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Subject

Depiction of Gardens in Candide

Candide is an interesting narrative’s story. The theme of gardens in the story has multiple meaning. There are many gardens portrayed in the story including the garden of the Baron of Thunder-ten-tronckh, in the garden of the Eldorado, the garden of the old Turk, and the garden of Candide at the end. In this story, the garden is shown as a symbol of both of material and non-material culture. It provides food. It also presents as intellectual symbol which considered as a metaphor for spiritual food. The garden is also a symbol of praise of the normal home, as we always fail to build a perfect world.

Candide tells the story of a boy a little naive to whom comes a lot of adventures, and who learns a lesson at the end of his long journey. He tells us: “We must cultivate his garden (Voltaire, Francois Marie).” First, cultivating one's garden is a metaphor that means: let's leave aside the metaphysical problems, and let us instead occupy things that we can change, and improve. In other words, it means that we must apply to change the society, to make it better. Secondly, one could say that cultivating one's garden is not trying to directly improve the world (as in the 1st argument) but rather its immediate environment, its home or rather its “in itself”. It is useless to travel the world, to travel unceasingly to discover what is happening in distant countries, the great discovery is rather that of oneself, there, nearby, around oneself in one's garden.

Thirdly, one can take the advice literally by cultivating one's garden, planting and sowing. It's always good to grow your garden, by doing that you can eat “natural” food; it also helps with income, plus you need to buy food.

The Candida maintains a scheme of a love-adventure novel, dating back to the late antiquity novel. All the attributes of this novel are evident: the love and separation of the characters, their travels around the world, adventures, incredible dangers, each time endangering their lives and honour, and their happy reunion at the end. But Voltaire is parodied. In contrast to the heroines of the old novel, the Voltaire Kunigunda comes out of a lively mess of pretty shabby. She retained neither innocence nor beauty. The epilogue of the novel, when Candide marries Kunigunda, who has smoked and grown old (she has wrinkled cheeks, inflamed eyes, a withered neck, red cracked hands), is mocking. Throughout the story, the sublime feelings of the characters are deliberately reduced.

The meaning of Voltaire's irony is not unambiguous. Voltaire parodies not only a love-adventure novel, he writes a parody of the 18th century bourgeois novel genre, especially English, in which for the first time the life of a private person was portrayed without any comic grotesque as something important, significant, worthy of poetry. Voltaire, on the contrary, was convinced that private life could not be a serious subject of art. In Candida, as in other Voltaire novellas, the main thing is not the private life of the heroes, but the criticism of social order, an evil satire on the church, court, royal power, feudal wars, etc. The classic definition of the novel as an epic of private life to prose Voltaire is not applicable, because its content is not a private destiny, but a philosophical idea relating to the world as a whole.

Voltaire creates a special art of thought, where behind a collision of people there is a clash of ideas and where the development of the plot is not subject to the logic of characters, but to the logic of philosophical positions. In his stories, he does not seek to preserve the illusion of believability, he is not important to everyday truth, but philosophical - the truth of general laws and relations of the real world. For Candida, the formula “it is necessary to cultivate our garden” has a wider meaning - it becomes the answer to the question “what to do”, the truth it has acquired. Candide rises above both philosophers, at the same time agreeing and disagreeing with them.

The image of paradise reappears in the chapter on Eldorado. This fantastic country of Candide is now compared with Westphalia. The meeting with the Negro, after which Candide breaks up with the philosophy of Pangloss, follows the episode of Eldorado. And yet the country of Eldorado is important in the novel. Eldorado is something that does not exist, but Eldorado is what can and should be. Candide has lost the imaginary paradise; he must create another - the real one. Regarding the reasoning of Pangloss, Candide remarks: “This is well said, but it is necessary to cultivate our garden (Voltaire, Francois. Candide).”

In the article “Paradise” of “Philosophical Dictionary” by Voltaire wrote that the word paradise came from the Persian language and there it meant an orchard. Candide translates the biblical image into the language of life, replacing paradise with a garden (Voltaire, Francois). Man’s place is not in heaven, but on earth, not the Garden of Eden, but “our garden” must be cultivated. The word “garden” in the mouth of Candida becomes a symbol of life. The world is unreasonable, evil reigns in it, but it can and must become reasonable. For this you need to work. Earthly paradise can only be built with human hands. A dervish is right - the world is not created by God according to the measure of man, man must conquer all by himself, by his work create a “second nature” that corresponds to the human mind - and this is the meaning of progress, this is the task of the future. Such an understanding of the formula “it is necessary to cultivate our garden” is undoubtedly decisive for the philosophical meaning of the novel, and it was not for nothing that this peaceful formula was sounded in Voltaire's correspondence as a revolutionary call to change the world.

But in the novel, a different, pessimistic, martin note is also clearly felt. It is the result of Voltaire’s understanding of the contradictions of bourgeois civilization, to which he does not close his eyes, but which he cannot resolve. The path to earthly paradise is a difficult and complex path. Regarding the future, Voltaire is cautious, does not want to make too decisive conclusions, draw utopian pictures, such as the happy country of Eldorado. One thing is clear to Voltaire: it is necessary to do away with the evil that can be done away with - tyranny, the Catholic Church, religious fanaticism, feudal arbitrariness. Will this be enough for the desired realm of reason to come; Voltaire is not sure. But life must further suggest new solutions. The word “garden” in Candide is polysemic which includes a broader meaning (“our garden” Candida) and a narrower one, the one that Marten puts into it. Even a small business (“garden” in the open-heart sense), according to Voltaire, worth is more than metaphysical supports. Together with Martin, he tells the reader: “We will work without reasoning, this is the only way to make life bearable.”

Finally, we can analyse politically the theme of the garden: Candide lives in a small community, folded on itself, which reflects the fact that states are corrupt, so we must leave them to lead a secluded life, based on work.

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