Chaucer And Milton Essay, Research Paper

The Canterbury Tales by Geoffrey Chaucer, and Paradise Lost by John Milton both show how big the role was by women to contribute to the downfall of man. Each of these authors portrays women s actions in different ways. Chaucer, in his female pilgrimages thought of women has having an evil-like quality, which was that they always tempt and take from men. They were shown as untrustworthy, selfish and vain. He shows these examples greatly in the The Wife of Bath , The Prioress , and Nun s Priest Tale tales. Milton, in his view of women shows how they were submissive to man in his portrayal of Eve in the Garden of Eden.

The Wife of Bath represents the extreme in regards to female stereotypes of the Middle Ages. Unlike most of the women being undistinguished during the Middle Ages, she has a mind of her own and speaks out. She speaks greatly of herself and loves to show off whenever she can. She intimidates men and women alike due to the power she possesses. Because of her attitude Chaucer makes her obese and toothless. Doubtlessly, she is very ugly, almost to the point of not presentable. She also had five different husbands and countless affairs, thus breaking innocent men s hearts. The Wife of Bath brings up many valid points, but Chaucer disregards her opinion because of her social class and looks, when in reality she is really wise. It is as if her intelligence is forgotten by the fact that she is a woman and considered a whore.

Now in the Prioress Tale Chaucer describes the Prioress as a loving, elegant person who is well mannered and above all loving. The Prioress is a very tenderhearted person who can t stand the site of pain and suffering. This represented that she has a weak soul with low tolerance for hardships. By this representation Chaucer was stating that women are wary and frightened members of society who need to be cared for by men.

The Nun s Priest Tale is perhaps the best tale of men s downfall due to the influence of women. This story circles around a rooster, Chauntecleer who is the most beautiful in England. He has seven wives but his favorite is a hen named Pertelote. It is this woman that causes Chauntecleer great problems. One night Chauntecleer is awoken by a bad dream so he tells Pertelote seeking comfort from her. But instead of consoling her husband she challenges his manhood and tells him that no man of hers should be afraid of a dream. So Chauntecleer, even though being a big believer that dreams predicts the future agrees with his wife instead, and goes about his day normally. Chauntecleer later is indeed attacked by a wolf and carried away to the woods because he listened to Pertelote and not himself. Thus proving the point that women are the downfall of men.

As we look at Milton s Paradise Lost we see that he depicts Eve as a weaker subordinate human. Certainly Milton was sexist; he could not be otherwise given his times and his religion. He has to tell a story that was itself sexist, because it is a myth with a social purpose. Poor Eve suffers from Milton’s time and place. She is the “weaker,” she was made not directly in God’s image but from part of Adam’s body, she must worship God through Adam, not in her own right. She is beautiful, yet her beauty is her downfall when the serpent flatters her and convinces her to eat from the tree of knowledge.

In conclusion Chaucer and Milton both had the same views on women. They believed that women were weaker and had a great influence on the downfall of men. It was not only in these three tales by Chaucer that women were thought of as having an evil-like quality, that they always tempt and take from men, but in almost every one of the stories. They are depicted of untrustworthy, selfish and very vain throughout the collection of tales. Milton s Eve in Paradise Lost shows in diffident perspective how he felt about the place and role of women. He depicts her of a weak minded individual who was easily tricked into eating the fruit and bringing down man. Both these authors have opinionated views of the opposite sex and express it very strongly in their works.