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"My Hand Has Found, Like a Nest, the Wealth of the Nations" (Isa 10:14): Conceptual and Ideological Blending in the Rhetoric of Isaiah 10

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Abstract: *Concerning Isa 10:5–15, and the fictional speeches of an Assyrian king in it, scholars agree that much of this text's content appears in the Neo-Assyrian royal annals, yet the referenced material is reversed to cast Assyria and its royal representative as the antithesis of everything the imperial discourse sought to uphold and propagate. The focus of this article is on the king's plunder of the nations' treasures which is presented through the symbolism of bird hunting and egg robbing (Isa 10:14). Drawing on ANE textual and iconographic material, this article suggests that the bird imagery in v. 14 reflects the Assyrian practice of hunting and collecting ostriches and their eggs, both of which were exotic commodities that signified wealth, prestige, and world domination. Deploying this symbolism, the Judean prophet, however, overlays it with his own Israelite negative understanding of the ostrich. Blending the two "ostrich ideologies," the prophet satirizes the hubristic claims of the Assyrian king. Subverting the king's self-aggrandizing claims and making him laughable, the prophet signals the king's impending demise.*

Key Words: *Isaiah 10*; *Assyrian propaganda*; *bird hunting*; *egg robbing*; *ostriches*

Introduction

In her work on the book of Deuteronomy and the Succession Treaty of Esarhaddon, Carly L. Crouch discusses the notion of subversion in

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literature, that is, when one text adapts another tradition and in the process of adaptation subverts some tenets of the adapted text in service of its own ideological goals. "In grammatical terms," she explains,

> [S]ubversion requires an object: a text cannot simply *subvert*, but must subvert *something*. The relational quality of subversion, however, is not merely abstracted, involving the author's inner awareness of a relationship between two entities. As transformative action, a successful act of subversion requires an audience: those whose minds are to be changed, ideas transformed, and opinions undermined. If subversion leads to action, it is the audience that, thus affected, undertakes to overthrow governments and overturn institutions. Without an audience, subversion has no effect.[2]

She further explains that if, for example, a biblical writer uses an extrabiblical tradition, the latter needs to be easily identifiable in its new, adapted form.

> The more complex the relationship between the source and other potential sources, and the more specific the author intends to be in identifying the source, the more specific the signal [within the adapted version of the original source] needs to be ...[3]

Isa 10:5–15 has received much attention in biblical scholarship. Variously focused, discussions of this text have sought to demonstrate that in it Isaiah, a Judean prophet in the eighth century BCE (as well as later redactors), draws on the Neo-Assyrian annals in his presentation of an anonymous king of Assyria, who was called to act as YHWH's

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[2] Carly L. Crouch, *Israel and the Assyrians: Deuteronomy, the Succession Treaty of Esarhaddon and the Nature of Subversion* (ANEM 8; Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2014), 21. See also Joachim J. Krause, "Citations, Allusions, and Marking Them in the Hebrew Bible: A Theoretical Introduction with Some Examples," *Biblical Interpretation* 31 (2022): 440–456; Cooper Smith, "Inner-Biblical Allusion and the Direction of Dependence: Toward a Comprehensive List of Criteria," *The Journal of Hebrew Scriptures* 22 (2023): 1–26.

[3] Crouch, *Israel and the Assyrians*, 24, 28–34.

agent. In doing so, the prophet adapts his sources to undermine the Assyrian monarch and his schemes. Regarding Isa 10:5–15, Peter Machinist, for example, argued that although much of the rhetoric featured in this text appears in the Assyrian annals, yet its meaning is radically transformed. In this "*hubris* of the highest order," states Machinist, "the Assyrian becomes what the 'enemy' was in his own inscriptions, who 'trusted in his own strength' and 'did not fear the oath of the gods'."[4] Elsewhere, he observes that,

> [W]hat is at stake in our Isaiah poem is not a simple borrowing from these inscriptional conventions, but a deliberate inversion of them. Indeed, one may go further to suggest that it is an inversion, not only of individual conventions, but of the Assyrian royal inscriptional tradition as a whole.[5]

In one way or another, scholars of the Hebrew Bible (HB) and the ancient Near East (ANE) detect markers of borrowing, adaptation, and subversion of the Neo-Assyrian royal propaganda in Isaiah 10, particularly in the text's presentation of the king and his hubristic speeches.[6] Some, however, go as far as to assert that Isa 10:5–15, as well

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[4] Peter Machinist, "Assyria and its Image in the First Isaiah," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 103 (1983): 719–737 (734).

[5] Peter Machinist, "Ah Assyria … (Isaiah 10:5ff): Isaiah's Assyrian Polemic Revisited," in Gilda Bartolini, Maria Giovanna Biga, and Armando Bramanti (eds), *Not Only History: Proceedings of the Conference Held in Honor of Mario Liverani in Sapienza–Università di Roma, 20–21 April 2009* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2016), 183–218 (201).

[6] *Ibid*., 183–218; Peter Machinist, "Royal Inscriptions in the Hebrew Bible and Mesopotamia: Reflections on Presence, Function, and Self-Critique," in Scott C. Jones and Christine R. Yoder (eds), *"When the Morning Stars Sang": Essays in Honor of Choon Leong Seow* (Boston/Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018), 331–363. See also, among others, Morton Cogan, *Imperialism and Religion: Assyria, Judah, and Israel in the Eighth and Seventh Centuries BCE* (SBLMS 19; Missoula, MT: Society of Biblical Literature, 1974); William R. Gallagher, *Sennacherib's Campaign to Judah: New Studies* (SHCANE 15; Leiden: Brill, 1999); Shawn Z. Aster, "The Image of Assyria in Isaiah 2:5–22: The Campaign Motif Reversed," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 127 (2007): 249–278; Michael Chan, "Rhetorical Reversal and

as other HB's woe oracles, could be understood as a form of political satire, which was weaponized in "the hands of the weak in war against a tyrant despot more powerful than he."[7]

Neo-Assyrian Royal Propaganda and Its Prestige-oriented Rhetoric

To unpack some of the aspects of the text's subversive and satirical force and its impact on the intended audience, this discussion will focus on the symbolism in Isa 10:13–14. To understand what the prophet subverts and satirizes here in service of his own agenda, a few words are in order on the nature of the Neo-Assyrian propaganda and the place of self-aggrandizement in it. Concerning Sargon II, who, at times, has been suggested as the anonymous king in Isaiah 10, Josette Elayi writes, "Using the *prestige*-oriented propaganda in his royal inscriptions, he pointed to his invincibility and superiority with the help of the gods."[8] Regarding the reign of Sargon's successor, Sennacherib, and more specifically his account of the campaign against Elam in 691 BCE, Andrew George states that it is "notable for its bombastic style and rhetorical ambition ..." Adding to this are "the literary allusions that give the account a 'mythical dimension' by recalling the primeval battle of the gods that gave order to the cosmos

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Usurpation: Isaiah 10:5–34 and the Use of Neo-Assyrian Royal Idiom in the Construction of an Anti-Assyrian Theology," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 128 (2009): 717–733; Hugh G.M. Williamson, "Idols in Isaiah in the Light of Isaiah 10:10–11," in Rannfrid I. Thelle, Terje Stordalen, and Marvyn E.J. Richardson (eds), *New Perspectives on Old Testament Prophecy and History: Essays in Honour of Hans M. Barstad* (VTSup 168; Leiden: Brill, 2015), 17–28; Shawn Z. Aster, *Reflections of Empire in Isaiah 1–39: Responses to Assyrian Ideology* (ANEM 19: Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2017); Reinhard Müller, "From Carchemish and Calno (Isa 10:9) to the Book of Isaiah. Paradigmatic Images of Imperial Hubris in Isa 10:5–15," in Joachim Schaper and Reinhard G. Kratz (eds), *Imperial Visions: The Prophet and the Book of Isaiah in an Age of Empires* (FRLANT 227; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2020), 61–80.

[7] Ze'ev Weisman, *Political Satire in the Bible* (SBLSS 32; Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1998), 84–93 (93).

[8] Josette Elayi, *Sargon II, King of Assyria* (ABS 22; Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2017), 83.

…"[9] Such prestige-oriented and rhetorically embellished discourse in the annals was built by means of both conventional and innovative motifs. For example, contributing to Sargon II's, and other kings', self-aggrandizing programme is the ambitious project of journeying to Lebanon to acquire its choicest cedars as timber (cf. Isa 10:33–34; 37:24). Shawn Z. Aster explains that this project

> served as a crowning achievement of Neo-Assyrian imperial conquest as far west as one possibly could on land, this western journey was idolized among Neo-Assyrian kings, because it fulfilled one of the core ideological statements of kingship—the universal rule of the world—which also legitimated the king's title as the "ruler of the four regions" (*šar kibrāt erbettiti*).[10]

Another facet in the ideology of Assyrian kingship is represented by royal claims to extraordinary powers of discernment and wisdom. Discussing self-referential titles among Mesopotamian monarchs, Eckart Frahm explains that many kings use

> Sumerian epithets such as (lú-)geštug-dagal-la "(man) of wide understanding" (literally, "(man) with a wide ear"), lú-igi-gál-tuku "knowledgeable man" (literally, "man who has what requires eyes"), or gal-zu-níg-nam-ma "who is wise in everything", and Akkadian ones such as *āhiz nēmeqi* "who has acquired deep wisdom", *eršu* "crafty", *hāsis kal šipri* "clever in every type of work", and *mūdû* "knowledgeable", among others.[11]

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[9] Andrew R. George, "The Poem of Erra and Ishum: A Babylonian Poet's View of War," in Hugh Kennedy (ed.), *Warfare and Poetry in the Middle East* (London/New York: I.B. Tauris/Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 39–72 (42–43).

[10] Aster, *Reflections of Empire*, 231.

[11] Eckart Frahm, "Keeping Company with Men of Learning: The King as Scholar," in Karen Radner and Eleanor Robson (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Cuneiform Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 508–532 (509); cf. Marie-Joseph Seux, *Épithètes Royales Akkadiennes et Sumériennes*

Might, domination, and supremacy are also asserted through "theriomorphizing" rhetoric commonly assumed by Assyrian kings—e.g., Shalmaneser III's trampling down enemy territory as a wild bull (KB 1, 166:52)—and through the metaphorization of enemies as vulnerable animals and birds.[12] The presentation of the Assyrian king in Isa 10:5–15 and his two fictional speeches in Isa 10:8–11 and 10:13–14 are also constructed to reflect propaganda bent on unlimited prestige, power, and domination; as such, they are marked by the motif of hubris.[13]

Building on previous studies of Isa 10:5–15, this discussion will seek to expand ANE practices postulated as the background material for its rhetoric.[14] In this text, YHWH chooses Assyria, and its royal

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(Paris: Letouzey et Ane, 1967); Ronald F.G. Sweet, "The Sage in Akkadian Literature: A Philological Study," in John G. Gammie and Leo G. Perdue (eds), *The Sage in Israel and the Ancient Near East* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 45–65.

[12] David Marcus, "Animal Similes in Assyrian Royal Inscriptions," *Orientalia* 46 (1977), 86–106; Michael J. Chan, "Cyrus, Yhwh's Bird of Prey (Isa. 46.11): Echoes of an Ancient Near Eastern Metaphor," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 35 (2010): 113–127; Chaim Cohen, "The Well-Attested BH-Akk. Simile כראים (Ps 92:11)/ כמו בן־ראמים (Ps 29:6) = Akk. *kīma rīmi/rīmāniš* and Its Semantic Equivalent כְּאַבִּיר (Isa 10:13 [Kethiv]) in the Speech of the Assyrian King," in Shamir Yonah, Edward L. Greenstein, Mayer I. Gruber, Peter Machinist, and Shalom M. Paul (eds), *Marbeh Ḥokmah: Studies in the Bible and the Ancient Near East in Loving Memory of Victor Avigdor Hurowitz* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2015), 83–110. For the role of Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian public buildings in royal propaganda, see Mattias Karlsson, "'An Object of Wonder for All of the People'. Ideology and Propaganda in the Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian Empires," in Ludovico Portuese and Marta Pallavidini (eds), *Ancient Near Eastern Weltanschauungen in Contact and in Contrast: Rethinking Ideology and Propaganda in the Ancient Near East* (Münster: Zaphon, 2022), 245–269.

[13] Siegfried Mittmann, "'Wehe! Assur, Stab meines Zorns' (Jes 10,5–9.13ab–15)," in Volkmar Fritz, Karl-Friedrich Pohlmann, and Hans-Christoph Schmitt (eds), *Prophet und Prophetenbuch: Festschrift für Otto Kaiser zum 65. Geburtstag* (BZAW 185; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1989), 111–132 (119).

[14] E.g., Moshe Weinfeld, "The Protest Against Imperialism in Ancient Israelite Prophecy," in Shmuel N. Eisenstadt (ed.), *The Origins and Diversity of Axial Age Civilizations* (SSNES; Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1986), 169–182, 510–511; Mittmann, "Wehe! Assur," 111–132; Ernst Haag, "Jesaja, Assur und der Antijahwe: Literar- und traditionsgeschichtliche

representative, to carry out judgment on his own erring people (vv. 5–6), yet the arrogant monarch goes after not one nation, but many, bragging of 1.) seizing and deporting their cultic statues (vv. 10–11), 2.) changing their borders (v. 13), 3.) dethroning their rulers (v. 13), and 4.) plundering their wealth (v. 14).[15] Speaking of his economic pursuits (v. 14), the king formulates them in highly figurative terms. First, the nations' resources are seized like eggs from an abandoned nest, and second, unable to protect their resources, the defeated nations capitulate like vulnerable birds. The focus of the subsequent discussion will be on this highly evocative symbolism. It will be argued that relating the king's ambitions at this juncture (v. 14), the prophet blends two attitudes or ideologies, foreign and domestic, regarding the practices of bird hunting and egg gathering. Through such ideological blending, the prophet maximizes, and satirizes, the king's hubristic claims. In doing this, he anticipates the demise of the royal megalomaniac.

Beobachtungen zu Jes 10, 5–15," *Trierer Theologische Zeitschrift* 103 (1994), 18–37; Gallagher, *Sennacherib's Campaign,* 75–87; Nili Wazana, "'I Removed the Boundaries of Nations' (Isa 10:13): Border Shifts as a Neo-Assyrian Tool of Political Control in Ḫattu," *Eretz-Israel* 27 (2003): 110–121; Baruch A. Levine, "Assyrian Ideology and Israelite Monotheism," *Iraq* 67 (2005): 411–427 (420–422); Matthijs J. de Jong, *Isaiah Among the Ancient Near Eastern Prophets: A Comparative Study of the Earliest Stages of the Isaiah Tradition and the Neo-Assyrian Prophecies* (VTSup 117; Leiden: Brill, 2007), 126–134; Göran Eidevall, *Prophecy and Propaganda: Images of Enemies in the Book of Isaiah* (CBOTS 56; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2007), 42–54; Mary K.Y.H. Hom, *The Characterization of the Assyrians in Isaiah: Synchronic and Diachronic Perspectives* (LHBOTS 559; New York, NY: T&T Clark, 2012), 36–52; Hugh G.M. Williamson, "The Evil Empire: Assyria in Reality and as a Cipher in Isaiah," in Schaper, Kratz, *Imperial Visions*, 15–39 (26–27); Aster, *Reflections of Empire,* 173–237; Jessie DeGrado, "Kidnapping the Gods: Assyrian Cultic Despoliation and Aniconism in Isaiah 10:5–11," *Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society* 35 (2021): 33–81.

[15] Hans Wildberger argued that the root to plunder in v. 13, שׁשׁה, is stronger than those used in v. 6 (בזז, שׁלל). Hans Wildberger, *Jesaja 1–12* (BKAT; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1972), 399.

Isaiah 10:13–14 in Biblical Scholarship

In Isaiah 10, the Assyrian king discloses his intentions regarding other nations, saying,

> כי אמר בכח ידי עשיתי ובחכמתי כי נבנותי ואסיר ו גבולת עמים [ועתידתיהם כ] (ועתודותיהם ק) שושתי ואוריד כאביר יושבים:
>
> ותמצא כקן ו ידי לחיל העמים וכאסף ביצים עזבות כל־הארץ אני אספתי ולא היה נדד כנף ופצה פה ומצפצף:

The NRSV translates this speech as follows, "By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom, for I have understanding; I have removed the boundaries of peoples, and have plundered their treasures; like a bull I have brought down those who sat on thrones. My hand has found, like a nest, the wealth of the peoples; and as one gathers eggs that have been forsaken, so I have gathered all the earth; and there was none that moved a wing, or opened its mouth, or chirped." (vv. 13–14).

In his analysis of Sennacherib's campaign to Judah at the end of the eighth century BCE, William R. Gallagher argues that Isaiah 10 and the fabricated speech in it can be correlated with much of the Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions.[16] Thus, he contends, the following motifs are shared by the royal annals and Isa 10:13–14: (1) the strength of the Assyrian king/his hand; (2) the king's boasting; (3) his wisdom; (4) the removal of the nations' borders; (5) the plunder of their treasures; (6)

[16] Gallagher, *Sennacherib's Campaign*, 75–87. Part of his discussion focuses on the relation between Isaiah 10 and the speech of Rab-shaqeh in Isaiah 36//2 Kings 18. On the ways this material could have been transmitted to Judah, see Shawn Z. Aster, "Transmission of Neo-Assyrian Claims of Empire to Judah in the Late Eighth Century BCE," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 78 (2007): 1–44; William Morrow, "Tribute from Judah and the Transmission of Assyrian Propaganda," in Hermann M. Niemann and Matthias Augustin (eds), "*My Spirit at Rest in the North Country" (Zechariah 6.8): Collected Communications to the XXth IOSOT Congress, Helsinki 2010* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2011), 183–192.

the treatment of foreign rulers like a bull; (7) the metaphorization of enemies as birds; and (8) the royal titles "king of the world" and "king of the four world regions" echoed in the formulation "gathering all the earth."[17] Regarding the "nest" symbolism in v. 14, Gallagher says that it is often found in the inscriptions of Ashurnasirpal and Sennacherib. Thus, for example, it appears in Sennacherib's fifth campaign: "In my fifth campaign, the populations of Tumurru [...], whose dwellings were set on a ridge, the peak of Mt Nipur, a hazardous mountain, like the nest of the eagle (*kima qinni arî*), foremost of birds, and who had not been submissive to any yoke...."[18] Gallagher explains that the "nest" imagery in Assyrian sources is usually applied to enemy groups dwelling in mountainous, unreachable areas.[19] According to him, although bird imagery often features in the Assyrian annals, the rhetoric of Isa 10:14 is more sophisticated. To the best of his knowledge, no relevant ANE sources contain phraseology and/or imagery comparable to v. 14, i.e., that of robbing abandoned eggs or of birds not flapping their wings or being silenced.[20]

In his analysis of Isaiah 10, Shawn Z. Aster in turn appeals to Sargon II's *Letter to the Gods* as the background material for the prophet's presentation of the king. The letter deals with Sargon's military campaign to Urartu in 714 BCE.[21] Comparing Sargon's letter with Isa 10:5–15, Aster asserts that the two compositions are thematically linked, with Isa 10:13–14 containing the closest parallels to Sargon's text. Like Gallagher before him, Aster identifies six motifs in Isaiah's anti-Assyrian polemic in vv. 13–14,[22] stating that the sixth motif, i.e., "the silence expressed by no bird flapping wings, connected to a nest"

[17] Gallagher, *Sennacherib's Campaign*, 78–83.

[18] *Ibid.*, 82.

[19] *Ibid.*, 82.

[20] *Ibid.*, 82.

[21] Aster, *Reflections of Empire*, 191–206.

[22] The first five motifs are close to the ones highlighted by Gallagher. *Ibid.*, 191.

is unparalleled in HB and the Neo-Assyrian imperial corpus.[23] Noting its uniqueness, Aster connects this motif to a section in Sargon's *Letter* which reads,

> It was in U'aush, a great mountain covered with clouds, the peak of which reaches the sky, which no living creature had traversed since time immemorial, nor any wayfarer seen its hidden fastnesses, nor even a bird of heaven in flight passed over, nor built a nest to teach its little ones to spread their wings, a peak sharp-tipped as a dagger point.[24]

For Aster, this part of Sargon's *Letter* is "a much more direct and specific parallel to the metaphor in Isa 10:14" which speaks of the lack of resistance on the part of birds while the Assyrian harvests their eggs.[25] Despite Aster's enthusiasm, the comparability between the two texts is very marginal. Insightful as Aster's analysis is elsewhere, he does not discuss the imagery of bird hunting/fowling and egg collecting in v. 14. Acknowledging reflexes of the Assyrian annals elsewhere in Isaiah 10, Hugh G.M. Williamson, in turn, notes that in v. 14 the bird simile is "extended throughout" and it is done by "completely unparalleled elements in a manner which suggests that it is best ascribed directly to Isaiah's fertile imaginative style…"[26] The subsequent analysis of the text will draw on HB and ANE textual and iconographic material to address this elusive bird symbolism in v. 14, which is part of the king's prestige-oriented discourse. At this

[23] *Ibid.*, 191.

[24] *Ibid.*, 199 (citing Benjamin Foster, *Before the Muses: An Anthology of Akkadian Literature* [3[d] ed.; Bethesda, MD; CDL Press, 2005], 796, ll. 96–98).

[25] Aster, *Reflections of Empire*, 199, 200; cf. Hom, *The Characterization of the Assyrians*, 43.

[26] Hugh G.M. Williamson, *Isaiah 6–12: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary* (ICC; London: T&T Clark, 2018), 528–529. For suggested inner-biblical allusions, see, for example, Weisman, *Political Satire,* 92; Klaus Koenen, "'Süßes geht vom Starken aus' (Ri 14,14). Vergleiche zwischen Gott und Tier im Altes Testament," *Evangelische Theologie* 55 (1995): 174–197 (183–184); Richard J. Bautch, "Isaiah 10 as an Intertext that Informs a Unified Reading of Zechariah 11 (Zech 11:1–3 and 11:4–17)," in Richard J. Bautch, Joachim Eck, and Burkard M. Zapff (eds), *Isaiah and the Twelve: Parallels, Similarities, and Differences* (BZAW 527; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020), 97–116.

juncture, however, a few words are in order on the so-called conceptual blending of metaphors in ANE and HB literature.

Conceptual and Ideological Blending in Isaiah 10

Simply put, conceptual blending theory explains a phenomenon or a technique in communication, whereby people combine symbols, images, and codes from divergent conceptual domains. Such images or codes are then "integrated through basic cognitive and creative operations that are able to produce an emergent meaning that is greater than the sum of its parts."[27] Most recently, for example, David Bosworth and Lucia Tosatto have discussed human-nature metaphorical blends in the book of Isaiah and Neo-Assyrian prophecy, namely, how the two corpora tap into the worlds of nature and humans to speak of parent-child relationships.[28] The Isaianic prophecy at hand, Isa 10:14, could likewise be viewed as a case of conceptual blending, albeit not from disparate but cognate domains, that is bird hunting/trapping and egg-collecting.[29] Moreover, it can also be viewed as a case of ideological blending, i.e., the blending of two cultural worldviews, Assyrian and Israelite, which allows the prophet to satirize the megalomaniacal claims of the king.

Regarding divergent ideologies in Isaiah 10, Göran Eidevall asserts that the text

> dramatizes an ideological conflict. Whereas the interests of Assyria and Judah could sometimes coincide on a purely pragmatic level, the

[27] David Bosworth, Lucia Tosatto, "Human-Nature Blends and the Parent-Child Relationship in Isaiah and Neo-Assyrian Prophecy," *AVAR* 1 (2022): 247–281 (251).

[28] *Ibid.*, 248. On conceptual blending, see further *ibid.*, 250–255 and the literature cited there. On human-animal relations in classical HB prophecy, see Idan Breier, *An Ethical View of Human-Animal Relations in the Ancient Near East* (PMAES; Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 175–206.

[29] For Mittmann the bird symbolism is already present in v. 13. Mittmann, "Wehe! Assur," 122.

> official Assyrian ideology, which aspired to attain world dominion at the command of Aššur, was irreconcilable with the pro-Judahite Isaianic theology which was inspired by a Zion-centered vision of YHWH's universal dominion.[30]

Furthermore, he notes that in Isa 10:5–15, the prophet takes an approach typically used in propaganda wars, whereby he identifies key tenets from the enemy's propaganda, transforms them, and redeploys them against Assyria.[31] To illustrate this, Eidevall appeals to Isa 10:13, wherein the Assyrian king is said to bring down "those who sit on thrones"/יושבים. Although this reading of v. 13 is more or less straightforward, the term יושבים could also be read as "inhabitants." Seen this way, "the victims of the 'bulldozing' activity [of the Assyrian king] were not the king's equals, but ordinary, defenceless civilians." Such reading of the text is damning for the king, as it ridicules his "heroism."[32] Additionally, in Isa 10:13, Isaiah has the king compare himself to "a wild bull"/אביר, echoing the Neo-Assyrian inscriptions which feature the similes *kīma rīmi* or *rīmāniš* in reference to monarchs and their subjugation of enemies.[33] Notable, however, is that here the prophet does not utilize the more usual HB equivalent כראים or כמו בן ראמים but instead uses the term אביר. Since the latter appears in divine epithets (Gen 49:24; Isa 1:24; 49:26; 60:16; Ps 132:2, 5), the Assyrian king

[30] Eidevall, *Prophecy and Propaganda*, 43.

[31] *Ibid.*, 43. On psychological warfare, see Peter Dubovský, *Hezekiah and the Assyrian Spies: Reconstruction of the Neo-Assyrian Intelligence Services and Its Significance for 2 Kings 18–19* (BibOr 49; Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2006), 10–27, 161–187.

[32] Eidevall, *Prophecy and Propaganda*, 44.

[33] Cohen, "The Well-Attested BH-Akk. Simile," 100–110; cf. Marcus, "Animal Similes," 87–88. For those who read כאביר as "like a bull," see, e.g., *BDB,* 7; *DCH,* vol. 1, 106; Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 19; New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), 252; John D.W. Watts, *Isaiah 1–33* (WBC 24; Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 184–185 (cited in Cohen, "The Well-Attested BH-Akk. Simile," 110).

can be seen as blaspheming by equating himself with God, which contextually is justifiable.[34]

In summary, the Judean prophet appears to be tapping into both foreign (Assyrian) and home-grown (Israelite) ideologies to create a biting parody of the neo-Assyrian propaganda. A comparable rhetorical move can be detected in v. 14, wherein Isaiah appeals to Assyrian sources (textual and iconographic) yet undermines them by blending them with Israel's own views, beliefs, and values. Through the enmeshing of foreign and domestic cultural codes, the prophet achieves a rhetorically charged critique of the Assyrian king. Incidentally, of interest here is Assyria's policy of imposing one set of cultural expectations and norms on their vassals, resulting in "a state of alike-ness among colonized city-states."[35] In view of such "homogenization," the Judean prophet may appear to be returning the favour by mixing ideologies; the outcome of such mixing is a powerful rhetorical sabotage of the king's discourse.

[34] John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1–39* (NICOT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986), 265–267. In v. 12, the king's pride is formulated as "the greatness of the king's heart"/גדל לבב (Isa 10:12; cf. 9:9). Cf. Ezekiel 28, wherein the prince of Tyre is said to have a "raised up heart"/גבה לבך (Ezek 28:2, 5, 17) and "a heart of God"/לב אלהים (Ezek 28:2). In HB, a rhetorically enhanced heart is part of the polemic against arrogant foreigners—the king of Babylon and his ambitious heart (Isa 14:13–14), the king of South and his "lifted up heart"/רם לבב (Dan 11:12 [ק]; cf. the description of Moab's pride as רם לב in Jer 48:29). Ekaterina E. Kozlova, "King Solomon and the Anatomy of Wisdom," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 46 (2021): 249–268 (266–267). Note, however, that v. 12 in Isaiah 10 is seen as a later addition.

[35] Christopher B. Hays, "Enlil, Isaiah, and the Origins of the *ʾĕlîlîm*: A Reassessment," *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 132 (2020): 224–235 (228), referencing the Assyrians' imposition of cultural uniformity on their subjects (and mentioning Bustenay Oded, *Mass Deportations and Deportees in the Neo-Assyrian Empire* [Wiesbaden: Reichert, 1979], esp. 81–91).

Bird Hunting and Egg Gathering as A "Blend" in Isaiah's Rhetoric

The first element in Isa 10:14's conceptual "blend" stems from the practice of bird hunting or bird trapping. This element is found in the first and third bicola in v. 14—"My hand has found, like a nest, the wealth of the peoples" and "there was none [no bird] that moved/flapped a wing, or opened its mouth, or chirped."[36] Richly documented in ANE text and image, bird trapping led to the metaphorization of deities, monarchs, and national leaders as fowlers and hunters who capture and incapacitate, as birds, their enemies, disloyal vassals, and own erring people.[37] Given its prominence, this metaphor has been duly discussed in the literature.[38] The middle colon of the royal speech—"as one gathers eggs that have been forsaken, so I have gathered all the earth" (v. 14b)—is the second element in the prophet's conceptual "blend" (to be discussed below). Ideological blending in v. 14, however, could be seen in the mixing of Assyrian and Israelite attitudes towards the *bird species* envisaged in the bird- and egg-hunting "blend." Notable here is the combination of the following

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[36] On the structure of Isa 10:5–15, see Machinist, "Ah Assyria," 184–188. For the division of v. 14 into 3 bicola, see Willem A.M. Beuken, *Jesaja 1–12* (HTKAT; Freiburg: Herder, 2003), vol. 1, 272.

[37] On bird hunting/fowling in ANE, see Armas Salonen, *Vögel und Vogelfang im alten Mesopotamien* (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1973); Oded Borowski, *Every Living Thing: Daily Use of Animals in Ancient Israel* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira, 1998), 155–158; Elisabeth Von Der Osten-Sacken, *Untersuchungen zur Geflügelwirtschaft im Alten Orient* (OBO 272; Fribourg: Academic Press, 2015), 29–187; Rozenn Bailleul-LeSuer, "Fowling in the Marshes and Aviculture," in Rozenn Bailleul-LeSuer (ed.), *Between Heaven and Earth: Birds in Ancient Egypt* (OIMP 35; Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 147–156.

[38] Angelika Berlejung, "The Metaphor of the Bird and the Discourse on Life and Death: Life and Death According to the Imaginations of the Israelites," in Angelika Berlejung, *Divine Secrets and Human Imaginations. Studies on the History of Religion and Anthropology of the Ancient Near East and the Old Testament* (ORA 42; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2021), 335–368 (349–350). On four fowler deities, see *ibid*., 348, n. 103. She also discusses Akkadian and Hebrew vocabulary related to bird hunting, and more specifically, to nets used in this practice. On the motif of catching birds in a net, see Jeremy Black, "The Imagery of Birds in Sumerian Poetry," in Marianne E. Vogelzang and Herman L.J. Vanstiphout (eds), *Mesopotamian Poetic Language: Sumerian and Akkadian* (CM 6; Groningen: Styx Publication, 1996), 23–46 (26–29). On the weakness of birds, see *ibid.*, 33–34.

features in vv. 13–14: 1.) the acts listed here are *royal* feats; 2.) the gathering of the earth as *eggs* parallels the king's plunder of the nation's *treasures* and *wealth,* not people;[39] and finally, 3.) the king gathers eggs *abandoned* by their parents.[40] The combination of these and other details in the context suggests that the prophet may have had a very particular Assyrian practice in mind; a practice which he chose to dress in an Israelite garb. To identify this practice, the formulation ביצים עזבות/"abandoned eggs" is key.

The word "egg" appears only six times in HB (Deut 22:6 [x2]; Isa 10:14; Isa 59:5 [x2 with vipers]; and Job 39:14); and the only bird that is specifically said to abandon/עזב its eggs is the ostrich/רננים (Job 39:14–16).[41] Notably, Isa 10:13–14 and Job 39:14–17 share an intriguing set of terms and/or ideas—abandoned eggs (Isa 10:14: ביצים עזבות; cf. Job 39:14: תעזב לארץ בציה), the presence or lack of wisdom and understanding (Isa 10:13: ובחכמתי כי נבונתי; cf. Job 39:17: כי־השה אלוה חכמה ולא־חלק לה בבינה), and immobilized wings or wings in motion (Isa 10:14: ולא היה נדד כנף; cf. Job 39:13: כנף־רננים נעלסה). Even if Job 39 is a later tradition than Isa 10:13–14, it could have preserved (and crystalized) pre-existent cultural attitudes towards the ostrich, attitudes that are also reflected in Isaiah 10. If the king's speech in Isaiah 10 indeed refers to the ostrich and ostrich eggs, then the king's rhetoric could attain a

[39] On "provisions/treasures," see Williamson, *Isaiah 6–12,* 488–489, 526.

[40] On the "wealth of the nations" motif in ANE and HB, see Michael J. Chan, *The Wealth of Nations: A Tradition-Historical Study* (FAT 93; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017).

[41] The identity of the bird in Job 39 is widely debated. E.g., Arthur Walker-Jones, "The So-called Ostrich in the God Speeches of the Book of Job (Job 39, 13–18)," *Biblica* 86 (2005): 494–510; Leonid Kogan, "Animal Names in Biblical Hebrew: An Etymological Overview," *Babel und Bibel* 3 (2006): 257–320 (292). Peter Altmann, however, argues that on balance to understand רננים in Job 39 and the expression בנות יענה in Lev 11:16, Deut 14:15, Isa 13:21, 34:13, 43:21, Jer 50:39, Mic 1:8, and Job 30:29, in a traditional way, i.e., as ostrich(es), is more compelling. Peter Altmann, *Banned Birds: The Birds of Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2019), 98. See further *ibid*., 96–101.

more defined set of contours.[42] To see these, two ideologies or cultural views regarding the ostrich—Israelite and Assyrian—should be considered.

The Ostrich in Ancient Israel

As noted by Adrian Franklin,

> Animals convey meanings and values that are culturally specific; in viewing animals we cannot escape the cultural context in which that observation takes place. There can be no deep, primordial relationship underlying the zoological gaze since it must always be mediated by culture.[43]

For the purposes of this discussion, four features of the ostrich's profile in HB are important—1.) its perceived cruelty as a parent; 2.) its inedibility per dietary laws; 3.) its residence in locales associated with ruin and desolation; and 4.) its lack of wisdom. Thus, in Job 39:14–16, the female ostrich is said to leave (עזב) her eggs unattended on the ground (v. 14) forgetting that a foot may crush them, that some animal

[42] It is worth noting that in HB, the word קן, which appears in Isa 10:14a, can represent nests that are built both in elevated places and on the ground (Deut 22:6: כי יקרא קן־צפור ו לפניך בדרך בכל־עץ ו או על־הארץ). So, hearing the statement in v. 14a ("My hand has found, like a nest, the wealth of the peoples…"), the Judean audience would not have automatically thought of a nest up in a tree or on a cliff (cf. Num 24:21; Deut 32:11; Jer 49:16; Obad 1:4; Hab 2:9; Job 39:27, etc.). I am grateful to Hugh G.M. Williamson for querying the use of the word קן in HB (private communication). On nests, see further James Barr, "Is Hebrew קן 'Nest' a Metaphor?," in John Barton (ed.), *Bible and Interpretation: The Collected Essays of James Barr; Volume III: Linguistics and Translation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 641–651.

[43] Adrian Franklin, *Animals and Modern Cultures. A Sociology of Human-Animal Relations in Modernity* (London: Sage, 1999), 62.

may trample them (v. 15).[44] She is further said to treat her young harshly, as if they were not hers/הקשיח בניה ללא־לה; she cares not that her labour was in vain (v. 16). Utilizing a different word for "ostrich"/יענה, Lam 4:3–4 also speaks of the ostrich's cruelty as a parent. Regarding HB's depiction of the bird, Bosworth and Tosatto explain,

> The negligence of the ostrich as a mother emerges as the most culturally salient aspect of the ostrich in biblical literature, appearing also in Lam 4:3. The verse likens the Judeans ("my daughter people") to the indifferent ostrich and unfavorably contrasts them with jackals that nurse their young. Ostriches do care for their young, but their normal behavior may seem neglectful compared to mammals and many other bird species. A leading male ostrich creates a hole in the ground as a nest for the eggs of several females, and a leading hen places her eggs at the center where they are most likely to survive. If the nest becomes too full, some hens lay eggs separately concealed under brush. The lead cock and hen protect the nest. They stay nearby when the chicks hatch and raise them communally with the other adults.... Even with this care, only about 15% of ostrich eggs survive to adulthood. The observation that ostriches do not immediately incubate their eggs led to the species' reputation as neglectful mothers. The focus on ostriches as mothers in biblical literature

[44] In this text, Mitchel Dahood proposed to understand עזב as עזב II, "to put, lay," and not as עזב I, "to leave, forsake". He wrote that "one may charge her [the ostrich] with stupidity, but not with negligence." Mitchell Dahood, "The Root עזב II in Job," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 78 (1959): 303–309 (307–308). It may be true in real life, but Job 39:16 does not support Dahood's reading. For the argument against the existence of עזב II in Classical Hebrew, see Hugh G.M. Williamson, "A Reconsideration of עזב II in Biblical Hebrew," *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 97 (1985): 74–85.

> may motivate the language "daughters of ostriches" [Lev 11:16; Deut 14:15; Isa 13:21; 34:13; 43:21; Jer 50:39; Mic 1:8; and Job 30:29] because this construct phrase highlights the most culturally salient aspect of ostrich behavior.[45]

Furthermore, it is notable that in Israel ostrich meat was prohibited for consumption according to the dietary laws in Lev 11:16 and Deut 14:15. The rationale for this prohibition remains unclear, and as such, is debated in HB scholarship. Most recently, Anna Angelini has argued that if בת היענה in these prohibitions (Lev 11:16; Deut 14:15) is understood as ostrich (cf. LXX which renders it as στρουθός/"ostrich"; cf. Vulg. of Lam 4:3 as *struthio*/"ostrich"), then it is the bird's perceived hybridity and monstrosity that could explain its exclusion from Israel's diet.[46] Peter Altmann follows suit explaining that even though the culinary preferences of Israel's neighbours (Egypt, Levant, Mesopotamia) did not differ significantly from those in the Pentateuchal laws, the prohibition against ostrich meat, and possibly

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[45] Bosworth, Tosatto, "Human-Nature Blends," 268. Cf. Aesop's fable which presents the ostrich in similar terms. *Ibid*., 268, n. 52. Seeing Isa 10:14 as one of the cases of conceptual blending in prophetic rhetoric, Bosworth and Tosatto further note that here the combination of birds, abandoned eggs, and parental nurturance, conceptually, represents the wealth of the nations. Beyond this, they do not develop their discussion of this text. Regarding ostriches as parents, Peter R.S. Moorey explains that they can leave their incubating eggs alone, unattended but only during the heat of the day. Peter R.S. Moorey, *Ancient Mesopotamian Materials and Industries: The Archaeological Evidence* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 128. But as Walter Houston rightly noted, when it comes to references to birds and animals in HB, we should not expect "any excessive care for realism" from HB authors. Walter J. Houston, *Purity and Monotheism: Clean and Unclean Animals in Biblical Law* (JSOTSup 140; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 197.

[46] Anna Angelini, "L'Imaginaire Comparé du Démoniaque dans les Traditions de l'Israël Ancient: Le Bestiaire d'Esaïe dans la Septante," in Bertrand Dufour, Fabian Pfitzmann, Thomas Römer, and Christoph Uehlinger (eds), *Entre dieux et hommes: anges, démons et autres figures intermédiaires: Actes du colloque organisé par le Collège de France, Paris, les 19 et 20 mai 2014* (OBO 286; Fribourg: Universitätsverlag; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2017), 116–134 (123); Christophe Nihan and Anna Angelini, "Unclean Birds in the Hebrew and Greek Versions of Leviticus and Deuteronomy," in Innocent Himbaza (ed.), *The Text of Leviticus: Proceedings of the Third International Colloquium of the Dominique Barthélemy Institute, Held in Fribourg (October 2015)* (Leuven: Peeters Publishers, 2020), 39–67.

ostrich eggs, has to do, most likely, with the bird's status as a non-flying bird with mixed/hybrid anatomical features.[47] Further problematizing the ostrich's profile in HB is its habitation in locales closely associated with "the antithesis of human civilization" (Isa 13:21; 34:13; 43:21; Jer 50:39; cf. Mic 1:8).[48] So much so that in some traditions, the bird's area of habitat is linked with primordial chaos as described in Gen 1:2 (Isa 34:9–10, 13).[49] These already negative cultural assumptions about the ostrich are further exacerbated by the belief that the bird was deprived of wisdom and understanding (Job 39:17).

The Ostrich in the Ancient Near East

Unlike HB's negative view of the ostrich, attitudes and values attached to it in the broader ANE context were extremely positive, particularly during the Neo-Assyrian period. In ANE, the ostrich (*Struthio camelus syriacus*, the Arabian/Syrian ostrich) was viewed as a strong, defiant, and extravagant bird. It inhabited the Syro-Mesopotamian hinterland, which can be traced through textual sources, iconography, and archaeological remains. In antiquity, this flightless bird was hunted for

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[47] Altmann, *Banned Birds*, 100. He also explains that the ostrich is one of the species of birds which are allowed for consumption in ANE but are banned in Israel. See also Peter Altmann and Anna Angelini, "Purity, Taboo and Food in Antiquity: Theoretical and Methodological Issues," in Peter Altmann, Anna Angelini, and Abra Spiciarich (eds), *Food Taboos and Biblical Prohibitions* (AB 2; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020), 9–24 (20). Using Levantine and Mesopotamian art/iconography, Aren M. Wilson-Wright and Megan L. Case proposed that ostriches were sacred birds in early Israel, and as such, ostrich meat "could be consumed in ritual contexts—which may account for the appearance of a few butchered ostrich bones at Israelite sites—but not in everyday life." Aren M. Wilson-Wright, Megan L. Case, "Sacred, Yet Savory: Ostrich Iconography and Dietary Prohibitions in Ancient Israel." (a paper presented at SBL, 2013). For refutation, see Altmann, *Banned Birds*, 100.

[48] Ken Stone, "Jackals and Ostriches Honoring God: The Zoological Gaze in the Isaiah Scroll," in Jon L. Berquist and Alice Hunt (eds), *Focusing Biblical Studies: The Crucial Nature of the Persian and Hellenistic Periods. Essays in Honor of D.A. Knight* (New York, NY: T&T Clark, 2012), 63–80 (72).

[49] *Ibid.*, 72.

its skin, plumes, and eggs, which were used to produce luxury objects—garments, accessories, jewellery, and décor items. Additionally, its eggs served as offerings to deities and its eggshells were prized for their medicinal qualities. Furthermore, due to their impressive physique and speed, ostriches, alongside other animals, were viewed as trophies worthy of royal sport. Captured alive, these formidable birds were kept in palatial zoos to entertain local nobility and foreign diplomats.[50]

Ostrich Eggs in Medicine, Food, and Offerings to the Gods

Since Isa 10:14 equates the abandoned eggs with the nations' *wealth*, a few words are in order on the value the ancients attached to ostrich eggs. Of interest here is that textual evidence speaks of the high versatility of ostrich eggs and their use in several spheres and domains. Thus, for example, Assyrian medical texts mention crushed and ground ostrich eggshells as part of remedies for renal conditions (e.g., BAM 3, 237; 313; 318).[51] As food, ostrich eggs were consumed by the elite, more specifically by kings, particularly in the city of Mari in the second millennium BCE (ARM 26 I/1, 487, n. 18, text M.13158;[52] cf. the

[50] Karen P. Foster, "The Earliest Zoos and Gardens," *Scientific American* 281 (1999): 64–71; Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones, "Keeping and Displaying Royal Tribute Animals in Ancient Persia and the Near East," in Thorsten Fögen and Edmund Thomas (eds), *Interactions Between Animals and Humans in Graeco-Roman Antiquity* (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2017), 305–338; Vernon N. Kisling, "Ancient Collections and Menageries," in Vernon N. Kisling (ed.), *Zoo and Aquarium History: Ancient Animal Collections to Zoological Gardens* (London/New York: CRC Press, 2022), 1–46.

[51] Salonen, *Vögel und Vogelfang*, 166. In Egypt, ostrich eggs and ostrich fat were thought to be medicinal as well. Rozenn Bailleul-LeSuer, "From Kitchen to Temple: The Practical Role of Birds in Ancient Egypt," in Rozenn Bailleul-LeSuer (ed.), *Between Heaven and Earth: Birds in Ancient Egypt* (OIMP 35; Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 23–33 (29).

[52] Olga V. Popova and Louise Quillien, "Wild Ostriches: A Valuable Animal in Ancient Mesopotamia," in Laerke Recht and Christina Tsouparopoulou (eds), *Fierce Lions, Angry Mice and*

banquet stela of Assurnasirpal II [ii. 92][53]). Both ostrich meat and eggs also had a role in the royal religious life in the first-millennium BC Babylonia. In the sixth century, for example, the Babylonian king Nabonidus is recorded to have offered ostrich eggs to the gods as part of regular divine rations (TCL 12, 123).[54] Similar cultic usage for ostrich eggs comes from the Hellenistic period.[55]

Ostrich Eggs as Luxury Items in ANE

Ostrich eggs were likewise prized in the luxury industry. Given their size and durability as raw material, ostrich eggshells were used to

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Fat-tailed Sheep: Animal Encounters in the Ancient Near East (Cambridge: McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, 2021), 235–245 (242); Louise Steel, "Sumptuous Feasting in the Ancient Near East: Exploring the Materiality of the Royal Tombs of Ur," in Louise Steel and Katharina Zinn (eds), *Exploring the Materiality of Food "Stuffs": Transformations, Symbolic Consumption and Embodiments* (RSA; London: Routledge, 2016), 189–204; Jack M. Sasson, "The King's Table: Food and Fealty in Old Babylonian Mari," in Cristiano Grottanelli and Lucio Milano (eds), *Food and Identity in the Ancient World* (HANES 9; Padova: S.A.R.G.O.N. Editrice E Libreria, 2004), 179–215; Simo Parpola, "The Leftovers of God and King: on the Distribution of Meat at the Assyrian and Achaemenid Imperial Courts," in *ibid*., 281–312; Ann Brysbaert, "'The Chicken or the Egg?' Interregional Contacts Viewed Through a Technological Lens at Late Bronze Age Tiryns, Greece," *Oxford Journal of Archaeology* 32 (2013): 233–256; For more on ostriches, see Amir Gorzalczany and Baruch Rosen, "Ostriches and People in Archaeological Contexts in the Southern Levant and Beyond," *Levant* 54 (2022): 29–49.

[53] Donald J. Wiseman, "A New Stela of Aššur-Naṣir-Pal II," *Iraq* 14 (1952): 24–44 (28); Moorey, *Ancient Mesopotamian Materials*, 128. For the consumption of ostriches by the Persians, see Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae* 4.145 (Altmann and Angelini, "Purity, Taboo and Food," 20).

[54] Popova and Quillien, "Wild Ostriches," 240, 242–243; Paul-Alain Beaulieu, "Egg Offerings to the Gods of Babylon," *Nouvelles Assyriologiques Brèves et Utilitaires* (1991): no. 79, 50–52; Marc J.H. Linssen, *The Cults of Uruk and Babylon: The Temple Ritual Texts as Evidence for Hellenistic Cult Practice* (Leiden/Boston: Brill-Styx, 2004), 136, 178 (cited in Popova and Quillien, "Wild Ostriches," 240).

[55] See further, *CAD, L*, 255. On the value of ostrich eggs in later periods, see Nile Green, "Ostrich Eggs and Peacock Feathers: Sacred Objects as Cultural Exchange between Christianity and Islam," *Al-Masaq* 18 (2006): 27–66; Abraham O. Shemesh, "'Ostrich is a Fowl for Any Matter': The Ostrich as a 'Strange' Fowl in Jewish Literature," *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 74 (2018); 4938; Abraham O. Shemesh, "Ostrich Eggs as a Conceptual-Symbolic Accessory in Jewish Synagogues," *European Journal of Jewish Studies* 15 (2020): 60–83; doi:10.1163/1872471X-11411097.

create luxury items—beads, vessels, goblets, and vases. In the third and second millennia BCE, these objects were particularly ornate. The famous royal cemetery at Ur yielded many artifacts, including decorated ostrich eggshells which were fashioned as fancy containers.

> One is decorated with a band of mosaic round the rim, made with inlay of mother-of-pearl and red paste in bitumen (BM 123556, ...). Another is an imitation made of gold, with its rim and foot adorned with mosaics of ostrich eggshell, limestone, lapis lazuli and sandstone inlaid in bitumen (Penn Museum B16692).[56]

Aesthetically enhanced, ostrich eggshells also served as receptacles for precious substances, such as oils, perfumes, and aromatic spices.[57] In various degrees of decoration, ostrich eggshells were kept in royal palaces, deposited in temples, and buried in graves in Mesopotamia, Syro-Palestine, and Cyprus. Due to their value, they also served as diplomatic gifts, presented as tributes, and captured as booty.[58] In the Bronze Age, they appear among traded exotic goods and commodities in the Levant and the larger Mediterranean world.[59]

[56] Popova and Quillien, "Wild Ostriches," 242 and the literature cited there. Lee Horne, "Ur and Its Treasures: The Royal Tombs," *Expedition Magazine* 40 (1998): n.p. (Penn Museum, 1998); accessed 03 May 2023 <http://www.penn.museum/sites/expedition/?p=5402> Tamar Hodos, "Eggstraordinary Artefacts: Decorated Ostrich Eggs in the Ancient Mediterranean World," *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications* 7 (2020): article 45. See also Tamar Hodos, Caroline Cartwright, Janet Montgomery, Geoff Nowell, Kayla Crowder, Alexandra Fletcher, and Yvonne Gönster, "Origins of Decorated Ostrich Eggs in the Ancient Mediterranean and Middle East," *Antiquity* 94 (2020): 381–400.

[57] Popova and Quillien, "Wild Ostriches," 242.

[58] *Ibid*., 232; Bailleul-LeSuer, "From Kitchen to Temple," 29.

[59] Popova and Quillien, "Wild Ostriches," 242.

Ostrich Hunting and Ostrich Egg Gathering in Royal Inscriptions and Glyptic Art

Ostrich hunting was a risky and dangerous sport.[60] As such, it was deemed to be worthy of kings, who in turn proudly documented their exploits in text and image often crediting their *hand* with success in the hunt (cf. Isa 10:13–14; ידי, בכח ידי).[61] In the ninth century BCE, for example, Ashurnasirpal II brags about his trophies, which he acquired with his hands.

> [...] alive in my hands I captured, and herds of wild oxen, and elephants, and lions, and ostriches, and male and female monkeys, and wild asses, and gazelle, and stags, and bears, and panthers, and cheetah, all the beasts of the plain and of the mountains. (AKA I, col iv, 36–46)[62]

In the same century, Tukulti-Ninurta II describes his hunting expedition and specifically mentions capturing young ostriches with his hand.

> I set up camp (and) spent the night here. Ḫindanu is on the other side of the Euphrates river. During the hunt in the desert, I killed ostriches. The little ostriches, the birds, I took them with my own hands/*ina qâti*. (Scheil 1909, 79–82; cf. RIMA 2, A.0.100.5, ll. 79–82)[63]

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[60] Ostriches were thought to be wild and dangerous creatures, so much so that in various material artefacts (see below), egg robbers are pictured carrying weapons—e.g., scimitars, swords, sticks, bows and arrows. In fact, some artefacts depict ostriches and lions as equally strong. *Ibid*., 240.

[61] *Ibid*., 236.

[62] See further *CAD, L*, 255.

[63] Jean-Vincent Scheil, *Annales de Tukulti Ninip II, roi d'Assyrie 889–884* (Paris: Librairie Honoré Champion, 1909), 18–19 (cited in Popova and Quillien, "Wild Ostriches," 237). See also the Cornelian pyramidal seal depicting a "hero" holding an ostrich by its neck (WA 89888, London, British Museum). Dominique Collon, "First Catch Your Ostrich," *Iranica Antiqua* 33 (1998): 25–42 (32). On the royal hunt of ostriches in Egypt, see Bailleul-LeSuer, "From Kitchen to Temple," 29.

Iconographic evidence is of further significance as it makes a hunter's hand particularly salient in the process of procuring ostriches and their eggs. In a few studies on ostriches in Assyrian and Babylonian art, Dominique Collon showed that the interest in ostriches as prey for hunters increased in the eighth and seventh centuries BCE.[64] Discussing a range of artifacts from this period—cylinder and stamp seals, decorated vessels (bowls, beakers), quivers, etc.—Collon explains that most of them feature solitary figures (human or hybrid/mythic hunters) standing in close proximity to an ostrich and holding up its egg to it.[65] The bird, in turn, is pictured either attacking the robber with an extended wing or leg or shielding the other eggs on the ground with a wing or a leg. Concerning this motif, Collon suggested that it may represent the trick used by egg robbers—that is, one person distracts the bird with one egg, while the other gathers the rest of the eggs from the nest. Since the majority of these artifacts picture ostrich hunters alone and unassisted, another explanation for the motif at hand is possible.[66] Given (1) the danger involved in the ostrich hunt, (2) the pride drawn from its successful capture, and (3) the association of the ostrich hunt with kings, the egg robber's posture in the above motif could be understood as *taunting* the parent bird with an egg already captured. This in turn would fit the unrestrained ambitions of ANE monarchs (cf. Isa 10:12). In summary, as a highly-prized and much sought-after bird, the ostrich contributed strongly to the construction of royal ideology. As such, it fits well with the presentation of the Assyrian king in Isaiah 10.

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[64] Collon, "First Catch Your Ostrich," 25–42. Ostriches also appear in the "master of the animals" motif (a figure holding two animals [ostriches] by the neck) on artefacts from Iron I–II Beth-Mirsim, Beth Shemesh, Tell en-Naṣbeh, and other locales. Othmar Keel and Christoph Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God in Ancient Israel* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1998), 140, 173, 182, 277, 385. See also Ido Koch, "Human-Animal Encounters on Early Iron Age Stamp-Seals from the Southern Levant," *Near Eastern Archaeology* 85 (2022): 296–305 (299–303) and the sources cited there.

[65] Collon, "First Catch Your Ostrich," 25–42.

[66] Collon also says that she was not able to verify her theory, and so it remains tentative. *Ibid.*, 39.

Isaiah 10:14 and the Assyrian King

Regarding Isa 10:13–14, Gallagher asserted that it is a composite speech heavily dependent on Assyrian ideology. In fact, whereas,

> the Assyrian inscriptions often employed the motifs [present in Isa 10:13–14] in specific situations, the prophet presented the[se] motifs as generalizations concerning the Assyrian king... Despite these liberties, the extreme conceit and megalomania of the Assyrian king, as he depicts himself in the royal inscriptions, is condensely summarized by the prophet in these two verses.[67]

Concerning conceptual "blends" in the figurative language of ancient literature, Bosworth and Tosatto note that, "When conceptual metaphors for a particular target domain differ between cultures, the result is a stark difference in the respective conceptualization of that domain."[68] This is of particular significance for the formulation of Isa 10:13–14.

Luxury, Prestige, and Imperial Reach

In view of the prestige-oriented Assyrian discourse already echoed in Isaiah 10, the imagery in Isa 10:14 can be seen as further reinforcing it. If, as argued here, the verse refers to ostrich hunting (v. 14a, c) and ostrich egg harvesting (v. 14b), then the king's megalomania becomes even more salient. First, if the proposed "identity" of eggs and birds/hatchlings in the text is correct, then the wealth of the despoiled

[67] Gallagher, *Sennacherib's Campaign,* 83. Notably, among the possible channels of transmission of ANE propaganda is Assyrian visual art (e.g., palace reliefs, inscribed/non-inscribed stelae, and statues in and outside Assyria). Aster, "Transmission of Neo-Assyrian Claims," 1–44 (9).

[68] Bosworth, Tosatto, "Human-Nature Blends," 249.

nations is imaged as *extravagant, luxury objects* fit to be possessed by royalty. Regarding luxury items and decorated ostrich eggs, Tamar Hodos explains that "any notion of a luxury item is predicated upon our understandings of the values such an item imparts to its consumers...," and these eggs can be "extraordinary for both their exquisite workmanship, material uniqueness, and restricted circulation amongst those of elevated social status..."[69] As indicated above, ostrich eggs were highly prized, and as such boosted the status and prestige of their owners. This, in turn, secured them a prominent place in the Assyrian self-aggrandizing programme.

Secondly, in addition to other aspects of the ostrich's profile in ANE, the bird was thought to be a mythical creature who inhabited territories far removed from those occupied by humans. Accordingly, Olga V. Popova and Louise Quillien explain that the ostrich is often seen

> fighting a genie-hero on scenes engraved on cylinder seals, or mentioned among the wild animals of the Babylonian peripheries in the *Mapa Mundi*. Therefore, at the time of the building of the empires, ostriches became a motif highlighting the king's power and skill and, through its hunt, demonstrating his domination over the inhabited spaces and peripheral territories that they intended to conquer and master.[70]

Hence, from the Assyrian point of view, v. 14's reference to the hunting of ostriches and their eggs would complement, and reinforce, the king's expansionist agenda seen in the phrase "gathered in all the earth." Encoding the might and wealth of ANE monarchs, the ostrich

[69] Hodos, "Eggstraordinary Artefacts," 3.

[70] Popova and Quillien, "Wild Ostriches," 243. Cf. Collon's assertion that "the periods in which o.s are most frequently depicted also coincide with the periods of greatest Assyrian expansion: the Middle Assyrian and Neo-Assyrian periods." Dominique Collon, "Ostrich," in Jürg Eggler and Christoph Uehlinger (eds), *Iconography of Deities and Demons in the Ancient Near East.* (2010); no. 84: 1–8 (5); http://www.religionswissenschaft.uzh.ch/idd/prepublications/e_idd_ostrich.pdf

maximizes the king's *hubris* rhetorically—that is, the king is cast conquering distant, inaccessible lands and nations increasing his military prowess and imperial reach.

From the internal perspective, however, the mention of ostriches and ostrich eggs would have generated a qualitatively different set of associations. On the one hand, banned from consumption, the ostrich would have held no perceived economic value in Israel.[71] On the other, although it was associated with uninhabited places, as in ANE, no glamour was attached to such association (cf. Isa 13:21; 34:13; 43:20; cf. Job 30:29). On the contrary, the ostrich's presence in a locale signals its ruin, desolation, and chaos resulting from a military conflict.[72] In fact, unlike in ANE, wherein the ostrich is a cipher for *wealth* and *luxury*, i.e., the very "stuff" *worth* plundering, in HB, it symbolizes states and conditions *post*-plundering—i.e., it represents lands whose treasuries have been emptied out (Jer 50:39, cf. vv. 10, 37). Understood differently in the two cultures, the ostrich, as a symbol, carries disparate messages. From the Assyrian point of view, it signals the king's wealth, prestige, and world domination. For the prophet's internal audience, it encodes a biting critique of the monarch. Furthermore, given the initial interjection הוי (Isa 10:5) featured elsewhere in laments and judgment texts (e.g., 1 Kgs 13:30; Jer 22:18; 34:5),[73] as well as the king's upcoming ruin (Isa 10:15–19; cf. 10:12), the ostrich symbolism also

[71] Altmann, *Banned Birds*, 45, 100.

[72] On Isa 13:21–22, see also Hugh G.M. Williamson's discussion, wherein he shows that the initial list of animals in this text was subsequently widened to include demonic beings. "The demons are part of the means whereby God seals Edom's ultimate demise, drawing that into the spiritual as well as the political domain." Hugh G.M. Williamson, "Animals or Demons in Isaiah 13:21–22," in Reinhard Müller, Urmas Nõmmik, and Juha Pakkala (eds), *Fortgeschriebenes Gotteswort: Studien zu Geschichte, Theologie und Auslegung des Alten Testaments. Festschrift für Christoph Levin zum 70. Geburtstag* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020), 227–235 (235).

[73] On "woe" oracles and sayings, see De Jong, *Isaiah Among the Ancient Near Eastern Prophets*, 90–91, 349, 456.

signals the king's pitiable state, the kind that deserves mourning; more specifically אבל כבנות יענה/"the mourning of ostriches" (cf. Mic 1:7–8).[74]

Silence and Non-resistance

Further indications of the king's hubristic attitude are detected in Isa 10:14c, which states that while he was pillaging the nations' treasuries/nests no one/no bird "moved a wing, or opened its mouth, or chirped." This is usually thought to represent Assyria's military conquests, whereby its king subdues the nations with ease, unopposed. Regarding v. 14c, Williamson, for example, asserts that the imagery here signifies that the king's

> conquests were all too easy: being overwhelmed by his power and radiance, as emphasized so often in the annals, the subdued nations were rendered incapable of offering any form of resistance. This added to his self-deception that his sovereignty was without limits... The last part of the verse emphasizes this point with further colourful language. Given that within this extended image the eggs had been abandoned, presumably by the sitting mother, we must assume that it was the newly hatched fledglings which neither *escaped by flying* (literally: "with a wing") or *opened* their *beak and chirped...* We have to depict them as helpless and petrified at the advance of the predator.[75]

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[74] Additionally, applying the symbolism of bird hunting/fowling typically featured with human subjects to non-human targets, i.e., treasures and riches, the king, arguably, equates non-human and human capital. In the process, he up-values the former and de-values the latter. This, again, could be part of his hubristic attitude.

[75] Williamson, *Isaiah 6–12*, 529. Echoing this idea of unopposed surrender, Aster explains that the symbolism in Isa 10:14 is "somewhat unexpected, since it is unclear why flapping a wing would be an effective way for a bird to oppose the stealing of eggs from its nest; one would expect the bird to fly in the face of the thief and peck at him. The phrase וְלֹא הָיָה נֹדֵד כָּנָף is an example of a blind motif, which does not fit neatly where it is inserted, and can best be understood by

In view of the proposed bird species in v. 14, this reading of v. 14 could be nuanced further.[76]

Although HB profiles the ostrich as a bird with no parental instincts, the Assyrian glyptic art indicates the opposite. In fact, the majority of ostrich-themed artefacts discussed above decisively contradict the scenario from Isa 10:14c—"no bird fled/escaped by flying" or "opened its mouth or chirped." One cylinder seal from the Neo-Assyrian period is of particular interest (BM 102397).[77] In it, a robber is holding two adult (presumably parent) ostriches by the neck. Seized and choking, each ostrich is nevertheless kicking the robber with one leg; each bird has its wings outspread, and one is touching (attacking?) its human assailant. Furthermore, under each adult ostrich, there are two "youngsters." All four, two from each side, are charging against the hunter, their wings outspread. At least one of them has its beak open.

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reference to the context from which it derives. It is most likely that Isa 10:14 borrows this unique motif from Sargon's letter." Aster, *Reflections of Empire,* 200. Mittman argues that the participle מצפצף echoes Isa 8:19 and 29:4, in which the root צפף represents the sound of the spirits of the dead. Hence, Assyria's victims (and the whole world) in v. 14 are imaged in complete silence as if they were in the underworld. Mittmann, "Wehe! Assur," 125–126.

[76] Mittmann understands the phrase נדד כנף not as the one who flaps its wings, i.e., a fluttering bird (cf. *HALOT*, 672), but as *one with wings fleeing* or *a winged fugitive*. In other words, no one/no bird was able to escape from the Assyrian king. Mittmann, "Wehe! Assur," 125. If the phrase נדד כנף signifies birds/hatchlings unable to escape by flying (Williamson, *Isaiah 6–12*, 492; cf. Isa 16:2; Prov 27:8; Jer 4:25), and if, as proposed here, the text speaks of an ostrich nest under attack, then finding the word כנף/"wing" as an indicator of the hatchlings' means of escape would be unusual, given that the ostrich is a flightless bird. However, some of the aforementioned artefacts that do depict fleeing ostriches picture them with their wings *outspread*. Collon, "First Catch Your Ostrich," 33–35.

[77] Fig. 20.3 in Popova and Quillien, "Wild Ostriches," 238. See also the cylinder seal from the Neo-Babylonian period (1000–539 BCE), Pierpont Morgan Library, no. 773, New York, Porada 1948, no. 773 (Fig. 20.5 in Popova and Quillien, "Wild Ostriches," 239). In it, an ostrich is attacking an individual who has seized the bird by the neck. The individual also has a scimitar in his hand and a quiver of arrows behind his back.

Suspended in the air is another ostrich chick attacking a gazelle.[78] This seal, and others like it, provide a more realistic scenario of what happens when an ostrich nest is attacked—both adult and young birds protect it at all costs. From the Assyrian perspective then, the king's claim that there was *no resistance* offered to him by the ostrich, a formidable opponent, was an exaggeration meant to boost the king's might.[79] From the Judean perspective, however, this inflated claim would have been laughable—in HB, robbing an ostrich nest requires no effort (Job 39:14–16); in HB, even a child can handle the task. In the prophetic rhetoric, therefore, the clash between two "ostrich ideologies" radically undermines the king's claims.

Wisdom and Understanding

Of further interest here is that the king takes sole credit for his accomplishments, citing his strength, wisdom, and understanding—"By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom; for I am prudent/עשיתי ובחכמתי כי נבנותי" (v. 13). Although it was typical of ANE monarchs to brag about their wisdom and various achievements resulting from it, they did understand wisdom as a gift from the gods. Sargon, for example, declares that he was endowed with intelligence and broad knowledge (*šadal kar-še*/"broad/wide heart/interior") by his divine patrons, Ea and Belet-Ili (TCL 3 23).[80] Sennacherib, in turn, is cast

[78] Dominique Collon, *Catalogue of the Western Asiatic Seals in the British Museum. Cylinder Seals V. Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian Periods* (London: The British Museum Press, 2001), 171.

[79] Mary K.Y.H. Hom notes that the king clearly exaggerates his power here, since even in the book of Isaiah various nations are said to resist Assyria (e.g., Isa 37:8–9). Hom, *The Characterization of the Assyrians,* 43. Interestingly, Assyrian kings also exaggerated their might by saying that they captured wild creatures, including ostriches, as if they were already caged. Ashurnasirpal II, for example, states, "The gods Ninurta (and) Nergal, who love my priesthood, gave to me the wild beasts and commanded me to hunt. I killed 450 strong lions. I killed 390 wild bulls from my ... chariot with my lordly assault. I slew 200 ostriches like caged birds..." (RIMA 2, A.0.101.30, ll. 84b–90); *CAD, L,* 255.

[80] *CAD, K,* 225; Leonidas Kalugila, *The Wise King: Studies in Royal Wisdom as Divine Revelation in the Old Testament and its Environment* (CBOT 15; Lund: Gleerup, 1980), 54–56.

as ^{d}NIN.ŠI.KÙ *iddina kar-šú ritpāšu*, i.e., being endowed with "spacious mind/inner core/heart" by Ninšīku,[81] and Assurbanipal is said to be *šadlu ṣur-ru karaš ritpāšu*/"[of] wide mind/heart, wide-hearted."[82] Relatedly, regarding the king's subjugation of the nations in Isaiah 10, Machinist observed that here the Assyrian king "does so hubristically, on his own, with no regard for Yahweh as his lord (10:13–14). The point is that what in the Assyrian royal inscriptional tradition is represented as a divinely approved widespread enlargement of territory is here in Isaiah 10 understood as a willful disregard of Yahweh's more limited command. In other words, the Assyrian king … is depicted as arrogating to himself the right to determine terrestrial borders, which instead belong to Yahweh to fix (cf., e.g., Deut 32:8–9; Ps 74:16–17), and so the king violates the very order of the cosmos that Yahweh has decreed."[83] Notably, however, the frame of the Assyrian material in Isaiah 10 decisively curbs the king's claims and assumptions, concerning which Eidevall states,

> The "instrumental" imagery employed in vv. 5 and 15 deprives Assyria of its authority and independence (on the rhetorical-ideological level, at least). A rod, a staff, an axe or a saw—they are all instruments, in the hands of someone else, wielded by the user as (s)he wishes. These metaphors … insinuate that the Assyrian disinclination to accept these terms was something unprecedented and unnatural. Rebellion and insubordination would have been unacceptable at all events, but the image of a tool that revolts

[81] *CAD, K,* 225; cf. Daniel D. Luckenbill, *The Annals of Sennacherib* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1924), 117; Kalugila, *The Wise King,* 56–57.

[82] *CAD, K,* 225; *CAD, Ṣ,* 260. For the motif of Assyrian royal obedience to the gods vs. impiety of enemies, see "Esarhaddon (RINAP 4) 2: i 38–49 (//Esarhaddon 1: iii 20); …Tiglath-pileser III (RINAP 1) 9: 2'; 35 i 21'; Sargon II (RINAP 2) 65: 346; Sennacherib (RINAP 3) 22: v 31 (// Sennacherib 23: v 23); 22: v 82 (// 23: v 71); 35: 29'; and Esarhaddon 1: i 32, ii 65, iii 47; 2: ii 5; 30: 4'." DeGrado, "Kidnapping the Gods," 43, n. 32.

[83] Machinist, "Ah Assyria," 198; cf. Mittmann, "Wehe! Assur," 120. Cf. Bernhard Duhm, *Das Buch Jesaja* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1902), 73.

> against its user and starts thinking and acting on its own (v. 15) would … amount to a reversal of the very order of things in the universe.[84]

Moreover, for the Judean audience, the king's bragging about wisdom and understanding in close proximity to the ostrich-based symbolism would further caricature the king. If the Assyrian attributes his conquering, pillaging, and terrorizing enemy lands to his own might and intellect, he then fails to see that he is only a tool in God's hands (v. 5). Such failure negates his claims to *wisdom* and *understanding*—ובחכמתי כי נבונתי. Deprived of wisdom and understanding, the Assyrian king is like the Judean view of the ostrich, i.e., a bird who lacks these attributes and abilities by God's design—כי־השה אלוה חכמה ולא־חלק לה בבינה (Job 39:17).[85] Of further irony here is that even without these qualities, the ostrich can honour God (cf. Isa 43:20). According to the logic of Isaiah 10, however, the Assyrian king cannot (v. 13); as such, he is worse than the ostrich.

Conclusion

Discussing the phenomenon of subversive adaptation in ancient literature, Crouch notes that,

> A subversive text is inherently Janus-like in its relationship with the text it subverts: the source text is at once denigrated, by virtue of being the target of the subversive efforts, yet also perversely honored, by virtue of having been deemed significant enough to merit them. The very act of adaptation, in fact, contains an innate subversive potential, in so far as adaptation implies at least the possible inadequacy of the source. The development of the

[84] Eidevall, *Prophecy and Propaganda*, 245.

[85] Incidentally, in Egypt, ostrich feathers were linked to Ma'at, the goddess of truth, justice, and wisdom. Emily Teeter, "Animals in Egyptian Religion," in Billie J. Collins (ed.), *A History of the Animal World in the Ancient Near East* (HO I/64; Leiden: Brill, 2002), 335–360 (339).

> adaptation as not merely an extension of or addition to the interpretive possibilities of the original, but as actually incompatible with them, renders this subversive potential a reality.[86]

Concerning Isa 10:5–15, scholars agree that much of the content featured in this text appears in the Assyrian annals, yet the referenced material is adapted and reversed, to cast the Assyrian king as the antithesis of everything the imperial discourse sought to uphold and propagate.[87] In a similar vein, the foregoing discussion has sought to demonstrate how, as part of the king's speech, Isa 10:14 imitates or adapts the Assyrian practice of ostrich hunting and ostrich egg gathering. Deploying this symbolism in the king's rhetoric, the Judean prophet overlays it with his own, home-grown understanding of the bird, its behavior, and its habitat. Blending the two ideologies, the prophet augments, and satirizes, the hubristic claims of the Assyrian king. In fact, through blending, he invites a comparison between the Assyrian king and the ostrich; a comparison which ridicules the former by suggesting he is worse than the latter. Subverting the king's self-aggrandizing claims and making the claimant laughable, the prophet signals the king's impending demise.

[86] Crouch, *Israel and the Assyrians*, 27–28.

[87] Machinist, "Assyria and Its Image," 734.