

Art Facing the Problem of Otherness, with Reference to the Interwar Literature of Annemarie Schwarzenbach (1908-1942)

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ABSTRACT: The work of Annemarie Schwarzenbach (1908-1942) is an interesting illustration of the power of representing the struggles of the inner world in literature. In her work, the whole problem of otherness is evident, which is largely resolved through literary activity, in a woman who assumed in herself a marginal otherness due to her gender, her sexual identity, and for having been admitted for psychiatric treatment on more than one occasion during her life. But, beyond the individual aspect, her novels also provide a valuable account of the feelings of the interwar generation, an intellectual and artistic group that experienced the taste of modernity during the brief period between World War I and Hitler's uprising. The author took part in this exodus and, in this case, literature was an important means of collective endurance. Delving into both aspects, we witness a reflection, perhaps old, but full of associations with our present society.

KEYWORDS: Annemarie Schwarzenbach; Otherness; Literature; Liquid modernity; 1920s; Nazism; Swiss; Feminism; Queer theory.

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RESUMEN: *El arte frente a la problemática de la otredad, a propósito de la literatura de entreguerras de Annemarie Schwarzenbach (1908-1942).* – La obra de Annemarie Schwarzenbach (1908-1942) es un interesante exponente del poder que tiene el acto de representar en la literatura las vicisitudes del mundo interno. En su obra queda patente toda una problemática de la otredad, que queda resuelta en gran medida con la actividad literaria, en una mujer que suponía en sí misma una alteridad marginal por su género, su orientación sexual y por haber sufrido ingresos psiquiátricos en más de una ocasión a lo largo de su vida. Pero, más allá del aspecto individual, de sus novelas se obtiene también un valioso testimonio del sentir de la generación de entreguerras, un grupo intelectual y artístico que saboreó la modernidad el breve lapso entre la 1ª Guerra Mundial y el alzamiento de Hitler. De dicho éxodo participó nuestra autora y, en este caso, fue la literatura un importante medio de resistencia colectiva. Profundizando en ambos aspectos, asistimos a un reflejo, añejo quizás, pero plagado de identificaciones con nuestra sociedad actual.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Annemarie Schwarzenbach; Alteridad; Literatura; Modernidad líquida; Años 20; Nazismo; Suiza; Feminismo; Teoría queer.

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INTRODUCTION

The happy valley (Das glückliche Tal) (Schwarzenbach, [1940] 2016). This is how Annemarie Schwarzenbach titled a story that is rooted in her own psychological conflict facing the abyss of otherness. This work takes place in Persia, in the lunar territory of river Lahr's valley, where she projects the loss of identity suffered by an interwar generation. The author, a Swiss national, was an archaeologist, reporter, and writer, with the journey being a central topic in her work. She was an active member of intellectual resistance against Nazism, in spite of the fact that her home country was seeking refuge in neutrality.

In the following pages, we intend to analyze Annemarie Schwarzenbach's work from the perspective of otherness and intergenerational conflict. Our analysis is mainly focusing on two of her travel novels: *Death in Persia* (1935) and its rewriting, *The happy valley* (1940), which she made during her stay at Bellevue de Yverdon psychiatric clinic, in Switzerland.¹ While also using the content of other works, we find these two particularly relevant as a concrete testimony of the period in which they were written: the catastrophic years that agitated Europe, when she was forced to choose between acting or fleeing. Throughout her travels to Persia, she faced the otherness of an unknown territory, on which she captured her own inner conflicts, on the one hand, and the collective ones that her generation was suffering, on the other (Almarcegui, 2013).

It is quite easy to feel questioned in the presence of such existential doubts. There is now a growing interest in his author's work, whose writings fell into oblivion for decades after her passing. Most of her manuscripts, which were kept at the Swiss Literary Archive in Berne, have been published in their original language: German. Nevertheless, a good part of her work is being translated into other languages, which is undoubtedly due to the relevance of her reflections in the present.

Every generation faces various challenges, which depend on the continuous variation of society: politics changes cyclically, and so does the relationship with the environment. Human bonds also acquire new shades, sometimes in an immediate fashion, such as the one we are currently experiencing with the pandemic (Agamben *et al.*, 2020). The different forms of knowledge observe, describe, and make their own proposals in this framework. This is why nowadays there are theories about Anthropocene, intersectionality, and liquid time. Anthropocene is the name of a geological era, still undefined, whose meaning ramifies in the social, economic, and political field (Speranza, 2019); intersectionality explains the interaction between different social exclusions (Platero, 2012); lastly, the widely used term of "liquid modernity" refers to a time without certainties, wandering and virtual (Bauman, 2007).

As we are living in a political and economic system that has oriented us towards absolute individualization, could we not say that we are facing the desubjectivation of a society where "the Other" is just another element

of consumption? Are we not at that point of the wheel in which, as the divides generated by the current system have come to their limit, a change in paradigm imposes itself against totalitarianisms? Annemarie's history represents a generation willing to achieve deep and radical changes, in an environment where the harshness of great crises results in the uprising of fascist movements. This is also our history, the feeling that anything is possible, and anything can be taken away from us.

There are new anguishes, both individual and social, that derive from the loss of subjectivity and otherness and seem very close to the ones that were suffered in the last century. From this perspective, our proposal is to explore, by means of analyzing Annemarie Schwarzenbach's work, what forces helped to face such anguishes in the past, focusing on the importance of literature as a collective mental health agent. We intend to carry out our analysis, on the one hand, through what we call communicated introspection: an inner search exercise that works as a bridge to otherness since its own creation is directed towards it. On the other hand, our work is based on the assumption that writing is the expression of an absence, which allows the emergence of all that is being oppressed and marginalized at a certain time; consequently, it has the power of denunciation. The work of our author, in fact, represents a movement of liberation in various social contexts: an outcast, a psychiatric patient, a woman, and a homosexual.

There is, therefore, a double scenario: the youngsters from the wild 20s, as a generation representing an intolerable otherness for that time, which was devastated by the war, and our actual society, which has destroyed otherness itself, in a silent and widespread fashion. Literature can be used as a social space, where individual voices become a collective one, and vice-versa, without *a priori* elements of exclusion (there are undoubtedly some filters and exclusions in its subsequent commercialization, but there are none in the very act of human creation, except for the repressions of each individual). To quote Laplanche: "Cultural activity is an act of opening to the other, of addressing towards the other" (Laplanche, 2017, p. 13).

We are analyzing below how Annemarie's life has been articulating with her way of exposing and resolving the conflict with otherness through the act of writing.

ANNEMARIE SCHWARZENBACH, A BIOGRAPHY OF OTHERNESS

Early life: the conflict against otherness originated within the family

Annemarie Schwarzenbach was born in Zurich in 1908, the third of five siblings in a wealthy and socially well-regarded family in Switzerland. Her father, Alfred Schwarzenbach, owned a silk enterprise that became a multinational. Her mother, Renée Wille, came from a military family and proudly showed her conservative convictions. She spent the early years of her youth locked up at home because of scarlet fever, her only relationships be-

ing with her siblings and cousins (Grente y Müller, 1991). According to what she writes in her work and letters, the bond with her family has always been ambivalent: between emotional dependency and breaking up with all the values represented by them. We could say that her family represents a figure that largely corresponds to the description of otherness suggested by Judith Butler in *Precarious Life: the Other as a vigilant face exercising a moral authority, without verbalizing anything, just through its own existence*. And, in this founding fact, tension emerges between surviving to the Other and a non-violence mandate, a prohibition of destroying it (Butler, 2004).

In her work, Annemarie Schwarzenbach gives an unceasing representation of this tension every time she mentions her family and her other links. In the following paragraph, she describes the relationship with the Other as oscillating between guilt, demand, and desire:

Even though sometimes one can cling to pain, to the bitter longing for home, and to the bitter remorse, they cannot remember their own fault anymore. Who could accuse again, appeal to another human being again, love again! One rushes into the illusion, as broad as the sea and similar to the sea in every possible aspect, one has faith and prays and forgets the dark fear of contemplating the loved face (Schwarzenbach, [1935] 2003, p. 12).

And what could this “dark fear” possibly be, if not what we spoke about when referring to the Other’s face, imposing its authority on us? Similarly, Jacques Lacan describes the relationship with otherness as follows: “What does it want? What does the Other want? I am wondering” (Lacan, [1968] 2000, p. 49). Again, a relationship based on demand.

Jessica Benjamin, a well-renowned theorist of intersubjectivity, highlights the matter of “how do we relate to the independent conscience of the other: a mind that is basically like ours, but unbearably different and out of our control” (Benjamin, 2013, p. 27). She states that it is impossible to conciliate the acknowledgement of otherness with the affirmation of our own existence. She suggests that there is a perpetual tension between these two positions (which she refers to as “tolerable paradoxes”) and that the only possible solution is to tolerate this ambivalence, by creating a third position that breaks the dichotomy and bears the existence of the One and the Other at the same time. This third position would be created through the construction of a “dialogue” that is an entity itself (Benjamin, 2013, p. 14). Is this not the very essence of literature: a dialogue between the One and the Other?

Our author broke up for the first time with the Face of her family through a journey, which was going to be almost a mantra throughout her whole life. In 1929, she interrupted her studies in History at Zurich University to spend two semesters attending philosophy and psychology seminars at the Sorbonne. During those months, she stayed at International Student House, the first hostel for foreign female students that opened in Paris in 1928 and

is still operating nowadays. In that period, the city was one of the cradles of modernity and culture in Europe, as there were some groups of artists with extremely progressive thoughts and freedoms, such as one of women writers (Weiss, 2017), many of whom were openly homosexual, who used to meet at the Rive Gauche.² When she took the train that would take her to France, she wrote: “For the first time I became aware of the wide perspectives that life was offering me; the limits were moving back, the obstacles that once seemed enormous to me were ostensibly diminishing, until they appeared as ridiculously insignificant.”³

We can observe that when facing the exit from her nuclear family for the very first time, the author immediately perceives that her potential paths for the future are widening. An interesting consideration deriving from this quote is the fact that Otherness is an immensely broad term that applies not only to the bonds between individuals, but also to the relationship between human beings and time, the future, language, the unconscious, and death. Emmanuel Lévinas explains otherness as something that is simultaneously similar to and external to us. It is not the relationship with the other-I, but a relationship with a mystery. He proposes death and future as instances of absolute otherness: “Future is what cannot be absolutely apprehended... it is what cannot be captured, what falls upon us and takes control over us, the future is the other, the relationship with the future is the relationship with the other itself” (Lévinas, 1993, p. 117).

During her stay in Paris, Annemarie bonded with artists and Russian immigrants and, overall, she encountered a community that was a revolutionary Otherness itself, the opposite of the one she had known in the bourgeois environment of her native Switzerland. Starting from this experience, she reflected on the feeling of mystery and unawareness provoked by the encounter with the otherness: “Every search is a departure, we went away from our mother... And we keep going away from ourselves: would we feel otherwise so desperately lost?”⁴

The passage to adulthood in the scenario of 1930s Germany

In 1930, once she was back in Zurich, she finished her studies and wrote her doctoral thesis on the Middle Ages in the Lower Engadin region (Grente y Müller, 1991). Furthermore, she wrote her first published novel, *Freunde um Bernhard*, and she met Klaus and Erika Mann, respectively son and daughter of the already then Nobel prize Thomas Mann. The long-lasting friendship that she maintained with them would determine the future directions of her life. Annemarie’s comings and goings to Germany in order to see her friends, even staying and living there for a while, remained linked to the period in which she completely broke up with her previous schemes, she sought more freedom and ideological commitment, and she lived her frantic nights of lesbian romances, hanging out with groups of revolutionary artists, cabarets, and transvestite clubs (Moeschler, 2001). For the first time she consumed

morphine, a substance that would accompany her for the most part of her life. It happened with Klaus Mann, holding hands with Mopsa Sternheim, who was the daughter of Jewish writer Carl Sternheim, and was part of Annemarie's circle of friends. Mopsa was also a lesbian and close to communists, for which she was sent by the Nazis to the extermination camp of Ranvensbrück (Polo, 2018).

In this moment of inflection, Annemarie wrote her following novel: *Lyric Novella*, where she describes her interior journey during those years, through the main character. Here, she exposes the changes imposed on her by the path toward maturity, as well as the conflictive breakup with her origins and the feeling of emptiness entailed by it:

I could not sleep. I was thinking about our journey by car and until what point had it been crazily dangerous. The worst thing is that I realized that it wouldn't have mattered to me if I had had an accident. (...) And now, as I was kneeling on the bed, it still didn't matter, I could think without any horror about the possibility of having died. This consideration triggered a sort of desperation in me, I lied down on the floor and cried helplessly, and, for the first time, life was scaring me (Schwarzenbach, [1931] 2016, p. 44).

It was an era of modernity, but also one of confusion, poverty, and dangers, which led to the Second World War. In Germany, most part of the population, including the intellectuals, did not react to the uprising of national socialism (Pérez, 2008). On the other hand, the Mann family was critical and watchful from the beginning before the ongoing political movements. For instance, Heinrich Mann, Thomas Mann's older brother, in his text *The Pachtulke Class* attempts to portray the part of German society that was supporting Hitler, by stating: "When Pachtulke has a Führer, that Führer will have dead hands: without having learned or done anything, all that he touches will die" (extract from Pérez, 2008, p. 77).

Annemarie, immersed in the circles of the Mann family and their close friends, and also already more aware of her own position of political dissent, was profoundly impacted by and involved in the exile and persecution suffered by her generation. As totalitarian movements were advancing, in 1934 she started her period of trips to Persia. In the first one, she went under invitation as an archaeologist. In the following ones, she was seeking the relief of leaving a collapsing Europe and her own family, which openly supported Hitler and applauded what was happening in Germany (Grente y Müller, 1991). As a matter of fact, this search for an escape as the purpose of a trip is highlighted in various studies about the author, as we are discussing in the following pages, considering that traveling for her was not so much a vocation, but even a necessity (Vázquez, 2009). In this context, she met a young French ambassador in Tehran, whom she decided to marry as a legal agreement that would facilitate personal circumstances for both. In Annemarie's case, the marriage had a consequence that would have a particular impact on her future: to own a diplomatic passport, which

she took advantage of. Thus Claude Clarac, also a homosexual, became her husband. That stay of hers in Persia would inspire her novel *Death in Persia*, which, as previously noted, she would rewrite as *The happy valley*. With regard to the development process of this second book, in a letter to Klaus Mann, she wrote as follows:

I write in the morning, in the afternoon, at night, and despite not doing anything else, I am only able to finish two pages per day. But you should know that it is as if I wrote two poems per day... My memories have become clearer, they have been interpreted and transformed into symbols. All this resembles a scream of desolation, and it is terribly tough.⁵

On the one hand, this shows the need to write that she felt, in spite of her willpower being at a minimum, something she, in fact, affirms in various occasions on the story of *The happy valley*, which could lead to thinking that, for Annemarie, writing is more than just a vocation, just like traveling. But on the other hand, this also explains the decision of rewriting the same story as a new act, to broaden the understanding of what has been lived, develop it, and take it to the symbolic level. This was the first time, though not the last one, that the author re-elaborated one of her books. And she did this while she was hospitalized in a psychiatric structure, a situation that became a constant in her life. In 1935, after a suicide attempt, for the first time, she entered the Chesa Dr. Rupaner clinic in Samedan (Switzerland). In the following months, she went through another detoxification treatment at Doctor Forel's clinic in Prangins (Switzerland). In 1938, she even suffered three psychiatric hospitalizations: two detoxifications in private Swiss structures and, after suffering from severe depression in Tehran, an admission to the Bellevue de Yverdon clinic, where, as previously described, she started the writing of *The happy valley* (Grente y Müller, 1991).

During those agitated years, besides her stays in Iran, she traveled to the USA on several occasions, in one of which she observed and portrayed the condition of southern states, denouncing the ravages left by the Great Depression.⁶ Afterward, she traveled to the East again, this time to Afghanistan, with writer Ella Maillart. The latter would write about this new adventure in *The cruel way* (Maillart, 1955), while Annemarie would do it in *All the roads are open* (Schwarzenbach, [1939] 2008).

In 1940 she embarked again towards New York, where she lived in the Plaza Hotel and had an affair with the baroness Margot von Opel, the multimillionaire wife of the well-known car manufacturer (Grente y Müller, 1991). This romance intertwined with the one with the already then-promising American writer Carson McCullers. The relationship between Annemarie and Carson is registered in the intense correspondence that they kept and in McCullers' unfinished autobiography *Illumination and night glare* (McCullers, 2001). Then, the ultimate inflection came when Annemarie received the news of her father's death. Terribly impacted by it, she had a violent fight with

the baroness, and she attempted to kill herself once again (Mazzuco, 2000). She was then transferred to a mental hospital in Connecticut, where she was diagnosed with schizophrenia. During her hospitalization she was not allowed to write anything but, later, she was able to relate explicitly, through her letters or fragments from her novels, the intimidation, and the abuse she suffered there, being completely isolated, without any possibility of getting in touch with her family and friends. The inspection of correspondence, if not its very prohibition, has been a common practice in the history of psychiatry (Villasante, 2018).

Notwithstanding this, there is extensive literature on psychiatric female patients describing their experience and the mistreatment and violence they suffered throughout it.⁷ In our author's case, we can highlight how the act of writing represents a form of resistance and testimonial denunciation: "You are ill. Don't be nervous, stay calm. This was all that they were able to tell me. I showed them some of my poems. They didn't even look at them. Later, they made me wear a straitjacket. Of course, I fought back."⁸

One night she managed to flee from the psychiatric clinic and get to New York. Nevertheless, she was a wanted person: escaping from a mental hospital was a crime in North America at that period. She was eventually taken by the police to Bellevue, New York's first public hospital, to some sort of shared cell (Mazzuco, 2000). Thanks to the contacts of her wealthy family, her brother Alfred obtained her transfer to a private clinic; she was then expelled from the United States with an entry ban (Grente y Müller, 1991). She would write about such an experience after some time, through the voice of Marc, her alter ego (and the main character of her last novel): "It was an agony, I was imprisoned, and I couldn't live like all the others, but out of the world, with all the paths immersed in obscurity, as inaccessible as the sky. It was as if we were living under a giant bell jar."⁹

As we can observe, Annemarie's tone as she describes the experience of being judged, diagnosed, locked up... acquires a vigor that is closer to a protest than to the desperation that underlies others of her works. She also claims that mental hospitals are places "out of the world," where people lose their future and are kept inside a "bell jar"; the same metaphor that Sylvia Plath used to name her famous novel, where the protagonist also experiences psychiatric confinement (Plath, [1963] 2012). Therefore, in order to understand the harshness entailed by being in a mental hospital, the sources written by patients are of vital importance (Villasante *et al.*, 2018).

When she was back in Switzerland in 1941, she was thrown out of the family house by her mother and decided to leave for Belgian Congo. Some European colonies were still territories of freedom and resistance, and she intended to join their mission. Nevertheless, a single woman was considered so strange there, that the only plausible explanation among the colonists of that small town was that Annemarie was a Nazi spy, which even led to her interrogation by Leopoldville's authorities and her prevention from joining their work. As paranoia was persecuting

her, she moved to a herd deep inside the Congolese jungle, in Molande, on the plantation of a family friend of the Swiss ambassador, the Viviers (Moeschler, 2001). There she wrote *The Miracle of the Tree*, a novel whose protagonist, Marc (the author's alter ego that we previously mentioned), is struggling between his love for a woman and the need for both of them to give up on each other, in order to save their freedom (Schwarzenbach, [1941] 2011). It is quite symbolic that her last novel openly suggests the opposition between the survival of one's freedom and the possibility to love and be loved.

After her African stay, she went back to Switzerland and bought a house in the Engadin region, in Sils. The morning she was going to sign for the purchase she had a bike accident and, because of the brain and skull trauma she suffered, she fell into a coma, waking up after some days in a vegetative state (Grente y Müller, 1991). Her mother hired some nurses to stay in the house and look after Annemarie and she left, firmly ordering that no one entered nor found out what had happened. She died after a few months, in November of 1942.

Before this tragic epilogue, she had rewritten *The Miracle of the Tree* (Schwarzenbach, [1941] 2011) as a long poem named *Marc* (Schwarzenbach, [1941-1942] 2012), where these premonitory verses appear:

(...) and, lonely, my heart beats,
murmuring as the childhood's fountains.
(...)
then raises death,
above the magic edges of the world,
immersed now in a deep sleep,
and I cease to exist.¹⁰

Otherness appears, therefore, in its numerous facets in literature, more concretely in the one by Annemarie Schwarzenbach that we are analyzing here. In these last verses, it appears as death nullifying our existence. In others, it is the loneliness we must accept when we realize that the other is Other, and it is not an Other-I that we can hold on to. And, especially, when we understand how we can bear existence when we represent an otherness that is a stranger to our own time.

The writing of Annemarie Schwarzenbach as a communicated introspection resolving the conflict with otherness

Until now, we have told Annemarie Schwarzenbach's biography with a focus on how her work reflects the conflict with otherness. It would not be exaggerated to affirm that writing was our author's primary resource when facing the issue of the assumption of otherness.

Patricia Almarcegui, in her essay *The Meaning of the Journey*, suggests that Persia represents to Annemarie the most absolute form of otherness, which allows her to identify with the landscape in order to narrate what is most alien to herself (Almarcegui, 2013). "I must not go on dividing my love and my passion between the 'writing

I' and the life of the earth that surrounds me and claims for my attention. Both nurture each other mutually.”¹¹

In this quote, the author reaffirms her right to be a woman inhabiting and contemplating real life, and to be the writing self, in a living space that is not land, but the interior, the very oneself. Not only she wants to be both, an inside and an outside, but she also admits that inside and outside mutually nurture each other. This is the journey's movement that Almarcegui refers to, an introspection going outside, searching for reality, which, as a matter of fact, is that intangible Otherness.

If we go back to Jessica Benjamin's idea that we can keep ourselves in the tension between the acknowledgement of the Other and the survival of our own I to achieve “the intolerable paradox” (Benjamin, 2013, p. 14), then we can consider literature as a third position, a point of transition from where we can tolerate the above-mentioned paradox. Our creative self can be, as explained by Lola López Mondéjar in her *Munchausen Factor* theory, an observer integrating our islands of self, fragmented by dissociations and contradictions (López, 2009). To be an introspection of the surviving self, which directs towards another one, acknowledged as Other.

This is our idea of communicated introspection, the main thesis deriving from our research. A quality of writing through which elements of introspective narrative (evocation, catharsis, integration, and reparation, for the most part) are produced, in the non-abstract presence of an Other (personified by the public) to be looked for and with which to build that passage, that bridge between the I and the otherness. A conversation between two characters in *Lyric Novella* goes as follows: “—¿What were people thinking when they built the first bridge?—They only wanted to reach the other side” (Schwarzenbach, [1931] 2016, p. 40).

This would be our metaphor, to build a bridge that allows the “I” inhabiting the interior world to contemplate the other side of otherness, and to attempt to reach it through the act of writing. Regarding this, Michael Foucault in *The Thought from Outside* would speak of an «outside» exposed to the individual with no obstacle in between, but that cannot be reached since it is not a positive presence, but an absence. This is why the subject of literature cannot be the same as that of the language of positivity. Instead, it should be the writer of an absent outside (Foucault, 2005). Here, he uses a concept suggested by Georges Bataille when he refers to a discourse that is not exactly that of the unconscious, nor that of an internal contradiction, but that of a limit. The issue would be, therefore, to attempt a language that does not belong to the outside nor to the inside, a language being in the middle of both, at the limit (Foucault, 2005).

It seems that, in order to survive, we are bound to listen to the emptiness deriving from a missing Other from the border of its own abyss. Byung-Chul Han suggests playing with transition spaces, limits, and passages, as mysterious areas where the negativity of otherness begins and we can contemplate it, without ceasing to exist in it (Han, 2014). Annemarie Schwarzenbach, in her most

openly homosexual work, portrays the first encounter with a woman she feels deeply attracted to in this way, through a transition space:

To see a woman and to feel at that same instant that she has also seen me, that her questioning eyes have been enchanted by me as if we didn't have other solution than to meet each other at the beginning of the unknown, in the obscure and melancholic border of conscience (Schwarzenbach, [1928] 2007, p. 7).

That said, in the very moment in which the creation goes towards the others, it is exposed to the same vicissitudes of its own person, and to the same possibility to be either loved or destroyed. Why then it seems that this sphere is safer than a direct bond? Maybe because of the freedom admitted and acclaimed by the writing, which integrates plurality and non-normativity. Because it plays the role of a third position between the I and the others, in a sort of transitional space. And, possibly, because of this ultimate purpose, almost a mystic one, of an aesthetic in which the object of the content partly loses its priority before the search for beauty at its highest and for art itself. In the words of Martínez Llorca about Schwarzenbach. “Annemarie has always opposed everything that represented law and order. Above all, order. And she has always chosen its opposite: beauty” (Martínez, 2019, p. 97).

Concerning this, Jean Baudrillard in his *The Conspiracy of Art* criticizes art that resembles pornography, over-exposing reality and displaying a reality that is more real than reality itself, and he compares it to the art that contemplates a mystery without showing it, suggesting and insinuating the non-existing (Baudrillard, [1988] 2012). Maybe the question is not how much or what is shown, but the intention for art to be an object or, instead, to keep the mystery of otherness in its own work. The unknowable subjectivity embodied in a cultural manifestation. The creative act, one way or another, could consist of feeling involved, summoned by another one, when being made as well as received. The expression of the interior is projected on a supposed public, not necessarily personified, but existing from the very beginning, as a presence accompanying the creation.

In the whole fiction of our author, we can feel like we are her companions in her introspective wanderings, feeling really questioned by the text, probably because when she narrates, she is searching for that Other to accompany her in her conflict. Therefore, we can affirm with a certain emphasis that she, who wrote unceasingly throughout her whole life, did it precisely as a way of survival for her most dissenting I, in need of a connection with the otherness that could accompany her without destroying her, through the right proximity of the writing. And she did this in her own place, between her interior and exterior. A place that, representing a threshold, could not be destroyed by the cruelty of the war that was devastating her time, nor by her internal suffering. In the words of Gertrude Stein, an interwar artist as well:

In the end, the only important thing for everyone, that is, for everyone who writes, is to live inside one own to tell what is inside there. This is why writers must have two countries, the one from where they are, and the one where they actually live. The latter is romantic, is something aside, it is not real, but it really is there (Stein, [1940] 2009, p. 10).

THE LITERATURE OF A WOMAN: THE LITERATURE OF A GENERATION

Through this biography of otherness, we are taking a leap from the individual to the collective, in order to focus on generational conflicts and the role of literature as a resistance to them.

The literature of an interwar generation, a literature of timeliness

Until now, we have analyzed Annemarie's literature from her individual perspective. Nevertheless, there is something latent in all her work, and that is the voice of an entire generation upon which she reflected profoundly, portraying it as a society of wandering vagabonds without certainties, compared to the apparent solidity of the previous generation (one of her own parents). She gives a good account of this nonsense felt by her generation, which worsens as totalitarianisms threaten all that it represents, taking its future away, in her precocious *Lyric Novella*:

—What does this mean nowadays?—I said humorously. Magnus and I had conversed on the fact that there isn't much more in our generation than the immense privilege of friendship. What we wanted to say was that all the normal conditions had disappeared, that all the valid objectives were uncertain, that all forms of stability had vanished from our lives (Schwarzenbach, [1931] 2016, p. 41).

If one read this text without knowing what period it is from, it would not be absurd to think that it is a contemporary one, referring to our postmodernity. It is, in fact, comparable to the theory of liquid modernity after which Zygmunt Bauman names our contemporary time: «the liquid times,» when the uncertainty forces us to keep moving at a constant velocity that does not allow us to stay, to commit “as Ralph Waldo Emerson observed, when one is skating on thin ice, velocity is salvation” (Bauman, 2007, p. 13).

This theory also encompasses human bonds, portrayed by the author not as ties of love with the Other, but as “networks” of liquid relationships which it is as easy to connect to as to disconnect from (Bauman, 2018). Hundreds of «human surpluses» are generated this way, otherness either converted into an object, or into an enemy, or annulled. Was the interwar generation a liquid generation such as ours? Is our postmodernity not unique, new? Or maybe, do generations that go through transition times have some fundamental qualities as hinges that make them resemble each other?

We suggest this comparison since we deem it inevitable to feel identified with that generation, according to what is reflected in our author's work. And we think that understanding it can help us comprehend the events we are facing nowadays. Following this reasoning, we quote historian Timothy Snyder:

Our tradition requires us to analyze history in order to understand the deep sources of the tyranny, and to reflect on the adequate response to give it. We are not wiser than those Europeans who saw democracy giving way to totalitarianisms in the 20th Century. Our only advantage is that we could learn from their experience (Snyder, 2018, p. 14).

Therefore, even now we have the description of a generation based on modernity and uncertainty, which we can identify ourselves with, for its qualities as well as for the dangers it had to face. A generation looking for new paths and liberties within the complex, but more open in certain aspects, the Weimar Republic (for instance, the *Institut für Sexualforschung* dedicated to the study of sexuality appeared in that period, as a pioneer in the defense of dissident sexualities and feminine emancipation). Until political movements turned their transformation energies into desperation with Adolf Hitler's uprising, the growth of totalitarianisms, and World War II.

In 1933, two weeks after Hitler's nomination as chancellor of the Reich, the “cleaning of Prussian Academy of Arts” and the public burning of books selected by the führer started, leading to the massive exodus of great German writers and intellectuals, which had the distribution of the cultural élite of Germany all over the world as a consequence (Pérez, 2008). The Mann family was among them. The Schwarzenbach family, on the contrary, was openly supporting Nazism, even raising money for the cause. Annemarie's mother also succeeded in sending some of her German servants to vote for the Nazi party in the decisive elections of March 1933 (Polo, 2018). As a matter of fact, when Annemarie's father asked her to take part in the construction of a new Germany, she, dissenting from her family's mandate, joined her friends' exile and the opposition movement instead, to the point that she was denied entry to Germany in the following years. On the harshness of the situation, she would write:

Those who live in a European country nowadays know that there are many who cannot keep up with such a tremendous dialectic: a dialectic that encompasses the personal conflict between the desire of peace and the decision to take action; a dialectic that does not exempt anyone from paying their tribute. And if, despite this, a young person attempts to escape and avoid that tribute, they will bear the mark of Cain, stigma of the brother's betrayal, no matter how scrupulously they have planned their escape (Schwarzenbach, [1935] 2003, p. 10).

This way she leaves her internal conflict captured in the generational one, mentioning her desire to escape from Europe, before the need to resist Nazism and the

feeling that everyone's path is socially identified. Patricia Almarcegui comments on Annemarie's travels as follows: "To Schwarzenbach, wandering and escape represent the aims of traveling. Fleeing implies an escape, the one of a generation of interwar intellectuals who fed up with the conflicts in Europe, look for a new life outside the continent" (Almarcegui, 2013, p. 174). Concerning the meaning of her travels, M^a Teresa Arias indicates the author's fight to transgress the concept of border, and break the boundaries by traveling and writing to achieve freedom: "Her look distorted the boundaries. She looked and her only limit was the unreachable horizon" (Arias, 2021, p. 224). It may be necessary to understand her conflict with the oppression that boundaries represented then, a conflict that she faced by writing about traveling.

On the other hand, it is important to remember that our author also had a significant vocation as a photo reporter and that most part of her travels, despite being motivated by an escape, was generally supported by commissions from various magazines and newspapers, where she published her work with great analytical skills and a significant political commitment (Schwarzenbach, [1932-1941] 2018; Schwarzenbach, [1941-1942] 2020). This aspect is highlighted by Guiomar Topf, who focuses on Schwarzenbach's objectivity in portraying Western prejudices about the East: "Here is the photographer and reporter speaking, when approaching a giant, exotic animal to the point she sees its eyes shining. We can observe that her ambition is to capture every possible image in the most authentic way" (Topf, 2017, p. 8).

Even though the writer appears divided between the escape and the struggle, in her testimonies we can therefore perceive an antifascist commitment, in the context of her travel novels as well as in her reportages and acts: she financed various publications of the resistance such as the well-known *Die Sammlung* by Klaus Mann, with whom she also traveled to Moscow to join the *Congress of writers* and see communism first-hand. Later in life, at a more mature age, she did everything she could to help, using her diplomatic passport, the escape of refugees from Germany and Austria (Grente y Müller, 1991).

Before the war, words (20th and 21st century)

It is now important to address an issue that may cast many doubts: whether we can refer to Annemarie's literature from the perspective of exile literature. Concerning this, it is worth mentioning, as Guiomar Topf indicates, that:

The reasons why this writer has been regarded as an exile writer go from biographical analysis, where her re-emigration from Berlin to Zurich in 1933 and her friendship with exiled German intellectuals are highlighted, to reflections on the figure of the wandering traveler as a metaphor for exile in her travel novels (Topf, 2018, p. 96).

On the one hand, there are her novels, while on the other, her journalistic contributions, which include, as we

have mentioned before, openly anti-fascist articles, such as the one she wrote during her exile in the USA named *Switzerland, the country that didn't get the chance to open fire* (1940), where she harshly criticized the neutrality of her home country (Grente y Müller, 1991).

The gender issue affects the acknowledgment of the political nature of her work since feminine exile literature was considered to narrate from the margins of everydayness, without an openly ideological discourse (which exclusively belonged to men). German exile literature from this period is extremely broad, with publications written under the perspective of intellectual resistance, the exile experience and its misfortunes, the pre-war and the war itself... by the hand of authors such as Heinrich Mann, Thomas Mann, Stefan Zweig, Anna Seghers, Fritz Landshof, and, of course, Klaus and Erika Mann (Pérez, 2008).

Specifically, the two novels which our essay focuses on, *Death in Persia* and *The happy valley*, portray her experience of exile in a more or less metaphoric fashion. There is a clear criticism towards fascism and war, through her reproduction of conversations with exiled people in the colonies, as well as through her own reflections on the future of Europe and her rejection of Nazi ideology. Like, for instance, a conversation that the author writes to have had with a friend working in Persepolis excavations, whom she pays a visit to:

—Since four years ago. And I have not been in Germany for the last four years...—he said—. The Americans hate Germany, they hate it like only uncultured people can hate. They ignore that the swastika is not German, and they forget that the professor was also from Germany.
—¿Can't you explain it to them?
—¿Me?—he asked.
—You know the way things are.
—No, I do not absolutely know the way things are. During all these years I have felt nostalgia, nostalgia for a Germany that, as far as I know, has ceased to exist. And what exists now, cannot be defended. It simply cannot be defended! (Schwarzenbach, [1935] 2003, pp. 61-62).

Even though she did not develop a structured intellectual discourse (but only a few articles and reports), we can observe how she described her testimony of those years with a clear critical element. Quoting Guiomar Topf once again: "The lack of a homeland and of one's own territory is part of modern individuals, who keep suffering from existential doubts, while the historical moment seems to demand important decisions" (Topf, 2018, pp. 102-103). This character could not be more related to the work of our author, who writes unceasingly about her generation's innate doubts, reduced to silence by the reality of their own time: "The future is dead. No breath of life comes from it, it has no color, neither light nor dark, and the path leading to its regions is long, and I can't go through it anymore" (Schwarzenbach, [1935] 2003, pp. 141-142).

The future is dead and cannot be achieved, she tells us. If we can feel identified with those times so easily, it is because today we also fear an annihilation of the fu-

ture, not in the form of war, but of extinction. As we have briefly mentioned in our introduction, according to some scientists, we have gone from the Holocene (an age characterized by climatic stability that led to our expansion and domination) to the Anthropocene, a new geological era in which man has broken the previous climatic stability, and whose consequences can be unpredictable. Some authors take this to the socioeconomic level, referring to Capitalocene (Speranza, 2019). Thinking this from a holistic and integrated perspective, we would talk about a civilizing crisis, a theory exposed by Franco “Bifo” Berardi in his reflections on the pandemic situation we are currently living in:

The Earth has reached an extreme degree of irritation, and the collective body of society has been suffering from an intolerable level of stress for a long time. (...) What provokes panic is that the virus escapes from our knowledge: neither medicine nor our immune system know it. And the unknown abruptly stops the machine. A semiotic virus in the psychosphere blocks the abstract functioning of the economy, as it takes all bodies away from it; the bodies slow down their movement, give up their actions. Do you want to see it? (Agamben *et al.*, 2020, p. 37).

Bodies give up their actions. Civilizing crisis. Fear of extinction and uncertainty. In the end, are these not the same contents that we have found in the texts written by the destroyed youth of the «crazy ‘20s»?

Literature as a generational dissidence

According to our thesis, this past that we have analyzed can help us find some cultural and social elements to face the current challenges. We do not know what is going to happen with our tumultuous present, how we are going to save ourselves from the ongoing events, and what is going to occur during the process. But we do know what happened then and how those who saved themselves were able to do it. In the following extract by Schwarzenbach, addressed to her friend Ella Maillart, we can observe that there is not only a will to face totalitarianisms in a collective way, but also an understanding of the need to destroy the evils that contribute to their uprising:

I want to understand the most hidden roots of European crisis and I want to seek the source of the strength we really need during this horrible war and afterwards, in order to build in every soul the resistance not only against fascism, but also against the evil and the failed life that have led to it...¹²

German literature during those years was forced to exile and chose the place of resistance. Its great achievement was to be the union point among German exiles, leaving a committed testimony of their present, facing Nazism with no less force or success than anti-fascist political groups (Pérez, 2008). To achieve this, they endowed themselves with a whole infrastructure of publishers and magazines that made communication possible and spread their de-

nunciations: “German writers understood much earlier than great political parties the need to create bonds in order to overcome the divisions and define common objectives against national socialism” (Pérez, 2008, p. 28). Our author took part in this mission in an active and honest way:

Does this mean that it doesn’t matter what we undertake, as long as we use our forces with bravery, and we end our lives with no desperation? Weren’t maybe mistakes the flight, the escape, the loss that led me to this place, to the most remote periphery? Wasn’t it out of fear that two years ago I abandoned Europe and my homeland? (Schwarzenbach, [1935] 2003, p. 143).

The author tells us about a time when life as they knew it just vanished. She tells the indescribable pain of the exile and the doubts that torment her about the decisions she has made, exposing them. She writes about this repeatedly, with literature representing a sort of psychological, humanitarian refuge.

Human beings have used art as a communication tool in the community since the remotest beginnings, with intrapsychic benefits that are both individual and collective. Sigmund Freud (1975) observes that art allows us to represent an existence that seems intolerable in the real world, putting it on an imaginary level, like a child who plays and creates a fictitious world that he can perfectly tell apart from reality. An intermediate space that Donald Winnicott (1990) named transitional space. Jacques Lacan (2006) made some suggestions that could make us think about art’s ability to work on traumas in their symbolic helplessness. Joyce McDougall (1989) revalued its power to integrate our identity complexity. Alicia Hartmann (2016) refers to the writings of the people she analyzed as the language of the absent. And Enrique Pichon Rivière (1991), according to the theory of the operational group and social psychology, gives art the quality of the surface of a social group, able to show the community what lies at the bottom and is ignored, but must be listened to.

Literature undoubtedly included these characteristics highlighted by the above-mentioned authors, and it is important to notice that all of them, one way or another, refer to the social function of the creative act: as an element of elaboration of what is intolerable, hidden in the social unconscious, absent, non-symbolized. All this is especially relevant in the situation of rupture and loss that the interwar generation was experiencing. And there is a greatly important function that has appeared repeatedly in our author’s analyzed texts and is worth reminding: that of social dissidence and resilience as a testimony and denunciation instrument, providing the voices shut up by the power structures with public space.

Another element of social health provided by art is related to Byung-Chul Han’s proposal on our individualistic society, where the otherness has been lost and everyone lives in a narcissistic depression. In such theory, Han refers to an affective resource where otherness can persist: “The Eros takes the subject away from itself and guides

it outside, towards the other” (Han, 2014, p. 21), which is what literature also does, according to our proposal of communicated introspection. In the words of Annemarie Schwarzenbach:

Sometimes I ask myself why I am leaving a record of all these memories. Maybe I want strangers to read them? Do I want to put myself in their hands, or even in the hands of close people, of good friends? But I am giving them so little! Where does this bitter desire of confession come from? (Schwarzenbach, [1935] 2003, pp. 87-88).

Annemarie seems to be questioning herself on her urgency to write, considering literature as a giving of her inner self to those so desired Others, like a need to be understood and accompanied in the loneliness of exile. And like a place where her denunciation of what happened to her generation can last and be proclaimed.

For this reason, we can identify the existence of a «dissident self» in the work of Annemarie and many other authors. This category of analysis has been proposed by Ana Martínez-Canales and Mariano Hernández (2019) and has been developed in various ways. The term dissidence “can be applied to the people or collectivities who manifest a total or partial disagreement with the criteria of coexistence (and normality) accepted (or imposed) by the respective community or society. In other words, with the established order” (Huertas, 2020, p. 36). Following this idea, we suggest Annemarie’s literature as the representation of a collective dissidence:

I know that someday it will all become clear. (...) and I am sure that I will not revolt, in spite of what they did to me. I will only raise an accusation, more bitter than anything else: the accusation that some indifferent strangers were able to tie my hands and put evil on me (Schwarzenbach, [1935] 2003, p. 95).

Judith Butler states that those who have the possibility of being represented, or even better, auto-represented, are more likely to be humanized. And that the power either allows or forbids certain representations, with the aim of humanizing or dehumanizing the individuals who form the society where they exert their authority (Butler, 2004). We might say that, when we talk about the ‘20s generation as an otherness that was canceled by fascisms, we talk about this use of power explained by Butler, since the dissident identities were destroyed in the cruelest way that History has ever known. Therefore, facing such a dehumanization, literature allowed the «lost» generations to narrate themselves as a form of being represented again, of keeping existing.

Annemarie Schwarzenbach portrays in her writings, like many of her exiled companions, the experience of annihilation and exclusion. And just like that, through the act of writing, she constructs a space where she can meet the Others again and be herself One and Other. A place inhabited by the resistance. Are we not, in postmodernity, needing the same?

CONCLUSIONS

The concept of otherness shapes our affective bonds and our conception of society. Its lack of recognition is part of the desubjectifying system we are surrounded by, which represents, along with ecologism, one of the fundamental challenges of our time. Nevertheless, this is not a new issue. Through the analysis of Annemarie Schwarzenbach’s work, we can observe the way the author experiences the conflict with otherness, which is due to her past, on the one hand, and to the avant-garde generation she belonged to, on the other. A generation involved in existential uncertainties that are very similar to the ones we are experiencing nowadays. It is evident that literature entailed a new place between the interior and the exterior world. A communicated introspection that can serve as a bridge towards the Others.

From a collective perspective, literature has been one of the most powerful opposition movements against Nazism in that period, and Annemarie Schwarzenbach took part in it, expressing the generational sentiment with honesty and profundity. The writing was the only identity and refuge for a single woman and a whole generation who overcame the limits of their assigned roles.

In our present, to accept the negativity of otherness means to accept a «not being able to be able»: not being able to consume the other like any other capitalist good, is anti-system. To be only one is the actual mandate. Literature, nevertheless, provides us with a different way of existence, both individual and collective; just like it did with the lost avant-garde interwar generation. The otherness, that is, those who were excluded from society because of the danger represented by the union of different Ones, could then find its way to form a network of resistance through literature. Annemarie Schwarzenbach’s own words can aid us in concluding our reflection:

To reject the intermediate formula that accepts the world’s imperfections, means to keep the multitude in a painful obedience, to relegate their aspirations of happiness to the hereafter, to divert the revolutionary impulse of the youth (perpetual guarantee of human progress) towards the fighter discipline and the idealization of sacrifice in the altars of the dominant reality. On the contrary, as a generation whose fate is either to fight or to die, we want at least to be on the future’s side (Schwarzenbach, [1935] 2003, p. 33).

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NOTES

- 1 *Memorias de abajo*. Barcelona: Alpha Decay.
- 2 Baquero, M. (2020) *El paris de Ladies Almanack* published on Pikara Magazine digital edition, available at: <https://www.pikaramagazine.com/2020/10/el-paris-de-ladies-almanack/> (last access 19 February 2021).
- 3 Excerpt from Parisier Novelle, unpublished text by Annemarie Schwarzenbach written in 1929 (extracted from Grete y Müller, 1991, p. 50).

- 4 Excerpt from Parisier Nouvelle, unpublished text by Annemarie Schwarzenbach written in 1929 (extracted from Grente y Müller, 1991, p. 51).
- 5 Excerpt from a letter from Annemarie Schwarzenbach to Klaus Mann, written in 1939, extracted from Grente y Müller, 1991, pp. 180-181.
- 6 This report was published in 1939 in Thomas Mann's magazine *Mass und Wert* (Zürich) with the title *The drama of Southern States of North America* (Grente y Müller, 1991).
- 7 To mention some examples of works that testimony the process of suffering from a psychiatric hospitalization as a woman, we can name *Down Below* by Leonora Carrington ([1972] 2017), *The bell jar* by Sylvia Plath ([1963] 2012), *The loony-bin trip* by Kate Millet ([1990] 2019).
- 8 Testimony by Annemarie Schwarzenbach as told by Ruth Landshoff, German-American actress and writer, a friend of the author and the lover of Mopsa Sternheim (Grente y Müller, 1991, p. 204).
- 9 Excerpt from *Marc* by Annemarie Schwarzenbach, written in 1942 and extracted from de Grente y Müller, 1991, p. 204.
- 10 Idem.
- 11 Excerpt from a letter from Annemarie Schwarzenbach to Ella Maillart in 1941, on the elaboration process of her novel *The Miracle of the Tree*, extracted from Grente y Müller, 1991, p. 216.
- 12 Excerpt from a letter from Annemarie Schwarzenbach to Ella Maillart, written on 18th March of 1942, extracted from Grente y Müller, 1991, p. 223.

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