelled at the fruitful lands that surround it, gasped at the beauties of the bay, shuddered at the thundering of Vesuvius, footstepped Homeric heroes in the *campi phlegrei* (or “fields of fire”), and often ignored or despised the city itself. Today not a great deal has changed: the visitors offloaded at the airport from their low-cost flights scramble onto buses, trains and ferries to escape to magical Capri, or the Siren haunts of Sorrento rather than heading for the city. The attention of classicists has shifted from the supposed entrance to hell on the volcanic landscape of Solfatara, east of the city, to Pompeii and Herculaneum, rather further down the coast on the other side. Vesuvius remains a lure but, if truth be told, Naples doesn’t really “do” tourism. It feels rather dead in August. There are plentiful architectural treasures to see, but the ancillary treats – the shopping, the restaurants – reveal themselves less easily. The city seems not to be the province of an established and dominant bourgeoisie ready to exploit the wealth of overseas visitors. There appears to be no infrastructure of service industries. And, as so many travellers’ tales confirm, there is the perennial fear of having your bag snatched to contend with.

Shirley Hazzard first arrived in Naples in the 1950s, soon after the Second World War, to work for the United Nations. The city had been devastated by fascism, bombing and the uncomfortable process of liberation by the Allied Military Government. (Norman Lewis’ memoir, *Naples ’44* (1978), offers a sympathetic, if perplexing portrait of the city under Allied rule; Curzio Malaparte’s *The Skin* (1952) a more phantasmagoric version.[1]) At the height of the Grand Tour, visitors had conventionally admired Naples with their backs turned on the city, looking out at the Bay, glorying in its “azure surface, smooth as glass, while a thousand boats glided in different directions over its shining bosom”.[2] With Posillipo to the right, Vesuvius to the left and the “ridgy summit” of Capri straight ahead, the

Sharon Ouditt (2014). “Naples is a Leap”: Time, Space and Consciousness in Shirley Hazzard’s Naples. In Brigitta Olubas (Ed). *Shirley Hazzard: New Critical Essays*. Sydney: Sydney University Press.

1 Norman Lewis, *Naples ’44: An Intelligence Officer in the Italian Labyrinth* (1978) (London: Eland, 1983); Curzio Malaparte, *The Skin*, trans. David Moore (1952) (London: Panther Books, 1964).

scene, in the eyes of the classical tourist John Chetwode Eustace, was "illuminated by a sun that never shines so bright on the less favoured regions beyond the Alps".[3] Joseph Forsyth found it a "fairy-land of poets", Lady Blessington was dazzled by the "hand of enchantment" that had created steeples, towers and domes, the gem-like Capri, and the crescent of isles and promontories leading from it towards Misenum.[4] Dickens, on the other hand, was dismayed by the poverty and begging; Gissing by the "*sventramento*" ("disembowelling") that followed the cholera epidemic of the 1880s; and Edward Hutton, founder of the *Anglo-Italian Review*, dismissed the city as sordid, sterile, noisy and confused.[5]

Hazzard would, of course, have been aware of the mixed reputation in which Naples glories. Indeed she demonstrates that awareness by having her narrator in *The Bay of Noon* (1970) describe the view of the bay as "comic" in its familiarity, "its configurations too intimately known" as a consequence not so much of magisterial renderings by Turner or Cozens, but as a result of finding its way onto posters and chocolate boxes – an endless variety of commercial products.[6] It has become a bit of a joke: over-exposed, although, like the *Mona Lisa*, it never quite gives all of its secrets away. The narrator, Jenny, the central protagonist of *The Bay at Noon*, turns her attention away from the conventional star attraction and towards the city itself, and its inhabitants: those too often ignored or disparaged by the more transient visitors. Naples is thus subjected to a more patiently curious gaze than the tourist or travel writer might offer it, one that seeks to understand how time, place and consciousness become interleaved. The folds and wrinkles that appear in a city immersed in its massive history are not easily understood. "Naples requires time", Hazzard says, in one of her later "dispatches" from Naples: time, patience, and openness of heart and mind.[7] It is a city whose vast chronology is everywhere in evidence, but disordered, palimpsestic, piled up; not divided into neat zones that separate the ancient from the middle ages and the middle ages from the baroque as if under the organising eye of the modern tour-guide manager. And the consciousness of the observer – at least in *The Bay of Noon* – is similarly opaque: given to unfolding, not to making peremptory judgements such as those the subject of a travelogue might offer.

These, then, are the central preoccupations of this chapter: place, time and consciousness, where the place is Naples, the time reflective of the longevity and confusion of that worn by a 3000-year-old city, and the consciousness drawn from two perspectives. The perspectives belong to the impressionable Jenny in *The Bay of Noon* which is one of Hazzard's earlier works, and to Hazzard as co-author of *The Ancient Shore* (2008), a later publication, more synoptic perhaps, but no less curious about the effect of place and time

---

2 John Chetwode Eustace, *A Classical Tour through Italy*, 4th ed. (Leghorn: Glaucus Masi, 1815–18), Vol. II, 384.

3 Eustace, *Classical Tour*, 385.

4 Joseph Forsyth, *Remarks on Antiquities, Arts and Letters during an Excursion in Italy in the Years 1802 and 1803* by Joseph Forsyth (1816), ed. Keith Crook (London: Associated University Presses, 2001), 151. Lady Marguerite Blessington, *The Idler in Italy* (London: Henry Colburn, 1839), vol II, 66.

5 Charles Dickens, *Pictures from Italy* (1846), edited and introduced by Kate Flint (London: Penguin, 1988); George Gissing, *By the Ionian Sea: Notes of a Ramble in Southern Italy* (1901) (London: Chapman and Hall, 1905), 5; Edward Hutton, *Naples and Southern Italy* (London: Macmillan, 1915), 1.

6 Shirley Hazzard, *The Bay of Noon* (1970) (London: Virago, 2005), 40. All subsequent references are to this edition and appear in parentheses in the text.

7 Shirley Hazzard and Francis Steegmuller, *The Ancient Shore: Dispatches from Naples* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 51. All subsequent references are to this edition and appear in parentheses in the text.

on the mind of the perceiver. The key terms that circulate in Hazzard's descriptions of her interactions with Naples – vulnerability, loneliness, error and imagination – speak to an approach far from the tourist's desire to see and do all that is necessary in as brief a period as possible, and equally far from the conventional travel writer's desire to create an impression: a picture that conveys the bold strokes of knowledge and authority, characteristics that may have been assumed rather than earned. Hazzard's approach is both tentative and serious. The act of perceiving Naples was, for her, not something to be hurried, but something that was to take place over decades, through vacillations between immersion and distance, repetition and synopsis.

Let us then take a closer look at Jenny's first real "view" of Naples. Unlike the vast panoramic panegyrics of Eustace and Blessington, hers isn't really a "view" at all. To begin with, she is *in* the city, on San Biagio dei Librai, the Spaccanapoli, in the ancient centre, looking *at* the city as it surrounds her. She is not on the shore looking out at the bay, nor even out at sea taking in the architectural outline of castles and promontories that define "*Il Cratere*", as Naples is often known. The setting, instead, is a domestic, feminine space, overlaid on what was once a family home, but now reduced to create living room for an independent woman. The woman in question is called Gioconda (the name by which the enigmatic Mona Lisa is conventionally known). Gioconda becomes an alluring if elusive friend of Jenny, and it is from her balcony, hardly positioned as "monarch of all she surveys" in that imperially commanding sense observed by Mary Louise Pratt (175), that Jenny sees "arches and towers and polychrome domes . . . stacked there beside and behind each other like so much scenery backstage at a theatre". It is a jumble, vibrant in its theatricality, unreal in that it is too close, too varied. From her viewing position there was "no tracing" the streets, "no accounting" for the cloisters and gardens; in fact "[t]here was no outlook, in any usual sense" (15). So the "scene" refuses to reveal itself according to the usual rules of perspective, to become knowable in the conventional terms of foreground and background, or according to the rational town-planner's arrangement of streets and gardens. There seems to be no plan, as one might expect to see in Rome, for example, leading the viewer from one magnificent building to another, along a vista designed to impress the eye and mind with the drama and power of an ancient civilisation brought to life in the present day. Instead it resembles an undifferentiated backstage muddle, but one inflected with potent, if discontinuous, historical references: "That red curve of houses follows the wall of the theatre where Nero sang." The "big thing" below the cathedral "had been a paleo-Christian temple. Those columns came from a temple of the Dioscuri, that church was the site of the Roman basilica" (15). It reads like a dream landscape in which displacement and condensation obstruct a clear interpretation. One era is superimposed on another in an architectural palimpsest in which time, place and the consciousness of the beholder work like a concertina, folding in on each other then pulling out again, making their own cacophonous harmony. As Jenny remarks earlier, "Forgotten or overlaid, antiquity had been buried in the walls, making its laconic signal – a sunken column, . . . a Roman inscription, traces of a fortification . . . that, centuries since, had been surmounted by a rooftop" (9). Of course architectural opportunism is the norm in Italy's ancient cities, where the bricks or columns or statuary of one building might be pillaged for use by a successor, but there seems to be something of the uncanny at play here; something on the borderline between the familiar and the disconcertingly strange, in which nothing is what at first it seems: it holds within its physical presence the remnant or ghostly outline of something it once was. Even the street-urchins, children running for wrinkled, value-

less bank notes blown in the wind, have "fierce, elderly faces" (37) as if they embody the spirit of centuries of ramshackle poverty and opportunism that have gone before them and will succeed them. And Jenny's hair, tended by her hairdresser, is described as being "*come la Maddalena*", (70) like Mary Magdalene's, as simply and easily as if the comparison had been with a contemporary film star. Thus Jenny, too, is gently folded into the mix in which time, the mythic and the material dissolve into each other.

Just as Jenny's initial "view" of the city departs from conventional views, and as her sense of the city is destabilised by the spatio-temporal and cultural convulsions of time and mythical frames of reference, so this lack of amenability to the familiar contours of eye and mind is of a piece with Jenny's unfolding consciousness. She, and those by whom she is surrounded, are perpetually to be seen in triangular relationships – often overlapping – in which the displacements and odd angles of vision thus engendered permit sudden close-ups, moments of perception, obscured and partial insights that decline to expose any one of them with unambiguous clarity. These relationships might be seen, for example, between Jenny, her brother and her sister-in-law; between Jenny, Gioconda and Gianni; between Jenny, Gioconda and Justin; or between Gioconda, her father and Gaetano. The similarity, aural or visual, in the initial letter or sound of many of these names – the soft "g" of Jenny, Gianni, Gioconda and Justin being the most prominent – can hardly be coincidental and reinforces the sense that, far from being each other's destiny, in a romantic illusion of dyadic unity, these figures constantly change roles, positions and partnerships in a disarming, perhaps even random, way.

In Herculaneum, for instance, which was destroyed by Vesuvius in 79AD, and has been subject to a faltering process of discovery and destruction since the eighteenth century, and which, of all places, seems to represent the past as the return of the repressed in all its uncanniness, Gianni kisses Jenny, unseen by Gioconda. Jenny has been invited to join the couple on their day out, as audience or witness to the game-playing nature of their relationship. Jenny at first declines, but is persuaded by her friend, on the grounds that her presence there will be pleasant but impermanent: it will not be she who goes to bed with Gianni "at the end of the day" (29). At the moment of the kiss – or displaced kiss: Jenny turns away – Gioconda's sight-line is obscured by the labyrinth of walls and doorways. Gianni claims only to be "observing the conventions" (35), repeated who knows how many times in that space where play-acting and acting playfully are indistinguishable, but he is also anticipating the later moment when the two, however briefly, become lovers, while both chase the memory of an absent Gioconda. Scenes such as these, and the conversations and explanations that follow them, all seem to have an extra implicit dimension – a further viewpoint, triangulation point, if you will, that might be represented by the reader. But the idea that there exists a position of independent, omniscient or holistic authority is raised and dashed numerous times in the novel. Fortune tellers and psychologists are criticised for stating the obvious while creating the illusion of explanatory power. Neapolitans are said to know a lot, "but they know it collectively. Break them up, take them away, and they're hopeless" (38). In other words, there is no sovereign authorial or readerly position that will magically focus the scenes in front of us. As Gioconda says when trying to tell the story of her earlier love affair with Gaetano, "The design imposes itself afterwards. And is false, must be false" (66).

"Naples is a leap. It's through the looking-glass", says Gianni to Jenny, implying that not only will Naples change her, but it will change her way of seeing (38). The city, however, is not represented as a stage set for self-development, a metaphorical backdrop (like Venice

or Florence or Rome) in which monuments represent splendour or decay, the brevity of human glory or other similarly grand observations. Instead the assets of Naples are "concealed" and require investment and participation if they are to have an effect on the viewer. Rather than having been purposefully "resurrected" for the glory of city or country, or the benefit of the tourist industry, they remain "engulfed in their own continuity" (69): hidden, not separated out, named and labelled as objects for veneration, but part of a fabric into which time and population are knitted. Distortions, absurdities seem normal there. Events that Jenny might have thought improper in an English setting seem instead acceptable, sincere, appealing. Grace and the grotesque go hand in hand. The words for madness (*pazzia*) and patience (*pazienza*) seem to blur into each other. The collapse of the façade of a palazzo is greeted more as a relief to an intolerable suspense, than as a catastrophe. There is little that is easily absorbed, pretty, sublime or picturesque about Hazzard's Naples. The novel acknowledges that Leopardi described it as a "*Topaia*" – a rats' nest (90) – and one of the characters comments that "it *always* looks as if it had just been under bombardment" (125). The language used to describe it often implies violence, even when applied to artistic and cultural movements: there was an "explosion of the baroque", an "outbreak of grotesque capitals", Neapolitan painters had "flashed through" the city leaving "a flood-tide of decoration". The phrase "Nothing in moderation" seems to apply equally to the city and its people, but both remain a "secret" to Jenny, who is impressed and interested rather than distressed by this, aware that "ordinariness", typicality, commonality, has little relevance in a city "where untraceable convulsions of human experience had yielded up such extremes of destitution, of civilisation" (72). This strikingly concise statement lies at the heart of Jenny's perception of Naples. It threatens to unfurl the evidence of centuries of oppressive bombardment by forces both natural (volcanic eruptions; violent earthquakes) and man-made (brutalising invasions from colonisers and liberators alike), but leaves these details unspoken. What we have instead is an impression of the city as a place that exercises a violent assault on the sensibilities of its visitors, who, if they have the time and patience to register the subtleties of that assault, grow to respect those for whom that violence is both diurnal and perennial.

The Bay of Noon is framed by Jenny's journey into Italy (from Somaliland via London) and her journey out again (to America, the New World) with Naples – which represents old Europe, ancient Europe and modern Europe all at once – in the middle, a central "character" in the developing consciousness of Jenny. In many respects Jenny's story is a conventional one of sentimental education, a journey from innocence to experience, with Naples, the old European roué, playing an essential role in that journey. But what is striking about the novel is less the narrative arc that propels Jenny forwards than the fascination with Naples as a city in and for itself; the investment in attempting to understand it on its own terms, rather than dipping into the clichés in which it has been veiled by less patient visitors. Hazard would be the first to admit that one's own discoveries, for all their freshness, may be other people's commonplaces, but one is left, on reading *The Bay of Noon*, with the view that the character of Naples retains a subtle, luminous strangeness that bears repeated thoughtful investigation.

In *The Ancient Shore*, a collection of short pieces by Hazzard and her husband Francis Steegmuller, the perspective is much longer. Derived from the experience of frequent return visits to the city across decades, it is thus representative of a vision ultimately more synoptic than that offered by *The Bay of Noon*, built on accretion and repetition, rather than unfolding across the duration of a particular narrative centring on a particular con-

sciousness. Here the New World perspective is more clearly in view, in that the Old World, represented by Naples, seems to offer a missing link to those without frequent recourse to the evidence of ancient civilisations: a vision of humanist history laid out untidily across the shores, artefacts, buildings and populations of the Neapolitan coastline. It is in these considerations that Hazzard uses the terms "loneliness", "error", "vulnerability" and "imagination" in relation to her efforts to gain some kind of intimacy with this other country. Each of these qualities is visible, in nascent form, in Jenny's experiences. Loneliness comes of spending days, weeks, months outside the comfortable community of family and close friends. The errors may be in judgement or understanding, knowledge or self-knowledge, but the consciousness of having made them engenders a shift in register, a diminution of egocentricity, a sense of something lost. Vulnerability often accompanies loneliness, illness, personal weakness, but it is glossed specifically in *The Ancient Shore* as vulnerability to "time interleaved; to experiences not accessible to our prompt classifications, and to the impenetrable phenomenon of place" (34). So, one must be prepared to be hurt, disappointed, damaged even; one must be alert to the convulsions of time, its folding in on itself, missing the usual signposts, expanding and contracting as material remnants and psychical observations play against each other. Here Hazzard is more willing to be critical of Naples, saying it is often "indefensible" (49) (although declining to describe the nature of its indefensibility) and commenting that it has the "gift of taking strangeness for granted and balking only at system" (29). Her analysis is not a political one, nor even really a social or cultural one. She comments on power relations that "in the best laid schemes of mice and men, at Naples, the mice tend to win" (52), and her heart lies with the "artists of survival" (shopkeepers, artisans, booksellers and pedlars) who populate the city, whose "acts of human fellowship and inexpressible grace" overwhelm – for those who are willing to see it that way – the diabolical and the grotesque, the violence and disaffection (57).

Part II of *The Ancient Shore* is taken up by Francis Steegmuller's "The Incident at Naples" which tells the story of his attack by "*scippatori*", muggers on *motorini*, who, in snatching a bag (containing books of personal, not monetary value) dragged him along the street in their wake, leaving him badly injured. One wonders here if this is the kind of "vulnerability" Hazzard has in mind; the preparedness to be hurt that is required if one is to see the best and the worst of Naples. All visitors to Naples, whether foreign or from a few miles away, are aware of the risks of being mugged. This is perhaps one of the "indefensible" qualities of the city. The story Steegmuller tells, however, juxtaposed against the brutality of his attackers, and the global ubiquity of random street violence, is of the generosity of his rescuers (bystanders who tended to his wounds then drove him, hand on hooter, to the hospital), the profound sensitivity, humanity and understanding of the paramedics and doctors who treated him at the dilapidated Loreto Mare hospital in Naples, and then at the equally squalid Ascalesi hospital. Sympathy and solidarity are expressed by all, doctors and fellow patients alike, and, compared with the massive bills and efficiently inhuman treatment offered in the shiny clean hospitals of New York, stand out as beacons of human fellowship, courtesy and civilisation of the kind lost in the pretentious, self-important condescension of his anonymous new world. The story vacillates between brutality and grace, poverty and privilege, and any notion that either of these sets of qualities is unambiguously tied to the noble, squalid, old world of Naples, or the affluent, efficient new world of East Coast America (Hazzard and Steegmuller's permanent home) is to be ruefully dismissed.

The Ascalesi hospital was once a fourteenth-century convent, a shelter for “fallen” women. The victim of centuries of bombardments and earthquakes, its rotten, peeling surfaces declare a kind of immemorial nobility, expressed in the impassioned professionalism of its doctors. It might be tempting to try to draw a moral from this story. The differences between sentiment and sentimentality, between mighty words and their flimsy equivalents, between brigandage of an outlawed and of an official kind are presented and precariously balanced against each other by Steegmuller for our perusal. It is a tragicomedy. His story sits between Hazzard’s more general ruminations on the past and presence of Naples, and her attempt at a summing up, presenting a pointedly inconclusive polyvocality. “We arrive from modern cities and societies that have all the answers, armoured with explanations”, she writes, and counsels not the application of those explanations to situations that seem to resist them, but a “state of receptivity” which “does not supply solutions” (125). This is something like the traveller’s equivalent of negative capability: the capacity to resist the irritable reaching out for fact and reason, and its replacement by something like “*simpatia*”, a profound sense of fellow-feeling that derives from immersion in time and place. The whole volume reads like a contemplation of this elusive quality.

If Naples requires time, then, perhaps it also *represents* time, at its most untidy, chaotic, repetitive and long, whose conventional landmarks are absorbed into the texture of the place, offering light, colour, memory and a sense of belonging to the insider, while baffling the stranger. “*A Napoli c’è sempre confusione*” (“Naples is always chaotic”), an otherwise taciturn taxi driver from the deep Italian south once said to me, when confronted at a major road junction with a pile of undifferentiated signage, in which supermarkets, local districts, petrol stations, distant motorways, carwashes, museums, and industrial zones were all jostling for attention, and among which signs to the airport seemed to point in two opposite directions. This may not be entirely what Shirley Hazzard had in mind when she commented on the impenetrable phenomenon of place, but it seems like rather a good metaphor.

References

Blessington, Lady Marguerite. *The Idler in Italy*. London: Henry Colburn, 1839.

Dickens, Charles. *Pictures from Italy* (1846). Edited and introduced by Kate Flint. London: Penguin, 1988.

Eustace, John Chetwode. *A Classical Tour through Italy*, 4th edn. Leghorn: Glaucus Masi, 1815–18.

Forsyth, Joseph. *Remarks on Antiquities, Arts and Letters during an Excursion in Italy in the Years 1802 and 1803* (1816). Edited by Keith Crook. London: Associated University Presses, 2001.

Gissing, George. *By the Ionian Sea: Notes of a Ramble in Southern Italy* (1901). London: Chapman and Hall, 1905.

Hazzard, Shirley. *The Bay of Noon* (1970). London: Virago, 2005.

Hazzard Shirley and Francis Steegmuller. *The Ancient Shore: Dispatches from Naples*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008.

Hutton, Edward. *Naples and Southern Italy*. London: Macmillan, 1915.

Lewis, Norman. *Naples ’44: An Intelligence Officer in the Italian Labyrinth* (1978). London: Eland, 1983.

Malaparte, Curzio. *The Skin*. Translated by David Moore (1952). London: Panther Books, 1964.

Pratt, Mary Louise. *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (1992). New York: Routledge, 2008.

Shirley Hazzard

SYDNEY STUDIES IN AUSTRALIAN LITERATURE

Robert Dixon, Series Editor

Alex Miller: The Ruin of Time
Robert Dixon

Shirley Hazzard: New Critical Essays
Brigitta Olubas, editor

Shirley Hazzard

New Critical Essays

Edited by Brigitta Olubas

SYDNEY UNIVERSITY PRESS

First published in 2014 by Sydney University Press
© Individual contributors 2014
© Sydney University Press 2014

Reproduction and Communication for other purposes
Except as permitted under the Act, no part of this edition may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or communicated in any form or by any means without prior written permission. All requests for reproduction or communication should be made to Sydney University Press at the address below:

Sydney University Press
Fisher Library F03
University of Sydney NSW 2006
AUSTRALIA
Email: sup.info@sydney.edu.au
sydney.edu.au/sup

National Library of Australia Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

Title:	Shirley Hazzard : new critical essays / edited by Brigitta Olubas.
ISBN:	9781743324103 (paperback)
ISBN:	9781743324110 (ebook : epub)
Series:	Sydney studies in Australian literature.
Notes:	Includes bibliographical references and index.
Subjects:	Hazzard, Shirley, 1931---Criticism and interpretation.
Other Authors/Contributors:	Olubas, Brigitta, editor.
Dewey Number:	823.914

Cover image: Photo of Shirley Hazzard, © Nancy Crampton.

Cover design by Miguel Yamin.

Contents

Acknowledgements vii
Introduction ix
Brigitta Olubas

I Between Short Fiction and The Novel 1
1 Future Anterior: *The Evening of the Holiday* 3
John Frow
2 "This Intricate Lasting Nature": Passage, Pastoral Elegy and the Pedagogy of Loss in *The Evening of the Holiday* 13
Fiona Morrison

II Naples and *The Bay of Noon* 25
3 Another Journey to Italy: *The Bay of Noon* 27
Lucy Dougan
4 "No-one Had Thought of Looking Close to Home": Reading the Province in *The Bay of Noon* 41
Brigid Rooney
5 "Naples is a Leap": Time, Space and Consciousness in Shirley Hazzard's Naples 55
Sharon Ouditt

III *The Transit of Venus* 63
6 Glasses and Speculations: On Hazzard's Transits 65
Gail Jones
7 Returning to the Scene of the Crime: On Re-reading *The Transit of Venus* 79
Robert Dixon

IV Writing at the Mid-Century 95
8 The Mid-century Method of *The Great Fire* 97
Claire Seiler
9 Does Idealism Preclude Heroism? Shirley Hazzard's United Nations Writings 111
Nicholas Birns

V Biography 121

10 The Transit of Shirley Hazzard 123
Jan McGuinness

11 Meeting Shirley Hazzard 137
Martin Stannard

Index 147

Acknowledgements

This collection had its genesis in a scholarly symposium held at the Heyman Center for the Humanities, Columbia University, New York in 2012, and has been supported by the School of the Arts and Media, University of New South Wales. I would like first to thank the former director of the Heyman Center, Akeel Bilgrami, for his invitation and his generous support, without which this book simply wouldn't exist. I also wish to acknowledge, with gratitude, the current center director, Mark Mazower, and the assistance provided by Jonah Cardillo in the planning and running of the symposium. I am grateful to all the participants at the symposium – presenters; chairs; respondents, particularly Edward Mendelson; and audience – for their contributions to a very stimulating conversation. The symposium was run in conjunction with a public event honouring Shirley Hazzard at the New York Society Library, and I would like to express my thanks to the library, to the head librarian, Mark Bartlett, and to library staff, in particular Sara Elliott Holliday and Harriet Shapiro for all their support and for their work on this occasion. Thanks also to the Australian Consul-General to New York, Phillip Scanlan AM, and to Jonathan Galassi, Annabel Davis-Goff, Jay Parini, Gail Jones and Martin Stannard for speaking on the night. Warm thanks also to Shirley Hazzard, to Francie Alston for her tireless assistance, and, as always, to Bruce and Zoia. Finally, thanks to Susan Murray-Smith, Agata Mrva-Montoya and the staff at Sydney University Press. *Shirley Hazzard: New Critical Essays* is published in SUP's Sydney Studies in Australian Literature series, which includes sole-authored studies of contemporary Australian writers and edited collections of essays on important issues in the study of Australian literature. My work on this project was supported by an Australian Research Council Discovery Grant (2011–13): DP110104174, "Shirley Hazzard: Life, Work and Ethical Engagement".