"Discuss the relation of the conclusion to the beginning in Candide."

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for

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François Marie Arouet de Voltaire's Candide, ou l'Optimisme (1759) is one of many philosophical contes he wrote to satirize various aspects of the society of his time. Candide parodies the form and style of the 'epic' novel and primarily satirizes Leibniz's philosophy of sufficient reason by writing about the absurdity of applying the philosophy beyond the domain of physical science. At first reading, the point of departure and the destination of Candide and Pangloss's travels may seem unrelated and disjointed, but the beginning and ending of the conte are related by way of similar situations and places that arise at these points of the story. Some of these situations and places are treated by the characters in the same manner both times, such as the question of marriage between the Baron and Candide's families and the fortification of the characters' 'gardens' against evil. Other situations and places are dealt with in completely opposite ways: the student-teacher relationship between Pangloss and Candide, and the heavenly versus earthly paradisiacal nature of the 'gardens.'

The Baron's family makes two important decisions regarding marriage in the conte. The motive behind both of these decisions is identical: the preservation of noble lineage. The very first paragraph of Candide states that Candide's father was a man "whom [the Baron's sister] refused ever to marry because he could only ever give proof of seventy-one quarterings" on his coat-of-arms (Voltaire 3). As the number of quarterings on a coat-of-arms represents the number of generations of nobility its bearer can trace, and though seventy-one is a ridiculous number of quarterings, Candide's paternal ancestry was not considered pure enough for marriage into the Baron's family. In Chapter 29, when Candide and Cunégonde are finally reunited and ask Cunégonde's brother (the new Baron) for permission to marry, they are denied: "my sister shall never marry unless it be a Baron of the Empire." (Voltaire 89). Again, the young Baron is concerned with purity of noble blood. Indeed, it seems to be "family tradition" to keep
Candide's lineage away from the Baron's own, since the elder Baron had attempted also to separate Candide from Cunégonde by ejecting him from the castle before relations between the two had gone too far (Betts 289).

*Candide* begins in a protected location – a castle – and also ends in a protected location – a garden. Although the Turkish farmer claims that the garden is a safer place than Thunder-dentronckh, both locations are just as vulnerable to the evils of the world. The castle is protected from attackers by its walls, but it is raided and destroyed by the Bulgars. Candide's garden is no better; it is situated in the heart of Turkey, "a Mahometan world where life is cruel and barbarous" (Wolper 269). The Turk claims that working in the garden makes it safe from the social evils of "boredom, vice, and necessity" because he "never [inquires] about what goes on in Constantinople," and thus knows "absolutely nothing" of the events and politics that happen outside of the garden (Voltaire 92). This ignorance, like the castle's walls, is its own weakness, however. Throughout Candide, Martin, and Pangloss's journey, they witnessed a multitude of social evils both violent and not: executions, rape, theft, gambling, and war. If work can cure "boredom, vice, and necessity", ignorance causes them. Pococurante's boredom and discontent with literature is because he "needed no one's help in order to be ignorant" (Voltaire 77). When Candide becomes ill in France, greedy doctors unexpectedly come to his door because they notice that Candide is carrying a box of jewels (Voltaire 60); their vice is certainly not caused by a lack of work (i.e. other patients to care for). The sufferings of the many innocent people in the story were never caused by idleness or necessity, but from their exploitation by society's powerful members, who are ignorant of the needs of the powerless.

As the story opens, Pangloss is Candide's mentor and teacher, but by the end of the journey, it is Pangloss that has learned from Candide. In Chapter 1, Pangloss teaches that
possession of rank and title brings about the consequence of happiness and comfort, that "the greatest baron in the province must perforce be the best housed", to which Candide, the student, concludes that the top item on his list of degrees of bliss was to be the Baron von Thunder-den-tronckh (Voltaire 4). By Chapter 30, Candide suggests that the Turk "seems to have created for himself an existence far preferential" to that of the six deposed and unhappy kings whom he, Pangloss, and Martin had dined with in Venice. Pangloss reverses his earlier opinion and now agrees with Candide that "rank and titles are often dangerous", following with a list of historical examples. Candide then states that he only knows that they have to cultivate the garden. This time, Pangloss acknowledges that Candide is right, that "man was placed in the garden...so that he might work," proving that "man was not born for rest" (Voltaire 93). Another example is the remainder of Pangloss's nonsensical speech in Chapter 1 explaining that "noses were formed to support spectacles, therefore we have spectacles... since pigs were made to be eaten, we eat pork all year round," that is, what one has can be taken for granted because it is provided "through the agency of a beneficent Providence" (Betts 286). Candide accepts this reasoning without question. Yet in Chapter 30, Pangloss has learned, through travelling with Candide, that events happen through chains of causes and effects, reasoning that if their journey had never happened in the way it happened, or not at all, then they would never be in the garden "eating candied citron and pistachios." In this enlightened reasoning he learns that everything must come from somewhere else, whether that place is experience or cultivation, and not simply placed there for their use by a supernatural agent.

Both Thunder-den-tronckh and Candide's garden are linked by Biblical reference to the Garden of Eden. If Thunder-den-tronckh represents Eden and the events happening therein the Fall of Man, then Candide's garden represents an earthly and realistic place reflective of an
acceptance of the human situation. In the Bible, Adam and Eve's state of innocence is spoiled by the snake tempting Eve to eat the fruit from the tree of knowledge, Adam and Eve doing so, and then the couple expelled from Eden by God. Analogously, Candide and Cunégonde's innocence is lost after Cunégonde witnesses Pangloss's "lesson in experimental physics" to Paquatte and Cunégonde later partaking of it with Candide behind the screen, which gets the couple "expelled from the earthly paradise" of the castle by the Baron (Voltaire 5). In both cases, it is the woman who tempts the man, and the Baron acts as "a grotesque exemplification of the Old Testament God" ruling over "the universe of his creation" (Henry 134). God's original purpose of placing man in Eden was that man was to dress and keep it, but after the Fall is "condemned to work as punishment" (Bottiglia 107). Once Pangloss has settled into working in Candide's garden, he ironically quotes from the Bible, "[man] was put [in the garden of Eden] ut operaretur eum", that is, to work (Voltaire 93). In a reversal of the Biblical sentiment that work is punishment, Pangloss now regards work as a wholesome activity. The denizens of the paradise of Eden needed only to fear God; the workers in Candide's garden have reason to fear both physical and social evils. Candide's band of workers have realized that physical evils such as earthquakes can never be predicted or prevented, but social evils such as cruelty can be remedied by the cultivation of a pragmatic and hardworking attitude. They can no longer hold to the ignorant ideal that an omnipotent Creator has made the best of all worlds, for they have learned that social evils are of man's own doing. In this way, Candide's garden can be considered an earthly, realistic place in contrast to the "paradise" of the castle.

Despite what appears to be a disconnection between the opening and final scenes of Candide, the two settings are actually very closely linked by a number of similarities and differences. The Baron's denial of the union of his and Candide's bloodlines, the protected but
weak nature of Thunder-den-tronckh and Candide's garden, the teacher-and-student relationship between Candide and Pangloss, and the gardens' relation to the Biblical Eden are examples of situations and places which are found at both the beginning and the ending of the conte. The first two examples are dealt with in similar fashion at both parts of the story and the latter two are handled in contrasting ways. As Betts attests, an investigation of such "parallels and oppositions" in Candide produces very expansive and complex results (Betts 283). Thus the examples illustrated above provide only a small selection of such similarities and contrasts, and further investigation would extract significant insight into the parallelism of the structure and content of Voltaire's most celebrated work of fiction.


