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'THE GOLDEN THREAD'

THE SEARCH FOR LOVE AND TRUTH

IN

SHIRLEY HAZZARD'S WRITINGS

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SUMMARY

This thesis, as its title suggests, will examine the themes of love and truth in Shirley Hazzard's writings. It will be argued that although she views her characters with ironic detachment, presenting love and its effects with a clear-eyed lack of sentimentality, nevertheless, Shirley Hazzard's theme throughout her novels and short stories is that the ability to love is of immense importance in the life of her characters. Though love itself may be transient, through the powers of memory its effects are permanent. Those that have loved 'must always be different' and in, that sense, 'love is eternal' for Shirley Hazzard's heroines.

The different attitudes of Shirley Hazzard's male and female characters to love is also investigated and it will be argued that, with few exceptions, love to the men is 'but a thing apart'; to the women 'whole existence'. In this emphasis, Shirley Hazzard reflects the ethos of the period in which her short stories and novels are set and the expectations of her heroines. An important influence on such expectations is the conditioning of the romantic tradition which is explored by Shirley Hazzard through her characters' reactions to literature and art. It will be argued that through Sophie, in The Evening of the Holiday, and Christian Thrale, in The Transit of Venus,

Shirley Hazzard shows different responses to literature and its effect on life. Sophie conducts her love affair with Tancredi according to her own prescription for an ideal romantic love, short-lived, but 'a thing of beauty' forever in her memory. Christian's 'love affair' is even more short-lived, but lacking in authenticity, since Christian is an extrinsic romantic, perverting the truths of the poets.

As well as examining Shirley Hazzard's penetrating view of love and its effects, this thesis will explore the theme of the search for a spiritual home in Shirley Hazzard's writings, especially in relation to her heroines. Love is equated with place and therefore the divided loyalties of her heroines are of importance.

The concern for authenticity which Shirley Hazzard expresses in her non-fiction writings informs her fictional works as well. It is for this reason that one of her major concerns is the misuse of language, its manipulation for ulterior motives. Her arguments in Defeat of an Ideal for truth to the ideals of the United Nations Organization Charter are apparent in the fictional version of her experiences with that Organization in People in Glass Houses. They emerge, too, in The Transit of Venus in her depiction of bureaucracy and 'linguistic inhumanity'.

One of the principal themes of The Transit of Venus is that 'truth has a life of its own', that it may be driven underground for a time but will, eventually, emerge. In Defeat of an Ideal Shirley Hazzard argues this same point, using the Dreyfus case as

her example. But it is in The Transit of Venus that both the theme of love and the theme of truth receive their fullest and most complex expression. Shirley Hazzard's moral vision, as depicted in her writings, and her emphasis on the truth in dealing with oneself and with the world in general will be investigated in this thesis.

STATEMENT

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any other university; nor, to the best of my knowledge and belief, does it contain any material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text or notes.

K. M. TWIDALE

I am willing to make this thesis available for loan and photocopying if it is accepted for the award of the degree.

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