

EINE REISE DURCH DIE NEAPOLITANISCHE PROVINZ BASILICATA UND DIE ANGRENZENDEN GEGENDEN: MIT BERÜCKSICHTIGUNG DES JÜNGSTEN ERDBEBENS VOM 16., 17. DECEMBER 1857

Carl Wilhelm Schnars

Analysis by Chiara Cernicchiaro

Travelogue

Carl Wilhelm Schnars’ *A Journey through the Neapolitan Province of Basilicata* (1858) is a travelogue written after the tremendous 1857 earthquake in Basilicata. In its work, Schnars combines firsthand impressions with secondhand reports, transforming the ruins of Basilicata into symbols of fragility and neglect. His figurative “sickle of death” evokes both poetic devastation and a critique of Bourbon-era mismanagement.

Year of Publication	1859
Publication Place	St. Gallen
Editor	Scheitlin und Zollikofer
Entity	1857 Basilicata earthquake

GEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

Earthquake 1857 Basilicata earthquake

REAL EVENT

Time	21:15, 21:18, 22:15 (local time) on December 16th, 1857
Location	Basilicata Italy
Coordinates	40.296736, 15.991373
Impacted Areas	Several towns in Basilicata and Campania (area of 20.000 km2), but felt over a larger area
Seismic Fault	Caggiano fault system

Magnitude	7,1 MW
Typology	Tectonic Earthquake Source: Galli et al.
Anthropization Level	Remote Dwellings The most severe damage was felt in the mountainous areas, particularly in the Val d'Agri, which at the time was one of the most isolated regions of the Kingdom of Naples in terms of infrastructure and economic exchange (Guidoboni and Ferrari 114-115) Houses A very high number of towns, 182, within an area of over 20,000 square kilometers, suffered severe damage to their building heritage, rendering a large part of the houses uninhabitable (Guidoboni and Ferrari, 115) Factories Such is (if a faded word can portray too vivid a reality) – such is the condition of three towns in the Valley of the Agri: Montemurro, Saponara, and Viggiano, once flourishing with vibrant industries and a numerous population, and adorned with refined and prosperous buildings (Racioppi 10-11) Churches Like palaces and huts, churches and convents, towers and bell towers crushed, scattered, crumbled; the plaster peeled off from the bare stone (Racioppi 15) Religious Buildings And Sites Like palaces and huts, churches and convents, towers and bell towers crushed, scattered, crumbled; the plaster peeled off from the bare stone. (Racioppi, 15) Public Buildings And Sites Like palaces and huts, churches and convents, towers and bell towers crushed, scattered, crumbled; the plaster peeled off from the bare stone (Racioppi 15)
Ecological Impacts	Physical Landscape Changes Everyone, after the great shock, noticed that the waters of the springs and rivers had risen; for three days, the torrents of the Vallo swept along muddy and turbid waters; and on the 17th, such that crossing the Agri, its dark and threatening waves were felt to grow restless and rise minute by minute (Racioppi 7) Other Earthquake light (Racioppi 24) Atmospheric Changes After heavy autumn rains, the weather turned cold and stable for 40 days from November 25, confirming local tradition. It ended with severe snowstorms and record cold, even freezing the Maglio river at its source (Racioppi 26)
Social Impacts	Destruction Of Dwellings A very high number of towns, 182, within an area of over 20,000 square kilometers, suffered severe damage to their building heritage, rendering a large part of the houses uninhabitable. Within this area, more than thirty localities suffered disastrous damage: entire towns and villages, spread over a surface of 3,150 square kilometers, were reduced to rubble (Guidoboni and Ferrari 115)

Destruction Of Public Buildings

A very high number of towns, 182, within an area of over 20,000 square kilometers, suffered severe damage to their building heritage, rendering a large part of the houses uninhabitable. Within this area, more than thirty localities suffered disastrous damage: entire towns and villages, spread over a surface of 3,150 square kilometers, were reduced to rubble (Guidoboni and Ferrari 115)

Deaths

In Basilicata, in the current municipalities of Montemurro, Grumento Nova (then Saponara), Viggiano, Tito, Marsico Nuovo, and Polla, the highest number of deaths occurred (figures 4 and 5). Official sources declared, after several months, 9,732 deaths for the “province of Basilicata” and 1,207 for the other damaged areas: a total of 10,939 deaths—a very high number considering that the three districts of Potenza, Lagonegro, and Melfi had a combined population of 417,895 according to an official survey from 1852 (Guidoboni and Ferrari 115)

Injuries

The thousands of injured buried under the ruins of Montemurro, Saponara (Grumento Nova), Viggiano, Marsico (today Marsico Nuovo), Carbone, Castelsaraceno, Guardia Perticara, and many other destroyed towns received only “very scarce and delayed” aid (Guidoboni and Ferrari 125)

Social Disruption

Meanwhile, in the devastated areas – as is often documented when the structures of civil life and the bonds of social control break down – numerous acts of barbarity were worsening the lives of the survivors: abandoned to themselves, they had to defend against hunger, cold, and “scavengers.” On December 20, a report from Laurenzana stated that in Montemurro, several individuals from other towns, pretending to exhume the dead, had resorted to looting. Distressing acts of vandalism, brutality, and banditry continued to further burden the lives of the survivors (Guidoboni and Ferrari 120-122)

Diseases

Many of the people sent to provide aid – sailors, soldiers, engineers, and workers – fell ill due to the lack of adequate equipment, as they were unaccustomed to the cold of the Lucanian mountain winter. The 450 soldiers sent by the Bourbon government (a negligible number compared to the scale of the needs) arrived late wherever they did arrive, and their efforts were poorly executed; in many cases, they even harmed the survivors by indiscriminately burning all kinds of timber to protect themselves from the harsh Lucanian winter. By April, while the tremors continued, the rains brought with them the onset of disease: infectious fevers and malaria (Guidoboni and Ferrari 124-126)

Relocation

22,000 ducats were invested to colonize a marshy area in the Salerno region – by deporting several peasant families from the earthquake-affected area (Guidoboni and Ferrari, 126)

Depopulation

Population balance in the municipalities of Basilicata between 1861 and 1881: in the areas that suffered the most severe damage (within the marked boundary), the decline was significant. (Guidoboni and Ferrari 126)

Poverty

Only one thing seemed new to me: the horrifying increase in misery. The remnants of clothing that each person had pulled out from beneath the stones are worn out. The last resources of the majority are completely exhausted. The year has barely made up for the losses suffered, since the harvest was very poor, as you know, and the small landowners are in even greater difficulty than the laborers. The bread famine has pushed part of the population to the brink. Everywhere, I found families in complete destitution. (Roller 85) In the twenty years following the earthquake, the resident population in the area most severely affected declined significantly, forced to emigrate, oppressed by malaria and poverty (Guidoboni and Ferrari 131)

Time	21:15, 21:18, 22:15 (local time) on December 16th, 1857
Location	Basilicata Italy
Coordinates	40.296736, 15.991373
Impacted Areas	Several towns in Basilicata and Campania (area of 20.000 km2), but felt over a larger area
Emphasis Phase	Pre-disaster (causes / context), Disaster (phenomenal and social dynamics), Post-disaster (consequences)
Seismic Risk Ref.	Referenced
Seismic Fault	Caggiano fault system
Magnitude	7,3 MW

Typology	Tectonic Earthquake
Anthropization Level	Remote Dwellings Houses Country Houses Public Buildings Churches Squares Villages Streets Towns Religious Buildings And Sites Public Buildings And Sites Farming Areas
Ecological Impacts	Physical Landscape Changes Atmospheric Changes Soil Changes
Social Impacts	Deaths Injuries Destruction Of Dwellings Destruction Of Public Buildings Poverty Resource Depletion Destruction Of Cultural Heritage (Materials And Sites) Trauma

COLLECTIVE REACTIONS & AFFECTS

Affects/Reactions

Name	The population
Reactions	Distrust Intervention Solidarity Madness
Name	Politicians
Reactions	Disorder Hindrance
Name	Wealthy people
Reactions	Intervention Cooperation Solidarity
Group Attitudes	
Name	The population
Reactions	Acceptance

LINGUISTIC & STYLISTIC ANALYSIS

Keywords

"Das Verheerende Erdbeben" 'The Devastating Earthquake' (Schnars I, My Trans.)

"Das Schwere Erdbeben" 'The Severe Earthquake' (2; My Trans.)

"Heimsuchen" 'To Afflict' (32; My Trans.)

"Große Verwüstungen" 'Massive Destruction' (43; My Trans.)

"Gerüttelt Und Geschüttelt" 'Shaken And Jolted' (68; My Trans.)

"Das Grausige Bild Eines Verworrenen Schutthaufens" 'The Grisly Image Of A Chaotic Heap Of Rubble' (67; My Trans.)

"Die Katastrophe" 'The Catastrophe' (67; My Trans.)

"Die Schrecknisse Der Unglücksnacht" 'The Terrors Of The Night Of Misfortune' (69; My Trans.)

"Die Ruine" 'The Ruin' (69; My Trans.)

"Das Unglück Jener Schreckensstunden" 'The Misfortune Of Those Terrifying Hours' (70; My Trans.)

"Die Furchtbare Erderschütterung" 'The Dreadful Earth Tremor' (99; My Trans.)

Metaphors

"unheimliches unterirdisches Donner und Krachen" 'the eerie underground thunder and crashing' (Schanrs, 68; my trans.)

"die Schrecknisse der Unglücksnacht" 'the horrors of the night of misfortune' (69; my trans.)

"ein furchtbarer unterirdischer Donner" 'a terrible underground thunder' (91; my trans.)

Hier mähte die Sichel des Todes gleich der Sichel des Schnitters im reifen Aehrenfelde" 'Here, the sickle of death reaped like the reaper's sickle in a field of ripe ears of grain' (66; my trans.)

"2000 Leichen allein in Polla ausgegraben seien und daß die traurige Arbeit noch nicht beendet" 'Two thousand bodies alone were exhumed in Polla, and the sad work was not yet finished.' (102; my trans.)

Similes

"es lag eine Beleuchtung über der Fläche, welche mit dem Licht des Mondes einige Aehnlichkeit hatte" 'and there was an illumination over the area that bore some resemblance to moonlight' (Schnars 91; my trans.)

"große Strecken Landes wie mit dem Pfluge umgewühlt" 'arge stretches of land were plowed as if by a plow' (91; my trans.)

Motifs, Topoi, Mythologemes

Locus Amoenus

Locus Horridus

Death

Ruins

Hyperdisaster

Syntax

Hypotaxis, High Frequency Connectives, Complex Noun Phrases

Punctuation

No Peculiarities, Dashes, Multiple Commas

Morphology

High Frequency Passive Forms

"Hier mähte die Sichel des Todes gleich der Sichel des Schnitters im reifen Aehrenfelde" - Carl Wilhelm Schnars' Travel Account in the Context of the Devastating Basilicata 1857 Earthquake

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Introduction

The subject of this work is the analysis of the travelogue by the German traveler, archaeologist, and physician Carl Wilhelm Schnars (1806-1879), titled *A Journey through the Neapolitan Province of Basilicata and the Surrounding Areas: with consideration of the recent earthquake of December 16-17, 1857*. In his work, the author retraces his journey through the region of Basilicata on the eve of the disastrous 1857 earthquake.

The Basilicata Earthquake of 1857

The Basilicata earthquake of 1857 is one of the most destructive seismic events in Italian history over the past twenty-five centuries and holds significant media relevance, as it was the first to be documented through photography and the one that marks the first usage of “seismology” to refer to the science of earthquakes (Ferrari). The earthquake occurred on December 16, 1857, and unfolded in three violent shocks, occurring in quick succession at 21:15, 21:18, and 22:15, local time, with an estimated magnitude of 7.1 Mw (Galli). The epicenter was located in the town of Montemurro, in the Agri Valley (Val d’Agri). The damage was immense: several towns in the affected areas were completely destroyed, and there were thousands of deaths, injuries, and displaced people.

Most of the following written information comes largely from the research of Guidoboni and Ferrari (2004), supplemented by Racioppi (1858). The Basilicata earthquake caused widespread devastation, with 182 towns and villages across more than 20,000 square kilometers suffering extensive damage to their buildings. Many homes became uninhabitable, and in over 30 localities, covering around 3,150 square kilometers, entire settlements were reduced to rubble. In the aftermath, people noticed rising water levels in lakes and rivers; for three days, the rivers of the Vallo flowed muddy and turbulent, and on the 17th, the Agri River’s dark and threatening waves were seen to rise visibly. The loss of life was catastrophic. The highest number of victims was recorded in what are now the town of Montemurro, Grumento Nova (formerly Saponara), Viggiano, Tito, Marsico Nuovo, and Polla. Official reports, released months later, recorded 9,732 deaths in the province of Basilicata and another 1,207 in surrounding areas, for a total of 10,939 deaths. This picture is especially shocking considering that the districts of Potenza, Lagonegro, and Melfi counted only about 417,000 inhabitants in 1852. In addition to this, thousands of injured survivors received almost no aid, as the rescue efforts were both late and insufficient.

In the disaster zones, social order collapsed: there were acts of looting, vandalism, and violence. In Montemurro, for example, people from neighboring towns arrived under the pretense of retrieving bodies, only to plunder the ruins. Survivors were left to defend themselves against hunger, cold, and the brutality of these looters. Many relief workers – including soldiers, sailors, and workers – fell ill because they lacked proper winter equipment and were unaccustomed to the harsh Lucanian climate. The 450 soldiers sent by the Bourbon government were far too few to meet the enormous needs of the needy population. They often arrived late, worked ineffectively, and even harmed survivors, for example by indiscriminately burning wooden structures to stay warm. The situation was further worsened by diseases. By April, when aftershocks still continued and rains began, infectious fevers and malaria spread through the region.

Efforts to rebuild and relocate were poorly managed. Limited funds were used in questionable ways. Over 20,000 ducats were spent on the restoration of churches, chapels, and convents. 22,000 ducats were invested in the colonization of marshlands in Salerno, forcing the relocation of farming families from the earthquake zone and. Moreover. In addition, 18,000 ducats were used for local pawn funds instead of direct relief to the inhabitants of Basilicata.

The consequences were long-term. Between 1861 and 1881, the population of the worst-affected areas of Basilicata declined sharply, as residents were forced to emigrate due to misery, disease and malaria. The Englishman Theophile Roller participated directly in the distribution of aid to the population, but when he arrived in Basilicata in February 1858, he found the territory unchanged since the earthquake. (Roller 85). Charitable aid was so limited as to be “a drop in the ocean” (ibid.), with only a few makeshift huts built by individuals. The only noticeable change was the frightening increase in poverty: clothes salvaged from the rubble were worn out, resources were completely exhausted, and the poor harvest did little to compensate for the losses. Small landowners were in an even worse

condition than labourers, and bread shortages drove part of the population to the brink of starvation. Families were found living in utter destitution and near-nakedness everywhere.

The earthquake received significant media coverage, even at the international level. In the United Kingdom, Charles Dickens published an essay on the Basilicata earthquake in his magazine *Household Words* in May 1858. The essay includes testimonies from an English philanthropist, Mr. Major, who decided, in full 19th-century English spirit, to travel to the affected areas to provide aid, supported by the geologist Robert Mallet. Dickens and Major denounced the dire conditions in which the affected populations were living, blaming the local government's mismanagement and the social and economic backwardness of the ruling class.

Mallet arrived in Basilicata at the end of January 1858, just over a month after the seismic event, and traveled over 500 kilometers through the affected areas, trying to pinpoint the exact epicenter using physical and mathematical analyses. Mallet's investigation was the first to be based by using real data, collected in person, and documented using a new medium that was emerging at the time: photography. In 1862, Mallet published a volume titled *The Great Neapolitan Earthquake: The First Principles of Observational Seismology*, coining the name of the science we know today.

Remembering the 1857 Earthquake: Schnars' Perspective

Alongside the scientific and humanitarian reports written in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake, we also find narrative and reflective testimonies, such as the account of Carl Wilhelm Schnars.

Schnars was a German physician, scholar, journalist, and travel writer. Born in Hamburg in 1806 and educated in medicine and surgery at the University of Halle-Wittenberg, he initially worked as a physician before turning to journalism and travel. His travels took him through Asia Minor and Egypt, and in the 1840s he settled in Naples, where he participated in archaeological activities and joined various scientific societies.

Schnars developed a keen interest in southern Italy, especially the region of Basilicata, which he visited right before the devastating earthquake of 1857. Though not a direct witness to the disaster, he later published an account of his travels, integrating reflections on the earthquake into his narrative. His information about the disaster was drawn from newspaper reports and secondary sources. In the preface to his work, he writes: "Das allgemeine Interesse und die große Theilnahme, welche das jüngste verheerende Erdbeben im Basilicat erweckte, veranlassen mich, eine Reiseskizze aus dem Basilicat und den angrenzenden Gegenden, welche ich vor einigen Jahren dem „Ausland“ mittheilte, neu umzuarbeiten und als besondere Brochüre zu veröffentlichen" 'The widespread interest and deep concern aroused by the recent devastating earthquake in Basilicata have led me to revise and publish, as a separate brochure, a travel sketch of Basilicata and the surrounding areas, which I had shared a few years ago in *Das Ausland*' (Schnars I ; my trans.) and he further adds: "Die Reise wurde vor dem Erdbeben gemacht [...] und schildert also Ortschaften und Gegenden in ihrem früheren Zustande. Die jüngsten Ereignisse sind in Kürze, zumal sie aus den Zeitungen allgemein bekannt, den verschiedenen Orten, wo sie stattfanden einverleibt" 'The journey took place before the earthquake [...] and thus describes towns and areas in their former condition. The recent events, since they are widely known through the newspapers, have been briefly incorporated into the descriptions of the respective locations where they occurred' (ibid.).

The work blends vivid descriptions of the local population, landscapes, and customs with cultural and historical insights, offering a rare foreign perspective on one of Italy's least explored regions at the time. Basilicata was, in fact, a remote province of the Kingdom of Naples that had largely been neglected by scholars, who, in their search for a Mediterranean and classical landscape in the South, focused mainly on Naples and the Vesuvian coast (Di Liello 53). Unlike Mallet, who studied the earthquake through direct scientific observation, Schnars provides a more reflective and literary approach. His writings reflect a 19th-century European fascination with southern Italy as a land of contrasts – both beautiful and underdeveloped, rich in culture yet plagued by poverty and poor governance (Di Liello 53). His journey started from Canosa in Apulia and crossed the region

Basilicata all the way to Eboli in Campania. During his travel, Schnars visited several towns which were involved in the sisma, including Andria, Canosa, Lavello, Venosa, Barile, Rapolla, Melfi, Monticchio, Rionero, Avigliano, Potenza, Acerenza, Picerno, Vietri, Pertosa, Auletta, Bella, Polla, Saponara, Padula, Grumento, reaching finally the Vallo di Diano and Eboli.

Key linguistic features of Schnars' account

On a linguistic level, it is possible to identify five semantic fields that describe the disastrous situation through nouns, verbs, and adjectives.

The first semantic field is related to the “Erdbeben” ‘earthquake’ itself. It is described using adjectives such as “verheerend” ‘devastating’ (Schnars I; my trans.), “schwer” ‘severe’ (3; my trans.), and “furchtbar” ‘terrible’ (65; my trans.), which emphasize its seriousness. Schnars also refers to the earthquake using the compound “Erderschütterung” ‘earth tremor’ (99; my trans.), or by mentioning the numerous “Stöße” ‘shocks’ (66; my trans.), also used in the singular as “Stoß” ‘shock’ (69; my trans.). The use of definite determiners such as “dieses” ‘this’ (66; my trans.), or temporal adjectives like “das jüngste” ‘the most recent’ (43; my trans.) and “das letzte” ‘the last’ (32; my trans.), shows how clearly Schnars was aware that he was describing a highly seismic area and that in his work he was referring to the last, sadly well-known earthquake. Figures of speech are also frequently used, such as the hyperbole “die Katastrophe” ‘the catastrophe’ (67; my trans.), whose severity is conveyed in a more poetic and expressive way through the personification “Die Katastrophe trat in der Nacht ein und überraschte die Mehrzahl ihrer Opfer schlafend” ‘The catastrophe occurred during the night and caught the majority of its victims while they were sleeping’ (67; my trans.). Other metaphors that occur in the work are complex nominal groups, which are expanded through genitive modifiers such as “die Schrecknisse der Unglücksnacht” ‘the horrors of the night of misfortune’ (69; my trans.) and “das Unglück jener Schreckensstunden” ‘the misfortune of those terrifying hours’ (70; my trans.). There are also synesthetic references in the description of effects that can be perceived visually, auditorily, and olfactorily, as in the metaphor “unheimliches unterirdisches Donner und Krachen” ‘the eerie underground thunder and crashing’ (68; my trans.) and in the longer description with a metaphor and a simile “Eine halbe Stunde vor dem heftigsten Stoß, der von *furchtbarem unterirdischem Donner* begleitet war, war die Atmosphäre mit *starkem Schwefelgestank* geschwängert und es lag *eine Beleuchtung über der Fläche*, welche mit dem Licht des Mondes *einige Aehnlichkeit hatte*” ‘Half an hour before the strongest shock, which was accompanied by *a terrible underground thunder*, the atmosphere was filled with *a strong smell of sulfur*, and *there was an illumination over the area that bore some resemblance to moonlight*’ (91; my trans.).

The second identifiable semantic field is related to the effects of the earthquake on the towns of Basilicata – a subject to which Schnars devotes particular attention, probably because he had visited those places only a few months earlier and was then comparing his personal memories with the recent accounts found in newspapers and travel reports. Indeed, elements belonging to this semantic field are particularly numerous in the text. First and foremost, verbs evoking destruction, such as “heimsuchen” ‘to afflict’ (1; my trans.), “zusammenstürzen” ‘to collapse’, “zusammenfallen” ‘to collapsed’ (99; my trans.), and those referring to the tremors of the earthquake, like “erschüttern” ‘to shake’ (32; my trans.), appear frequently. The destruction of the towns is described through many support-verb constructions such as “in Trümmern dahinsinken” ‘to sink into ruins’ (34; my trans.) and “[große] Verwüstungen anrichten” ‘to cause [great] devastation’ (43; my trans.). Several participial phrases further depict the devastation of the earthquake-stricken areas, including “heimgesuchte Provinz” ‘afflicted province’ (1; my trans.), “einstürzenden Gebäuden” ‘collapsing buildings’ (65; my trans.), and the evocative “herzerreißenden, schaudererregenden Wirkungen” ‘heart-wrenching, horrifying effects’ (67; my trans.). Schnars frequently uses the expressions “das Erdbeben machte sich [irgendwo] fühlbar” ‘the earthquake was felt [somewhere]’ (7; my trans.) or “heftige Erschütterungen wurden bis [...] verspürt” ‘violent tremors were perceived as far as [...]’ (65; my trans.) to describe the perception of the earthquake in certain areas without any damage being reported to buildings or people. The nouns Schnars uses to describe the devastated landscape include, for instance, “das grausige Bild eines verworrenen Schutthaufens” ‘the horrifying sight of a chaotic pile of debris’ (67; my trans.). Hyperboles are also frequent, such as “Vignola ist eine Ruine” ‘Vignola is a ruin’ (69; my trans.), “Vi[g]giano ist der Erde gleichgemacht” ‘Viggiano is razed to the ground’ (69; my trans.),

“[Saponara] gleicht jetzt einem vollständigen Trümmerhausen” ‘[Saponara] now looks like a complete pile of rubble’ (115; my trans.). Saponara is the ancient name for the town of Grumento Nova, where the remains of the old Roman town of Grumentum are still partially to be found. Unfortunately, the 1857 earthquake destroyed a big part of them. Schnars uses a personification to describe the disaster “sind auch die Ruinen Grumentums theils von der Erde verschlungen, durcheinander gerüttelt” ‘Even the ruins of Grumentum have been partly swallowed by the earth and violently shaken.’ (115; my trans.). Schnars also includes several references to the destruction of cultural heritage sites “Im Basilicat und Principat (Provinz Salerno) gingen auch 5 Franziskanerklöster mit allen Mönchen zu Grunde.” ‘In Basilicata and Principato (province of Salerno), five Franciscan monasteries, along with all their monks, were also destroyed.’ (102; my trans.).

The third semantic field refers to the description of the effects of the earthquake on the territory and the landscape. The verbs “öffnen” ‘to open’ and “spalten” ‘to split’ are used to describe the severe deformation of the ground: “die sich spaltende und öffnende Erde” ‘the splitting and opening earth’ (65; my trans.), “hier [in Brienza] die Erde der Länge des Hauptplatzes nach öffnete” ‘here [in Brienza] the earth opened along the length of the main square’ (69; my trans.). The earthquake also has a significant impact on the ground, as represented through the simile “große Strecken Landes wie mit dem Pfluge umgewühlt” ‘arge stretches of land were plowed as if by a plow’ (91; my trans.).

The fourth semantic field identified in Schnars’ work refers to the impact of the earthquake on the population living in the areas affected by the disaster, including deaths caused by collapses or by hunger and poverty. The inhabitants are described as “die Unglücklichen” ‘the unfortunate ones’ (70; my trans.). The construction “das Leben verlieren” ‘to lose one’s life’ (32; my trans.) is recurrent. Schnars employs various figures of speech, such as the metaphors “Hier mähte die Sichel des Todes gleich der Sichel des Schnitters im reifen Aehrenfelde” ‘Here, the sickle of death reaped like the reaper’s sickle in a field of ripe ears of grain’ (66; my trans.) or “2000 Leichen allein in Polla ausgegraben seien und daß die traurige Arbeit noch nicht beendet” ‘Two thousand bodies alone were exhumed in Polla, and the sad work was not yet finished’ (102; my trans.) and poetic expressions such as “ganze Familien fanden ihren Untergang unter den Ruinen ihrer Häuser” ‘Entire families met their end beneath the ruins of their homes’ (66; my trans.). The consequences for the population are also conveyed through personifications, such as “der Schrei des Jammers durch das ganze Land ertönte” ‘The cry of anguish echoed throughout the whole land’ (68; my trans.) or “Kälte und Hunger raubten vielen Hunderten noch nach der Katastrophe das Leben” ‘Cold and hunger robbed many hundreds of their lives even after the catastrophe’ (70; my trans.).

As for the linguistic features, four levels of analysis will be examined below: narration, punctuation, lexis, and syntax.

Schnars’s narration is almost always in the first person singular, with the personal pronoun “ich” ‘I’ appearing 192 times throughout the work, for example in “Ohne große Mühe erreichte ich den höchsten Punkt...” ‘Without much effort, I reached the highest point...’ (47; my trans.) but it frequently alternates with an impersonal perspective through the use of the indefinite pronoun “man” ‘one’, for instance in “Unterirdisches Geräusch will *man* zu verschiedenen Zeiten und besonders während des letzten Erdbebens deutlich wahrgenommen haben” ‘An underground noise is said to have been clearly perceived at various times and especially during the last earthquake’ (46; my trans.). Schnars uses this shift in narrative perspective to differentiate the types of information presented in his work – namely, what he witnesses firsthand and what has been told to him or received from other sources. The use of the first-person plural narrative with the personal pronoun “wir” ‘we’ is also frequent, especially when he addresses the reader directly to guide them through the text, for instance “Treten wir jedoch die Reise an” ‘Let us, however, begin the journey’ (2; my trans.) or when recounting his experiences with various local guides and companions, such as in ‘nach einer halben Stunde waren wir bereits vom Scirocco-Regen eingeweicht’ ‘after half an hour, we were already soaked by the Scirocco rain’ (16; my trans.).

Regarding punctuation, it is worth noting the frequency of commas, which are often used for parenthetical insertions, such as in “Barile, ein Städtchen von ungefähr 3000 Einwohnern, stellt sich sehr pittoresk den Blicken dar” ‘Barile, a small town of about 3,000 inhabitants, presents itself very picturesquely to the eyes’ (33; my trans.). Commas also serve in the construction of both paratactic and hypotactic sentence structures. Schnars also uses dashes – both single and double – on several

occasions. The single dash appears more rarely, sometimes used to emphasize an element in the Nachfeld (Wöllstein *et al.* 349) “im Durchschnitt zählt man jährlich 95 Regentage – also 3 Mal mehr als in Neapel” ‘On average, there are 95 rainy days per year – that is three times more than in Naples’ (81; my trans.) or to indicate a thematic shift “[...] Potenza, wo von ungefähr 8 Professoren Mathematik, Physik, [...], Mythologie, Geographie u.s.w. gelehrt wird. – Die ökonomische Gesellschaft besteht aus ungefähr 25 Mitgliedern außer den Theilnehmern und Korrespondenten” ‘[...] Potenza, where around eight professors teach mathematics, physics, [...] mythology, geography, etc. – The economic society consists of approximately 25 members, in addition to the participants and correspondents’ (89; my trans.)

As for the lexicon, the text contains several borrowings from Italian, French, and Latin, which Schnars highlights in bold.

The author’s syntactic style is complex. This complexity occurs on multiple levels: complex noun phrases are frequent, often expanded with premodifiers on the left “eine ganze aus 7 Mitgliedern bestehende Familie” ‘a whole family consisting of 7 members’ (99; my trans.) or through relative clauses placed directly after the referent “die größere Straße, welche von Marsico Nuovo herunterkommt” ‘the larger road that comes down from Marsico Nuovo’ (111; my trans.). Indeed, there is a clear preference for the relative pronoun “welcher/welche/welches/welche”, which the author uses throughout the work a total of 231 times.

Conclusion

Schnars’ work offers a compelling perspective on the catastrophic 1857 earthquake in Basilicata, highlighting – through the lens of a foreign observer – the region’s already severe shortcomings and deep underdevelopment. In the aftermath of the disaster, Basilicata became even more inaccessible, or as Schnars himself described it, a “terra incognita” ‘uncharted land’ (Preface 1; my trans.).

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