A Tale of Three Candides: Sfar, Meyran and Delcourt Recount Voltaire

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Abstract

Since the millennium, *bande dessinée* artists have retold Voltaire's *Candide* three times. The first *Candide* is by Joann Sfar, the second by Philippe Meyran, and the third, by Gorian Delpâture, Michel Dufranne and Vujadin Radovanovic, is being published by Delcourt. This article begins with a brief presentation of the work. Taking our three *Candides* in chronological order, I then examine how Sfar, Meyran and the Delcourt version retell the story. Specific excerpts are studied, with emphasis on how far they convey Voltaire's irony. We shall see how Sfar finds new ways to infuse Candide with irony. Analogies with medieval illuminations intimate that the great iconoclast is being sanctified. Moreover, Sfar's grotesque artwork contrasts with Voltaire's elegant prose. Thus, Sfar adds a visual dimension to Voltaire's incongruities between what is said and what is meant. Sfar also jokes about ideas raised by Voltaire including philosophical optimism, anti-Semitism and Utopianism. Meyran depicts the hero's sequence of misfortunes with faux naïf caricature. Thus, he makes visible an incongruity between narrative developments and the manner of their recounting. Yet Meyran usually weakens (or eliminates) irony, while playing down philosophical and polemical issues. The Delcourt version employs elegant, technically accomplished artwork. The narrative is not without irony although engagement is intermittent. This work places emphasis on recounting a fast-moving adventure rather than elaborating upon the story's philosophical underpinnings.

Keywords: Voltaire, *bande dessinée*, irony

Introduction

Since the millennium, *bande dessinée* artists have recounted Voltaire's eighteenth-century philosophical tale *Candide* three times.[1] As yet that curious fact has aroused no critical interest. The first *Candide* is by Joann Sfar, who is one of today's most prolific artists.[2] *Candide* is not one of Sfar's better-known works. He is more famous for *Le Chat du Rabbin* [The Rabbi's Cat] and *Klezmer*, which combine unconventional plots with questions of Jewish identity.[3] The second *Candide*, with a print run limited to twenty-five, is by Philippe Meyran, an amateur enthusiast.[4] The third *Candide*, authored by Gorian Delpâture, Michel Dufranne and Vujadin Radovanovic, is currently being published in Delcourt's popular classics series Ex-Libris.[5]

The present article begins by examining the peculiar attraction *Candide* exerts over twenty-first-century *bande dessinée* artists. Next I analyse how their text/image combinations recount *Candide*. The story's rapidly unfolding twists, turns and digressions cannot all be considered here. I have therefore selected representative excerpts. *Candide* is familiar to the French reading public, but for anglophones a brief summary may be required. My theoretical approach must also be outlined before we consider specific examples. Let us start with a brief resumé of the plot.

Candide grows up in a tumbledown German castle with the baron's daughter Cunégonde. The youngsters admire their tutor Pangloss, a philosophical optimist who teaches that they are living in 'le meilleur des mondes possibles' [the best of all possible worlds].[6] Candide and Cunégonde embrace; they are discovered by the baron who throws Candide out. Candide is plunged into a series of misadventures including war, shipwreck, earthquake and arrest by the Inqusition. He runs into Pangloss, who informs him that the castle has been pillaged and its inhabitants scattered. An old woman unexpectedly reintroduces Candide to Cunégonde, who is now a courtisane. They flee to Argentina, where the governor covets Cunégonde and threatens Candide. Candide

1 Voltaire (François-Marie Arouet), *Candide ou l'optimisme*, first published 1759; revised 1761. We refer to the 1761 edition published in *Voltaire: Contes et romans* [Voltaire: Tales and Novels], ed. F. Deloffre (Paris: Gallimard [Pléiade], 1979), 145–233.

2 Joann Sfar, *Candide: Voltaire* (Paris: Bréal, 2003).

3 Joann Sfar, *Le Chat du Rabbin*, 5 vols (Paris: Dargaud, 2002–2006); *Klezmer*, 3 vols (Paris: Gallimard, 2005–2007).

4 Philippe Meyran, *Candide d'après l'oeuvre de Voltaire* [Voltaire's Candide] (Mont de Marsan: Bulles d'Encre, 2004).

5 Gorian Delpâture, Michel Dufranne and Vujadin Radovanovic, *Candide ou l'optimisme de Voltaire*, 2 vols (Paris: Delcourt, 2008–2010).

6 Voltaire, *Candide ou l'optimisme*, 146.

escapes into the wilderness and he stumbles across Eldorado. His stay there is brief, as he wants to rescue Cunégonde and live on Eldoradan treasure. Candide sails homeward, having despatched his servant to buy Cunégonde back. After various mishaps in Europe, Candide marries Cunégonde and buys a small farm.

Pangloss's teachings, echoed by Candide and Cunégonde, parody those of the German philosopher Gottfried Leibniz. In his *Essais de Théodicée* [Essays of Theodicy] (1710), Leibniz attempted to reconcile divine omnipotence with evil. He postulated that God had created the best possible world. Therefore, if we understand God's pre-ordained harmony, we shall appreciate how every event, however negative, is justifiable in a positive way. For the Leibnizian optimist 'evil has no absolute existence, but is merely a means to good and consequently part of God's benevolent scheme of things'.[7] The litany of misfortunes which befall the characters gives philosophical optimism the lie.

Irony is essential to Voltaire's parodies: the narrator humorously imitates Leibniz, evoking calamity after calamity as positive developments; thus, incongruities arise between what is said and what is meant. Moreover, Voltaire does not only parody Leibniz. 'Irony ... forms an essential part of the whole conception of *Candide*, because the book is above all an attack on systems of thought and attitudes of mind which divorce men [*sic*] from from reality and reason.'[8] Voltaire also parodies war, fundamentalism and politico-economic repression, recounting them as if they were rational, sensible and beneficial. Systematic contradictions between catastrophic developments and the manner of their recounting generate humour: 'il y une contradiction entre la nature des événements et la manière dont ils sont rapportés: c'est là une des techniques éprouvées du comique' [there is a contradiction between the nature of the events and the manner in which they are reported: that is one of the comedy's proven techniques].[9] Recounting *Candide* raises the question of how to convey irony.

My theoretical approach is informed by adaptation scholars, principally Linda Hutcheon, whose writings on postmodernism also shed useful light.[10] Adaptation scholars have discredited fidelity to an

7 W.H. Barber, *Voltaire: Candide* (London: Edward Arnold [Studies in French Literature 5], 1960; repr. 1984), 20.

8 W.H. Barber, *Voltaire: Candide*, 39.

9 Jean Sareil, *Essai sur Candide* (Geneva: Droz, 1967), 82.

10 Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation* (London: Routledge, 2006). Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (New York and London: Routledge, 1988, repr. 2000).

original source as the focus for critical analysis. Hutcheon argues that fidelity is too subjective to be a useful criterion, and that over-emphasizing it implies adaptations are secondary. Rather than debating fidelity, she defines adaptation as 'a form of repetition without replication'.[11] Adaptations from novels to films are particularly popular, although the process also operates in the other direction. Adaptations to and from graphic novels, plays, operas, ballets, video games and theme parks also abound. The audience is immersed in different ways when a work is adapted from one 'mode of engagement' to another; as a result, the adapted work gains as well as loses.[12] Accordingly, my article does not assess how faithfully Sfar, Meyran and the Delcourt authors adhere to *Candide*. My purpose is rather to investigate the process through which the tale is adapted onto text/image combinations. Yet before we embark on that analysis a preliminary question arises. Within the French literary canon, *Candide* alone has prompted as many as three retellings by BD artists. Why does *Candide* enjoy such appeal?

Why Three *Candides*?

The resurgent popularity of *Candide* is part of a wider trend: the exponential rise in the number of BD albums adapted from French literary texts. Such adaptations go back to Philippe Druillet's SF remake of Gustave Flaubert's *Salammbô* of 1862, although they have only consitituted a major tendency since 2006.[13] The market-leader Ex-Libris carries, amongst others, Molière's *Tartuffe* (1669) and Balzac's *Père Goriot* [Old Goriot] (1835).[14] Petit à Petit has published Corneille's *Le Cid* (1637), Flaubert's *Trois Contes* [Three Tales] (1877) and more.[15] The fashion for such canonical literature evinces the ongoing 'drive to legitimate the medium' which Bart Beaty has examined.[16]

11 Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*, xvi.

12 Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*, 22–24.

13 Thierry Groensteen, *La Bande dessinée: Son histoire et ses maîtres* [The Bande Dessinée: Its History and its Masters] (Paris: Skira Flammarion, 2009), 186. Philippe Druillet, *Salammbô* (Paris: Humanoïdes associés, 1980).

14 Fred Duval, Zanzim and Hubert, *Tartuffe*, 3 vols (Paris: Delcourt, 2008–2010); Pierre Lamy, Philippe Thirault and Bruno Duhamel, *Le Père Goriot d'Honoré de Balzac*, 2 vols (Paris: Delcourt, 2009–2010).

15 Jean-Louis Mennetrier, Christophe Billard and Oliv', *Le Cid: Une tragi-comédie de Pierre Corneille* [Pierre Corneille's Tragi-Comedy Le Cid] (Darnétal: Petit à Petit, 2006); Mathieu Binan, Luc Duthil, Olivier Desvaux, Laurence Clément and Julien Lamanda, *Trois Contes* (Darnétal: Petit à Petit, 2007).

16 Bart Beaty, *Unpopular Culture: Transforming the European Comic Book in the 1990s* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 14.

The Ninth Art's quest for a legitimate place within the established culture has persistently involved dismantling barriers between BDs and more highly esteemed art forms. From the 1970s, artists, seeking new literary possibilities in characterization and plotting, turned towards the graphic novel. During the 1990s, 'the ground shifted to favour the visual realm, with stronger connections to the fine arts'.[17] At the same time, the rise of autobiography legimitized cartoonists as authors.

The quest remains but partly fulfilled. As Thierry Groensteen writes: 'La bande dessinée est une forme artistique qui a longtemps été (et continue en partie d'être) faiblement légitimée, suspectée de vulgarité, d'infantilisme, d'insignifiance artistique' [The *bande dessinée* is an artistic form which was for a long time (and still in part is) not fully legitimized, suspected of vulgarity, infantilism and artistic insignificance].[18] Since the millennium, the ground has arguably been shifting back towards the literary realm: rapprochement with canonical texts currently promises legitimacy. In such a climate, *Candide* is a strong contender. Although *Candide* is canonical literature, it has much in common with adventure comics, novels and films: the episodic story is structured around the exploits of a brave, generous, peripatetic young man; emphasis is on action not on philosophical or psychological analysis; secondary characters unexpectedly reappear. The villains are easily recognizable: warmongers, hypocrites, the clergy, worshippers of money and power.

To add to its attraction, *Candide* anticipated postmodern practices by mixing high and low art forms with irony. Citing films (such as *The Name of the Rose* which fuses religious history with a detective story), Hutcheon comments that postmodernism 'does indeed "close the gap" ... between high and low art forms, and it does so through the ironizing of both'.[19] If Hutcheon is correct, then *Candide* was prescient. Voltaire raised questions worthy of erudite tomes; but he parodied philosophizing with prose fiction, a form his peers deemed lightweight; parody is still thought trivial to this day.[20] Moreover, Voltaire ironically imitated popular writers as well as philosophers: *Candide* parodied 'epico-heroic, pastoral, picaresque and utopian adventure-romances';[21] that is why the

17 Bart Beaty, *Unpopular Culture*, 54.

18 Thierry Groensteen, *Parodies: La Bande dessinée au second degré* [Parodies: Comics between the Lines] (Paris: Skira Flammarion, 2010), 9.

19 Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, 44. Hutcheon is quoting Leslie Fiedler

20 William Bottiglia, *Voltaire's Candide: Analysis of a Classic* (Geneva: Les Délices, 1959), 66. Thierry Groensteen, *Parodies: La Bande dessinée au second degré*, 10.

21 William Bottiglia, *Voltaire's Candide: Analysis of a Classic*, 34.

hero is lachrymose and buffeted by events; most of his journeys involve running away. Voltaire was not a precursor of postmodernism. His deism and his belief in Enlightenment principles distance him from his successors. Furthermore, Voltaire would have had no truck with the postmodern ethos of 'collapsing the high/low art hierarchy of earlier times'.[22] The author of *Candide* was not an apologist for art he considered low-brow. Nevertheless, Voltaire closed the gap between high and low by 'the ironizing of both' two centuries before postmodernism.

Sfar's *Candide* is the most affected by such ideas: he too closes gaps between high and low culture by making parodies of both; Sfar's extratextual sources range from Antoine Watteau to Little Red Riding Hood. Like postmodernists, Sfar views the cultural hierarchy with irony: he ironizes not only about Voltaire's canonical status, but also about his own subordination. Meyran and Delcourt are more conservative: they transpose *Candide* into period costume dramas, without questioning the prevailing hierarchy.

Candide holds yet another potential attraction, particularly for BD artists. The tale, again presciently closing gaps between high and low culture, bears similarities to a comic strip. Voltaire's prose style, especially in the chapters up to Eldorado, is characterized by short sentences and phrases; verbs describing actions abound but connectors are minimized. Thus, succeeding misfortunes unfold through rapid sequences of juxtapositions. Pascal Debailly is one of many to comment on the fact: 'Les faits sont juxtaposés les uns aux autres ou simplement coordonnés par "et" ... L'abondance des verbes constitue un autre facteur de rapidité' [Events are juxtaposed to each other or simply coordinated by "et" ... The abundance of verbs constitutes another accelerating factor].[23] As has also been noticed, the effect produced is not unlike cartoon animation. According to Jean-Pierre Bigel, the end of chapter I resembles a 'dessin animé' [animated cartoon] because 'les actions sont nombreuses, se suivent rapidement, simplement juxtaposées' [the numerous actions follow each other rapidly, simply juxtaposed].[24] Sfar points out too that 'les scènes s'entrechoquent à un rythme effréné' [the scenes jostle together at a frantic rhythm] as in 'des dessins animés de *Tom et Jerry*' [*Tom and Jerry* animated cartoons].[25]

22 Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, 61.

23 Pascal Debailly, *Voltaire: Candide* (Paris: Hatier, 1986), 30.

24 Jean-Pierre Bigel, '*Candide*, du Château au jardin' [*Candide* from the Castle to the Garden], in *Analyses et réflexions sur* Candide *de Voltaire*, ed. Jean-Paul Fenaux (Paris: Ellipses, 1982), 65–71; 68.

25 Joann Sfar, *Candide: Voltaire*, 77.

The analogy with animated cartoons stretches to comics. Indeed, comics are arguably still more like *Candide*. Adapting *Candide* to animation transposes it from written words onto film; writing engages the imagination, whereas film communicates visually and aurally. Adapting *Candide* to comics is different, because comics incorporate writing and pictures into sequences of unmoving panels. As in cartoon films, the pictures show actions, characters, gestures, décor, and so on. Nevertheless, as in *Candide*, the imagination remains actively engaged in bringing the story to life: readers animate the sequences by forming mental images of what happens in the gutters; we conjure up voices, sounds and music; texts may recount events which pictures do not show, thereby encouraging readers to visualize what is not depicted. To continue the analogy, comics do not have images projected onto a screen frame by frame: images are printed one after the other. Consequently, as in *Candide*, the rapidly unfolding actions succeed one another across and down the page in sequenced juxtaposition.[26] The reader sets the pace, accelerating or decelerating the narrative.

Juxtaposed and speeded up actions, whether in written prose, cartoon films or comics, excel at extracting humour from misfortune. Candide getting a thrashing, Haddock taking a tumble or Tom tormented by Jerry are only afflicted during the passing moment. They recover exceptionally rapidly, the lack of naturalism making their hardships more entertaining than distressing. Sareil's observation holds true for countless comics and cartoon films: 'Tous ces malheurs ne sont acceptables que parce qu'ils sont divertissants; ils glissent sur les personnages qu'ils n'affectent que sur le moment et pendant leur durée' [All of these misfortunes are only acceptable because they are amusing; they roll off the characters like water off a duck's back, affecting them only for the moment and for their duration].[27] However, Voltaire's humour has a cutting edge lacking in *Tom and Jerry* or *Tintin* because he depicts devastating natural and human tragedies – earthquake and sexual assault to name but two; hence his characteristic incongruity between events and the manner in which they are recounted. Again we come up against the irony in *Candide*.

Candide seems perfect for twenty-first-century BD adapters: the tale mixes high and low culture with contemporary resonance, irony and

26 As Pierre Fresnault-Deruelle said of relations between panels: 'nous pouvons tout aussi bien ramener la B.D. à une immense juxtaposition d'éléments narratifs' [we can just as easily reduce comics to an immense juxtaposition of narrative elements]: Pierre Fresnault Deruelle, *La Bande dessinée: Essai d'analyse sémiotique* (Paris: Hachette, 1972), 52.

27 Jean Sareil, *Essai sur Candide*, 89.

chance similarities to comics. Yet if *Candide* is now performing a legitimizing function, then still more irony is at work: historical irony. *Candide* was called subversive, even obscene at its time of writing, while prose fiction and parody were inferior. Today, that situation is neatly reversed: Voltaire's transgressive prose parody confers respectable gravitas.

Three Ways to Recount *Candide*

Sfar's *Candide* repeats Voltaire's text verbatim. Dramatic moments, such as the earthquake and the pillaged castle,[28] are shown in individual pictures taking up an entire page, but the margins are full of Sfar's own words and images. The reader is immersed in the rapid flow of Voltaire's writing until he/she pauses to look at a picture or is led off into the margin. The marginalia comprise single-picture vignettes and short sequences of inter-linked images resembling mini comic strips. What happens in margins, rather than illustrating the story, provides visual prompts, brief annotations and fleeting asides. Visually, Sfar's predecessors are twelfth- and thirteenth-century illuminated books of hours and psalters. The 'rapid, linear, almost "cartoon-like" style'[29] recalls the illuminators, albeit with more comic strip devices, particularly panels and speech balloons. Aware of the genealogy, Sfar mentions his 'enluminures désastreuses et pantalonnades' [disastrous illuminations and tomfoolery] on the title page.

For all their humorous and sometimes bawdy marginalia, illuminated prayerbooks were venerated religious writings. Sfar's chosen form implies, by analogy, that *Candide* is similarly revered. Yet Sfar's homage is not without irony: an author notoriously sceptical about sacred texts is supposedly being sanctified. Sfar's text/image combinations are a still more ironic take if one concurs with Jean Werth that humorous marginalia was chiefly designed to combat the reader's boredom: 'les drôleries sont un remède contre l'ennui et … leur lien privilégié avec les livres de dévotion tient à la monotonie de la prière des heures [the jocular additions are a remedy against boredom and … their privileged connection with religious books is due to the monotony of prayer in books of hours].[30] If that is the case, then Sfar is enlivening august and

28 Joann Sfar, *Candide: Voltaire*, 35 and 44.

29 Michael Camille, *Image on the Edge: The Margins of Medieval Art* (London: Reaktion, 1992), 50. Camille is referring to the prayerbook *Marguerite's Hours*.

30 Jean Werth, *Les Marges à drôleries des manuscrits gothiques* [Comic Marginalia in Gothic Manuscripts] (Geneva: Droz, 2008), 363.

time-honoured writing, which is read partly out of duty. However, the irony is also self-deprecating: relegated to the periphery, the BD artist is literally marginalized by Voltaire. Sfar's ironizing about the high/low cultural hierarchy is first apparent in his unusual mode of retelling *Candide*.

Sfar and the illuminators frequently show the artist at work but with a significant difference: 'The modern notion of self-expression, which allows the creator to impose his or her self as the object and centre of attention, was unknown'.[31] Sfar, being from a different era, is not averse to putting himself forward. One instance, occupying an entire page, reflects on the adaptation process. Sfar discusses how to approach *Candide*. He weighs up various possibilities, eventually deciding:

> Oublier le conte philosophique. Oublier le désarroi et la colère de Voltaire face aux horreurs réelles. Garder les images. Les vraies images étranges du vrai conte qui se dégagent du texte ... rendre ces images-là saisissables à l'œil et ne surtout pas surenchérir aux effets déjà présents dans le texte.
>
> [Forget the philosophical tale. Forget Voltaire's anger and distress in the face of real horrors. Keep the images. The true images of the true story which emerge from the text. Make those images perceptible to the eye and above all do not try to outmatch effects already present in the text.][32]

Sfar's interpolation both problematizes fidelity and sheds light on how he recreates *Candide*. In so far as décor and characters are lightly sketched in, Sfar remains true to *Candide*. Dumeste's statement fits Sfar: 'Portraits et descriptions se réduisent au strict minimum. Le physique des personnages n'est qu'esquissé ... . Le Nouveau Monde n'est évoqué que par quelques animaux ou quelques plantes' [Portraits and descriptions are reduced to the strict minimum. The characters' physical aspect is only sketched in ... . The New World is only evoked by a few animals and plants].[33]

Nonetheless, Sfar departs from *Candide* on several counts. The grotesque mock-horror of Sfar's artwork is at variance with Voltaire's refined, calculatedly euphemistic prose, which often appears in captions. By that means, Sfar fashions a visual dimension for ironic contradictions between 'la nature des événements et la manière dont ils sont rapportés' [the nature of events and the manner in which they are reported].[34] Sfar's effect is particularly powerful at the more dramatic moments, such as

31 Michael Camille, *Image on the Edge: The Margins of Medieval Art*, 150.

32 Joann Sfar, *Candide: Voltaire*, 77. Sfar's use of 'surenchérir' is unusual. The verb is not normally followed by 'aux' and it literally means to 'outbid'.

33 Marie-Hélène Dumeste, *Candide ou l'optimisme (1759)* (Paris: Hatier, 2001), 92.

34 Jean Sareil, *Essai sur Candide*, 82.

the rape of Cunégonde or Pangloss being hanged by the Inquisition.[35] Sfar's *Candide* is peppered with gross, everyday colloquialisms, which again create incongruities with Voltaire's exquisitely mannered prose. Sfar passes over some episodes without comment (for example Buenos Aires in chapter XIII). Sfar's parodies draw upon different sources from those of Voltaire: a portrait of Candide, the baron and family lampoons Watteau; a scene in Eldorado echoes Haddock's Andean misfortunes.[36] As the following pages demonstrate, Sfar's word/image combinations branch out from Voltaire. His digressions not only explore philosophical underpinnings, but also amplify irony and parody beyond the effects Voltaire produces. Despite Sfar's stated aims, he does not and cannot remain true to *Candide*. In fact, Sfar barely even conforms to his own definition of 'true'.

Meyran and the Delcourt version transpose the plot-line onto conventional comic strips, without directing any irony at the text or at its adapters: events are divided into sequenced panels; those panels depict characters in action amid surrounding décor; narrators speak in captions and characters speak in balloons. Meyran conserves the bulk of Voltaire's writing albeit with paraphrasings, summaries and omissions; like Sfar, he introduces colloquialisms. As befits a strip by a do-it-yourself enthusiast, many captions have been painstakingly cut out by hand and then stuck in above the picture. The pages mostly comprise six rectangular, roughly equal-sized panels with hand-drawn borders. Meyran's artwork provides the texts with an illustrative accompaniment, even at the risk of redundancy: the narrative pace is not infrequently slowed by reduplicated information. Meyran's graphic style recalls Christophe Blain's seafaring saga *Isaac le pirate*: there is 'naïve use of line strokes, making characters whose physical features are little more than stock cartoon attributes'; the décor contains 'cameo details that bring the period to life'.[37] Candide's innocent face is reduced to the simplest of traits, while cartooning is embellished by caricature: stars for pain, question marks for surprise, sweat beads and onomatopoeia. Thus Meyran generates irony visually: he evokes contradictions between catastrophic events and the Panglossian manner of their recounting; the catalogue of disasters is drawn in incongruous *fausse naïveté*.

35 Joann Sfar, *Candide: Voltaire*, 46 and 49.

36 Joann Sfar, *Candide: Voltaire*, 13 and 86. Hergé, *Le Temple du soleil* [Prisoners of the Sun] (Tournai: Casterman, 1949).

37 Laurence Grove, *Comics in French: The European Bande Dessinée in Context* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2010), 194. Christophe Blain, *Isaac le pirate*, 5 vols (Paris: Dargaud, 2001–2005).

The Delcourt version broadly adheres to Voltaire's elevated register, although the text is pruned back to give pictures greater narrative responsibility. The scenario contains much spectacular action, with catastrophes succeeding one another in elegant sequences of juxtaposed panels. Visual possibilities are extensively exploited. Characters' faces are expressive and colours are evocative. Grotesquerie and caricature mingle with detailed eighteenth-century sailing ships, costumes, architecture and interiors. The same page layout is rarely repeated two pages running, while panels appear in all shapes and sizes. There are cinematic close-ups, medium shots, long shots and low/high-angled shots: Candide's first amorous encounter with Cunégonde is recounted by small, silent, fleeting vignettes zooming in on their intimacy; later Candide rides across a map of Spain, obviating a textual explanation; his arrival in Cadiz is an aerial view; the text disappears at moments of high drama which lend themselves well to visual representation, such as the storm-tossed ship and the earthquake.[38] Having less text accelerates the already rapid pace, by partially avoiding redundancy. Text reduction also removes verbal ironies which, as we shall see, are often reinstated in collaboration with the images.

The Optimist's Castle

Let us investigate in greater detail how Sfar, Meyran and the Delcourt version implement the adaptive process which Hutcheon termed 'repetition without replication'.[39] We begin with the introductory paragraphs from *Candide*. The story opens in a bleak old German castle belonging to the baron, who is one of the most powerful lords in the region 'car son château avait une porte et des fenêtres' [because his castle had a door and windows].[40] Voltaire's fallacious association implies that the baron's status is a pretence. In a brief aside we hear: 'Tous les chiens de ses basses-cours composaient une meute dans le besoin' [All of his farmyard dogs formed a pack of hounds when the need arose].[41] The lack of hunting hounds suggests the castle is down at heel.

Sfar depicts a shabby-looking castle whose door and windows, though plainly visible, are marked out by words and arrows (see Fig. 1).[42] Thus

38 Gorian Delpâture, Michel Dufranne and Vujadin Radovanovic, *Candide ou l'optimisme de Voltaire*, vol. I, 5, 30–31 and 37; vol. II, 11.
39 Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*, xvi.
40 Voltaire, *Candide ou l'optimisme*, 145.
41 Voltaire, *Candide ou l'optimisme*, 146.
42 Joann Sfar, *Candide: Voltaire*, 10.

Figure 1: Sfar, The Optimist's Castle, ©Bréal, 2003.

he accentuates verbal irony through deliberate text/image redundancy. The same picture lingers over the hounds. Two peasants ask the baron, who is accompanied by his dogs, 'que comptez-vous chasser flanqué d'un tel équipage?' [what do you expect to hunt with a bunch like that?], and he replies 'le naturel'. The baron alludes to a proverb: 'chassez le naturel, il revient au galop' [drive out what is natural and it comes galloping back], indicating that it is impossible to rid ourselves of natural tendencies.[43] Sfar's quip enlarges on the idea that the castle is based on a pretence: nobody can drive out what is natural.

43 Alain Rey and Sophie Chantreau, *Dictionnaire des expressions et locutions* (Paris: Robert, 1991), 624.

Meyran's castle is less shabby. The justification for the baron's power is reproduced while the door and windows are visible in the background (see Fig. 2).[44] The two words 'portes' and 'fenêtres' no longer accentuate irony by intruding into the picture; instead, they are unobtrusively worked into a caption. Meyran makes no mention of hounds. The Delcourt version's opening panel foregoes verbal ironies about doors, windows and hounds; but the artist, producing irony visually, pretends to take Voltaire's words at face value (see Fig. 3):[45] a too-perfect, Disneyesque castle stands in a pristine landscape.

Pangloss proceeds to give Candide and Cunégonde their lesson in optimism. As critics note, he distorts Leibniz's words: 'Voltaire frequently and wilfully misunderstood or exaggerated his [Leibniz's] ideas to suit his own purposes. Particularly demonstrable is the leitmotiv of *Candide*: "this is the best of all possible worlds".'[46] Amongst much else, Pangloss's parody of Leibniz asserts that:

> tout étant fait pour une fin, tout est nécessairement pour la meilleure fin. Remarquez bien que les nez ont été faits pour porter des lunettes, aussi avons-nous des lunettes [everything having been made for an end, everything is necessarily for the best end. Notice that noses were made to wear spectacles, therefore we have spectacles].[47]

Of course, the end is not necessarily the best end. Moreover Pangloss, connecting what is unrelated, leaps from universal generalizations to spectacles and noses.

Sfar's six pictures running down the margin constitute a mini gag, which hinges on changing the meaning of the word 'possible' (see Fig. 4).[48] Leibniz 'often urges that the objects of definitions must be shown to be *possible* ... . A possible idea, for him, is one which is not self-contradictory'.[49] Sfar's Candide complains that his baba would taste better with rum than with beer. Pangloss explains that Candide's baba may not be the best one of all, but it is the best possible as rum is too expensive. 'Possible', losing its Leibnizian connotations, now means contingent on economic conditions in the seedy castle. Candide,

44 Philippe Meyran, *Candide d'après l'oeuvre de Voltaire*, 1.

45 Gorian Delpâture, Michel Dufranne and Vujadin Radovanovic, *Candide ou l'optimisme de Voltaire*, vol. I, 1.

46 Bettina L. Knapp, *Voltaire Revisited* (New York: Twayne [Twayne's World Author Series 889], 2000), 173.

47 Voltaire, *Candide ou l'optimisme*, 146.

48 Joann Sfar, *Candide: Voltaire*, 12.

49 Bertrand Russell, *The Philosophy of Leibniz* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1900), 19. Russell's italics.

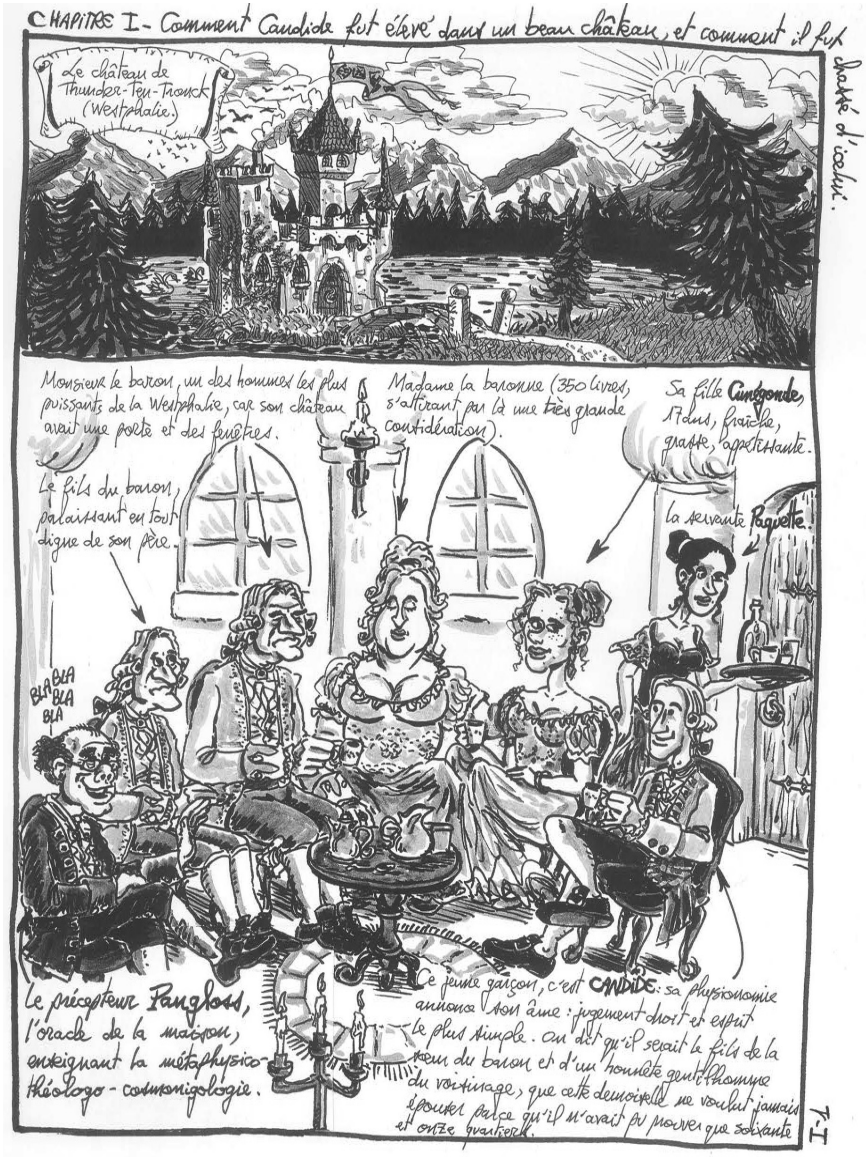

Figure 2: Meyran, The Optimist's Castle © Bulles d'Encre, 2004.

Figure 3: Delcourt, The Optimist's Castle and the Philosophy Lesson, © Delcourt, 2008.

imitating his tutor, constructs his own pseudo-argument. If there were no beer, he muses, then Cunégonde would be slimmer and hence no longer the most beautiful woman possible. Insisting on the Leibnizian connection where Voltaire does not, Candide adds: 'Leibniz, il dit possible' [Leibniz says possible] (Sfar's emphasis). The word 'possible'

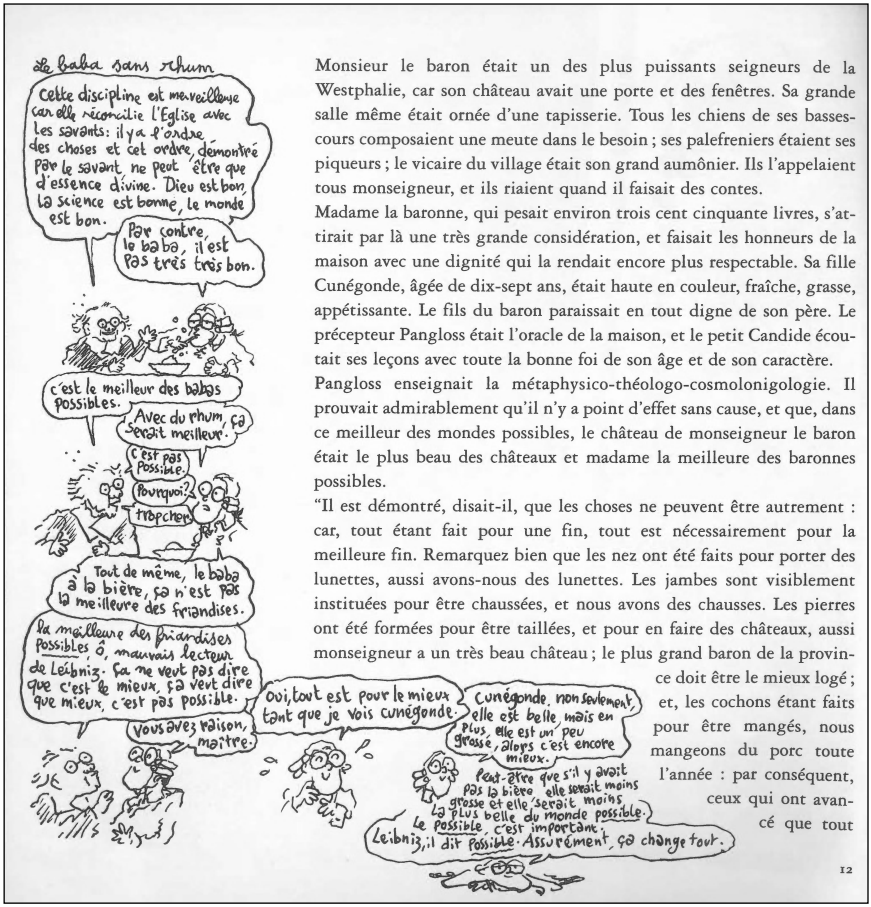

Figure 4: Sfar, The Philosophy Lesson, © Bréal, 2003.

has just been changed for a second time, to mean 'imaginable by Candide'. Sfar's opening pages are typical of what is to come. His text/image combinations extrapolate from the text. First he enlarges on the aside about the hounds, and then he parodies a parody: Sfar's characters, like Voltaire's, distort Leibniz; yet they fabricate even sillier arguments.

During Meyran's and the Delcourt version's philosophy lesson, Pangloss speaks in balloons. Meyran omits Pangloss's phrase 'le plus grand baron de la province doit être le mieux logé' [the greatest baron in the province must be the best housed].[50] That omission eliminates

50 Voltaire, *Candide ou l'optimisme*, 146. Philippe Meyran, *Candide d'après l'oeuvre de Voltaire*, 1.

another ironic jibe at the castle. The Delcourt version reproduces Pangloss's monologue in full (see Fig. 3).[51] Pangloss's voice is first heard through an open window; he bangs the castle wall for emphasis and his admiring students are viewed through his spectacles. Those pictures lend opening ironies about the castle and its inhabitants a discreet, non-verbal complement.

Swordplay in Portugal

When Candide has a swordfight in Portugal, Sfar attempts to wrest control of the narrative: he sets himself up as a rival in defiance of Voltaire. Sfar's conflictual attitude echoes the illuminators, whose *disputatio* with sacred texts were not infrequent: 'Once the manuscript page becomes a matrix of visual signs … , the stage is set not only for supplementation and annotation but also for disagreement and juxtaposition – what the scholastics called *disputatio*'.[52] The illuminators' disagreements mostly consisted of ribald joking and anti-clerical attacks. Sfar accuses Voltaire of anti-Semitism. He also brings in an element of gallows humour by citing the unsolved Omar Raddad affair. The brief outlines of that murder mystery are as follows. On 24 June 1991 the body of Ghyslaine Marchal, a wealthy widow, was found at her villa in Mougins. The words 'Omar m'a tuer' [Omar killed me] were written in her blood. Omar Raddad, Marschal's Moroccan gardener, was imprisoned for murder. However, the victim's incorrect spelling ('tuer' for 'tuée') was deemed implausible, the conviction was unsafe and Haddad was released.[53]

In chapter VIII, Candide, freshly reunited with Cunégonde, is listening to her tale of woe. Cunégonde's story is one of two lengthy intercalated flashbacks, the other being the old woman's.[54] Cunégonde recalls how her father's castle was destroyed and she was abducted by a Bulgarian soldier, who sold her to a Jewish banker named Issacar. Cunégonde is specific about consent: 'Ce Juif s'attacha beaucoup à ma personne, mais il ne pouvait en triompher: je lui ai mieux résisté qu'au soldat bulgare' [That Jew got very attached to my person but he could not prevail over me: I resisted him better than I did the Bulgarian

51 Gorian Delpâture, Michel Dufranne and Vujadin Radovanovic, *Candide ou l'optimisme de Voltaire*, vol. I, 1.

52 Michael Camille, *Image on the Edge: The Margins of Medieval Art*, 21.

53 See Jacques Vergès, *Omar m'a tuer* (Paris: Lafon, 1994).

54 Voltaire, *Candide ou l'optimisme*, 161–163 and 167–173.

soldier].[55] Sfar's three pictures in the margin point up veiled anti-Semitism in her remark. Firstly, he lampoons Issacar as a hook-nosed stereotype with the sarcastic caption: 'j'imagine que Voltaire eût apprécié que je donne au juif Issacar un faciès semblable' [I imagine Voltaire would have appreciated my giving the Jew Issacar features like that].[56] Secondly, Sfar aligns himself with his fellow Jew by drawing Issacar in his own image. Thirdly, he draws Cunégonde explaining that she could yield to a Bulgarian but not to a Jew, reproducing the spurious justification for her double standard in the caption: 'une personne d'honneur peut être violée une fois, mais sa vertu s'en affermit' [a person of honour can be raped once but it makes her virtue stronger].[57]

At the beginning of chapter IX, Cunégonde's and Candide's tête-a-tête is interrupted by Issacar. He rushes at Candide with a dagger; but Candide draws his sword and kills his assailant.[58] At this point, Sfar and Voltaire step into the characters' world (see Fig. 5).[59] Sfar draws a sword and challenges Candide in Issacar's stead, but Voltaire suddenly materializes alongside him. Voltaire reminds Sfar that Issacar actually had a dagger, as they are smaller and more vicious. Sfar adds sarcastically that a dagger is more Jewish, although on that point he is mistaken. According to Diderot's authoritative dictionary, daggers did not have Jewish connotations. 'Dague' is simply defined as 'un gros poignard dont on se servoit autrefois dans les combats singuliers' [a big dagger formerly used in single combat].[60] In line with the plot, Candide duly kills Sfar/Issacar, who writes 'Candide m'a tuer' as he dies.

Sfar's *disputatio* violates the boundaries between the worlds of author, adapter and diegesis: Voltaire, Sfar and Candide are brought to the same level of representation. Such transgressions are another characteristic of postmodernism. Brian McHale states that postmodernist fiction concerns itself with 'modes of being', by asking ontological questions like: 'What happens when different kinds of world are placed in confrontation, or when boundaries between worlds are violated?'[61] In Sfar's *disputatio* the answer is plain: the confrontational

55 Voltaire, *Candide ou l'optimisme*, 161.
56 Joann Sfar, *Candide: Voltaire*, 46.
57 Voltaire, *Candide ou l'optimisme*, 161.
58 Voltaire, *Candide ou l'optimisme*, 163.
59 Joann Sfar, *Candide: Voltaire*, 50.
60 Denis Diderot, *Encyclopédie ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers* [The Encylopedia, or Methodological Dictionary of the Sciences, Arts and Crafts], 35 vols (Stuttgart: Friedrich Frommann, 1967–1990), vol. IV (1988), p. 611. Originally published 1751–1790.
61 Brian McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction* (London and New York: Routledge, 1987), 10.

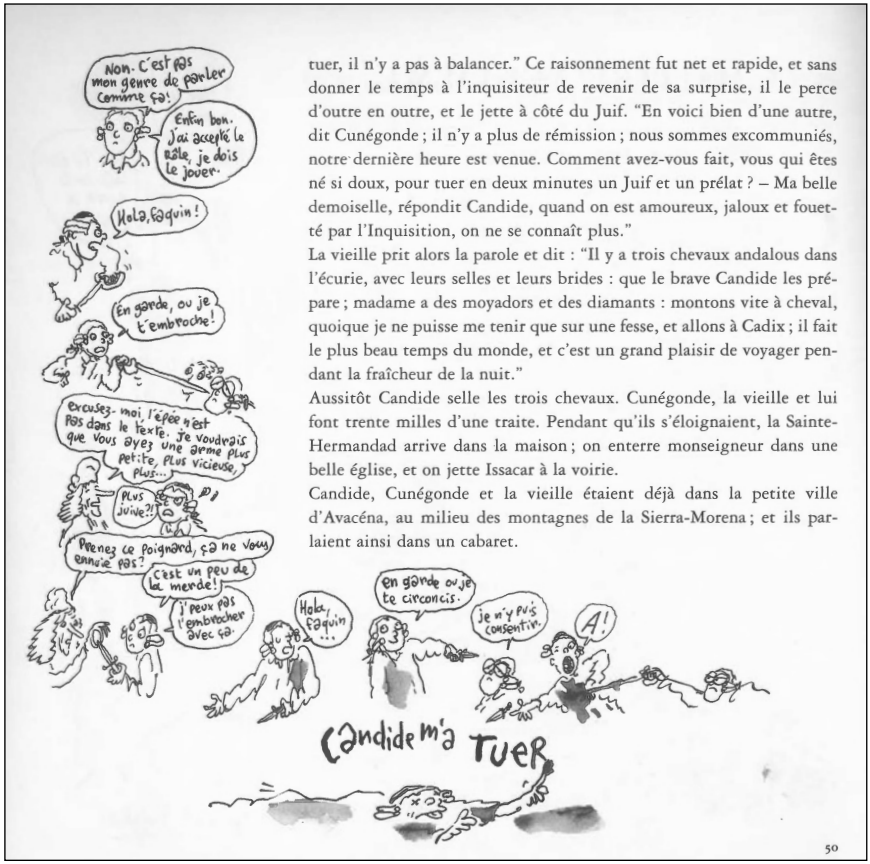

Figure 5: Sfar, Swordplay in Portugal, © Bréal, 2003.

adapter gets his facts wrong, and he is punished according to the author's dictates. Sfar's failure to usurp control over the diegesis evinces self-depreciating irony: his demise reduces him to illiterate French, and it wipes out the Jewish character he was defending.

Moreover Sfar's accusation of anti-Semitism was rash. Views attributed to Cunégonde need not be Voltaire's own. The Jews are not singled out in *Candide*: Catholics, Protestants and Muslims are equally fair game. Having killed Issacar, Candide summarily dispenses with Cunégonde's joint owner, the Grand Inquisitor. Issacar's body is thrown on the dump; the Inquisitor is buried in a splendid church.[62] The

62 Voltaire, *Candide ou l'optimisme*, 165.

contrast between the two men's resting places proves Voltaire was not insensitive to anti-Semitism, and used it to provoke irony.

Meyran and the Delcourt version develop the visual dimension rather than struggling for diegetic control or lingering over anti-Semitism. Meyran makes visible the discrepancies between traumatic events and the manner in which they are related: he draws Cunégonde's story with caricatural mock-*naiveté*.[63] In Delpâture, Dufranne and Radovanovic's volume her travails are retold with refined language and offset by tasteful period decor.[64] The sad grey/browns in her flashback contrast with bright red, pink and yellow when she is with Candide; there is comical repetition when Issacar and the Inquisitor graciously court her on bended knee in two almost symmetrical panels.

When Issacar bursts in, both Meyran and the Delcourt version spread the swordfight over two panels (see Figs 6 and 7).[65] Meyran slightly alters the structure to allow a dramatic page-break: Issacar appears at the close of chapter VIII rather than at the beginning of chapter IX, thus ending the page at an exciting moment. Delpâture, Dufranne and Radovanovic also use a dramatic break: the page of his equivalent scene ends with Candide killing Issacar. Both Meyran and the Delcourt version, perhaps out of latterday sensitivity towards anti-Semitism, portray Issacar more favourably than does Voltaire. The description of Issacar as 'le plus colérique Hébreu qu'on eût vu dans Israël depuis la captivité en Babylone' [the angriest Hebrew seen in Israel since the captivity in Babylon] is tactfully dropped. The insinuation that Issacar is cowardly as he attacked Candide thinking the latter was unarmed is likewise deleted. An element of irony about Candide's actions is missing too: neither Meyran nor Delcourt specify that Candide killed Issacar 'quoi qu'il eût les mœurs fort douces' [although he was very mild mannered].

Meyran and the Delcourt version effectively dramatize the unequal treatment meted out to Issacar and the Inquisitor (see Figs 8 and 9).[66] In Meyran, captions in two consecutive panels recount their differing fates while pictures illustrate words. Meyran's text/image redundancy reinforces the contrast: words and images, synchronized twice, express

63 Philippe Meyran, *Candide d'après l'oeuvre de Voltaire*, 32–36.

64 Gorian Delpâture, Michel Dufranne and Vujadin Radovanovic, *Candide ou l'optimisme de Voltaire*, vol. II, 4–6.

65 Voltaire, *Candide ou l'optimisme*, 163. Philippe Meyran, *Candide d'après l'oeuvre de Voltaire*, 36–37. Gorian Delpâture, Michel Dufranne and Vujadin Radovanovic, *Candide ou l'optimisme de Voltaire*, vol. II, 6.

66 Philippe Meyran, *Candide d'après l'oeuvre de Voltaire*, 39; Gorian Delpâture, Michel Dufranne and Vujadin Radovanovic, *Candide ou l'optimisme de Voltaire*, vol. II, 9.

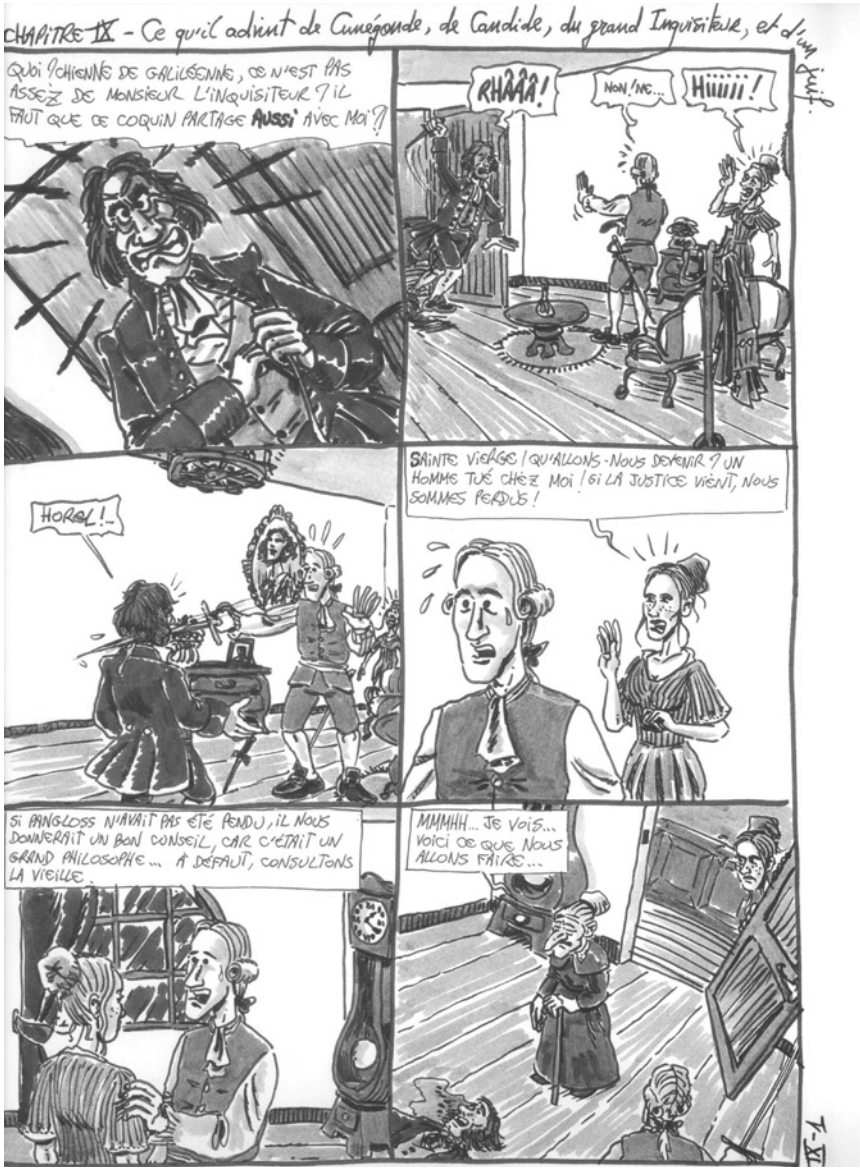

Figure 6: Meyran, Swordplay in Portugal, © Bulles d'Encre, 2004.

Figure 7: Delcourt, Swordplay in Portugal, ©Delcourt, 2010.

Figure 8: Meyran, The Deaths of Issacar and the Inquisitor, © Bulles d'Encre, 2004.

Figure 9: Delcourt, The Deaths of Issacar and the Inquisitor, © Delcourt, 2010.

the difference visually as well as verbally. The Delcourt version adopts a bolder tactic, by making words and pictures diverge. The church and the dump are not explicitly mentioned, they are only represented graphically. A picture of the Inquisitor lying in state goes with a caption recounting Candide's flight: this text/image combination accelerates the action, by implying simultaneity between the Inquisitor's burial and the hero's narrow escape. Next there is a picture of Issacar sprawled in the rubbish. An accompanying caption comments on the pleasures of travelling 'pendant la fraîcheur de la nuit' [during the cool of the night]. Those singularly inappropriate words were originally spoken by the old woman in an earlier dialogue.[67] The Delcourt version brings incompatible verbal and visual elements into the same frame: clement nocturnal cool is played off against Issacar's corpse. Irony arises from incongruity between the verbal and the visual.

Eldorado, Europe and Babar

Voltaire, with carefully selected epithets, creates the impression that in Eldorado all is grandiose and magnificent. Sfar's depiction is more sparing. For example, he makes no attempt to draw Voltaire's 'voitures d'une forme et d'une matière brillantes' [carriages of brilliant form and material], although a house 'bâtie comme un palais d'Europe' [built like a palace in Europe] is accompanied by a palatial interior and an elegant lady.[68] Meyran's Eldorado has vaguely Aztec ziggurats, short square towers and two-storey dwellings. The little we see of the Delcourt version's Eldorado is clean, green and pleasant with white, low-rise buildings trimmed in gold. Delcourt's *Candide* currently stops at the end of chapter XVII, just after the hero arrives. Meyran's Candide beholds Eldorado in a panoramic scene taking up half a page. He exclaims: 'voilà pourtant un pays qui vaut mieux que la Westphalie' [now here is a country superior to Westphalia].[69] The unusually large panel lends appropriate weight to Candide's words: this is the first time Candide has acknowledged that anywhere is better than the baron's castle. Adopting a technique that is the opposite of Meyran's, the Delcourt version has a close-up on the hero's ecstatic face.[70]

67 Voltaire, *Candide ou l'optimisme*, 164.
68 Voltaire, *Candide ou l'optimisme*, 184–185. Joann Sfar, *Candide: Voltaire*, 88.
69 Voltaire, *Candide ou l'optimisme*, 184. Philippe Meyran, *Candide d'après l'oeuvre de Voltaire*, 70.
70 Gorian Delpâture, Michel Dufranne and Vujadin Radovanovic, *Candide ou l'optimisme de Voltaire*, vol. II, 44.

Eldorado is spared Voltaire's most acerbic irony and he does not mock the ideal it represents.[71] In many respects, the Andean Utopia embodies everything Voltaire admired. Candide discovers a tolerant, liberal monarchy with a thriving cultural life. Eldorado boasts advanced science, good public works and an undogmatic, monotheist religion. However, as Eldorado does not exist it cannot resolve the problem of evil any more effectively than Leibniz. A discussion about religion hints discreetly at Eldorado's unviability, by touching on a conundrum which plagues Utopias: how to manage dissent. A venerable sage tells Candide that nobody offers petitionary prayers in Eldorado as there is nothing to ask for. People only pray to give thanks. The sage makes no mention of any religious texts, but he does explain that everyone is a priest in Eldorado and that 'nous sommes tous ici du même avis' [here we are all of the same opinion].[72]

Meyran edits out the key phrase 'nous sommes tous ici du même avis'; but Sfar underlines it, and he links it by an arrow to a six-image sequence comparing Eldorado to the perfect Jewish state.[73] Sfar dismisses the possibility of everyone having the same opinion. He then describes a situation where everyone is a priest as 'très juif' [very Jewish], presumably in reference to God's promise to Israel: 'You shall be my kingdom of priests'.[74] Distancing himself from Roman Catholicism, Sfar asserts that (as in Eldorado) Jewish prayers consist of thanksgiving rather than petition, or as he puts it 'quémander en se mortifiant' [begging while mortifying yourself]. According to the rabbi Shalom Carmy, Sfar is inaccurate: 'The building blocks of Jewish prayer … are praise, petition and thanksgiving. Important as praise and thanksgiving are to the religious individual, the heart of Jewish prayer is petition'.[75] Sfar goes on to raise the spectre of a state where rabbis decide who can marry. In such a place, he suggests, priests would interpret and apply the Torah.

Voltaire and Sfar both evince scepticism about sacred texts, and both propose unworkable societies where everyone is a priest. Yet Sfar's vision is the antithesis of Voltaire's: for Sfar, the text rules out dissent; but for Voltaire, the absence of text rules out dissent. Moreover Sfar's

71 William Bottiglia, *Voltaire's Candide: Analysis of a Classic*, 126.
72 Voltaire, *Candide ou l'optimisme*, 188.
73 Joann Sfar, *Candide: Voltaire*, 93.
74 Exodus 19.6, *New English Bible: Old Testament* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 97.
75 Shalom Carmy, 'Destiny, Freedom and the Logic of Petition', *Tradition* 24(2) (1989), 1.

vision, unlike Voltaire's, is utterly preposterous: if everybody is a priest then everybody decides who can marry.

On the opposite page Sfar treats Eldorado far more flippantly than Voltaire. The king reclines on a litter saying 'je suis Eldorado la dorade'.[76] His untranslatable pun plays gratuitously on the two meanings of 'dorade': the first was the name given to Eldorado in the French translation of Sir Walter Raleigh's Amazonian travels (1596);[77] but 'dorade' also means 'sea-bream'. The king's bearers chant: 'Youkadi youkada Eldorado est sympa' [Eldorado is nice]. They are sending up a Scouting song about the wholesome joys of summer camp.[78]

Voltaire's Eldorado, far from being a glorified Scout camp, is urban and sophisticated. The Utopian setting positively invites pictures of colossal buildings and futuristic machines. However Sfar, Meyran and (so far) the Delcourt version decline. They opt for dystopianism combined with facetious mocking (Sfar), or give unexpectedly low-key depictions (Meyran and the Delcourt version). Our three latterday Eldorados differ still more sharply from the fashionably Utopian cityscapes of the 1960s and 1970s. Benoît Peeters, citing Pierre Christin and Jean-Claude Mézières's *Valérian* as typical, remarks: 'Il y a cette conviction que la ville elle-même va se libérer de sa pesanteur, qu'on va inventer de nouvelles formes d'habitat, de nouveaux modes de déplacement' [There is that conviction that the city will free itself from its gravity, that new forms of housing and new ways of travelling will be invented].[79] Sfar, Meyran and the Delcourt version form part of a wider turning away from Utopian visions also detected by Peeters.[80] Such disenchantment, Peeters suggests, is discernable in the work of Enki Bilal which replaces Utopia with a nightmare.

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After Eldorado, *Candide* turns towards moral vices: deceit and rapacity in Surinam; lust, hypocrisy and gambling in Paris; idleness and

76 Joann Sfar, *Candide: Voltaire*, 92.

77 André Magnan, *Candide ou l'optimisme* (Paris: Bordas, 1969; repr. 1982), 108.

78 E. Paroldi de la Ligurie, 'Youkadi', *Les Plus Beaux Chants Scouts* [The Best Scout Songs] (Marianne Mélodie 2008 0718437).

79 Benoît Peeters, quoted by Jean-Marc Thévenet in 'La Bande dessinée et l'esprit de l'Utopie' [Comics and the Spirit of Utopia], *Archi et BD: La Ville dessinée* [Architecture and Comics: The Drawing of the City], eds Jean-Marc Thévenet and Francis Rambert (Paris: Cité de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine, 2010), 94–96; 94. *Valérian* was first published in *Pilote* (Paris, 1967).

80 Benoît Peeters, 'La Bande dessinée et l'esprit de l'Utopie', 96.

boredom in Venice. The narrative slows, containing more discussion and less action. Sfar's images still contrast with Voltaire's periphrastic prose, as when the maid Paquette recounts her misfortunes.[81] Sfar still uses high and low culture to make parodies: when Candide is seduced by a woman pretending to be Cunégonde, he is Little Red Riding Hood to her big bad wolf; Candide later appears as Venus from Watteau's *Amour désarmé* [Love Disarmed].[82] Nonetheless, Sfar's marginalia register a change. Firstly, his extrapolations increasingly link *Candide* to the present. Candide's pessimistic friend Martin toiled in an Amsterdam bookshop. From the margin, Martin's counterpart today bemoans the plight of small bookshops in the internet age.[83] Candide's illness, occurring when he is in France, occasions satire relating to the French health system.[84]

Sfar also adopts a more pedagogical tone. He gives background information, often reiterating points already made by critics. When Candide leaves France, the marginal note reads: 'Il [Voltaire] s'y appesantit, règle des comptes, au risque de faire de cette partie du conte un hors sujet ... peut-être que c'est parce que ça a été rajouté après' [Voltaire gets duller, settles scores at the risk of making this part of the tale off the subject ... perhaps that is because it was added afterwards].[85] Sfar is not alone in thinking the Paris episode fits oddly and is lower in standard; moreover, chapter XII was lengthened in the 1761 edition, and Voltaire did take the opportunity to settle scores.[86] When Candide visits Venice, Sfar writes that Voltaire treats the blasé Pococurante leniently; perhaps that is because both are well-heeled connoisseurs entertained by reading, conversation, music and gastronomy.[87] Voltaire reappears in the margin to add that he and Pococurante enjoyed hot chocolate.[88]

81 Joann Sfar, *Candide: Voltaire*, 131.

82 Joann Sfar, *Candide: Voltaire*, 122 and 130; Antoine Watteau, *L'Amour désarmé* (circa 1715, Musée Condé, Chantilly), *Watteau 1684–1721* (Paris: Editions de la Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 1984), 324.

83 Voltaire, *Candide ou l'optimisme*, 196; Joann Sfar, *Candide: Voltaire*, 102.

84 Voltaire, *Candide ou l'optimisme*, 201; Joann Sfar, *Candide: Voltaire*, 112.

85 Joann Sfar, *Candide: Voltaire*, 124.

86 Pol Gaillard, *Candide: Voltaire* (Paris: Hatier, 1972), 52; André Magnan, *Candide ou l'optimisme de Voltaire*, 135–137; William Bottiglia, *Voltaire's Candide: Analysis of a Classic*, 245.

87 Joann Sfar, *Candide: Voltaire*, 137; André Magnan, *Candide ou l'optmisme de Voltaire*, 161.

88 Sfar's aside is correct. See Christiane Mervaud, *Voltaire à table* [Voltaire and Eating] (Paris: Desjonquères, 1998), 46.

Meyran evokes Paris and Venice with period cameos and *fausse naiveté*. In response to the narrative slowdown more text is excised, particularly from long discursive passages. Examples include a Parisian scholar holding forth on taste and a speech about attempted regicides.[89] Still more is cut when Candide has erudite discussions with Pococurante about writers from Antiquity and John Milton.[90] Judicious omissions partially alleviate the text-heaviness of Meyran's later chapters. Further examples of what Sfar and Meyran do with *Candide* after Eldorado could be enumerated; what the Delcourt version will do remains to be seen.

Towards the end, Candide acquires his farm. He marries Cunégonde who is now ugly, and he is unexpectedly reunited with characters from his adventures. They found a small community, where everyone contributes according to their talents. The hero finally realizes an ideal which exists in reality, unlike the castle and Eldorado. Yet this is no standard happy ending, because Candide has lost most of his fortune and he marries someone he no longer loves. The story concludes with Candide saying enigmatically: 'il faut cultiver notre jardin' [we must cultivate our garden].[91] Candide's garden has elicited a host of interpretations: mature acceptance of reality's imperfections, a paean to the work ethic, and a refuge from the outside world, to name but three.[92] Yet the suspicion remains that Voltaire is having the last laugh: Candide's polyvalent phrase defies attempts at reaching closure.[93]

Sfar keeps his biggest surprise for the end: he suddenly includes four pictures copied from Jean de Brunhoff's childrens' story *Le Roi Babar*.[94] Babar the Elephant is crowned king, having overcome adversity and confounded his enemies. He founds a community named Célesteville in honour of his newly wedded wife. The juxtaposition of *Candide* and *Le Roi Babar* without comment tempts the reader to seek analogies. With a modicum of effort a few can be found: both heroes

89 Voltaire, *Candide ou l'optimisme*, 204–206 and 208; Philippe Meyran, *Candide d'après l'oeuvre de Voltaire*, 93 and 96.

90 Voltaire, *Candide ou l'optimisme*, 216–219; Philippe Meyran, *Candide d'après l'oeuvre de Voltaire*, 109–110.

91 Voltaire, *Candide ou l'optimisme*, 233.

92 For an extensive list see William Bottiglia, *Voltaire's Candide: Analysis of a Classic*, 226–238.

93 See Bernard Valette, 'De Voltaire à Camus: Vers un humanisme laïque' [From Voltaire to Camus: Towards Non-Religious Humanism], *Analyses et réflexions sur Candide de Voltaire*, ed. Jean-Paul Fenaux (Paris: Ellipses, 1982), 104–106; 105.

94 Joann Sfar, *Candide: Voltaire*, 158, 159 and 161–162; Jean de Brunhoff, *Le Roi Babar* [King Babar], in *Trois Babar en un* [Three Barbars in One] (Paris: Hachette, 1943). The pictures are from the front cover, the inside cover and from pages 132 and 144. *Le Roi Babar* was first published in 1933.

survive perilous journeys, accident, war and captivity; both are taken in by old women; both marry and set up model societies where everyone plies their trade. Despite the reader's efforts however, Candide's philosophical enigma and Babar's triumph remain difficult to reconcile. What is more, the literary work ranks far above the nursery story in the prevailing cultural hierarchy. Does one not court ridicule by drawing firm conclusions from any similarities? Sfar ironizes about reaching closure, like Voltaire although by very different means. Sfar also ironizes about the postmodernist debate surrounding high and low culture: he encourages the reader to close gaps between *Candide* and *Le Roi Babar*, only to draw attention to the chasm separating the two. Meyran, rather than concluding on a note of irony, chooses a standard ending: everyone works in the garden happily ever after.[95]

Conclusion

Various factors make *Candide* peculiarly fit for adaptation: the Ninth Art's drive for legitimacy; a desire to revisit a perennial favourite; the tale's continuing relevance; fortuitous similarities between *Candide* and comics; Voltaire's ironic mixing of high and low culture long before before postmodernism.

Sfar's mode of recounting brings a distinctive brand of irony to bear. Analogies with illuminations suggest that Voltaire's sanctification by the canon is an irony of history: the erstwhile iconoclast has been beatified. Meanwhile, the fallible BD adapter is consigned to the margins and is subjected to the great man's wishes. Yet Sfar's self-depreciation is an ironic feint. Far from being Voltaire's lackey, Sfar is perfectly capable of recreating *Candide*. Grotesque pictures of calamities clash with Voltaire's elegant prose; thus, Sfar adds a visual dimension to the incongruities between what the narrating instance means and what it says. Sfar's position outside the text but on the page enables him to comment, criticize and put an alternative view. Sfar jokes wryly about Leibniz, anti-Semitism and Utopianism, using his own extratextual sources. His interjections are frequently coloured by his Jewish identity. After Eldorado, Sfar's marginalia change subtly as he grows more inclined to update and to inform. Those rather more pedagogical interventions contrast with Babar's dramatic entrance. The finale makes concluding ludicrous, and ironically acknowledges the continuing cultural hierarchy.

95 Philippe Meyran, *Candide d'après l'oeuvre de Voltaire*, 131.

Meyran's graphics lend Voltaire's text an illustrative accompaniment, running the risk of redundancy. The artwork conveys irony: caricatural *fausse naïveté* produces disparities between catastrophic events and the manner of their recounting. Even so, in the excerpts studied, Meyran's adaptive choices attenuate (or eliminate) textual ironies and polemical issues. The Delcourt version has less text than Sfar and Meyran, as well as less regard for polemics. Delpâture, Dufranne and Radovanovic recount a fast-moving story with emphasis on visual effects. Successive disasters unfold with rapidity and elegance of line. Texts and images, working together, use the BD's narrative resources to generate irony.

Despite our three *Candides*, the tale's potential for *bande dessinée* adaptations is far from exhausted. A *Candide* integrating Sfar's inventiveness, Meyran's mock-*naïveté* and the Delcourt version's draughtmanship is not inconceivable. Other ways of rendering ironic wit surely await discovery. The comic strip aspect remains underexploited. A concatenation of high-speed calamities in André Franquin's graphic style would be one possibility. A more radical approach could entail a complete remake with an innovative form and updated setting, rather like Posy Simmon's *Gemma Bovery*.[96] Such speculation is of course best resisted. We simply conclude that *Candide* will inspire more text/image reworkings in the future.

96 Posy Simmons, *Gemma Bovery* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1999).