

A glance at Annemarie Schwarzenbach's Life & Works

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Annemarie Schwarzenbach was born on the 23rd May 1908 in Zurich. Her father, Alfred Schwarzenbach, was the greatest manufacturer of silk of his time. Her mother, Renee, was the daughter of "Ulrich Wille", who was the general of The Swiss Army during World War I. Thus, Annemarie spent her childhood in a military and cultural environment. At first, she did not attend school, but she was educated at home, by a private teacher. Piano and riding lessons were a matter of course and Annemarie, the third child of the family, enjoyed them.

Schwarzenbach experienced the pleasure of story writing for the first time, when she was nine years old. She writes: "During my childhood, whatever I saw, whatever I did, experienced and felt, I wrote down immediately. I was nine years old, when I wrote my first story in a ruled notebook. I knew that the grown ups did not pay much attention to nine-year-old, therefore the hero of my story was eleven years old". Annemarie began to study history, philosophy, psychology and German Literature in 1927 at the University of Zurich. She traveled to America for the first time in 1928, and afterwards moved to Paris to study there for one year. At the same time, she began to write articles for different publications, and her name became well known. She made the acquaintance of the children of famous German writer Thomas Mann, Klaus and Erika Mann, and the friendship last for years. In the spring of 1931, she graduated from university with a doctorate in history. At the same time, she published her first novel "Freunde um Bernhard" (Friends around Bernhard).

From the fall of 1931 until the spring of 1933, Annemarie lived in Berlin as a writer. But with the coming of Hitler to power on 1933, she should leave Germany together with her friends Klaus and Erika Mann. At the same time, two works entitled "Fruhherbst" (Early Autumn) and "Flucht nach Oben" (Escape Upwards) were published. All these times, she was thinking on a journey to the East. In 1932, she was determined to travel to Iran by car, together with Klaus and Erika, but the suicide of their close friend "Ricki Hallgarten", who wanted to travel with them, prevented the journey. The despair resulting from this blow led her into drug addiction, and from that time onwards the addiction would cast a somber shadow over her life and works.

In the spring of 1933, Annemarie, Klaus Mann and Claude Bourdet decided to found a publication for the exiled German in Zurich; but for the political reasons, the journal "Die Sammlung" was printed in Amsterdam. Schwarzenbach's articles against Hitler regime were published there. After a journey to Spain in Fall 1933, she traveled to the Middle East and Iran, and in the next year repeated this journey. These two journeys were the beginning of Schwarzenbach's cooperation with the important German language publications of Switzerland. Annemarie became the first Swiss journalist and photographer, who traveled to Iran and Afghanistan.

In the summer of 1934, she returned to Switzerland and rented a house in Engadine; this house became a refuge for her and her friends. Shortly afterwards, she attended the Soviet Writers Congress in Moscow, with Klaus Mann; afterwards she traveled to Iran to work in the excavations at Rey.

During her stay in Iran, she married Claude Clarac, a French diplomat; thus obtaining a French diplomatic passport made her future journeys easier. During her stay in Tehran and Lar Valley, she wrote parts of her "Unpersonliches Tagebuch" (Impersonal Diary), which became the basis of "Tod in Persien" (Death in Persia). An unhappy marriage, illness and addiction compelled her to return to Switzerland and undergo treatment.

Annemarie Schwarzenbach became acquainted with Barbara Hamilton-Wright in 1936 and traveled to the United States. During this journey, she wrote political articles