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The Ancient Shore: Dispatches from Naples

Shirley Hazzard, Francis Steegmuller

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Born in Australia, Shirley Hazzard first moved to Naples as a young woman in the 1950s to take up a job with the United Nations. It was the beginning of a long love affair with the city. *The Ancient Shore* collects the best of Hazzard's writings on Naples, along with a classic *New Yorker* essay by her late husband, Francis Steegmuller. For the pair, both insatiable readers, the Naples of Pliny, Gibbon, and Auden is constantly alive to them in the present.

With Hazzard as our guide, we encounter Henry James, Oscar Wilde, and of course Goethe, but Hazzard's concern is primarily with the Naples of our own time—often violently unforgiving to innocent tourists, but able to transport the visitor who attends patiently to its rhythms and history. A town shadowed by both the symbol and the reality of Vesuvius can never fail to acknowledge the essential precariousness of life—nor, as the lover of Naples discovers, the human compassion, generosity, and friendship that are necessary to sustain it.

Beautifully illustrated by photographs from such masters as Henri Cartier-Bresson and Herbert List, *The Ancient Shore* is a lyrical letter to a lifelong love: honest and clear-eyed, yet still fervently, endlessly enchanted.

"Much larger than all its parts, this book does full justice to a place, and a time, where 'nothing was pristine, except the light.'"—*Bookforum*

"Deep in the spell of Italy, Hazzard parses the difference between visiting and living and working in a foreign country. She writes with enormous eloquence and passion of the beauty of getting lost in a place."—Susan Slater Reynolds, *Los Angeles Times*

"The two voices join in exquisite harmony. . . . A lovely book."—*Booklist*, starred review

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