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The People Shall Not Dwell Alone: The Hebrew Bible in Light of Chinese Classics

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Abstract: This article compares the similar texts in historiography, legend, poetry, and law between the Hebrew Bible and Chinese classic works, emphasizing the mutual reflection and illumination of the two in terms of culture. This article holds that a literary work, just like an object, will release a certain form of energy, which will have an impact on other works and, at the same time, be influenced by other works. This article examines Chinese classic works from the perspective of the Hebrew Bible to gain new insights. By discussing the traditional comparative methods in biblical studies, the article emphasizes the possibility of comparison between different cultures. It is believed that, for similar stories and texts, it is important to analyze their specific cultural backgrounds and writing environments and to reveal the deep-seated reasons in terms of philosophy, history, society, culture, personal life experiences, etc., behind the phenomena of similarities and differences. Using this method, the article deeply analyzes the similarities and differences between the two kinds of texts in specific literary genres such as historiography, poetry, and law and gives examples to illustrate the similarities and differences between these two types of literary works. The study of these narratives within a comparative framework enables people to have a deeper understanding of these texts and the societies that produced them, while also respecting the unique backgrounds and meanings of each work. The article underlines the significance of cross-cultural comparison in the studies of the Bible and Chinese classic works. This research approach, as proposed, enriches the comprehension of these two literary traditions and their profound influence on the shaping of human history and culture.

Keywords: Hebrew Bible; Chinese classics; comparative method; historiography; poetry; law; cross-cultural studies

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1. The Comparative Method in Biblical Studies

According to physics, all objects whose thermodynamic temperature is above zero are constantly emitting electromagnetic waves, radiation, or energy. Any work of literature is similarly radiating its energy perpetually in all directions: literary texts are influenced not only by works preceding them, but can also be changed and given new meaning by later texts, whether those are deliberate commentaries or other forms of allusion, or whether they are completely distant. When a text is situated in a new context, countless radiation lines can be generated and perceived just like a light source to a mirror consisting of another group of lights. The Hebrew Bible, undoubtedly, is a shining example of such a text, regardless of whether one perceives it as a theological work of faith, a record of history, or a work of literature. It preserves influences of civilizations much older than the culture that produced it and has been interpreted and reworked in numerous ways, from its inception to present day. Placing the biblical literature against the mirror of Chinese

classics will yield a kaleidoscopic set of images, providing illuminating insights for both of these literatures.

In a recent study, Aryeh Amihay suggested, following Claude Lévi-Strauss, that the biblical literature can be better understood if one acknowledges connections between different stories that were not necessarily deliberate or in the consciousness of the author (Amihay 2018). In this, his argument is very close to my opening claim about expecting to find laws of physics operating in literary text. However, all the examples in Amihay's study derive from the Abrahamic tradition, that is to say, from cultures that were actually in contact with one another, and especially from ancient Judaism. I propose that his argument can be strengthened and developed through an examination of texts where no argument for direct influence can be made, as indeed was the case for Lévi-Strauss's original argument (Lévi-Strauss 1955).

One more point of connection between my opening remarks and Amihay's study should be made: Amihay distinguishes between Lévi-Straussian parallels, which he claims are produced without authorial intent, and parallels which are deliberate allusions created by the author, where he follows Yair Zakovitch's notion of the "Mirror Narrative".[1] The mirrors that Zakovitch proposes are all internal, indeed they are part of a "web of connections between different writings" that Zakovitch describes as "Inner-Biblical Interpretation" (Shinan and Zakovitch 2012). Thus, the analysis remains in a self-contained hall of mirrors, in which the Hebrew Bible is employed for its own interpretation. While this approach has been fruitful and resulted in countless insights, the insertion of mirrors has not been exhausted.

In addition to "Inner-Biblical Interpretation", biblical scholarship has focused on two directions for the purposes of an analysis of biblical texts in conjunction with other texts. One direction was looking forward, namely, the study of "reception history" or "biblical exegesis", covering a broad range of literatures ranging from ancient Judaism and early Christianity, to the modern literature and film. The other direction was backward looking, focusing on the Near Eastern context of the Hebrew Bible.[2] Indeed, this direction in research was called in its early days, "the comparative method", as if the only relevant comparison for the study of the Hebrew Bible is the backdrop of the Near East. Shemaryahu Talmon, for example, praises the comparative method, when it is "historically and geographically defined" for its success in removing "biblical Israel from the cultural and conceptual seclusion" that was previously imposed on it (Talmon 1993). In a foundational methodological paper on the comparative method, he does not consider a single case, or even the option, of the benefits of comparison outside civilizations who were in close proximity to ancient Israel in time and place.

But even for this limited scope of comparison, confined to the Near East, Talmon offers many cautions and limitations, lamenting his colleagues' "disregard for internal analysis as a means to elicit from the biblical literature itself" as in relevant concepts for their study (Talmon 1993). Such qualms were most strongly expressed in Samuel Sandmell's article "Parallel mania", where he warned against comparisons leading to "some pallid unanimity" and describing the entire method as a "disease" (Sandmel 1962). Although his attack was directed at the postbiblical literature, his diatribe resonated with many biblical scholars and had a substantial impact on inhibiting comparison (Weitzman 2016; Silverman 2010; Milstein 2016).

The dangers of comparison are very real and should be noted. A distinction indeed must be drawn between a comparison of civilizations who certainly had or may have had contact and cultural exchange and between civilizations where no such contact is hypothesized. Talmon's emphasis that comparatists should "pay heed to differences between cultures and not only to likenesses" (Talmon 1993) is one that is commonly accepted, as

is his warning against comparison on a "grand scale" (ibid.). Comparisons require a cautious examination of specific details rather than listing superficial similarities. They are most fruitful when they acknowledge both similarities and contrasts, and they should not aim at creating an "eclectic museum", as Walter Kaufmann described it, (Kaufmann 1958) of dazzling resemblances. One more caution should be cited: comparisons should not be made for the sake of advancing a theological agenda, in favor or against a tradition, as in the sordid affair of Friedrich Delitzsch, or the more subtle prejudice of Mircea Eliade.[3]

Biblical scholars have long wrestled with the comparative method, focusing on comparisons with the ancient Near East, and grappling with the extent to which such comparisons are useful. In the context of the world's progressive convergence into an integrated global entity, there is a greater awareness for the benefits of cross-cultural comparisons. In addition to a pioneering study by Barbara Holdrege, which remained a solitary example for many years (Holdrege 1996), there is a slightly growing engagement of comparison between the biblical literature and East Asian culture, in diverse areas such as military history (Trimm 2017), scribal practices (Bin 2011), historiography (Gálik 2010), and reception history (Sugirtharajah 2018), but there is much more work to be performed in this direction. Such a comparison takes into account that cross-cultural studies do not seek historical contact or points of influence, but rather the connectedness of different literary works based on conceptual similarities or thematic affinities (Zhang 2007). The analysis of similarities and differences should not remain at a superficial listing of similarities and disconnections; rather, it should delve into the specific cultural backgrounds and writing contexts of the subjects under study (Yang 2002). By employing methods such as comparison, contrast, hypothesis, inference, analysis, and synthesis, one can uncover the deeper philosophical, historical, social, cultural, and personal origins behind the phenomena of similarities and differences. This approach will enhance the understanding of the subjects being studied, help truly escape the trap of "comparing for the sake of comparison", and allow us to discover the underlying patterns of similarities and differences through comparison. The ultimate goal of comparison is to achieve a state in which two cultures can reach "a diversity in harmony" and eventually "a harmony in diversity".[4] This new direction is not only most suitable for this day and age, but also has the potential of freeing biblical studies from the need to justify comparisons through arguments of historical causation and dependence, and instead to allow a new appreciation of the multitude of benefits in store for comparison in its own right. To illustrate these benefits, I turn now to three following genres: historiography and legend, poetry, and law.

2. Historiography and Legendary

> When Ching K'o took the map and presented it to the king, the king unrolled the map and at the end the dagger appeared. Accordingly, Ching K'o seized the king's sleeve with his left hand, and with his right he picked up the dagger and stabbed his chest. –The Grand Scribe's Records

This is a vivid description of the famous story of Ching K'o assassinating the King of Qin (秦王), recorded by Ssu-ma Ch'ien (司马迁) in his *The Grand Scribe's Records* 《史记》 (91BC). Ching K'o is a household name and the stock figure of the assassin in Chinese history. Ching K'o is remembered in Chinese culture for his death, his self-sacrificing spirit, the sharpness of his dagger, and for the aphorism associated with his narrative: "The dagger appears at the end of the map 图穷匕首见" (meaning "The final intention is revealed").[5]

The scene of the assassination is reminiscent, despite its differences to one of the shorter stories found in the book of Judges:

> As the king rose from his seat, Ehud reached with his left hand, drew the sword from his right thigh and plunged it into the king's belly. [Judges 3:20–21].

Ehud shared many similarities with Ching K'o. Both of them schemed the assassination out of opposition to the oppression or invasion of another nation or kingdom, rather than personal hatred. They fully prepared beforehand: Ehud approached his target with the disguise of sending tributes, while Ching K'o and the Heir Tan of Yen (燕太子丹) prepared several things to make the assassination secure, including a map of Yen's Tu-K'ang (督亢) which had a significant place in military strategy; the head of Fang Wu-chi, Chin's betrayer who had fled to Yen; and a helper named Ch'in Wu-yang (秦舞阳), who was so courageous that he killed a man when he was twelve years old, along with enormous other treasurers.[6] The weapon is similar, and its concealment is not only a matter of practicality but a shared motif between the two stories.

Their significance in the text in which they appear is different, however: Ehud's comprises only several paragraphs, quite negligible in comparison to the prominent figures in the Book of Judges, such as Deborah, Gideon, and most notably Samson. By contrast, Ching K'o is the most prominent assassin among those mentioned in *The Grand Scribe's Records*, namely, Ts'ao Mo (曹沫), Chuan Chu (专诸), Yu Jang (豫让), Nieh Cheng (聂政), and Ching K'o. The author Ssu-ma Ch'ien portrayed him with 3000 characters out of 5000 of the *Assassin-retainers Memoir* 《刺客列传》among the five assassins, from which his preference is clearly evidenced. Throughout Chinese literary history, numerous poets have written about him, either positively or negatively, including Tao Yuanming (陶渊明) of the Jin Dynasty, Jia Dao (贾岛) of Tang, Su Shi (苏轼) of Song and Gong Zizhen (龚自珍) of Qing, to name just a few.

The main difference between the stories, however, is the question of agency: Ehud is portrayed as the direct agent of God. He approaches Eglon by telling him that he brings him a message from God (Ju 3:20), and it is understood that the narrator does not consider this to be a lie.[7]

Ching K'o, by contrast, is operating of his own volition, and consequently, his narrative includes deliberations, ethical consideration, and political justifications. Initially, he is quite hesitant to assassinate the king of Ch'in. Upon hearing the Heir Tan's plan, he paused a long time, indicating his apprehension, and then replied:

> "This is a vital matter of state. Your servant is worn out and inferior and he fears he would he inadequate to take on such a task".

Ching K'o is not displaying humility, but rather his reluctance and lack of confidence as illustrated in the earlier fact that he was initiated in the art of politics, planning to serve the Lord Yuan of Wey (卫元公) who did not employ him eventually. His intention to travel several countries including Yen was not to become an assassin, but, rather, a politician.

This difference between the two narratives raises a serious methodological issue: most of the historiographic material of the Hebrew Bible, even when addressing political and military affairs, is framed in the context of religion and theology. Both in its reception and in its creation, the biblical literature is marked as religious. The Chinese classics, by contrast, defy such classification, and thus can provide insight regarding the definition of religion and the unique character of the Hebrew Bible, which presents even seemingly secular topics in religious garb. Of course, the fact that Chinese classics are not viewed as religious texts does not mean they are not canonical, or lacking a special status. Wai-Yee Li has identified in *The Grand Scribe's Records* at least three types of authority: textual, magical, and moral.[8] From early on, its authority was a "true record".[9] All this suggests a powerful attribution to a text which may lead us to question if its classification as entirely non-religious is accurate or helpful[10] and in any case is very similar to discussions of authority of the Hebrew by later readers of it (see, for example (Najman 2003; Sommer 2015)).

There is much more to say on this comparison of Ehud and Ching K'o, from a perspective of military history and politics. It is hardly the only example for a historiographic

example: Dong Zhuo (董卓) hurling a halberd at Lv Bu (吕布) and King Saul at David with a spear. In *The History of Later Han* 《后汉书》, the story was described as following:[11]

Dong Zhuo assigned Lv Bu as a Commandant of Cavalry and trusted him deeply, swearing their relationship as father and son. Soon, Lv Bu was promoted as Military Commander, ranking Marquis of Duting. Knowing that he himself is indulgent and ferocious, Dong Zhuo was often suspicious and fearful and therefore always asked Lv to guard him. Lv once took a trivial offence against Dong, and Dong hurled his halberd violently at him. Lv promptly eluded him and apologized at once with a pleasing face. Dong forgave him, but Lv was privately vindictive toward Dong. Dong entrusted Lv to guard the gate to the inner chambers for womenfolk, but Lv committed adultery with one of Dong's sexually favored maids. Lv was worried a lot and then went to Wang Yun's, Minister of Culture, Land and Personnel, complaining about Dong's hurling of his halberd at him. At that time, Wang was plotting with Shisun Rui, a deputy minister, to murder Dong and therefore asked Lv to be a planted agent. When Lv asked, "What about our father-son affection?", he responded, "You surnamed Lv on its own and have no blood ties. Now you even don't have the chance to survive, how can you concern about affection? Was he concerning the father-son affection when he hurled his halberd at you?" Then, Lv agreed and assassinated Dong at the North Side Gate to the Royal Palace ….

From the above text, it is easy to see many similarities to the episode about the conflicts between Saul and David in Hebrew Bible (1 Samual 18–19). Both David and Lv Bu are brave young men favored by their masters, who have absolute power over them; even the reason of the favor is alike, as both David and Lv killed their masters' strong enemy easily, Goliath and Ding Yuan, respectively. But later on, the two men encountered the same treat: a weapon from their masters hurling at them, with the difference in the weapons, Dong's halberd versus Saul's javelin, but equally fatal. Another difference is maybe the times of hurling, as Don did it once while Saul twice; and Saul continually sought David's death, but David chose to forgive, meanwhile Lv took revenge privately just for the one time of hurling[12] The excuses of hurling the weapon at the two are similar too: David and Lv offended their masters unintentionally, jealously from Saul and arrogance from Dong,[13] though.

Both the stories mentioned the similar relationship: father and son. Initiated by the masters, Dong Zhuo wants to take advantage of Lv's physical force while Saul desires to trap David with the in-law bondage. The relationship, however, earned the young men a higher status and better fame. However, the two pairs of father–son relationships were not genuine father–son relationships in the true sense. Saul and David were father-in-law and son-in-law, and this identity was imposed on David (1 Samuel 18). Dong Zhuo and Lv Bu had the relationship of godfather and godson, and Lv Bu's identity as an adoptive son was obtained by Dong Zhuo through the means of bribery of offering a very precious horse. Such a loose relationship obtained through insincere means is often vulnerable in the face of interests or other temptations.

In both of these pairs of relationships, there was an obvious power imbalance. Saul, as the king of Israel, had absolute power, and Dong Zhuo was also a figure of great power in the political environment at that time. David and Lv Bu were in a relatively subordinate position, and their fates were largely under the control of their masters. Therefore, both of them made corresponding efforts to escape from this control. David escaped from Saul's control, established his own forces, and gradually built up his strength to the extent that he could rival Saul. However, even though Saul threw a spear at him several times, when David later had the opportunity to take revenge, he still chose to spare Saul. He refused to harm "the Lord's anointed" and was unwilling to try to fulfill God's promise through his own rebellious actions. Moreover, he even "blamed himself in his heart" for cutting

off the corner of Saul's robe. David's act of not seizing the opportunity for revenge and seizing power, on the one hand, demonstrated his reverence for God and his respect for the order arranged by God. On the other hand, he also took into account the overall interests and unity of the Israelite nation. If he had killed Saul, it might have triggered internal division and chaos in Israel, plunging the country into civil war and turmoil. David was well aware that his actions would have a profound impact on the entire nation, and so he put the overall situation first and was unwilling to disrupt the country's stability and unity because of personal grudges. In this way, David's positive and perfect image was established. In contrast, Lv Bu is a negative character in the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*. Even though Dong Zhuo threw a halberd at him, he was reluctant to kill Dong Zhuo out of consideration for the name of their father–son relationship. It was not until Wang Yun (王允) reminded him, "you have the surname Lv, and he has the surname Dong. When he threw the halberd, was there any father-son affection?" that he made up his mind. Eventually, under Wang Yun's scheme, Lv Bu killed Dong Zhuo. Although the death of Dong Zhuo was a cause for celebration for the common people suffering in great distress at that time, it planted the seeds of disaster for Lv Bu. Coupled with the fact that he had previously betrayed and killed his other godfather, Ding Yuan, other warlords no longer trusted Lv Bu since then. In the end, when Cao Cao (曹操) was hesitating whether to kill Lv Bu in front of the White Gate Tower (白门楼), Liu Bei's (刘备) most fatal words, "Don't you remember what happened to Ding Jianyang and Dong Zhuo?" led to Lv Bu's death.[14]

Besides, both the stories involve a woman: David was married to Saul's daughter, and Lv had a sexual affair with Dong's maid.[15] The Hebrew Bible spent several verses on narrating how Michal helped David to escape Saul's chase, but the *History of Later Han* mentions the maid briefly. Considering the length of narratives on David as opposed to that of Lv Bu, however, it is hardly surprising. Anyhow, David is one of the main characters in Bible while Lv Bu is comparatively a walk-on part.[16] However, in the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, the story involving Lv Bu, Dong Zhuo, and Diao Chan is of great significance. The entanglement among these three characters takes up two chapters. Considering the grand narrative of the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, which features 1191 characters, occupying 2 chapters out of 120 is indeed a considerable proportion. Anyway, these two women both became political victims in their respective stories. Although both of them were good-looking and enjoyed a favorable status, it was precisely these two aspects that led to their tragedies. Diao Chan was especially renowned for her beauty and was praised as one of the Four Great Beauties in ancient Chinese history. While the Bible does not directly describe Michal's appearance, judging from David's reaction, she should not have been an ugly woman, as David killed two hundred Philistines for her. Both of them experienced love. Michal had married David, and Diao Chan eventually married Lv Bu. Regarding their status, Michal was a princess, and so of course, she had a high status. Although Diao Chan was initially a maidservant, she was later adopted as the foster daughter by Wang Yun, and her status was greatly elevated all of a sudden. However, since both of them were regarded as tools, they did not end up well in the end. One lived a melancholy life, ended up alone, and had no children until the day of her death. The other was killed by Guan Yu (关羽).[17]

Another comparison is also related to David, concerning his adultery with Bathsheba, wife of Uriah, one of his thirty mighty men (2 Samual 11–12). In Chinese records, there are two corresponding stories. One is narrated in Zuozhuan, in which there was commentary on the "Spring and Autumn Annals" about Duke Zhuang of Qi (齐庄公) committing adultery with the wife of his Chief Minister[18], Cui Zhu (崔杼), and the other was in *Zizhi Tongjian* 《资治通鉴》, recording that the last king of Later Chen, Chen Shubao (陈叔宝),

had an adulterous relationship with the wife of his General of the Flying Cavalry, Xiao Mohe (萧摩诃).[19]

In the Bible story, as a king, David should have abided by morality and the law. However, driven by desire, he had an evil affair with Bathsheba and even devised a plot to murder Uriah to cover up his actions. This reveals the collapse of the moral defense of a person at the pinnacle of power when faced with the temptation of desire. His behavior violated the commandment against adultery in the Ten Commandments and triggered God's condemnation through the prophet Nathan, stressing the religious doctrines on the moral restraint of those in power.

In Chinese historical stories, Duke Zhuang of Qi, similarly, had an evil affair with the wife of his Chief Minister, Cui Zhu, who had made him a Duke. The monarch crossed the ethical boundary. In the social context of the Spring and Autumn period with distinct hierarchies and strict etiquette, this behavior was not only a matter of personal morality but also triggered intense conflicts between the monarch and his ministers. Cui Zhu even went so far as to assassinate the duke, which shocked the whole court, highlighting the political unrest brought about by violating the social ethical norms at that time. The entanglement between Chen Shubao, the last king of the Later Chen Dynasty, and the wife of his General of the Flying Cavalry, Xiao Mohe, occurred in the final period of the Later Chen Dynasty when the country was in turmoil. As the monarch, Chen Shubao indulged in women and ignored the loyalty between the monarch and his ministers, further accelerating the downfall of the dynasty. This shows that, when rulers give free rein to their desires and disregard moral and political responsibilities, it will bring catastrophe to the regime. Under the system of emphasizing the monarch's virtue and the responsibility for the family and the country in traditional Chinese culture, it has become a negative example for later generations.

The story of David warns people that, no matter how high their status is, they must adhere to morality under the watchful eye of God, and those who make mistakes will surely be punished, guiding people to revere the gods and follow the lifestyle guided by religious teachings. Its implication runs through the inheritance of Christian culture, constantly reminding believers to examine whether their behaviors conform to the spirit of religious doctrines.

This incident sets the stage for David, who, after committing adultery, was indirectly established as a positive example, that is, those who repent after sinning can receive forgiveness and even blessings. Although David was punished in the subsequent Absalom's uprising, ultimately, he did not stop his sinful behavior. He did not sever his relationship with Bathsheba but instead married her and had a blessed offspring, Solomon, who brought about the most prosperous period in Jewish history. This in itself reflects the teaching in the Bible that anything and anyone can be justified theologically, and these interpretations enable the later Jewish people to learn more about the significance of submitting to God's teachings. The fact that this incident could be written down certainly also implies that the scribes were able to freely write true stories without being restricted by the royal censorship system (Putrawan et al. 2023). Furthermore, this implication, as well as the defense and justification of David's behavior between the lines should be regarded as a significant accomplishment and a great realization of the monarchy described in Deuteronomy (Lumingkewas et al. 2022).

Likewise, the purpose of the corresponding historical records in China is, on the one hand, to "faithfully record history": Cui Zhu later killed two historians who tried to record his regicide truthfully, but the third one still remained unyielding and insisted on recording it (note: these three historians were brothers. In ancient China, the position of historian was a hereditary family occupation). But here, it is doubtful whether the three historians

"faithfully" recorded the event since they only wrote part of the event "Cui Zhu killed his lord" ignoring completely the preceding sinful adultery. And the historians' partiality illustrates their unjust faith to their lord. On the other hand, the purpose for historians to record these events is to "use history as a mirror to warn future generations", enabling later emperors and monarchs to use history for political purposes or to warn subjects to submit to the rulers in order to maintain the patriarchal system.

The story of David's adultery, although reflecting moral constraints, more prominently embodies the "theocentric" ideology, while the texts related to Duke Zhuang of Qi reflect the ideology of "loyalty to the monarch". Cui Zhu cared deeply about the record of his regicide. It seemed that, even if Duke Zhuang of Qi's death due to his blatant adultery with his subject's wife was not deserved, Cui Zhu's revenge for this matter made him a heinous criminal, and he was extremely ashamed of it as it was known by future generations, thus forcing the historians to record that "Duke Zhuang of Qi died of illness". This coincides with the concept of "subjects should serve their monarch with faithfulness" propagated by Confucianism in ancient China.[20] Of course, the previous line is "the monarch treats the subject with courtesy", and the records about Yan Ying (宴婴) in the subsequent story of Cui Zhu also illustrate this point: After Duke Zhuang of Qi was killed, Yan Ying believed that "If the monarch dies for the country, then one should die with him; if the monarch flees for the country, then one should flee with him. If the monarch dies or flees for his own sake, except for his intimate favorites, who would take responsibility for it!" And he only expressed his grief out of courtesy.[21] Therefore, not all people in ancient China were foolishly loyal to the monarch.

Similarly, Xiao Moke was blamed for missing the favored military moment since he had no intention of fighting after he heard his wife's adultery with the monarch Chen Shubao, as if he were just a machine serving the monarch. However, after the downfall of Later Chen Dynasty, Xiao Moke still cared about his lord a lot, which was commended greatly. All of these things illustrate the chronicler's ideology of loyalty to the monarch. The case of Chen Shubao reinforced the concept that beautiful women can bring disaster and that a monarch's lack of virtue leads to the fall of the country. In the traditional education dominated by Confucian culture, it conveys to scholars, civilians, and the ruling class the message that cultivating oneself, managing the family, and governing the country and bringing peace to the world require taking virtue as the foundation, becoming a cultural force for maintaining social order and stability and consolidating the rule of the regime.

Since David occupies a significant amount of space in the Bible, reasonably, he has more parallels to Chinese stories. Another one is him feigning madness to that of Sun Bin (孙膑), both to get a better chance for survival. Under the tight chase of King Saul, David's actions, as described in 1 Samuel, involved disheveling his appearance and allowing saliva to run down his beard, creating the illusion of a man possessed by madness. This ruse allowed him to evade detection and safely flee to Gath, ultimately preserving his life and setting the stage for his rise to become the king of Israel. Sun Bin, on the other hand, was a military strategist from the Warring States period in China. His feigned madness was a response to the brutal punishment of having his kneecaps removed, a fate orchestrated by his rival and fellow disciple Pang Juan (庞涓).[22] Sun Bin's feigning of madness was far more extreme and involved behaviors such as smearing feces on himself, screaming, crying, laughing, and even eating excrement. These actions were so convincing that they deceived not only his jailers but also Pang Juan, leading to his eventual release from captivity. The methods employed by David and Sun Bin, while both aimed at deception, were distinct in their execution. David's madness was a more subtle performance, primarily focusing on his physical appearance and behavior which was enough to deceive the king of Gath. Sun Bin, however, had to endure a more prolonged and intense charade, as his

life depended on the continuous belief of his madness by those around him. Of course, this distinction may be due to the different writing style: David's story was narrated in the Hebrew Bible as part of the whole history while Sun Bin's was described to create the vividness of Sun's wisdom. The outcomes of their respective deceptions were similarly successful in terms of personal survival, though they diverged in their ultimate impacts. David's escape allowed him to continue his journey, which would eventually lead to his ascension to the throne, shaping the course of Israelite history. Sun Bin's escape, conversely, led him to become a vital advisor to the state of Qi, where his military acumen contributed to the defeat of the Wei army, altering the balance of power in the Warring States period. Here, cultural and historical contexts play a significant role in understanding the feigned madness of these two figures. David's story, set in ancient Israel, reflects the harsh realities of political intrigue and the struggle for survival. Sun Bin's narrative, within the backdrop of the Chinese Warring States period, underscores the value of strategic thinking and the role of individual cunning in the complex military and political landscape of the time. The two stories, after all, are not merely tales of cunning and survival but also reflections of the human capacity for ingenuity and adaptability in the face of adversity. These narratives continue to resonate across cultures, offering timeless lessons on the interplay between strategy, deception, and the human spirit.

The historical background of David feigning madness was that Israel was then in the transitional stage from the era of the Judges to the monarchy. The reign of the first king, Saul, gradually became unstable, and Saul developed deep jealousy and suspicion towards David. David had shown great bravery in the battles against the Philistines and won the love and support of the people, which caused Saul to panic. Saul was afraid that David would usurp his throne, so he began to pursue and kill David. In the face of such urgent political persecution, in order to survive, David had to resort to extreme measures, and feigning madness was one of the strategies he adopted to deal with the crisis during his escape.

In David's time, there were different tribes and groups, and the struggle for political power was often accompanied by social unrest and instability. At the same time, other powerful ethnic groups and countries around Israel, such as the Philistines, frequently launched wars against Israel. The external military pressure made the internal political situation of Israel even more complicated. In such a social environment, David not only had to face the threat from the monarch of his own country but also had to consider how to maneuver among different forces to preserve his own life and future political prospects. But, David still had a deep faith in God. When David was in a difficult situation, he might have believed that God was guiding his actions (referring to the fact that he always sought guidance from God). Feigning madness was also a way of survival under God's will. He believed that, through this way, he could get God's protection and eventually fulfill God's promise to him, that is, to become the king of Israel. This belief and dependence on God ran through David's entire life and also reflected the common cultural psychology of the Israelites at that time. They believed that God would intervene in human affairs at crucial moments and help those who trusted in Him.

In addition, in Hebrew culture, wisdom was regarded as a precious quality and a gift bestowed by God. In comparison, the sources of wisdom for the wisest people were rather mysterious. The teachers of those with great wisdom always had a semi-divine and semi-human mysterious nature, or they were directly said to be celestial beings. Take, for example, the teachers of Sun Bin, Zhuge Liang, and Jiang Ziya (姜子牙).[23] Here the application of David's wisdom was not only for his personal survival but also laid the foundation for his achievement of greater goals in the future. David's act of feigning madness reflected the ancient Israelites' admiration for wisdom and strategy. They believed that, when fac-

ing difficulties and enemies, using wisdom was an effective way to deal with the situation, but the ancient Israelites thought that this was in line with God's will, while the Chinese people believed that it was a need for strategy.

Moreover, David was the future king chosen by God, and his act of feigning madness was, to some extent, related to the concept of kingship at that time. In the concept of the ancient Israelites, the king was God's representative on earth and had a special status and mission. Although David was in a predicament of being pursued and killed at that time, he believed that he was entrusted with the mission of ruling Israel by God. Feigning madness was just an episode in the process of his fulfilling this mission, which was to protect himself and wait for the right opportunity to demonstrate God's choice of him and the kingship bestowed upon him. This concept of kingship was closely linked to God's will and reflected the close integration of religion and politics in ancient Israelite culture.

Sun Bin, similarly, lived in a complex period, an era of separatist warlords and frequent wars. The various vassal states, in order to compete for land, population, and hegemony, continuously launched wars and annexed other states. Against this backdrop, all states were in urgent need of military talents to enhance their own strength. The states of Qi and Wei where Sun Bin was located were also actively recruiting talents in an attempt to gain an advantage in the disputes. Sun Bin and Pang Juan were originally fellow disciples who studied the art of war together. Pang Juan went down the mountain earlier than Sun Bin and was highly regarded in the state of Wei, becoming a general of Wei. However, Pang Juan was well aware that Sun Bin's talent was superior to his own. Worried that Sun Bin would threaten his position after coming to Wei, he devised a plot to frame Sun Bin, fabricated charges, and imposed the punishment of cutting off the kneecaps and tattooing branding on his face, and imprisoned him. In order to escape from Pang Juan's persecution, preserve his own life, and at the same time wait for the opportunity to avenge himself, Sun Bin had no choice but to feign madness.

In traditional Chinese culture, enduring humiliation and bearing heavy responsibilities is a highly respected quality. This spirit is deeply rooted in the hearts of the Chinese people so Mencius said, "When Heaven is about to bestow a great responsibility on a certain person, it first frustrates his mind and will, exhaust his muscles and bones, starve his body and make him suffer from poverty, obstruct his actions and throw his undertakings into confusion. In this way, it stirs his mind, toughens his nature, and increases his abilities that he did not possess before".[24] When facing great difficulties and setbacks, they are tenacious and unyielding and are willing to endure temporary pain and humiliation in order to achieve long-term goals. They deeply believe that these sufferings are from "Heaven (天)" to strengthen them, which, is similar to God's "testing and refining" his people in the Bible with the difference that the former is to fulfill one's personal mission on the earth while the latter to fulfill God's will. In Sun Bin's story, he knew well that his knowledge had not been fully utilized and that he had not yet avenged the pain he had suffered. So, he could endure the temporary humiliation, pretend to be a madman to lull the enemy into a false sense of security, and wait for the right opportunity. Later, Sun Bin naturally obtained his revenge, and his enemy Pang Juan was killed. His strategies were also fully utilized, and he even summarized his strategic and tactical methods into a book titled *The Art of War by Sun Bin* 《孙膑兵法》. And his act of feigning madness was later included in *Thirty-Six Stratagems* 《三十六计》, which was called the stratagem of "feigning madness without becoming insane (假痴不癫)". It should be pointed out that the ancient Chinese people attached great importance to strategies and tactics so that they complied dozens of books on the art of war and strategies, and *The Art of War by Sun Bin* was one of them.

If the above parallels are about the failure or the death of adults, another one involves the birth and survival of two babies. Jiang Liu'er, also known as Tang Sanzang (唐三藏),

is a central figure in *Journey to the West* 《西游记》. His tragic backstory includes his father, Chen Guangrui (陈光蕊), being murdered by river pirates, and his mother, Yin Wenjiao (殷温娇), placing him on a wooden board to float down the river to save him from the same fate. He is discovered and raised by a Buddhist monk, eventually embarking on a perilous journey to the Western Regions (西天) to obtain sacred Buddhist scriptures.

Moses, on the other hand, is a prophet in the Hebrew Bible, whose infancy is marked by the same act of being set adrift (Exodus 2). Born to Hebrew parents during the time of Egyptian oppression, he is placed in a basket among the reeds of the Nile to escape Pharaoh's order to kill all male Hebrew children. He is found by the Pharaoh's daughter and raised in the Egyptian royal household, before leading the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt.

Both stories share the motif of an infant being saved from the water, featuring the plot of a floating baby being rescued from the water. This plot is a typical motif in the world's heroic mythological stories, such as Perseus in ancient Greek mythology, Karna in the ancient Indian epic Mahabharata, the twin brothers Romulus and Remus in Roman mythology, and Sargon of Akkad. This motif also confirms the first act of the hero's growth fable described by Campbell—the separation of the hero from his mother or father or both. However, here we will only compare Moses and Jiang Liu'er (Tang Sanzang). In this motif, water plays an significant role and embodies multiple connotations in the drifting and rescue of the two infants. In both stories, water initially represents danger and death. For Moses, at that time, the Pharaoh of Egypt had ordered the killing of all male Hebrew infants, and the waters of the Nile became a threat that could potentially swallow his life though his sister was watching by. For Jiang Liu'er, he was placed on a wooden board, which was more dangerous, and drifted down the river, and the river water was filled with unknown dangers, which could claim his life at any moment. However, water is also a force of purification and new life. Moses was placed among the reeds by the Nile River and was eventually discovered and saved by the Pharaoh's daughter. Jiang Liu'er drifted in the river and was discovered and adopted by a Buddhist monk. In his Moses and Monotheism, Freud pointed out that the container holding the baby and the river water symbolize the womb and amniotic fluid, respectively. But this statement is obviously not applicable to Jiang Liu'er, because whether it is Perseus, Karna, the twin brothers Romulus and Remus, or Sargon of Akkad, when they entered the river, they were all in a container similar to an embrace, such as a bamboo basket or a box, and these were all prepared in advance. However, Jiang Liu'er's mother accidentally saw a wooden board floating on the river, to which, in any case, is very hard to make an analogy with the womb. Nevertheless, the water in both cases can be regarded as a kind of baptism in Judaism or Viśuddhi Saṃskāraḥ in Buddhism, symbolizing that they were purified from their old predicaments, obtained new lives and beginnings, and laid the foundation for their future missions and great lives. Water in the stories also symbolizes the flow and guidance of fate. It brought Moses and Jiang Liu'er to different environments and initiated their unique life trajectories. Moses went from being abandoned by the river to entering the Egyptian royal family and then leading the Israelites out of Egypt. Jiang Liu'er went from drifting on the river to being raised by a Buddhist monk and eventually embarking on the journey to the Western Regions to obtain the Buddhist scriptures. Water is like the river of fate, guiding them towards their respective destined missions and life directions.

Their life journeys and missions are also quite similar. Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt, freeing them from the slavery of the Pharaoh, and embarked on a journey to the Promised Land. Jiang Liu'er went through numerous hardships and obstacles to obtain the Buddhist scriptures. His aim was to spread the Buddhist doctrines and lead people to achieve spiritual liberation. In a sense, he was also guiding the masses towards a spiritual

"Pure Land". After both of them were rescued from the water, they grew up in stable environments, which laid a good educational foundation for their later missions. After reaching adulthood, they were both entrusted with special missions. Guided by God, Moses was tasked with the heavy responsibility of saving the Israeli nation. Jiang Liu'er, who was the reincarnation of the Golden Cicada Immortal, later on named Tang Sanzang, was regarded as shouldering the mission of promoting Buddhism and saving all living beings. Such a mission gave them a strong spiritual motivation, enabling them to overcome numerous difficulties though Moses once wavered and showed weakness, and even tried to decline the mission, while Jiang Liu'er remained unwavering in his determination to embark on the journey to obtain the Buddhist scriptures. During the process of leading the Israelites out of Egypt, Moses faced many difficulties, such as the pursuit of the Pharaoh's army, the arduous journey through the desert, and shortages of food and water and the betrayal of his people. When on the journey to obtain the Buddhist scriptures, Jiang Liu'er encountered various challenges too, including the obstruction of all kinds of demons and monsters and the harsh natural environment. However, they both overcame these difficulties with firm faith and indomitable perseverance. Moses' actions shaped the national characteristics and religious beliefs of the Israelites, laying the foundation for the development of the Jewish nation. Jiang Liu'er's acquisition of the Buddhist scriptures and the dissemination of Buddhism had a profound impact on China's religion, culture, philosophy, etc., and changed the spiritual worlds and ways of life of many people.

3. Poetry

3.1. Poetry: Love Poems

In addition to narrative, works of poetry from the Hebrew Bible can also be illuminated through comparison with Chinese classics as shown in the following two verses.

> I lay on my bed at night,
> Searching for the one my heart loves.
> I searched for him,
> But I could not find him.
> —(*Song of Songs 3:1*)

> I sought her but I could not get her.
> Waking and sleeping, I yearned for her.
> Long and long did I pine for her,
> Tossing and turning on my bed[25]
> —*Crying Ospreys* from *Book of Odes*

When the two verses are in juxtaposition, a doubt is very likely to arise that they are from the same poem only for different genders. And, this, is only one of the enormous parallels from *Song of Songs* and *Book of Odes*. Although they are truly different from each other if carefully discriminated, their similarities can be recognized upon examination of how Western scholars try to introduce such ancient works of poetry to audiences more acquainted with the European poetic tradition (Gálik 2011; Yu 2018). Thus, Stephen Owen, in his foreword to Arthur Waley's translation of the *Book of Odes* 《诗经》, prepares his readers to find in ancient poetry "the magic of simplicity" and to consider the work as "both poetry and scripture" (Waley 1996). Similarly, Robert Alter describes the *Song of Songs* as being "the most exquisite" of biblical poetry on the one hand, but easily describes its metaphorical language as "conventional" (Alter 1985). The fascination and apologetic tone with ancient poetry is shared among scholars of the Hebrew Bible and Chinese classics. Another point of similarity is that both the biblical *Song of Songs*, with its attribution to

Solomon, and *The Book of Odes* are works that reflect simple, pastoral lives, but were actually collected, edited, and produced in the social settings of royal courts and as part of a national drive (Fox 1985; Saussy 1993; Owen 2001; Hunter 2019). A joint comparison will allow exploring the connection between nature and nationalism, the individual body and the spirit of the nation, and relationships between social elites and the folklore of the masses. Furthermore, both collections have also raised speculations as to how they were performed, and studying them together could provide great insight for performance studies (Meyers 1991; Brenner 1993; Soothill 1951; Kern 2000).

3.2. Poetry: Laments

However, comparisons of biblical poetry and Chinese classics will not focus only on shared themes. The laments of David over Saul and Jonathan in 2 Samuel 1:17–27 and Zhuge Liang's (诸葛亮) eulogy over Zhou Yu (周瑜) in the *Three Kingdoms* 《三国演义》 allows us to analyze a shared genre employed in strikingly different ways and bears the potential of reinterpreting the meaning of the biblical lament.

David's impassionately lamented over his previous master and rival, and his son, who was David's best friend, appears genuinely sorrowful. Zhuge Liang's eulogy is, if not more, at least equally impressive as witnessed by its numerous adaptations into operas for both its wording and the heightened dramatic effect of Zhuge Liang.[26] According to an idiom in Chinese, Zhuge Liang cried over the death of Zhou Yu—playing the game for real (诸葛亮哭周瑜——假戏真做).

Although Zhuge Liang's lament is much longer than the biblical lament of David, shared universal themes can be detected: both describe the great achievements and deeds of the deceased, Saul and Jonathan through the description of their professional military skills (2 Sam 1:22) while Zhou Yu through the series of achievements of his different age phases (Three Kingdoms, Chapter 57). Likewise, both Zhuge Liang and David mention the mournful reaction to the death of those eulogized as a crucial element of their lament. When Zhou Yu died, the army was sad, and Sun Quan (孙权), who was later the king of Wu, Zhou Yu's lord, shed tears, and Zhou Yu's friends wept a flood (Three Kingdoms, Chapter 7). As for David, he described the weeping of women of Israel and fears the rejoicing of Israel's enemies (2 Sam 2:20, 24).

Perhaps the most intricate problem in this analogy is determining the relation between David and Saul versus Zhuge Liang and Zhou Yu. The biblical narrative sends mixed messages as to whether David was unjustly persecuted by Saul or whether he is a usurper (Shemesh 2007). This might very well be because history is written by the winners, and therefore we mostly have the Davidic version (Tov 1985), but that actually only serves to make the case against David as one who sought to undercut Saul's reign. Very similarly, Zhuge Liang and Zhou Yu had such a close relationship although they were serving different lords, for the former serving under Liu Bei (刘备) and the latter under Sun Quan (孙权). When a stronger enemy, Cao Cao (曹操), led troops much larger in number to threaten the security of the two relatively weak kingdoms, Sun Quan and Liu Bei had to join arms for survival, and so did their first generals, Zhuge Liang and Zhou Yu. At the same time, however, they were also hostile to each other and never relinquished their rivalry. It is possible to read both laments not as differing, but actually both presented as heartfelt obituaries presented by rivals who may have unwholesome reasons to deliver such a eulogy. The relation between David's lament and the narrative of his ascent to power has been noted by scholars (Landy 1981; Weitzman 1997), but this comparison can shed further light on it.

Lamentation literature is not limited to individuals, of course. The biblical book of Lamentations presents a series of laments on the destruction of Jerusalem (587 BCE), often attributed to the prophet Jeremiah. It stands in a long tradition of national and exilic

laments known from Mesopotamia (Roberts 2002; Petter 2011) and has further echoes in the subsequent Jewish literature (Berlin 2003; Humphrey 1995; Hasan-Rokem 2000). Similarly, the *Li Sao Poem* (离骚), a lamentation by Qu Yuan (屈原, about 339 BCE—278 BCE) written during the Warring States Period (战国时期 475 BCE–222 BCE), manifests a confluence of national themes of exile and loyalty (Murck 2000; Yao 2007; Williams 2019). While much longer than the biblical laments, it will allow a crucial point of comparison as the national laments have already been compared with the Mesopotamian literature, and thus this will be an important test case for the differences in comparing not only the biblical text with a Chinese classic, but also considering this comparison against existing comparisons. Finally, the Chinese Dragon Boat Festival (端午节) commemorates Qu Yuan on the date of his death, May 5th of the Lunar calendar, in which a special food called Zongzi (粽子), is thrown into Miluo River. The biblical book of Lamentations is used liturgically on the fast of Tish'ah be'Av, commemorating the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, thus drawing a connection between poetry and ritual.

4. Comparative Law

Comparative law is perhaps one of the fields where incorporation of Chinese culture is most prolific as part of an Eastern–Western cross-cultural dialogue, as seen in the *Journal of Chinese and Comparative Law* and numerous studies (see survey by Zhang 2013, 2019). Developments have also been made for the study of Comparative Law in the context of the ancient world (Watson 1991; Scheidel 2009). However, a comparison of biblical law and ancient Chinese law poses a greater challenge, partially because of the relatively limited scope of biblical law. Comparing the terse commandment of the Decalogue concerning the duty to honor parents (Ex 20:11; Deut 15) with the detailed regimen prescribed in book 10 of the *Book of Rites* 《礼记》 concerning parents is a sufficient illustration of the problem. One way to tackle this problem is not to rely solely on legal codes, but to try and reconstruct a living practice based on historical records. This is along the lines of Amihay's suggestion of the ever-present "discrepancies or tension between a legal theory and a living legal practice" (Amihay 2016).

Deuteronomy 25:5–6 gives very clear rules for successive marriage:

> If brothers are living together and one of them dies without a son, his widow must not marry outside the family. Her husband's brother shall take her and marry her and fulfill the duty of a brother-in-law to her. The first son she bears shall carry on the name of the dead brothers so that his name will not be blotted out from Israel.

Correspondingly, several Chinese literature works mention a similar procedure for a successive marriage. The earliest recording of this marriage is in *Zuo Zhuan* 《左传》, which gives the terms "Zheng" (烝) and "Bao" (报). "Zheng" denotes the marriage tradition in which a son shall marry his father's concubine if his father dies. Of course, here the concubine should not be the son's biological mother. "Bao" refers to the tradition that a younger brother marries his sister-in-law or his uncle's wife if his elder brother or his uncle dies. The most famous example recorded is the successive marriage of Wang Zhaojun (王昭君), a legendary beauty, who had to get married to her husband's son after her husband died. This is recorded in *The Book of Later Han* 《后汉书》. In the Hebrew Bible, outside of the legal wording of the levirate marriage, there are a couple of examples from narratives that describe such marriages, including Tamar (Gen 38) and Ruth. The discrepancies between those tales and the legal stipulation have been a source for much debate (Weisberg 2009; Adelman 2012) and will allow further comparisons between the law and the social realities behind it.

However, an even greater instance for Comparative Law lies in the ongoing tension between a principle of primogeniture, which seems self-evident in a patriarchal society, and its repeated challenge by an ethos of an uprising from the younger son. Such cases are reported both in the Hebrew Bible and in *The Grand Scribe's Records*.

Primogeniture, or more broadly the privileges of the firstborn son, is set as a rule in Deuteronomy 21:15–17. This rule is further attested as the rationale for the rivalry between Jacob and Esau (Gen 27). Nevertheless, the patriarchal narratives in Genesis repeatedly challenge this rule, not only in the story of Jacob and Esau, but also in Abraham's treatment of Isaac and Ishmael (Gen 21) and in Jacob's disqualification of Reuben as his eldest, preferring Joseph (Gen 37:3; 49:3–4), in a direct contradiction to the words of the law as it appears in Deuteronomy. Jacob does the same when he blesses his grandsons, Ephraim and Mannaseh, and prefers the younger to the older (Gen 48:19–20). Finally, David's narrative showcases the same principle, where the younger is favored over the older, first in David's own election (1 Sam 16:11), and then in the succession of Solomon over his brothers (1 Ki 1:1–31).

With this in mind, I turn to examine the Chinese case. Chinese primogeniture is a patriarchal system originating from late Shang Dynasty and settled in early Zhou and passed through about three thousand years from Zhou to Qing (Levenson and Schurmann 1969; Cyrus Chu 1991; Freedman 1967). *Biography of Gong Yang in Spring and Autumn* 《春秋公羊传》 recorded the principle of "priority of age over virtue and nobility over age" (立嫡以长不以贤, 立子以贵不以长), which passes down as the prime rule for succession.

But, Chinese primogeniture is different from that of Hebrew in that the former not only stresses the age of the son, but also the position of the son's mother. If the mother is not the father's wife, but rather, a concubine, her son does not have the right to succeed the father's throne or position or property, even if he is the eldest one. More strictly, the son cannot succeed if the mother is a wife but was a concubine when the son was born. According to *The Annals of Lu Buwei* 《吕氏春秋》, King Zhou (纣王) of Shang dynasty, who was one of the most cruel kings in Chinese history, was actually the third son of his mother. Some of the subjects suggested that his father pass the throne to the firstborn, Weizi Qi (微子启). He was considered more virtuous but was rejected by some for the reason that, when he was born, his mother was a concubine rather than a wife which she became later on.

There are countless examples of breaking the principle of primogeniture, both in the *Grand Scribe's Records*, as well as other history books including the *Book of Former Tang* 《旧唐书》, the *Book of Later Tang* 《新唐书》, *History as a Mirror* 《资治通鉴》, *History of Song Dynasty* 《宋史》, and *History of Ming Dynasty* 《明史》. A detailed comparison of this theme is yet to be exhausted.

5. Conclusions

The brief samplings offered here are only a few examples of the wealth of resources for comparison with the Hebrew Bible in Chinese texts. Myths of creation and a flood could easily be added, as in the account provided by Pan Gu in *The History of Three Sovereigns and Five Emperors* 《三五历纪》 and Nu Wa's account in *Huai Nan Zi* 《淮南子》. Shaving the beard as a punishment is another example that could be found in the *Rites of Zhou*. The story of Samson, who bound firebrands to foxes' tails[27], with the tale of Tian Dan from the *Records of the Grand Historian*, who employed a fire ox array, share many similarities too. More parallels are also analyzed in Aryeh Amihay's and Lupeng Li's articles (Amihy and Li 2023, pp. 531–55; 2020).

Further examples must await a more lengthy study, which will not only present these comparisons through a close reading of their similarities and differences, but also classify

them into types of similarities, explanations for similarities, significance of differences, and clearly expressing the benefits of the comparative method when it is expanded beyond cultures that were in actual contact with one another. The broad range of literary genres attests to the potential that lies in this project, and the promise it bears for people working in biblical studies and in Chinese classics, whether their interest is in myth and narrative, historiography, law, or poetry.

The study of these narratives and practices within a comparative framework is not merely an academic exercise; it is a means of engaging with the rich tapestry of human history and culture. When the biblical texts are placed within the context of Chinese classic works, it can be perceived—the beams of light emitted by the biblical texts radiating into the Chinese classic works. The two reflect and illuminate each other, offering an encyclopedic perspective and a top-down vantage point. This enables people to gain a deeper understanding of these texts themselves and the societies that gave birth to them. This approach allows us to appreciate the complexity of these works, their lasting influence, and their practical significance in contemporary discussions about religion, literature, law, and society. As a result, it helps to achieve a harmonious integration of the two modern cultures despite their differences. This approach allows us to appreciate the complexity of these works, their enduring influence, and their relevance to contemporary discussions on religion, literature, law, and society.

Meanwhile, if these connections are further explored, we should remain mindful of the dangers of superficial comparison and the need to respect the unique contexts and meanings of each work. The comparative method should not be used to impose a theological agenda or to oversimplify the complexities of different cultures. Instead, it should be a tool for deepening people's understanding and appreciation of the diverse literary works that have shaped human history.

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Notes

1 Although Zakovitch himself calls this phenomenon a "reflection story". On the new term, see (Amihay 2018, pp. 555–79; Shinan and Zakovitch 2012, pp. 1–15, 65–72). For a helpful summary of this concept, see (Matthews 2005, pp. 58–59).

2 For a helpful survey of biblical studies and the Near Eastern literature, see (Chavalas 2011, pp. 150–65). See also (Greenspahn 1991).

3 For the former, see (Larsen 1995, pp. 95–106); for the latter, see (Allen 2002, pp. 101–27).

4 The idea of "A harmony in diversity (和而不同)" was proposed by Confucius in Analects VIII.

5 For his iconicity, see (Chen 1995, pp. 239–42).

6 The treasurers are valuables and gifts worth a thousand pieces of gold, but not for the king, rather, to bribe one of his favorite courtiers Meng Jia (蒙嘉), and so then Meng persuaded the king into calling Ching K'o and Ch'in Wu-yang in.

7 For ethical problems in this narrative, see (Sasson 2009, pp. 571–95).

8 (Li 1994, pp. 345–405). See, however, the critique of this study in (Klein 2010, pp. 14–16).

9 On this term, see (Klein 2018, pp. 259–332).

10 For a religious interpretation of the *Grand Scribe's Records*, see (Nylan 1998–1999, pp. 203–46).

11 There is a similar description in the *Book of Militaries* in *Taiping Yulan* (《兵部卷二十四•太平御览》).

12 In *The Romance of Three Kingdoms*, Luo Guanzhong adds a greater conflict between Dong Zhuo and Lv Bu, who both love the same beauty Diao Chan, who was sent by Wang Yun to alienate Dong and Lv. But, this is regarded as a legend rather than history since the book is only a novel. And the *Taiping Yulan* referring to *Archive of Wei* (《魏典略》) says Dong hurled at Lv from time to time when he is drunk; therefore Lv, worrying to be killed someday, turned to Wang Yun.

13 Neither the *History of Later Han* nor the *Taipin Yulan* mentions how Lv Bu offended Dong Zhuo, while in *1 Samual* (18:6–9), it is explicitly stated that Saul is angry with David because women in Israel praised David over Saul after David killed Goliath.

14 Ding Jianyang is the courtesy name for Ding Yuan.

15 This maid was believed to be Diao Chan in *The Romance of Three Kingdoms*. See 10.

16 Narratives on Lv Bu does not even have a sole chapter in *The History of Later Han*; instead, it is compiled after two other more important men, Liu Yan (刘焉) and Yuan Shu (袁术).

17 This was recorded in the *Records of the Three Kingdoms* 《三国志》, which is different from that in the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*. In the latter, Diao Chan's outcome was not mentioned after Lv Bu's death.

18 *The Grand Records of Historian* also recorded this episode, and most possibly it referred to the *Zuo Zhuan*.

19 There are many similar stories in Chinese history texts, (e.g., Yang Yuhuan (杨玉环), one of the beauties, was initially a wife of a Tang prince but later on married to the Emperor Ming (唐明皇), the prince's father) but these two are very typical, and the victim husbands are like Uriah, brave warriors faithful to their masters.

20 "The monarch treats the subject with courtesy and subjects should serve their monarch with faithfulness (君使臣以礼, 臣事君以忠)" is from *The Analects 13*.

21 This is also why Sima Qian highly praised Yan Ying, saying, "If Yan Ying were still alive, even if I were to hold the whip for him, I would feel honored and envious." See *The Grand Scribe's Records*.

22 Sun Bin's stories of feigning madness is nowhere in *The Grand Scribe's Records*, but him feigning madness appeared very late only in the *Annals of the Kingdoms in the East Zhou Dynasty* by Feng Menglong.

23 It is said that Sun Bin's teacher was Wang Xu 王诩 (also called Guiguzi 鬼谷子), who lived several hundred years and disappeared without a trace which implies that he may be a godly person, in the *Annals of the Kingdoms in the East Zhou Dynasty*, but in history books there is no mention about Sun's teacher. As for Zhuge Liang's teacher, there is no record, and therefore it is very mysterious, but before he went to political stage, his friends were all wise. Jiang Ziya's teacher, the Primordial Lord 元始天尊 is more unusual in that he was said to be the primordial creator of the universe in Taoism, therefore, a god.

24 See chapter 12 of *The Works of Mencius*.

25 The author translated it herself.

26 For the various cultural adaptations and representations of his narrative, see (Besio and Tang 2007; Murck 2000, pp. 80, 97; Wang-Ngai and Lovrick 1997, pp. 86–89).

27 Maybe jackals.

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