

III. THE NOVEL

III.1. Background of the Novel

Candide or optimism is the best known philosophic tale, and it is the most remarkable fruit of Voltaire's genius. Apparently aware that Candide would shock and offend many readers, he gave the work the fictitious subtitle "Translated from the German of Dr. Ralph, with the additions found in the doctor's pocket when he died at Minden in 1759." (Lowers 14)

It focuses on the problem of evil. Earlier writer, such as Pope, Leibniz had solved the problem by asserting that all opponent evils are necessary steps toward universal good. Voltaire's own Discours en vers sur l'homme (1734 - 1737) reflects Pope's doctrine that "whatever is, is right", and the hero in his tale Zadig (1747) suffers many misfortunes but finally learns from an angel that all evils lead to good. By 1758 Voltaire's opinion had changed. The terrible Lisbon earthquake of 1755 had shaken his optimism and his poeme

Sur le desastre de Lisbonne (1756) despite its wisely qualified conclusion, is bleakly pessimistic. In Candide Voltaire resolutely avoids coming to terms with evil.

III.2. The Subject Matter

Candide focuses on the problem of evil. It derides mercilessly the many absurd perversions of science, religion, government, romance.

III.3. The Theme

The theme of the novel is the futility of the philosophical speculation and the necessity of hard work.

III.4 The Characters

III.4.1. Candide

He is the naive young hero of the tale. Voltaire conveys his idea through his life, his experience, his encounters with other characters. In short to his process of learning.

III.4.2. Pangloss

He is the tutor of Candide and Cunegonde in the castle of the Baron Thunder-ten-tronckh. He teaches Candide and Cunegonde that all is for the best.

He reflects Leibnitz' philosophy which is ridiculed by Voltaire.

III.4.3. Cunegonde

The daughter of the Baron Thunder-ten-tronckh and the cousin of Candide. She is very lovely and Candide falls in love with her. The thought of her gives Candide a purpose in life. She is Candide's hope in life.

III.4.4. Martin

Candide chooses Martin to sail with him because he is the most miserable man Candide can find. His life is full of sorrow, which makes him to be a Manichean; a man who believes that man are in the power of evil and cannot improve. His attitude towards life is pessimistic.

III.4.5. Cacambo

He is the faithful servant of Candide.. His wide

experiences give him a cheerful, practical nature. Candide learns to be more positive through him.

III.4.6. Pococurante

A rich man whom Candide meet in his adventure. He is bored inspite of his wealth, and refine living.

III.4.7. The Old Woman

She takes care of Candide after he is being flagged in an auto-da-Fe and she made the encounter of Candide and Cunegonde.

She asserts that Candide's or Cunegonde's suffering is not so much in comparison with hers. Actually she is the daughter of a Pope but her fate brings her to all over the world as a slave, chamber maid.

III.5. The Stucture

In the castle of the Baron Thunder -ten-tronckh lived a young naive hero, Candide. His tutor taught him that the Baron's castle was the best of all castles and his wife was the best of all Baronesses.

The basic problem then was posed; Is this really the

best of all possible worlds ? A provoking incident happened to make it possible to answer the question. Candide was kicked out of the castle because of his amatory play with Cunegonde.

Conflicts between hope and despair followed this as he experienced one thing after another. First he experienced the brutal treatment at the hands of the Bulgars, then the horrors of warfare, the earthquake, the Inquisition where he witnessed the hanging of Pangloss and was flogged; the slaying of the Jews and the Grand Inquisitor, and the stabbing of Cunegonde's brother, the loss of his Eldoradoan wealth, the rapacity of the Parisian society. He also heard the frightening story of the old woman's sufferings.

Since Candide was a slow learner, he underwent a long series of adventures, each of which was marked by its own climax and anticlimax. The series of adventures were stages in Candide's learning. It is the thought of the lovely Cunegonde that made him keep on living and hoping despite many disheartening experiences he had undergone. The major climax was at the very end of the story when he found that Cunegonde had been terribly ugly. His last hope was destroyed. He abandoned Pangloss' doctrine of optimism. He found resolution in hard working and digging his own garden.