

Immense Suffering and the Journey of a Refugee: Analyzing *Candide*

Rajoo Hindocha

NOTICE: This is the author's version of the following article: Hindocha, R., & Sayed, A. (2017). Immense suffering and the journey of a refugee: Analyzing *Candide*. *Interdisciplinary Dialogue Student Conference Proceedings*, 1(1). Retrieved from https://journals.macewan.ca/inter_dialogue.

Permanent link to this version <http://roam.macewan.ca/islandora/object/gm:1384>

License All Rights Reserved

Rajoo Hindocha

Dr. Asma Sayed

COMP 103

March 27, 2017

Immense Suffering and The Journey of a refugee: Analyzing *Candide*

Voltaire's *Candide* is a novel that explores how individuals suffer from moving from one place to another. The objective of this essay will be to analyze Candide the main character who suffers enormously by not being able to find a home and Cunegonde his beloved from the novel *Candide* and, to examine how their experiences are similar to the life of a refugee.

Candide relates to the journey of a refugee because a refugee must escape from chaos in his or her country to sustain life itself. Candide also shares a similar experience in that he endures this kind of suffering as well. Similarly, Cunegonde also suffered enormously in the hands of the Bulgars who invaded the Castle of Thunder-Ten-Tronckh which led to her getting stabbed and more. Ultimately, Candide and Cunegonde finally settle in the Garden of Eden which is a peaceful and safe place for them to live and their suffering ceases in this place.

Refugees must escape the chaos in their country to sustain life itself because of imminent danger and constantly being under threat by the people in power. A refugee is defined as an individual who cannot go back to their country due to a fear of being persecuted regardless of race, beliefs, and their individual identity (Moldovan 682). Although, one is entitled to having a free-will and the autonomy to make decisions clearly in the life of a refugee these rights are taken away since, they must follow the rules or get killed. A point to note is that, to flee a country for a refugee can mean to forsake everything such as family, friends, the home and more which in turn, causes a lot of distress to oneself and results in losing opportunities in life. But, in

the case of Syrian refugees they are attempting to arrive in a safe area while their homes are destroyed and their kin are killed (Yenlimiz 18). Furthermore, with analyzing the benefits and costs of refugees' migration Yenlimiz mentions that the benefits of allowing refugees into the countries involved may contribute to the health of those economies positively, and it can help politically as well (19). But, there are costs associated with allowing refugees to migrate such as, the potential for conflicts if those refugees have been pursued by their enemies which in turn, could have a negative impact on the countries involved (Yenlimiz 19). By keeping these considerations in mind one will see both perspectives that comes from the refugees themselves, and the countries who receive them. The refugees who are haunted by their fears and past experiences of leaving their country, family, friends, and arriving to a safe land requires a mutual understanding between the migrants and the country they are going to which may make the process less difficult if that is possible. The goal of this endeavor may be thought of as a journey because as refugees are coming to other countries they can experience discrimination, hate crimes, and unacceptance which causes many other issues. In short, the journey of refugees consists of a host of issues which are difficult to approach and this ties in to *Candide* and Cunegonde's suffering because they are also kicked out of their homes and more.

Candide experienced immense suffering such as, getting tortured and receiving brutal treatment for being an outsider which played a part in his constant struggle for being accepted. Candide's character was described as having a kind nature and gentle manners, but since the Baron of Thunder-Ten-Tronckh could not tolerate his daughter Cunegonde being kissed he threw Candide out (Voltaire 100-101). Also, this is the starting point for Candide's unbearable suffering because without being kicked out he would have likely never experienced this kind of suffering. Additionally, his type of suffering can be regarded as one that involves stages because,

initially there are a series of unfortunate events such as being kicked out of the castle, meeting officers who have malicious intentions, and lastly, getting captured by four Bulgars which led to his extreme torture (Voltaire 103). The reasons for the torture are basically that Candide is regarded as an intruder who is unwelcome; therefore, to annihilate this intruder the Bulgars used cruel forms of punishment such as two brutal beatings and smashing his head. The events mentioned relate to Candide's suffering because he did not have freedom of choice to live wherever he wanted to which in turn, resulted in his complete misery. On the contrary, Candide suffered a lot and it can be said that he was resilient and persistent since, he did not give up on his journey to find a place to be accepted. Therefore, regardless of encountering the Bulgars, and others who detested him he still managed to continue. For example, when he innocently asked for bread while discussing and following Dr. Pangloss' philosophy he was immediately rejected and one character called him "a rascal and a rogue" (Voltaire 104). However, unexpectedly after the orator's wife poured something on his head with contempt, Jacque, an Anabaptist, rekindled Candide's hope due to Jacque's act of benevolence (Voltaire 105). These events can relate to a refugee's life because the number of struggles they face gives fainter and fainter hope to them, but with the help of others who accept them hope will someday be revived. Candide's feelings are not too descriptive about his suffering and perhaps, a view from contemporary times may say his torture experience would be utterly despicable, awful and the highest form of injustice. Ultimately, this work reflects the times of the past and present day since, in the past individuals engaged in hating each other vehemently which is still congruent with today's reality.

Cunegonde's suffering can be defined as above and beyond a human's capacity of tolerance to deal with the Bulgar invasion in the castle of Thunder-Ten-Tronckh because she was attacked, raped and stabbed by a Bulgar soldier, but her drive to survive continued. The life of a

refugee somewhat relates to this because men in Syria who had a hard time accepting that they were refugees lead to these men projecting violence onto women for no apparent reason (Anani 76). The example above is under the assumption that the Bulgars could not accept letting their so-called enemies live and just like the refugee men they reacted violently to women for no strong reason. Note that, there were other events that took place as well in Cunegonde's life such as, the atrocious murders of her mother and father by the Bulgars (Voltaire 111). Additionally, after the Bulgar soldier completed the murder he was killed by the captain Bulgar which created further tension (Voltaire 111). Although, the captain in a way saved her from the Bulgar, the captain had a sinister motive which was keeping her as a prisoner of war rather than letting her go free (Voltaire 111). A point that requires a broader understanding of the story was when captain Bulgar used her as an object and threw her away as if she was sub-human. This example shows that irrespective of what time-period one exists in these crimes will continue no matter what. Furthermore, considering all the harrowing events that occurred in Cunegonde's life, she felt exhausted to the point of being willing to die of weakness and hopelessness as well (Voltaire 112). Another way said, to endure this high amount of suffering she felt that "her mind was chocked with the massacre of her father/ mother and more (Voltaire 112). It can be said that, Candide's suffering and Cunegonde's suffering can be compared in that they went through the harshest physical punishment such that Candide was nearly destroyed by the Bulgar soldiers while, Cunegonde got attacked and raped. In other words, both were dehumanized and disrespected to the point of losing hope completely and for quite some time not seeing each other. In short, by exploring Candide's and Cunegonde's immense suffering it is indicative of a bleak future; however, as the story is close to the end they learn to cultivate their own garden (Voltaire 159).

The suffering ceases for Candide and Cunegonde because of arriving at the Garden of Eden which was a safe place for them to live. For example, when they arrived in the Garden of Eden that environment itself is a safe-haven for being who they want to be which was based on finding a purpose, being objective and completing tasks in the absence of those horrific events from the past. In other words, to redefine their own identities and return to a functional life was made possible by enduring the suffering and then rising above it. For example, Pangloss mentions that the events such as being forced out of the Baron's castle and more contributed to how they reached this destination; hence, the events share a connection (Voltaire 159). Furthermore, there is a strong relationship between a refugee's life and wanting to find solace in a safer country. One of the central messages of this work can appeal to those who are suffering because the people such as refugees are dealing with immense pain; therefore, the future is uncertain just like Candide and Cunegonde experienced. Ultimately, Candide and Cunegonde despite suffering enormously fostered their growth by working on the garden which symbolized hope for the future.

The suffering that Candide and Cunegonde went through consisted of pain and misery which led to some dire consequences. Considering that, a refugee also has similar experiences such as, not being accepted into society and being faced with discrimination. But, after Candide and Cunegonde were rendered helpless a hope was brought to their life which was coming together again and ultimately, reaching the Garden of Eden. Lastly, the fate of refugees remains uncertain and the calamity they are faced with is a true reflection of today's reality.

Works Cited

Anani, Ghida. "Dimensions of Gender-based Violence Against Syrian Refugees in Lebanon."

Forced Migration Review, vol. 1, no.44, 2013. pp. 75-78.

Moldovan, Carmen. "The Notion Of Refugee. Definition And Distinctions." *Centre for*

European Studies, vol. 8, no.4, 2016. pp. 681-688.

Voltaire. "Candide." *The Norton Anthology of World Literature*, edited by Martin Puchner, W.W

Norton & Company, 2012, pp. 100- 159.

Yenilmez, Y. Meltem. "The Thematic Articles: Inside the Refugees' Crisis." *Journal of Identity*

& Migration Studies, vol. 10, no.2, 2016. pp. 2-22.