5) Poirier, Jean-Paul. “The 1755 Lisbon Disaster, the Earthquake that Shook Europe.” *European Review*, vol. 4, no. 2, 2006, pp. 169-80. *ProQuest Research Library*, https://search-proquest-com.mutex.gmu.edu/docview/217327439?accountid=14541. Accessed 16 August 2018.

Scholarly article

Summary

In this examination of the Lisbon earthquake’s aftermath, Jean-Paul Poirier considers the disaster’s intellectual and philosophical legacy in Europe, and particularly in Germany. He begins with a survey of first-hand accounts of the earthquake, both accurate and fanciful. Particularly notable are the fears that some observers had that the citizenry, accustomed to the injustices of the Inquisition, would blame the destruction on heretics. Poirier then turns to the effect on the scientific understanding of earthquakes and geology generally, which he concludes was negligible. In contrast, the response from religious authorities and writers was extensive and largely divided into two camps: Catholic writers who supported the Inquisition argued that the earthquake manifested God’s judgment on heretics, and Protestant writers who saw it as punishment for the Inquisition itself. These attitudes also permeated the many literary responses to the disaster, and continued to do so for many years. Finally, Poirier turns to how it helped discredit Leibniz’s philosophy of Optimism, lampooned most notably by Voltaire in *Candide* and elsewhere.

Word count: 197

Relevance

Poirier’s article offers a helpful survey of the Lisbon earthquake’s effects, but as a survey, it provides a great many possible avenues I can pursue without offering much analysis of any of them. Given that my goal is to examine how the earthquake contributed to the development of Enlightenment thought, several of these could be relevant. As Poirier himself points out, too many sources treat *Candide* as though it is the only response to the disaster that matters. Somewhat surprising, though, is Poirier’s observation that the death of a single nobleman received more attention than the deaths of perhaps 12,000 other people: “the Count of Perelada, Ambassador of Spain . . . was crushed by the heavy, emblazoned, stone escutcheon over the portal of his town-house, when trying to escape in the street. The news of the poor Count’s sad fate was announced in all European gazettes, as though his demise had been one of the most tragic consequences of the earthquake” (171). When an official named José de Carvalho was appointed to direct the country’s response to the tragedy, “His very first order concerned the removal of the count [sic] of Perelada’s body from under the rubble!” (172) I plan to look for contemporaneous reactions to this. While my initial focus was the influence that the earthquake had on the Enlightenment conception of God as a clockmaker who does not interfere in His creation, part of Enlightenment thought involves the essential dignity of human beings. Perhaps the Lisbon earthquake also thus contributed to the Enlightenment preference for a republic over a monarchy.

Word Count not counting quotations: 183