

Longing, Weakness and Temptation

Longing, Weakness and Temptation:
From Myth to Artistic Creations,

By

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P U B L I S H I N G

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by Irena Avsenik Nabergoj

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PREFACE

This study represents the first major findings of my extensive research based on the methodological principle of intertextuality. Intertextuality deals with, portrays and analyses the syntactic, lexical and stylistic actualisation of motifs and metaphors that are universally human, considering them from a linguistic and literary viewpoint in the light of intertextual relations in their synchronic and diachronic development. The project focuses on the fields of meaning of biblical and other metaphorical expressions, sayings and archetypes of longing, weakness and temptation in relation to their background and contemporary usage. These fields change, narrow or expand depending on the needs of the situation and the broader context of various types of literature. The goal of the study is a literary analysis of well-known texts – from antiquity up to the present – which include the same or similar literary schemes. Semantic parallels between diverse languages are no less valid and instructive merely because those languages themselves are unrelated. The diversity of points of view enhances, rather than diminishes, the significance of the comparison.

The motifs and symbols of longing, weakness and temptation in their internal context has never been systematically researched, even though they rank among the fundamental existentially and socially relevant determinants of human identity, culture, science and art. Very similar archetypes of temptation and seduction exist throughout the world; they are evinced in the biblical story of Adam and Eve and that of Joseph of Egypt, and the similarity and specificity of the motif of Fair Vida is seen in various versions of the folk ballad over the entire European Mediterranean area. However, it is only in Slovenia that Fair Vida has become a central symbol, and from France Prešeren's time to today there have been more than fifty artistic versions of the ballad. The relevance of the results of this study and its potential influence are in line with the relevance and influence of the selected motifs and symbols in the corpus of antique and subsequent literature. Linking linguistic and literary factors in considering these texts ensures a more reliable and complete understanding of their content, a greater capability for comprehending their universal values, and an intensifying of the linguistic and literary experience as it expresses a complex and profound perception of values.

Since shortly after having completed my doctorate, I have been lecturing and publishing on the expressive power of Ivan Cankar's oeuvre and on the symbolic breadth of the ballad of Fair Vida in the Slovenian and international academic community. Through these activities, I have endeavoured to draw attention to the significance of Slovenian literature within Europe, the Mediterranean, as well as the broader international space. Much of the impetus for the publication of the present study followed a lecture and discussions carried out in the framework of the 2007 Annual Meeting of the American Association of Teachers of Slavic and Eastern European Languages (AATSEEL), which took place in Chicago in December 27-30 – specifically, a paper entitled “The Psychology of Temptation as the Key to the Darker Side of Human Existence” presented within the Panel: “Myths and Mythmaking: From Folklore to Literature.” The goal was to examine archetypes presenting the interrelated motifs of longing, weakness and temptation in world literature and to consider how the borderlines between tradition and artistic originality are delineated or informed by comparative folklore or mythology.

This study is the first academic effort to present the Slovenian motif of Fair Vida to an international audience. As shall be shown in the study, this is done by connecting the motif to narratives stemming from both religious and secular literature that are known throughout the world. Of primary interest are the narratives of Adam and Eve (Gen 3), Joseph of Egypt (Gen 37-50), Samson and Delilah (Judg 16:4-22) and the “Strange Woman” of Proverbs (chapters 1-9). These texts have impressed many writers and have thus inspired many new artistic creations since their inception, and this fascination continues today. This study limits itself to five examples of literary instances of the motif of Fair Vida in Slovenian Literature. Since the motif of Fair Vida has become a central and fruitful symbol in the Slovenian artistic tradition, there is room for further analysis of its role. In other words, this introductory study invites further studies and research into the motif and its manifestations in literature and other arts.

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In the end of last three years I have presented my papers on my research in Annual Meetings of AATSEEL, the American Association of Teachers of

Slavic and East European Languages. The last paper, read on 28 December 2008 in San Francisco, was entitled *Intertextual Representations of Longing and Temptation*. In participating at AATSEEL annual conferences I have benefited from the advice, support and example of a number of American scholars. On this occasion, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to Professor Alexander Burry, the Ohio State University, for his encouragement to further research in this topic, Professor Craig Cravens, University of Texas, Austin, for his unfailing help but also for his good spirit, Professor Andrew Corin, Defence Language Institute, and Professor David Prestel, Michigan State University, for their friendly suggestions about various issues concerning this topic.

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INTRODUCTION

Presentation of the semantic range of the concepts of longing, testing, trial and temptation as conceived in the realms of linguistics, literature, psychology, philosophy and theology is best founded on the basis of definitions available in major dictionaries as well as in specialist studies. Longing is the most agreeable of human capacities and the term encompasses humankind's natural desire for self-assertion, love, mortality, knowledge, and so forth. The Gilgamesh Epic, the greatest masterpiece of literature prior to the Bible and Homer, deals most dramatically with the serious problems of life and death as experienced by the hero Gilgamesh. Like Adam, Gilgamesh has gained knowledge but not immortality. Frightened by the prospect of death, Gilgamesh undertakes a perilous journey to the hero Utnapishtim, whom the gods had made immortal through a unique, and thus never to be repeated, event: the flood. Gilgamesh ultimately recognizes that the gods had reserved immortality for themselves and returns to his walled city Uruk, whose magnificence he admires. Like all myths of a lost paradise or golden age, the biblical story of the Fall is an indication of humanity's yearning for a better world and an attempt to account for the problems of evil and human suffering. But the most celebrated of all artistic expressions of human yearning is the universal impact of celebration and appeal to love in the Song of Songs (or Song of Solomon), which contains an abundance of meaning and emotional warmth. The Song finally proclaims love to be "strong as death" (8:6).

In view of the deeper meaning of the Song and of so many other expressions of human longing, it was only a matter of time before the broadest and the most profound perspectives of the phenomenon of longing would be voiced. Saint Augustine does this at the very outset of his *Confessions*, where he expresses the contrast between his former empty life and the new experience in union with the Source of life:

"You are great, Lord, and highly to be praised (Ps 47:2): great is Your power and Your wisdom is immeasurable" (Ps 146:5). Man, a little piece of Your creation, desires to praise You, a human being "bearing his mortality with him" (2 Cor 4:10), carrying with him the witness of his sin and the witness that You "resist the proud" (1 Pet 5:5) Nevertheless, to

praise You is the desire of man, a little piece of your creation. You stir man to take pleasure in praising you, because You have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in You.¹

The world of contrast between transient things and the yearning for unending happiness, love, knowledge and life without end makes it all the more the place of testing, trial and temptation. The *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* defines the words clearly enough, and there a distinction between the meanings of the verbs to TEST, TEMPT and SEDUCE is evident. The verb TEST is defined more broadly as “to undergo a test,” generally implying a determining of quality or authenticity. To TEMPT is “to entice to do wrong by promise of pleasure or gain,” such as by offering a bribe. To SEDUCE is literally “to lead astray,” often in a moral sense, and “usually by persuasion or false promises.”

Testing and tempting involve different subjects and objects. According to various cultures and religions humans are tested by impersonal objects, by undefined natural forces, by humans, by God or gods, and by demons; on the other hand, humans can have the role of testing God. Testing by demonic forces entails the meaning of tempting. Buddha was tempted by Māra, “Death” as binding to the sensual world (*Samyutta-Nikaya* 4; 23,11f.); Zarathustra by Angra Mainyu or Būiti (*Vendidad* 19), Christ by Satan (*Mt* 4:1-11; *Mk* 1:12-13; *Lk* 4:1-13); in the Koran Satan has the role of tempter of Adam in Paradise (*Suras* 2,36; 7,20; 20,120); when Moses received the Law from God, the Israelites were tempted by the Sāmīrī, the creator of the Golden Calf (*Suras* 20,85-97).² In the Koran, the dealing with and overcoming of the temptation caused by Iblīs (Satan) and his demons is the central religious issue (*Suras* 4,117-120; 7,20-25; 16,63).

Modern psychologists often teach that the form of temptation, including many forms of mental temptation, are primarily reliant on natural instincts, which as such ought, at least to some extent, to be satisfied in order to avoid repression. An analysis of the phenomenon in the framework of various cultures can be of positive service to a better estimation of the roots of psychological and moral disorders and to an appreciation of where moral responsibility ultimately lies. This monograph study is limited to literary analysis of three archetypes reflecting the interplay of longing, weakness and temptation: the motif of Adam and Eve (the Fall); the motif of Joseph of Egypt when tempted by Potiphar’s wife; and the motif of Lepa—that is, “fair” or “lovely”—Vida, which became the central symbol of personal and national identity of the Slovenian nation. The texts to be studied here fit into the general scheme of inner relationship between

longing, weakness and temptation. In order to make the point as clear as possible it seems necessary to focus attention at the outset on the relationship between the terms of “testing,” “trial” and “temptation” on the basis of the fundamental sources of European literature.

1. Testing, Trial and Temptation in Secular Greek Thought and the Bible

In Greek literature probing, proving or being put to the test for good or ill is referred to with some frequency. The words expressing the phenomenon of testing and trial are the verb *peirazein* (“to try,” “to make trial of,” “to put to the test”) and the noun *peirasmos* (“a hard trial/ordeal,” “a test” or “a testing”). What is denoted by this term is conceived of as an event primarily aimed at or happening almost exclusively to mortals. The “tested ones” (*peirazomenoi*) are such notable figures as Odysseus,³ the Spartan king Kleomenes III,⁴ certain travellers,⁵ soldiers,⁶ various criminals,⁷ servants or thralls,⁸ farmers,⁹ ambassadors to Philip of Macedon from Darius,¹⁰ judges,¹¹ “the man of many friends,”¹² a Heliodorus of uncertain origin,¹³ “evil people,”¹⁴ Stoics,¹⁵ the Aetolians,¹⁶ the children of the inhabitants of Ceylon,¹⁷ the slave philosopher Epictetus,¹⁸ the Trojan king Laomedon,¹⁹ and Lycaon the king of Arcadia, and his sons.²⁰

Jeffrey B. Gibson, on the basis of these passages, arrives at conclusions that are of methodological aid to this study.²¹ He states:

One’s experience of “probing,” “proving” and/or “being put to the test” was never thought of as originating subjectively, nor was it ever viewed in terms of its being an inner psychological event, that is, the rise of a desire or thought from within a person that must be expunged, resisted or overcome. Rather, it was always something known to be imposed from the outside. ... We find instances not only of mortals “being tried” or being “put to the proof,” sometimes only through happenstance, but also of men (but notably never women) and gods moving intentionally and actively to subject someone to probing and testing.²²

Testing concerns the nature of a person’s character, the extent of his integrity and the depth of one’s piety. This finding informs Gibson’s next statement:

Nowhere do we find men’s experience of being tested, probed or put to the proof and their common experience of enticement or solicitation to evil. ... When a person is subjected to testing it is always and only to see whether he will act in a particular way or whether the character he bears is well

established but never to get that person to act in a particular way, especially one that is morally wrong. This is the case even in instances where hostility and the desire to see the demise of the tested person motivates the subjecting the person to testing. For it is assumed there that the person tested is already morally corrupt, not susceptible to or ripe for corruption. Indeed, it is the knowledge that if the one to be tested could be shown for what he already is, his destruction could be assured, that makes testing appropriate here.²³

The analysis of passages containing the words which form the semantic field of testing and trial in secular Greek thought shows that this field is limited in scope. We are thus even more attentive to the fact that in secular Greek thought there are some passages reporting of the attempt of particular human persons, most strikingly of particular women, to entice or solicit to evil. Homer reports in *Iliad* 6.152-170 of the attempt of Anteia, the wife of King Proetus, to seduce the righteous Bellerophon. The text speaks of Anteia's mendacious accusations of Bellerophon after her failed attempts at seduction, as well as of Proetus' corresponding, albeit misguided and misinformed, hatred of and revenge on Bellerophon. Euripides uses this story in his remarkable tragedy showing that Stheneboea (the name for Anteia), the wife of Proetus, made advances to him, which he rejected and decided to leave the Tiryns in order to avoid the dishonour of yielding to Stheneboea, and for Proetus if he were to denounce the queen. Proetus listened to the slander produced by his humiliated wife and sent Bellerophon to King Iobates of Caria with a secret message bidding Iobates to slay him. Since Stheneboea continued with an attempt to destroy him, Bellerophon proposed to her that she should fly with him on Pegasus to Asia Minor. She assented, but while they were flying near Melos, Bellerophon cast her down into the sea.²⁴ Such was the end of a woman of twin evils: deceit and slander. Ovid, in *Heroides*, and Seneca, in *Phaedra*, elaborated the motif on the basis of the older Euripides variant.

The story is reminiscent of the episode of temptation in the Egyptian myth of Bata and Anubis, the so-called "Tale of Two Brothers," and in the biblical story of Joseph from Egypt and of various other biblical and non-biblical episodes and statements dealing with the motif of temptation implying a clear intention to entice a particular person to evil. Examples of this type show that temptation as an enticement to evil is not necessarily specific. Narratives and other literary genres convey the message with more complex linguistic and literary means. But when cultures meet, or conflict, it can happen that specific terms adopted in new cultures are used

in a broader sense because basic presuppositions open broader and deeper perspectives that were not perceived earlier, or at least were not in the foreground. This phenomenon is the most important fact that happened among the Hellenized Jewish and Christian population in the period after the death of Alexander the Great. Because of the multiplicity of Eastern languages, cultures and thought, the process of fusion was a complex and varied one. The Jewish homeland was surrounded by Greek cities, not only on the Phoenician coast but also to the north and east, so Jews were subject to various Greek influences within their homeland and even more in the Diaspora.

The environment obviously had an impact on Jews and early Christians. Greek was used even by those who promoted Hebrew for ideological reasons. We may conclude that by the time of Jesus areas such as Galilee and Judea were trilingual, with Aramaic being the language used for many day-to-day activities, Mishnaic Hebrew used for religious worship and learned discussion, and Greek the usual language for commerce, trade and administration. The result was that Judaism and Hellenism frequently interacted in many different spheres and with many different results. The chief interest of faithful Jews was not to promote the achievements of Greek learning but to use them to show how Judaism was “the best philosophy,” the purest expression of piety and virtue, conceived in terms comprehensible to any Hellenized person, Jewish or otherwise.²⁵ The distinguishing aspects of Jewish identity during this era were never expressed with respect to anything like a normative Judaism. Jews exercised considerable freedom in terms of how they defined their Jewish heritage, how they determined appropriate allegiance to that heritage and how they negotiated the relationship between that heritage and Hellenism. The different manifestations of Hellenization correspond to the different avenues available to Jewish people for manifesting their identity, including literary, religious, political, economic and artistic forms of expression.

Among the earliest and most influential projects of Hellenistic Judaism was the Septuagint, the Greek rendering of the Hebrew Bible, compiled mostly in the third and second centuries B.C. In assessing the Septuagint as a translation, the major question is its relation to the Hebrew text. The translation is necessarily a compromise with a fair amount of “semantic tolerance” in terms of its definitely being Greek in syntax and lexis, but having a distinctly Hebrew cast in certain places.²⁶ The same is true for the New Testament, not only because the New Testament is written in Greek but also because of the fact that the New Testament authors used the

Septuagint form of the Old Testament more than any other version. Semitic influence on the Septuagint and New Testament may show itself in the language, form and content. A “Semitism” in the Greek text of the Bible may be defined as an element of vocabulary, grammar, syntax, idiom or style, which deviates from expected Greek usage, and in that deviation coincides with idiomatic Aramaic or Hebrew usage. In any translation the translator is relatively free to choose words and idioms which come naturally to mind.

In connection with the vocabulary expressing testing, trial and temptation the “semantic tolerance” manifested in the Septuagint means a broadening and deepening of perspectives. Jeffrey B. Gibson questions certain directions of interpretation of biblical texts, by claiming:

Insofar as secular Greek usage had any influence on delimiting the semantic range within which Hellenized Jewish or early Christian usage of *peirasmos* and *peirazein* took its bearings, the observations outlined above indicate that there is strong reason to doubt that in those NT texts where *peirasmos* and *peirazein* are usually construed in terms of enticement to sin, this notion ever played any part. Tendencies for lexicographers and exegetes to see that it does may therefore be the result not of a sober analysis of the linguistic data but of eisegesis and circular reasoning.²⁷

But the direction of interpretation may not be so much a way of eisegesis as a considerable measure of constraint in terms of “semantic tolerance” present in translating biblical content in Greek—the content that is much broader and profounder in perspectives than the religious and philosophical presuppositions of Greek culture could ever indicate.²⁸

2. Two Biblical Narratives of Temptation and their Impact on Literature

The Hebrew Bible contains the root *nsh*, expressing testing and trial in verb and noun forms. It seems plausible to translate the basic meaning as to “undergo an experience.”²⁹ The semantic range of this word covers various aspects of testing experience: testing others, testing oneself, testing objects, testing God, testing by God (for instance Abraham in Gen 22:1-14, Israel in the wilderness, the testing of the righteous).³⁰ The corresponding Greek word used in the Septuagint and in the New Testament is *peirasmos*.³¹ Most passages in which the Hebrew or the corresponding Greek word occurs are short statements about the experience of testing or trial without any comment about the semantic

range of meaning. Only rarely does the word introduce a longer narrative indicating in which sense the word is to be understood. The famous narrative on testing Abraham by God in Gen 22:1-19 begins with the statement: "After these things God tested Abraham." The narrative as a whole shows that God puts Abraham's fear (faith, obedience) of God to the test; the key to the interpretation is found in the text itself (v. 12; see also v. 16): "Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me." In the context of the theological presuppositions of the Bible it is entirely clear that the writer of the text could not have had any kind of enticement to evil in mind.

But what about the interplay between prose and poetry in dealing with the motif of testing Job's righteousness? The poetic speeches of the book are an extended discussion of a particular theological issue, the origins and the cause of Job's suffering, until God enters into dialogue with Job and resolves matters by reorienting his view from inexplicable suffering towards the marvels of creation. But the opening two chapters, written in prose, seem to represent a more popular and a simple folk tradition conveying the belief that Job proved to be righteous by standing the test of suffering when afflicted by sudden terrible events. Job's reaction to the disasters that came upon him is a calm acceptance of the will of God without falling into the temptation of showing hostility towards Him for what has happened. He blesses God not only for what he has given but also for what he has taken away (1:21; 2:10). His stand frustrates the view of Satan regarding Job's righteousness when God praises him: "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man who fears God and turns away from evil" (1:8). In his second intervention, God adds to this praise: "He still persists in his integrity, although you incited me against him, to destroy him for no reason" (2:3). This argument implies the belief that Satan appeared with a clear intention to entice Job to evil and to destroy him through the consequences of his own evil. To withstand the trial is therefore the only way out of distress. The Book of Job determines that the existence of people depends on the moral quality of their life and not on the accidental circumstances of their material position.

This universal biblical presupposition is even more apparent in the Yahwist narrative of the account of Paradise and the transgression of Adam and Eve recorded in Gen 3. It is taken for granted that the background of the Genesis narrative is to be found in mythological

elements common to the traditions of various ancient Near Eastern cultures. We note certain parallels in other tales, especially in the Gilgamesh Epic and in the Myth of Adapa where the central issue is the attempt to attain immortality. In spite of striking similarities the biblical narrative is unique in implying that the failure of humankind was indirectly caused by their own free will from the beginning, and not by their weakness or fate or the envy of the gods. The Yahwist writer rejected almost the entire polytheistic background of various traditions in order to transform them into an account that was in accordance with the high moral and spiritual insights of the biblical religion. The biblical presupposition of Creation implies the drama of testing to determine the inner quality of the created human couple, but already at this moment the serpent appears as enemy of both humans and God, one whose aim is to entice humans into rebellion against God. It is noteworthy that the serpent appears without explanation of where he comes from or who he is.

Herein lies the reason for the exceptionally great impact of the Paradise account on later literature and art in general. Various writers and artists turned to the Genesis story for insight into the paradox of human existence. They instinctively recognized that the story deals with the typical aspects of the temptation to which every human is subjected at every moment of his existence and which embodies ambitious self-assertion, morbid curiosity for something undiscovered and forbidden, reckless decisions against unresisting obedience, and the shame that comes over the sinner as his brazen courage leaves him. As the Apocalypse of 2 Baruch puts it: "Adam is not the cause, except only for himself, but each of us has become our own Adam" (54:19).³² This explains why the Bible has shaped the interaction of scripture and vernacular writing until well into the Renaissance and has been by far the most important of foundational texts for English and many other European literatures. The great *Jeu d'Adam*, perhaps the first biblical play in the vernacular to be written in England, was written in Anglo-Norman French, rather than the more usual Latin. John Milton (1608-1674) chose the biblical story of the Fall and redemption over the national Arthurian myth. His works *Paradise Lost* (1667) and *Paradise Regained* (1671) represent a high point of biblical influence on English literature. In between, and in later times, innumerable other intertextual presentations and interpretations in direct or indirect relation to the Genesis story have been created all over Europe and beyond. The most well-known interpretations of the Faust legend by Christopher Marlowe and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe also come close to the essence of the Genesis story. Both works relate to an older popular

story, based on the belief that one of the deeds of the devil is to try to make mankind stray from God by tempting humans with things that might be superficial or non-human.

The last part of the Book of Genesis, the Joseph story of chapters 37-50, is entirely based on the experience of temptation. Joseph was tested by revelation of dreams to determine his trust in higher wisdom; he was put to the test by condemnation to a shameful death by his brothers in order that he may learn forbearance and about his capacity to forgive, and most strikingly he was tempted by the wife of his lord Potiphar in order to find out whether he was able to overcome her attempted seduction to the sin of infidelity. The seduction scene (39:6-23) manifests similarities with the popular story preserved in the Egyptian myth of Bata and Anubis, the so-called Tale of Two Brothers. The similarities are most revealing in connection with the seduction of the younger brother, Bata, attempted by the wife of his older brother Anubis. It has long been observed that the Egyptian story had a venerable prehistory before it was finally written down in its present form. The similarity between the two seduction scenes, which each end in failure, is all the more apparent in view of the seduction attempt preserved in Homer's *Iliad* (6.152-170) and in Euripides. Attempted seduction is an ever-occurring event, one that happens at all times, and it is therefore clear that these famous textual examples are not explicable solely in terms of mutual dependence. In any case, the Joseph story from Genesis as a whole has had a very great impact on Jewish, Christian and Muslim cultures until today. Mention may be made especially of the apocryphal work *The Testaments of Twelve Patriarchs*, of the allegorical reinterpretation of the story in the Koran (Sura 12), and of the great modern novel by Thomas Mann, *Joseph and His Brothers* (1934-1942).

3. Characteristics of the Literary Motif of *Lepa Vida* (Fair Vida)

This overview of most popular and influential literary presentations of the motifs of longing, weakness and temptation in the Bible and in literature in general turns our attention to the nature of subjects and objects of testing, trial and temptation. Those who initiate the testing, trial and temptation vary. In the Bible and in the Koran the tester is usually God or occasionally the adversary Satan. Less frequent is the anthropological understanding of temptation as the conscious desire of individuals to do what they know to be wrong (Gal 6:1; James 1:14). God is depicted as

creating tests for various persons and groups. The biblical monotheistic background entails also that God is the ultimate source of the temptation of humans, and even Jesus. In this connection an important role is assigned to Satan, whom God uses to tempt people. Civilizations of a polytheistic background, and especially of secular popular traditions, frequently resort to natural and undefined supernatural beings, to various kinds of demons who test or tempt humans. Though subjects that are considered positive in character put humans to the test in order to determine virtue, more often it is wicked subjects and undefined forces that appear with the clear intention to seduce their victims. In this connection it is important to point out that the wicked tempters and seducers are both male and female. Female agents of temptation, such as the wife of the older brother of the Egyptian Tale of Two Brothers, Steneboeia of Homer's Iliad, Potiphar's wife in the Book of Genesis, Delilah in the Book of Judges, the Strange Woman in the Book of Proverbs, etc., became most attractive literary archetypes of human imagination, and thus a favourite archetype throughout world literature.

The other side of the drama of testing and temptation are those who are tested and tempted. It is remarkable that the subjects who are put to the test or tempted are, in general, not women but men. Narratives relate how Abraham, Job, young men in the Book of Proverbs, Hercules, and others are put to the test to determine their faith, faithfulness, obedience and constancy. Individuals such as Adam, Eve, and Joseph of Egypt are tempted by subjects that hide or manifest evil intention. In the story of the Fall (Gen 3), Eve has as much the role of a victim of temptation as of a temptress. But in the end it is clear that neither Adam nor Eve sinned out of obstinacy but rather due to their imperfect nature. The source of their sin lies in the fact that they were seduced by an evil subject. Although men and women are equally obliged to constancy and called on to control fierce urges, to shun the allure of the exotic and forbidden in favour of lawful pleasures, the male oriented societies focused their primary interest in the fate of men who were responsible for their own morality and for the education of all members of the family. In all these cases the emphasis is on the education method to convince the people to be aware of the dangers of the forbidden and the ambiguous attractions of the permitted.

Another scope may result in other types of folk traditions. The most impressive example is extolling the figure of the weakest, unprotected member of human society, the woman, as victim of various kinds of violence executed by men of power. Such a prominent case is the figure of

Fair Vida, which is a central figure in the folk literature of the Mediterranean area and which became the central literary archetype in Slovenian literature. In existential terms, the figure of Fair Vida is probably the most justified motif expressing all imaginable variants of tragic fates of unprotected women who fell into the hands of demonic and violent men. The pattern of this relationship provides a convenient background for extolling the victim Fair Vida, not only to make human destiny and identity immediate, striking, and personal but also as the most expressive symbol of suffering that afflicts an entire subordinated nation. Fair Vida is the prominent figure for depicting the destiny of weak, unprotected individuals, groups and nations because the beautiful woman embodies longing for all that is reminiscent of tenderness, goodness and faithfulness. But this very beauty and longing for tenderness invites violent men to turn her expectations towards the opposite extreme. Her beauty and longing for a world of dreams and courtship is the source of the greatest attraction and thus at the same time the greatest danger, and the villainous characters who approach her know how to exploit this. Once Fair Vida is trapped between what she must do and her personal desires, she becomes prey to hidden spheres from which there is no escape. When emotions are mentioned in the texts, the conflict of weakness and strength is resolved to her advantage, for they make it manifest that she is essentially a righteous and strong woman.

Weakness is central to the figure of Fair Vida. Such weakness is apparent in her hesitancy, imperfection, or human frailty before a seemingly omnipotent master. Fair Vida is seen to bend before a sense of personal desire that overrides her public commitment to strength. The prominent existential background is the appropriate framework from which to understand and appreciate the interplay of this figure with the historical situations of the European nations of the Mediterranean in the periods of Arabic and Turkish domination. A specific cultural and sociological need made the dramatic characterization of weakness of human nature in general, embodied in Fair Vida, an expressive metaphor for the suffering people as a whole. This explains the great extent of variations of the same pattern. It is noteworthy that not everyone presents and reads the same figure the same way. The existential origin and various levels of meaning provide a background for dealing with the extant texts, and this goes beyond the historical approach. The motifs of longing, weakness and temptation are so general and universal that the most suitable approach is a comparative analysis of literary texts in their inner relationship between form and content and in their relationship to similar presentations of the

same motifs in literature from other areas or different periods. Already a superficial survey of instances of this topic in world literature shows that it is important in both folk culture and in developed written documents of human culture. Therefore, the growth of human culture from folk forms to forms of high art such as dance, literature and music is a central methodological issue; this means that the study of literary forms and contents includes the realm of folklore.

According to Albert Lord's classic work *The Singer of Tales*, there are three main streams of the intellectual subject of folklore: the humanistic, anthropological, and psychological-psychoanalytic perspectives.³³ Lord is a prominent representative of the humanistic perspective. His "oral-formulaic" theory was developed out of a focus on the south Slavic oral epic and was later applied to Homeric epics. Lord studied a live tradition of oral narrative poetry in order to demonstrate the process by which oral poets compose. He came to the conclusion that ancient native customs, contents and forms are receptive to the influx new forms and readily allow innovations. Since the primary interest is the development of the meaning for human existence, the anthropological perspective is even more important. Aesthetic products from various cultures mirror those cultures' values and offer a projective screen that illuminates their imaginations. The same tales are found in many parts of the world and the characters have many things in common. This fact shows that myths, dreams, ballads, and fairy tales reflect the ethos of many peoples and express hidden layers of unconscious human wishes and fears.

The evidence of international dissemination of motifs and archetypes can, however, exhibit local characteristics in terms of its popularity, persistence through various periods, as well as application to various levels of meaning. Keeping these points in mind, it is safe to conclude that the motifs of longing, weakness and temptation as expressed in the figure of Fair Vida reflect most clearly the identity of the Slovenian nation. The Fair Vida song variants warrant greater attention to what lies beneath their surface expressions. The relationship between the text and the larger past social world in which the observations are rooted requires some explanation. The basic premise of any literary approach is the awareness that there is a multiplicity of meanings in any text. This awareness is a precondition for any attempt to understand either literature in its own terms or in terms of comparative studies. Structuralism, meanwhile, deems it important to trace in the texts common patterns and differences with a view to the natural phenomena behind them, but any reading of the texts

entails an anthropological and psychoanalytical sympathy that invites new combinations of insight.

4. Literary Presentations of Universal Human Experience

The Bible is a collection of varied writings by diverse writers showing a preference for brief, relatively self-contained units. Its narratives make up an anthology of brief stories, and its poetry takes the form of self-contained lyric poems. Thus, anthologies of the Bible fall into familiar literary genres such as narrative and poetry. Biblical writers wrote in the context of ancient Near Eastern cultures with an awareness of the literature being produced in surrounding nations. On the surface, the Bible seems not to be governed by literary intentions; rather the subject matter of the Bible shows that the product of biblical writers is a unique literary incarnation of human experience in art forms. Biblical texts are concrete representations of universal human experience in the form of characters, actions, and images. They re-create experiences, sensations and events and convey a sense of reality and truth for all people in all places at all times. The literary language of the Bible is predominantly figurative and contains metaphors, similes, allusions, word plays, paradoxes, dramatic irony, and so forth. The narratives themselves are so filled with concrete pictures that they can be called poetic prose. All literary genres or types share certain elements of artistic form, such as unity or central focus, coherence, contrast, symmetry, various elements of repetition, variation, and unified progression. All these and other literary means of language, syntax, and rhetoric are constituent elements of a style that is recognizable in every passage. It is true that the content of a message dictates the form, yet it is also clear that the form contributes to the meaning of the passage.

Any comparative approach shows that great classical works, especially the Bible, which is the book for all seasons and all temperaments, are a mingling of the familiar and the unfamiliar. There is familiar emphasis on human experience, the presence of familiar genres and archetypes, and the usual display of artistry and reliance on special resources of language. But along these familiar features, much strikes us as distinctive, though not absolutely unique. As Leland Ryken puts it:

The Bible is a paradoxical book. Because of its range and its truthfulness to human experience, it preserves the complexities and polarities of life to an unusual degree. The paradoxes of life are held in tension in what can be called the most balanced anthology ever compiled. Human responsibility and divine sovereignty, God's transcendence and immanence, humankind's

potential for greatness and smallness, the importance of the earthly and yet its relative inferiority to the heavenly, the importance of the individual and yet the incompleteness of the individual apart from relationship, the literary impulse towards realism but also towards the more-than-earthly—these and other poles are simultaneously affirmed in the Bible. Even the style of the Bible is a paradox: It combines simplicity with majesty.

Despite its immense range of content and style, the Bible possesses more unity than other anthologies; it has a unifying plot. The central conflict is the great spiritual battle between good and evil. The protagonist is God, with every creature and event showing some movement, whether slight or momentous, towards God or away from Him. ...

Despite stylistic and generic diversity, biblical writers generally share certain preferences. They prefer the brief unit to the long one, conciseness to prolixity, the realistic to the wholly idealized, the plain or simple style to the embellished style, the religious view of life to the secular, the historical to the fictional, dialogue and dramatization to summarized narrative, the happy ending to the tragic, the bare narration of what happened over an explanation of it. Biblical writers gravitate naturally to heightened contrasts, to master images like light and darkness and pilgrimage, to elemental human experience, to simplified virtues and vices, to a clear sense of the world and of what is right and wrong in that world, to the primacy of the spiritual as a basic assumption about life.³⁴

The Bible presents the archetypes of the literary imagination that are the archetypes of literature in general: recurrent concrete images, motifs, character types, or feelings. Literary presentations of the motifs of longing and temptation illustrate especially clearly that literature is a mirror in which we see ourselves, our experiences, and our world. The story of the Fall tells us what Adam and Eve did in the Garden of Eden in a way which raises several interrelated questions: What universal aspects of human nature are embodied in these characters? Do these characters belong to a recognizable literary archetype? Who are the protagonists and the antagonists in the conflict? What elements of testing or tempting and choice are important to the action? How can the conflicts and the dramatic irony be resolved? What verdict does the story offer about falling into temptation at all times and in all places? The writer is telling us a story about life by means of the characters and events that have been presented. The story teller was attracted to the story because it reveals the deep significance of life. This explains why the Bible is the story of all things, embodied in a collection of all major literary genres, and why it has been and still is the single greatest influence on Western literature.

5. Literary-critical and Rhetorical Approaches to Intertextuality

The early Church fathers were the first to acknowledge the literary nature of the Bible. Augustine, in the fourth century, came to regard the Bible as literary in the same ways that classical literature was.³⁵ At both the level of literary nuances of language and rhetorical patterns and at the level of human experience, the Bible is an inexhaustible book. The more the fund of experience is enlarged, and the more literary knowledge readers bring to it, the more the Bible yields. But since the purpose of Scripture is primarily for “instruction in righteousness” (2 Tim 3:16), there are clear limits of “an integrative model for biblical interpretation.”³⁶ The awareness of the unity of content and style explains why James Muilenburg’s synchronic approach, considered holistic in character with an emphasis on the rhetorical features and with a concentration on the final form of the extant text, opened a new direction in biblical scholarship decades ago.³⁷ Kenneth A. Mathews finds good reasons for backing Muilenburg’s proposal:

A full(er) understanding of passage involves a holistic approach to interpretation, which comprises both grammatical-historical studies and literary analysis. Holistic study is necessary because the Bible is literary, if not literature. By “literary,” we mean that it is self-consciously conceived as literature. ...

Setting aside the question of literary study as a legitimate enterprise, we can turn now to the present scene. Contemporary literary approaches to the Bible were not created in a vacuum. They draw on a myriad of literary-critical theories and other disciplines, such as anthropology, psychology, linguistics, and political theory. ...³⁸

Mathews points also to another important feature of biblical literature and, to a great extent, of literature in general:

Since biblical narrative usually does not announce its intention overtly, it is necessary for the interpreter to derive it from the text by inference. For the most part, the reader is left to infer from rhetorical features of the text what the opinion of the narrator is.³⁹

Another important aspect of intertextual study of motifs of longing, weakness and temptation is the question of the relationship between myth and history as presented in literary texts of the ancient Near East. Comparative material induced most scholars to examine the popular

contrast between Israelite history and Pagan myth, claiming that history was the constitutive genre of Israel's religious expression, while myth exercised that function in contemporary paganism. Unfortunately, no one has worked out comparative differences based on an adequate literary analysis of extant texts. The task of clarifying the contrast involving the myth-history tension remains, but this task requires a new approach. Jimmy Jack McBee Roberts realizes that existing comparative attempts are based on broad generalizations and sees correctly that comparative significance shows itself through its expression in the respective literatures. His concluding statement is the proposal of a literary approach:

An adequate comparative study must examine the theological interpretations of historical events across the whole spectrum of literary genres native to the cultures being compared. One way of doing this is to take a typical event such as the fall of a royal cult center and then to trace the theological reflections on that event through the undoubtedly emerge in the ensuing discussion, and eventually one must construct a new synthesis—hopefully one that will recognize the theological value of both what is unique to the biblical faith and what it shares in common with the Ancient near Eastern religions.⁴⁰

The ascribing of a text to a genre provides the interpreter of the text with a key intertextual framework, with relations within the text in terms of its internal configuration and its autonomous form, and with a system of references to other books, other texts, other literary statements. Awareness of the importance of intertextuality leads us to examine the functions of images and written texts used in close association within a text in terms of their overall literary and rhetorical structure. It seems that *imitatio veterum* is instrumental not only in the construction of new texts but also in the construction of the world of current lived experience. It is in intertextual representations of reality and dreams that the great memory of literature exists, and it thus preserves the unity of our cultural heritage. The intertextual approach is obviously appropriate to the study of contents, symbols and forms expressing the experience of human longing, weakness and temptation. It shows how the source text continues to speak through the new work and how the new work unearths new meanings from the source text. Source texts, like those studied here—namely, biblical books, Greek literary works, or folk ballads in the Mediterranean area since the Middle Ages—are in most cases not a coherent whole, but read as a series of independent units written at different times, though with a common general purpose. Later writers use them with a historical sense, sensitivity to their larger original context and to the significance of the new text and the new context, also when aiming towards a fuller understanding of

authenticity of existence. Literary interrelationships provide evidence for the fact that the poets and writers incorporate the traditions of the past into a work such that it transforms past and present. And the result is that literature appears to be a system of interrelated texts, a new interaction of past and present in literary composition, a kind of reanimation of tradition.

The first methodological approaches of intertextuality focused on influence and causality, on authorial intention and on literary interrelationships and patterns of literary borrowing within literature proper. Subsequent contributions helped to broaden the understanding of intertextual relations in literary texts to include a variety of linguistic phenomena, the intra-poetic relationships and relationships between text and culture. Rhetorical approaches to intertextuality consider the way various key expressions and rhetorical figures are used in literary compositions and attempt to identify what the reader must do in order to recognize the dynamics of intertextuality and follow the intertextual signs and relations in any given text. Close to this approach are the linguistic theories of Roman Jakobson and the structural anthropology of Claude Lévi-Strauss that are based on linguistic models and metaphors as well as the presupposition that texts and communication are stable entities. Structuralist and semiotic methods point to inherent intertextual communication, to include any system of signs, not simply those used in literary texts. The awareness that every text must be read as part of a larger literary context provides a bridge between strictly diachronic and strictly synchronic approaches to literary texts, and to human culture as such. This helps us make use of the best results of various literary-critical approaches of intertextuality.

