In Voltaire’s *Candide*, there are a number of terrible things that happen to the characters, and some of them are somewhat downplayed. One thing that is not downplayed is Cunégonde’s demise from a beautiful and visually pleasing woman, to an ugly and deformed one. Through the text, it is shown that Cunégonde’s transformation occurs because Candide never truly loved her, and serves to represent an anti-feminist view of women. The love Candide has for her is superficial and one-dimensional, as he does not see Cunégonde as a whole person, he ignores her need for an emotional attachment. His superficial love for her is what inevitably causes the deterioration of her beauty throughout the novel.

The first clue the reader is given is that Candide “found Miss Cunégonde exceedingly pretty, though he never had the courage to tell her so” (101). This means that Candide had never spoken to Cunégonde before their illicit love affair, which proves that his love for her was based purely upon her appearance and without knowing anything about her personality. Every mention of Cunégonde after this point she is either referred to as the “lovely” Cunégonde or Candide talks about his love for her. He never mentions anything about her feelings or emotions and only wants her because she has a pretty face. This also furthers the theme of Cunégonde being represented in an anti-feminist way because she is never referred to in any way that does not complement her appearance.

Candide and Cunégonde’s conversation about what had happened to her after Candide had fled the castle was the only conversation the two had throughout the novel. She tells him that she was stabbed on her left thigh, leaving a scar, and Candide replies, “What a pity! I should very much like to see it” (111). He does not reply in a caring or concerned way, but what almost sounds provocative or flirtatious proving that her emotional wellbeing is not important to him. Not caring about a woman’s emotions once again represents the outdated view of women at the time.

Candide’s reunion with Cacambo shows another instance where Candide can only think about Cunégonde’s beauty: he asks, “What is Cunégonde doing? Is she still a marvel of beauty?” (152). Without even thinking about how she could be feeling, he immediately asks about her appearance and if she is still the beauty from his dreams. Upon hearing that she has lost all of her beauty, only agrees to carry through with their marriage because he is an honest man. He does not say that he loves her for any reason aside from what he can see. This continues to tie in with the anti-feminist view of Cunégonde and that she could not be desirable for any reason besides her appearance.

Because Candide never paid attention to Cunégonde’s feelings or emotions before becoming deformed, he is cursed to only pay attention to that for the rest of their time together. His superficial love for her caused Cunégonde to become ugly, and because his opinion of her so drastically changed after what happened to her, it proves that he never really cared about her at all, just what she looked like. It seems that Voltaire wants to make Candide sound noble for keeping his promise of marriage, when it is actually despicable that he remains with her for the sole reason that he is a man of his word. Cunégonde yearned for a complete relationship, while Candide only wanted her for her beauty, which is why she is seen as more of an object or as property of Candide, why she is portrayed in an anti-feminist light.