



François-Marie Arouet (Voltaire)

1694-1778

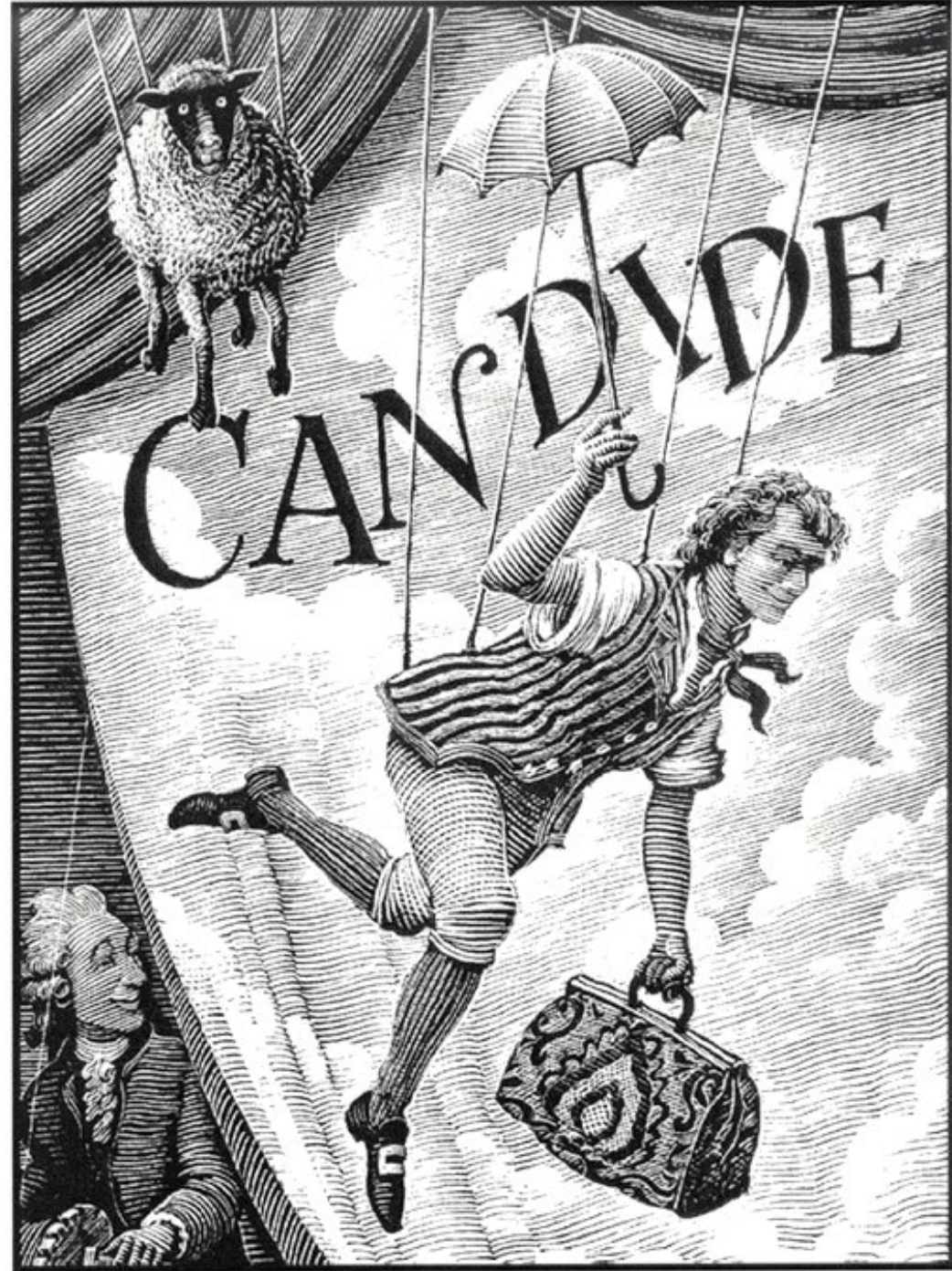
No section on Friday

Thursday 1-2

Background

History

- 1517: Martin Luther's *Theses*, Catholic and Protestant split
- 1618-1648: Thirty Years War (8,000,000 dead)
- 1710: Leibniz writes *Theodicy*, arguing that God is perfect, and that we live in the best of all possible worlds
- 1755: Lisbon earthquake, fire and tsunami. Hits on All Saints Day, kills between 20,000 and 200,000; had a huge influence on European thought
- 1759: Voltaire publishes *Candide*





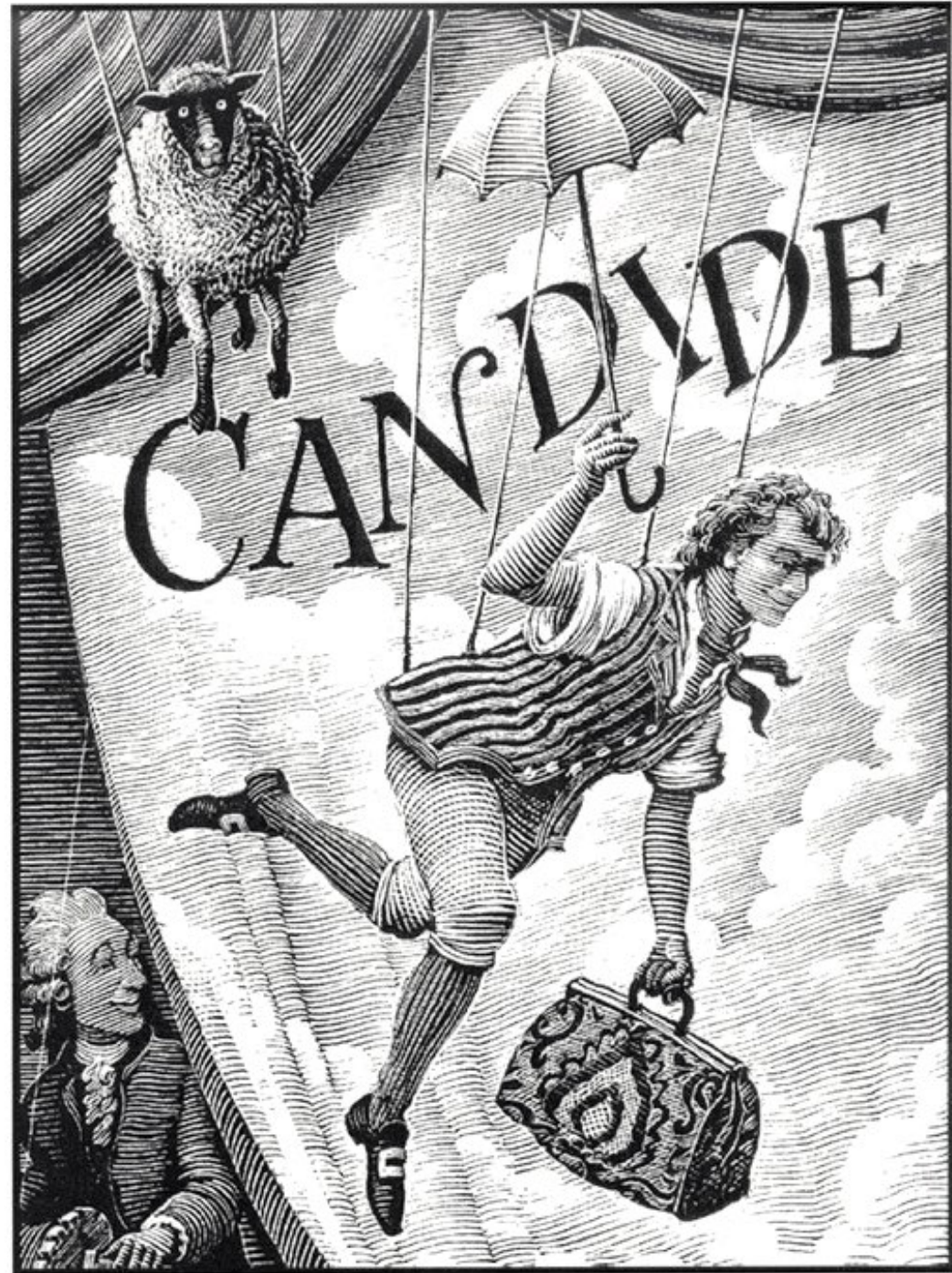






A Global Novel

- The world becomes a globe; faraway places are connected
- Candide travels throughout Europe (Chapters I-X), the Americas (Chapters XI-XX), and then Europe and the Ottoman Empire (XXI-XXX)
- In addition to Candide's point-of-view, characters come from and travel through Africa, the Russian Empire, Transylvania, Poland, Algeria, and much more
- Anthropological impulse — also imperial, colonial, racist — also humanitarian?



As they drew near the town they saw a Negro stretched on the ground with only one half of his habit, which was a kind of linen frock; for the poor man had lost his left leg and his right hand.

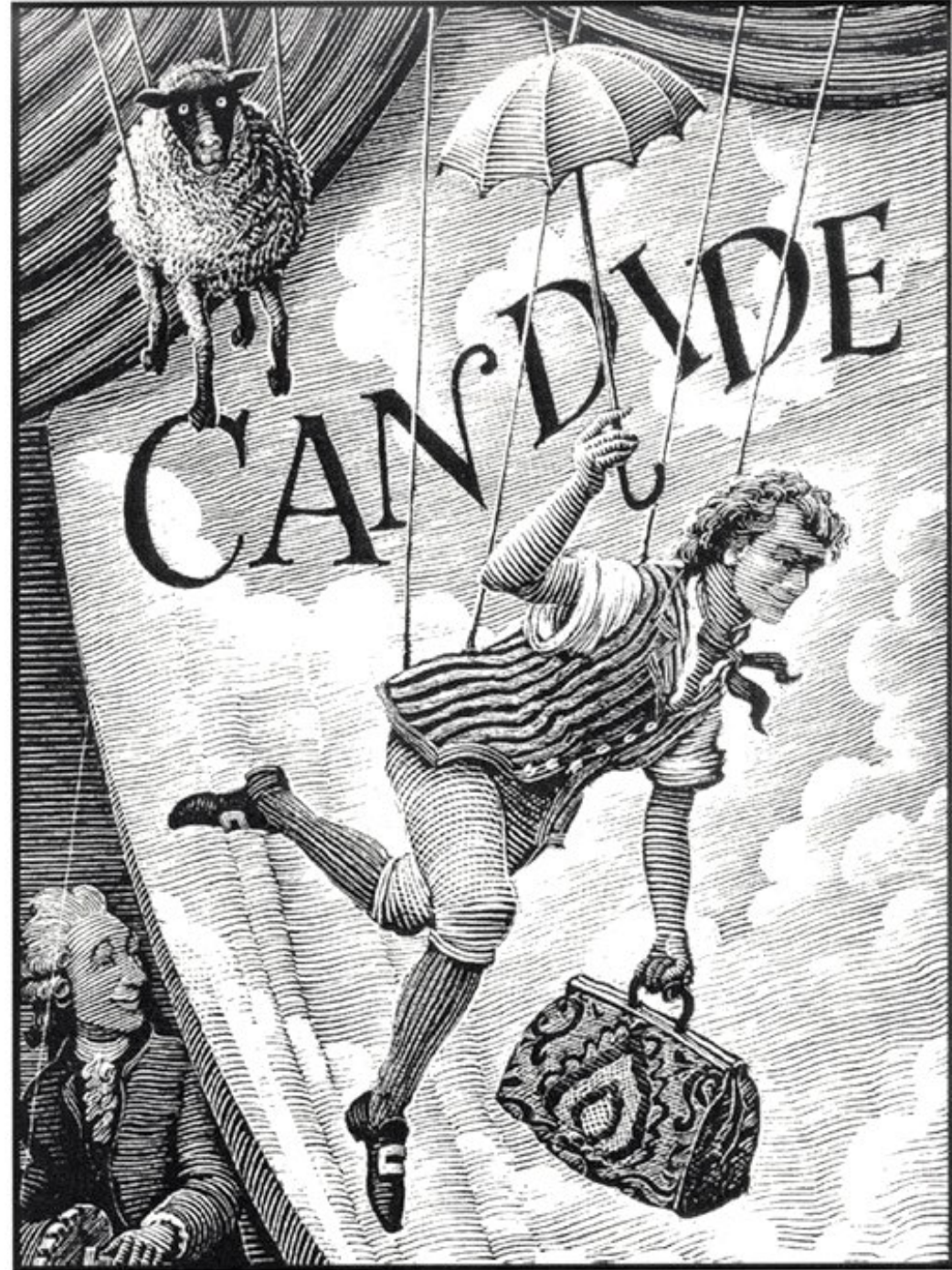
“Good God,” said Candide in Dutch, “what dost thou here, friend, in this deplorable condition?”

“It is the custom here. When we labor in the sugar works, and the mill happens to snatch hold of a finger, they instantly chop off our hand; and when we attempt to run away, they cut off a leg. Both these cases have happened to me, and it is at this expense that you eat sugar in Europe.”

“The Dutch fetishes who converted me tell me every Sunday that the blacks and whites are all children of one father, whom they call Adam. As for me, I do not understand anything of genealogies; but if what these preachers say is true, we are all second cousins; and you must allow that it is impossible to be worse treated by our relations than we are.” (XIX, 48–49)

Style

- What came before:
 - Baroque style: “marvelous,” overwhelming, opulent
 - Counter-Ref.: authority (Spanish Inquisition), tradition, censorship (*Index Librorum Prohibitorum*)
- Enlightenment
 - Neoclassical style: simple, orderly, rational
 - Enlightenment: reason, criticism, utopia



The baroque “marvelous”



Spanish Inquisition



The Index



VANDIÈRES THIAUCOURT VIGNEULLES FRESNES

ALL LIVE FOR THE





Enjoyment & Desire

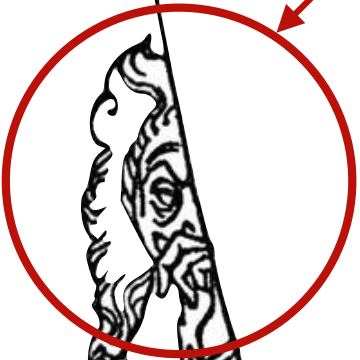
Candide & your enjoyment

- Why do we enjoy reading?
- Sex and literature; voyeurism; a “solitary pleasure”; prolonging and anticipation; *coitus interruptus*
- *Identification* is part of the structure of voyeurism





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One day when Miss Cunegund went to take a walk in a little neighboring wood which was called a park, she saw, through the bushes, the sage Doctor Pangloss giving a lecture in experimental philosophy to her mother's chambermaid, a little brown wench, very pretty, and very tractable. As Miss Cunegund had a great disposition for the sciences, she observed with the utmost attention the experiments which were repeated before her eyes; she perfectly well understood the force of the doctor's reasoning upon causes and effects. She retired greatly flurried, quite pensive and filled with the desire of knowledge, imagining that she might be a sufficient reason for young Candide, and he for her.

On her way back she happened to meet the young man; she blushed, he blushed also; she wished him a good morning in a flattering tone, he returned the salute, without knowing what he said. The next day, as they were rising from dinner, Cunegund and Candide slipped behind the screen. The miss dropped her handkerchief, the young man picked it up. She innocently took hold of his hand, and he as innocently kissed hers; their lips met; their eyes sparkled; their knees trembled; their hands strayed. The Baron chanced to come by; he beheld the cause and effect, and, without hesitation, saluted Candide with some notable kicks on the breech and drove him out of doors.



Kori Michele

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Nonbinary, very queer cartoonist. Addicted to tea and glitter and Yuri!!! on Ice. Co-editor of the Other Side Anthology. Retweets every bodega cat. They/Them!

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Follow

Candide was the classic lit I latched on to as "mine" in high school and looking back I'm not sure if it was because of the content or the super fucky Sheilah Beckett illustrations in my edition



5:19 AM - 21 Oct 2018

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Marri Lwyd 🔥 @Marri · 21 Oct 2018

Replying to @korimichele

I...I don't remember there being this many breasts in Candide





Candide & your enjoyment

- The novel as sado-masochism
- The sadism of watching others get hurt
- The masochism of identifying with those characters
- No complete fantasy possible in this novel; all frustration
- Normal comedies don't do this: humiliation is *usually* followed by sexual satisfaction (incomplete traversing of the fantasy)
- Negative enjoyment (73) and the pleasure of critique



Optimism and Pessimism

The best of all possible worlds?

- ❖ Leibniz wasn't dumb — what he meant was that, assuming there is a benevolent and all-powerful God, He must have achieved the maximum possible amount of goodness in a world that also had freewill (and hence evil)
- ❖ The calculations are clearly beyond human capacity — every event, no matter how small, over the entirety of the history of the universe, finding the best possible balance of good and evil, within the constraints of freewill and logical possibility — but that is what God has done



The best of all possible worlds?

- ❖ Srsly, this is the best we can do? Wouldn't the world be better without terrorism, wars, bad breath, earthquakes, people who don't use their turn signals, posers, Stalin, wannabes, illness, famine, that itchy spot you can't reach, Hitler, tsunamis, cancer, leeches, mosquitos, Facebook, comic sans, squeaky shoes, milk gone bad, death by fire, drowning, misery and Justin Bieber? Wouldn't it?



The optimist thinks this is the best of all possible worlds. The pessimist fears this is true.

—Oppenheimer

The best of all possible worlds?

- ❖ There is an option. Voltaire believed Leibniz's assumption was mistaken: "~~assuming there is a benevolent and all-powerful God~~"
- ❖ If there is not, then what remains is human nature. Here there are a variety of philosophical positions, from "people are pretty nice!" to "people are a**holes" — but all of them agree that people's behavior is amenable to change, ranging from persuasion and education to institutions and force.



Candide, or realism

- People are motivated by self-interest: sex, money, power; no scheme of government, no philosophy, that fails to recognize this, can succeed
- Human nature—not forces of nature, not God (who is presumed to not exist)—is the target of Voltaire's satire
- Also must be recognized: intolerance, cruelty, irrationality, superstition, etc.
- We cannot live in paradise (El Dorado) because of these impulses (but El Dorado is interesting)



Candide, or pessimism

- Candide and Pococurante (“caring little”): if we do nothing but critique, what can we enjoy?
- Teleology & social change
- Read against the grain: utopian novel with dystopian message. Does “cultivate your garden” mean “work without disputing?” How can we change?



Pococurante & negative enjoyment

Candide said to Martin, “Well, I hope you will own that [Pococurante] is the happiest of all mortals, for he is above everything he possesses.”

“But do not you see,” answered Martin, “that he likewise dislikes everything he possesses?”

“True,” said Candide, “but still there must certainly be a pleasure in criticizing everything, and in perceiving faults where others think they see beauties.”

“That is,” replied Martin, “there is a pleasure in having no pleasure.”

The negative direction of human nature

“Do you think,” said Candide, “that mankind always massacred one another as they do now? Were they always guilty of lies, fraud, treachery, ingratitude, inconstancy, envy, ambition, and cruelty? Were they always thieves, fools, cowards, gluttons, drunkards, misers, calumniators, debauchees, fanatics, and hypocrites?”

“Do you believe,” said Martin, “that hawks have always been accustomed to eat pigeons when they came in their way?”

“Doubtless,” said Candide.

Fatalism? Nihilism?

“Master, we come to entreat you to tell us why so strange an animal as man has been formed?”

“Why do you trouble your head about it?” said the dervish; “is it any business of yours?”

“What must then be done?” said Pangloss.

“Be silent,” answered the dervish.

“Work then without disputing,” said Martin;
“it is the only way to render life supportable.”



THE ENLIGHTENMENT PROJECT