Fall Of Man Essay, Research Paper

The Fall of Man Over the course of time, there have been many interpretations of man’s fall from grace, as told by the Bible. Among the literary interpretations are those of John Milton’s Paradise Lost and the American poet Louis Untermeyer’s “Eve Speaks.” John Milton’s epic poem deals with the entire story of man’s fall from grace, including background for Satan’s motives. Louis Untermeyer’s “Eve Speaks” was written about Eve’s thoughts, many years after she was forced to leave Eden. While both poems are derived from the same biblical root, they offer different interpretations of man’s fall through Eve’s motives, her attitude toward Adam, and her attitude toward her sin. In Paradise Lost, Eve was tricked by Satan, who assumed the form of a serpent, into eating from the Tree of Knowledge. Satan had whispered into her ear when she was asleep, and when he spoke to her later, he used his cunning to mislead her:He ended, and his words replete with guileInto her heart too easy entrance won. Fixed on the fruit she gazed, which to beholdMight tempt alone, and in her ears the soundYet rung of his persuasive words, impregnedWith reason, to her seeming, and with truth;(Paradise Lost, 733-739). Louis Untermeyer’s interpretation of Eve’s motives in “Eve Speaks”, were very different intheir implications. He suggests that Eve was not tricked by Satan, but instead she made aconscious decision to eat the forbidden fruit. Eve thought that man was created for morethan living in Paradise; She was seeking for a greater world: The thought that there wassomething more than joy, Beyond perfection, greater than singing peace And tranquilhappiness, vexed all my hours. (”Eve Speaks” 31-34)Eve reached these conclusions through the traits that she perceived in Adam. He was strongand had a brain designed to “dream and mould”. According to Eve, he was designed for”fiercer things and lustier worlds”. Another glaring dissimilarity between the two poems was the in which Eve perceived Adam.

Milton’s Eve felt inferior to Adam; When Eve was trying to decide whether or not to share the apple with Adam, one of her reasons for not sharing was so that she could be his equal, if not his superior. After she gave the apple to Adam, her demeanor turned even more submissive. This was in agreement with the traditional 17th century view of women. Louis Untermeyer gave Eve a more domineering position; In “Eve Speaks”, Eve acts for the good of Adam and does what she believes is the best for him. There were no subservient thoughts in Eve’s mind; Instead, she was actually attempting to attain divine like knowledge for herself and Adam: “… answer God with God’s own words and deeds (”Eve Speaks”).” The final major difference between Paradise Lost and Louis Untermeyer’s “Eve Speaks”, was Adam and Eve’s attitude toward their “mortal sin”. In Paradise Lost, Adam and Eve where extremely ashamed of their actions. Adam was especially ashamed of their sin: Bad fruit of knowledge, if this be to know,Which leaves us naked thus, of honor void,Of innocence, of faith, of purity,Our wonted ornaments now soiled and stained,(Paradise Lost, 1074-1078). As Adam and Eve left Eden, they wept for the loss of their innocence, but were hopeful fortheir new lives. Louis Untermeyer, however, showed that Eve was not at all ashamed of heractions. Eve felt that she made the proper decision to eat the apple, and for this reasonshe was not afraid of God’s wrath. Eve thought that they had lost little when they werethrown from Eden, yet gained much, for they had gained knowledge, “the force and shaper ofthe world(”Eve Speaks”).” The different interpretations of the same biblical story may be a result of the large time span between the stories. Milton’s Paradise Lost was written in a more religious time in which the fall of man would seem to be a great sin. During Louis Untermeyer’s time, worldly knowledge was seen as more important than the more spiritual ideas of the past. Despite their differences, both poems present the biblical story through a more human point of view.