The Shoot in Isaiah 11: A Subversive Hybrid Figure

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ABSTRACT

Isaiah 11, also known as the oracle of the "shoot of Jesse," imagines the ushering of an ideal age. The production of the book of Isaiah, including its multiple redactions, in the material circumstances of the subjugation of Israel under successive empires, makes it necessary to ask whether or how the text engages with its imperial milieu. What kind of figure does the "shoot of Jesse" represent in its imperial landscape? What kind of rule is imagined by the Shoot Oracle? This article engages with these questions by employing Homi Bhabha's concept of hybridity and argues that the poetic celebration of the "shoot of Jesse" presents a mimetic/hybrid figure and articulates an in-between space that subverts the imperial discourse as well as nationalistic hegemonic overtures of the Davidic dynasty.

KEYWORDS: Shoot Oracle; Shoot of Jesse; Isaiah 11; Hybridity

A INTRODUCTION

Isaiah 11, also known as the oracle of the "Shoot of Jesse," is a dynamic prophetic imagination of a new world. In Walter Brueggemann's words, this poetic oracle is an "impossible possibility of the new creation."[1] Scholarly discussions of the text have revolved around historical-critical questions about its composition and historical background. The question of whether the nature of the oracle is historical, messianic or eschatological has also occupied scholars. The production of the book of Isaiah, including its multiple redactions during periods of Israel's subjugation under successive empires, raises important questions about how the Shoot Oracle interacts with or responds to its imperial context. What kind of figure does the "shoot of Jesse" represent in its imperial landscape? What type of rule is imagined by the Shoot Oracle? What meaning does the ideal age take in terms of its material embeddings? This article engages

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1 Walter Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1-39* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 103.

with these questions by employing Homi Bhabha's theoretical concepts to bring out the features of the text in its imperial embeddings. The article focuses on Isa 11:1-9, as it forms a distinct pericope and serves as the core of the vision about the "shoot of Jesse" and the subsequent ideal age. The article commences with a brief introduction to Bhabha's concepts, followed by a discussion of the setting of First Isaiah. It then transitions into a succinct discussion on the imperial embeddings of the book of Isaiah and moves into a postcolonial reading of the oracle. The article concludes by drawing out insights that contribute to an understanding of the shoot as a hybrid figure.

B ENGAGING BHABHA'S CONCEPT OF HYBRIDITY

Over the past few decades, postcolonial theories and concepts have navigated through rich and varied landscapes. Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* and Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* advocate a resistant stance in terms of imperial domination.[2] Following this trajectory, Edward Said's 1978 seminal work *Orientalism* was one of the most profound postcolonial writings, laying bare and critiquing the constructions and representations of Arabs in the European thought world.[3] These early studies postulate a resistance perspective to counter the overtures of the empires, reinforcing a binary worldview that pits the colonisers against the colonised. Taking the postcolonial trajectory beyond Said's and Fanon's binary understanding of the colonial and the colonised, Bhabha proposes a deconstruction of the notion of culture and identity, striking at the idea of purity and superiority. Bhabha's seminal work *The Location of Culture* brings to the fore concepts like "ambivalence," "mimicry" and "hybridity" which elucidate the nuanced, camouflaged and yet powerful responses of the colonised towards the domination of imperial power and its cultural hegemony.[4] Ambivalence is a state of fluidity whereby the colonised wants to be like the coloniser and appropriate the dominant culture but dislikes and disavows its essence. Mimicry describes the adoption and affiliation of the cultural codes of the coloniser by the subjugated to enter into the discursive world of the coloniser and in the process mocks/disrupts and overturns its logic of superiority and purity. Hybridity is the result of these two phenomena,

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2 Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (trans. Richard Philcox; New York: Grove Press, [1963] 2004); Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* (Oxford: Heinemann Educational Publishers, 2000).

3 For Said, postcolonial resistance revolved around the binaries of Occident and Orient; Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin Books, [1978] 2003).

4 For details of these concepts, see Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge Classics, 2004), 1–6, 55–56, 95–120, 121–131. See also Simon Samuel, *A Postcolonial Reading of Mark's Story of Jesus* (London: T & T Clark, 2007), 27–30; Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Hellen Tiffin, *Postcolonial Studies: Key Concepts* (2d ed.; London: Routledge, 2007), 10–11; 124–127; 108–111. Philip P. Sam, "Jerusalem/Zion: A Counter-Imperial Trope in Third Isaiah," *Biblical Interpretation* 31 (2023): 332–355.

whereby the colonised, by imitating imperial codes or culture, enter a new hybrid, interstitial space—a fluid space and identity that disrupts imperial power and disavows the national discourse of purity. Elleke Boehmer explicates how the colonised writers appropriate the culture and discourses of the coloniser and hybridise them with their own cultural and religious myths and traditions as a strategic and nuanced means of resistance and self-expression.[5] Simon Samuel observes that these hybrid self-expressions, by mimicking the coloniser's style and discourse, not only disrupt the dominant imperial culture but also challenge and destabilise the hegemonic structures of native culture and authority.[6] Hybridity is thus an in-between and neither-nor state which subverts both imperial and native superiority.

Bhabha conceives hybridity as an "in-between" space, a space that "presages powerful cultural changes."[7] Hybridity leads to an indeterminate third space where cultural symbols and meanings are in flux and yet this space, in Bhabha's thought, is powerful in creating something new. The production of the book of Isaiah as well as its successive redactional growth under the shadows of the mighty empires makes it a fecund site of marginality, negotiation of identities and culture and a discourse marked by ambivalence, mimicry and hybridity.

C THE SETTING OF FIRST ISAIAH

First Isaiah (1-39), attributed to the prophet Isaiah of Jerusalem, has been generally placed in the eighth century BCE.[8] However, the composition of First Isaiah has been a complex issue. Historical-critical studies have helped to distinguish the original sayings of Isaiah from the secondary oracles, shedding light on this intricate process. Scholars of the second half of the 20th century

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5 Elleke Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature: Migrant Metaphors* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 96, 110–117, 126–130.

6 Samuel, *A Postcolonial Reading of Mark's Story of Jesus*, 32.

7 Homi K. Bhabha, "Cultural Diversity and Cultural Difference," in *The Postcolonial Studies Reader* (ed. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin; London: Routledge, 2003), 209.

8 Scholarship has affirmed the general tripartite division and the role of different hands in the final formation of the book. Isaiah 1-39, preserving many oracles from Isaiah himself, is considered as First Isaiah; chapters 40-55 stemming from the late exilic period are known as Second Isaiah and 56-66 composed in the postexilic period is Third Isaiah. Bernard Duhm, *Das Buch Jesaia* (5th ed. HKAT; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, [1892] 1968). See Marvin A. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39 with an Introduction to Prophetic Literature* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 41-42. Scholars have argued that numerous passages in First Isaiah have been expanded upon in later periods. See Jacob Stromberg, *An Introduction to the Study of Isaiah* (London: T & T Clark, 2011). Similarly, the composition of Isa 40-55 is also complex, and the text could be further divided into 40-48 and 49-55, as they seem to have different provenances. See Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer, *For the Comfort of Zion: The Geographical and Theological Location of Isaiah 40-55* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 130.

found it difficult to attribute any of the oracles to the eighth-century prophet and studies shifted more to the redactional setting of the book in the later post-exilic periods.[9] Recent scholarship, however, has attributed much of First Isaiah to the prophet Isaiah, which was subsequently expanded and redacted in the later periods. Williamson has demonstrated that many oracles of First Isaiah could be traced to the eighth-century prophet himself, which were expanded upon in the later periods.[10] Major portions of Isa 1-12; 28-31 and 36-39 have been attributed to the prophet Isaiah of Jerusalem, while chapters 13-23, 24-27 and 34-35 have been assigned to later periods.[11]

While assigning many of the oracles of First Isaiah to the prophet himself, Marvin A. Sweeney points out that, unlike the later editions of the book of Isaiah, there seems to be no evidence that a book form in the earliest eighth century period ever existed and used in a liturgical context.[12] From a redactional perspective, R. E. Clements and Sweeney have suggested multiple stages of composition for First Isaiah. They posit that many passages originated with Isaiah in the eighth century, but the text was expanded during the Josianic redaction in the seventh century, followed by further edits after the disaster of 587 in the latter half of the sixth century and in even later periods.[13] The

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9 One of the prominent redactional hypotheses came from Otto Kaiser who proposes a post-exilic date for the book; Otto Kaiser, *Isaiah 1-12: A Commentary* (OTL; London: SCM, 1983). For a discussion of the post-exilic dating of the text, see 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* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 6-7.

10 H. G. M. Williamson, "In Search of Pre-Exilic Isaiah," in *In Search of Pre-exilic Israel* (ed. John Day; London: T & T Clark, 2004), 181–206. Hays also argues that First Isaiah stems mainly from the Assyrian period. Christopher B. Hays, "The Book of Isaiah in Contemporary Research," *Religion Compass* 5/10 (2011): 554.

11 See Walter Brueggemann, *An Introduction to the Old Testament: The Canon and Christian Imagination* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 161–166. For Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39,* 59, however, the prophet's sayings are distributed widely through the chapters of 1-39. Arguing for an eighth and seventh-century Assyrian period for most of the oracles in First Isaiah, De Jong, as also Peter Machinist, claims that much of First Isaiah can be traced to Isaiah of the eighth century and its expansion in the seventh-century Josianic period because of numerous points of contact with the Assyrian background in the text. Peter Machinist, "Assyria and Its Image in the First Isaiah," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 103/4 (1983): 719–737. Aster also concedes an influence of the Assyrian period upon the textual data of First Isaiah. Shawn Zelig Aster, *Reflections of Empire in Isaiah 1-39: Responses to Assyrian Ideology* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2017), 22–23.

12 Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39,* 58–59.

13 R. E. Clements, *Isaiah 1-39* (The New Century Bible Commentary; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 7. Sweeney proposes four stages of composition. The first stage can be located in the original writing of the prophet in the eighth century BCE, the second,

important question, in Jacob Stromberg's view, is how the community in the post-exilic period was to read the First Isaiah, given its redaction during that time.[14]

In the light of the scholarly debates about the making of First Isaiah, Uwe Becker makes a valid point that a redactional analysis of Isaiah must take into consideration the whole book because the text is to be given more importance than the prophet himself and on account of the intertextual connections between First Isaiah and Second Isaiah.[15] Hence, delineating the original sayings of the prophet from the secondary sayings may not be much productive for studies of Isaiah. Instead focus needs to be directed toward the growth of the text and its intent. In recent times, more attention has been paid to the inherent unity of the book, following the "expansion hypothesis" contra the "unification hypothesis" propounded by the Duhm school.[16] Sweeney proposes multiple stages of redaction but conceives of a larger unity throughout the book.[17] Given the increasing consensus about the unity of the text, Ulrich Berges and W.E.M. Beuken have demonstrated a synchronous reading of the text, while placing the

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a late seventh-century redaction to support Josiah's reformation program, the third after the return from Babylon to promote the rebuilding of the temple and the fourth and final editing in connection with Ezra and Nehemiah's program of religious restoration in the mid or late fifth century BCE. Sweeney's argument is supported by the universal outlook of the book, characterised by the inclusion of nations under the Persian Empire. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39*, 51, 58–59. John Watts concedes that the final setting of the book is in the mid-fifth-century context of a fragmented community centred around a temple and without a king. He takes the final setting in the fifth century as definitive for his reading of the text. John D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 1-33* (Word Biblical Commentary 24; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 14, 27–29. Watts adopts a reader-centred approach to the text in his commentary.

14 Stromberg, *An Introduction to the Study of Isaiah*, 8, notes the redactional unity of the book, asserting that chapters 1–39 are intricately connected to chapters 40–66. He suggests that stages of editing in chapters 1–39 were influenced by chapters 40–66 and vice versa, with the development of chapters 40–66 shaped in light of chapters 1–39.

15 Uwe Becker, "The Book of Isaiah: Its Composition History," in *The Oxford Handbook of Isaiah* (ed. Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer; New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 51.

16 Christopher B. Hays, "The Book of Isaiah in Contemporary Research," *Religion Compass* 5/10 (2011):550. The expansion hypothesis propounds an expansion and growth of Isaiah's tradition in and through the book, while the unification hypothesis is about a later unification of the three parts to form one book. The unity and the inherent growth of the book of Isaiah have been recognised by many scholars. See R. E. Clements, "Beyond Tradition-History: Deutero Isaianic Development of First Isaiah's Themes," *JSOT* 31 (1985): 95–113. David Carr, "Reaching for Unity in Isaiah," *JSOT* 57 (1993): 61-80. Brueggemann has identified a canonical and social dynamic correlation in the book; Walter Brueggemann, "Unity and Dynamic in the Isaiah Tradition," *JSOT* 29 (1984): 89–107.

17 Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39*, 51.

text in its diachronic setting.[18] A synchronous reading of the final text, while attending to its diachronic development, would be a reasonable option to understand the text's message and its intent.

D ISAIANIC DISCOURSE AND ITS IMPERIAL EMBEDDING

The intent of the book of Isaiah, specifically Isa 1-39, cannot be fully grasped without attending to its imperial context, whether it be the Assyrian, the Babylonian or the Persian Empire. In Isa1-39, the Assyrian period assumes significance as the text points to the Assyrian threat and its propaganda. The expansionist agenda of the Assyrian Empire came into fruition with the coronation of Tiglath Pilesar III as King of Assyria in 744 BCE.[19] Throughout the centuries of Neo-Assyrian imperial rule, Assyrian propaganda and ideology—positioning Assur as the chief of the pantheon and the Assyrian king as the human representative of universal dominion—were effectively transmitted throughout the empire via various channels.[20] The findings of Peter Machinist about the Neo-Assyrian propaganda and its reflection in First Isaiah have been significant in understanding how the oracles in First Isaiah sought to deflect and rework the Assyrian propaganda prevailing in the eighth and seventh centuries.[21] Michal Chan notes that in many passages, an anti-Assyrian tone prevails. He points to Isa 10:5-6, 16-19 and 33-34, in which Assyrian royal propaganda is subverted to challenge the Assyrian king's claim to rule the world.[22]

What role does Assyria assume in the final editing of Isa 1-39? This question is intricately related to another question: What is the stance towards Persia in the book's overall final shape? The book of Isaiah's resistance and acrimony towards Assyria and Babylon are clear from the text of First Isaiah and Second Isaiah, respectively. However, its response towards the Persian Empire is more ambivalent and appears to be more pro-Persian.[23] Scholars like Jon

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[18] Berges and Beuken follow a synchronic reading that pays attention to the diachronic development of the text. Ulrich F. Berges, *The Book of Isaiah: Its Composition and Final Form* (trans. Millard C. Lind; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2012). Willem A. M. Beuken, *Isaiah 28-32* (Isaiah: Part II, Vol 2; Leuven: Peeters, 2000). Many of the oracles in Isa 1-39 can be narrowed down to the eighth or seventh-century Neo-Assyrian period. However, one should not lose sight of the fact that, as Berges, *The Book of Isaiah*, 16, rightly points out, the book as a whole looks back from some distance to the Assyrian and Babylonian period.

[19] Aster, *Reflection of Empire in Isaiah 1-39*,1.

[20] Aster, *Reflection of Empire in Isaiah 1-39*, 11–15.

[21] Peter Machinist, "Assyrian and Its Image in the First Isaiah," 734.

[22] Michael Chan, "Rhetorical Reversal and Usurpation: Isaiah 10:5–34 and the Use of Neo-Assyrian Royal Idiom in the Construction of an Anti-Assyrian Theology," *JBL* 128/4 (2009): 733.

[23] The pro-Persian stance of Second Isaiah and the Chronicler historian and the Persian support for temple building may seem to project a benevolent rule of the

Berquist have asserted a pro-Persian stance in the Second Isaianic text, which even hails Cyrus as Yahweh's anointed.[24] These proposals seem to be persuasive because of the positive image of Cyrus in Second Isaiah, but the second Isaianic discourse is to be recognised for its ambivalence because the affiliative posture towards Cyrus is a camouflaged and negotiatory discourse aimed at the restoration of Jerusalem.[25] In this strategic discourse, Cyrus is Yahweh's servant, while Yahweh is hailed as the supreme ruler asserting his supremacy through his self-assertions in the text.[26] Boehmer speaks about the "double vision of the colonized" even as the subjugated subjects from the periphery strike an affiliative-disruptive strategic discourse.[27] The subversive role and intent of the final shape of Isaiah in terms of its imperial background need to be given due attention in our exegesis of any text from Isa 1-39.

The narrative episode in Isa 36-39 is perhaps the most significant clue to the anti-imperial sentiment that shapes the whole book. Although the episode points to the Assyrian imperial desire, in its post-exilic setting it forms a counter-imperial discourse to the Persian Empire. Eidevall concedes that this episode, called the "701 paradigm," became the principal perspective that shaped the book, whereby Yahweh was projected as the guardian of Zion and Assyria became a cryptic reference for its successor empires.[28] The basic ideological feature that shaped the narrative was to highlight that "Mesopotamian imperialism represents a blasphemous denial of the power and authority of

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Persians over its colonies. However, as Louis C. Jonker observes, this was the empire's "carrot and stick" approach to impose their power and hierarchy on the subjugated population. Louis C. Jonker, *Defining All-Israel in Chronicles* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 116. Daniel Smith-Christopher points out that regardless of the difference in approach to governance, all empires are motivated by the desire to plunder their colonies. Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, *A Biblical Theology of Exile* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), 53, 54.

[24] Jon L. Berquist, *Judaism in Persia's Shadow: A Social and Historical Approach* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 1995), 30, 31. Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, xxviii, also posits that the final shape of the text serves as a call to its readers to accept the Persian rule as Yahweh's will to fulfil his purpose for Israel.

[25] See Leo G. Perdue and Warren Carter, *Israel and Empire: A Postcolonial History of Israel and Early Judaism* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015), 92–105. Göran Eidevall, *Prophecy and Propaganda: Images of Enemies in the Book of Isaiah* (Winnona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2009), 194.

[26] Tim Bulkeley, "Living in Empire: What Purpose Do Assertions of Divine Sovereignty Serve in Isaiah?" in *Isaiah and Imperial Context: The Book of Isaiah in the Time of Empire* (ed. Andrew T. Abernethy, Mark G. Brett, Tim Bulkeley and Tim Meadowcroft; Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2013), 81.

[27] Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature*, 110, 111. Cf. Jonker, *Defining All Israel in Chronicles*, 116.

[28] Eidevall, *Prophecy and Propaganda*, 189.

Yahweh over Judah and Jerusalem."[29] In the narrative's final shaping, it became a message about the downfall of Assyria, Babylon and Persia. The next section will analyse the Shoot Oracle harnessing the postcolonial concepts of Bhabha to understand the poem as a response to its imperial milieu.

E ANALYSING THE FIGURE OF THE "SHOOT" IN ISAIAH 11

The oracle forms part of a larger unit that begins from the woe oracles against Assyria in 10:5 and continues to the hymn of thanksgiving in 12:6. The unit of 10:5-12:6 starts with the judgment of Assyria (10:5-10:34), followed by the "Shoot Oracle" in 11:1-16 and concludes with the song of thanksgiving in 12:1-6. Chapter 11:1-16 can be considered a composite unit on a synchronous level, which can be further divided into two sub-units. The first sub-unit, verses 1-9, describes the sprouting of the shoot of Jesse and the consequent rule of peace. The second sub-unit, verses 11-16, announces the return of diaspora communities through an act of Yahweh, resembling the Exodus of Israel from Egypt. The formula "it will be on that day" in verse 10, repeated again in verse 11, serves to introduce the new segment in 11-16. Verse 10 forms a bridge between the two sections, portraying the "root of Jesse" as the rallying point of nations.

The oracle celebrates and announces the coming of an ideal ruler represented by the figure, the "shoot (חטר) of Jesse." What does the imagery of the "shoot" חטר signify? Does it depict an ideal ruler of Davidic descent? If it does, then what is the nature of this ruler or is it a metaphoric usage conveying something totally different and radical than the rule of the Davidic dynasty?

1 Identity of the Shoot and the Branch: Davidic Tradition Decentred and Hybridised

Isaiah 11:1 needs to be read synchronously in continuation with 10:33, 34, which depicts the "lopping off" of the branches of Assyrian power.[30] Furthermore, the clause-initial *weqatal* verb וְיָצָא in 11:1 connects with 10:33, 34 and its tree metaphor.[31] The tree metaphor is seen in 10:15-19, 33 and 34 and is about the judgment of Assyria, whereas in 11:1, it is about the promise and bright future for Israel. For the later post-exilic community, the fall of Assyria (perhaps as a cipher for Persia) and the subsequent sprouting of "shoot" must have been significant.

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[29] Roland E. Clements, *Jerusalem and the Nations: Studies in the Book of Isaiah* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2011), 81.

[30] Isaiah 11:1 forms a counterpoint to 10:33, 34. See Willem A. M. Beuken, "Emergence of the Shoot of Jesse: An Eschatological Event or a Now Event?" *Calvin Theological Journal* 39 (2004): 88.

[31] Beuken, "Emergence of the Shoot of Jesse," 89.

The announcement of the coming of the ideal ruler is brought about with a perfect consecutive *weqatal* (verb ויצא in v. 1) pointing towards a future expectation. The "shoot" represents a new outgrowth that comes out of the old, reduced and remaining "stump" גזע of Jesse. "Stump" is what remains after the cutting off of a tree and it represents the Davidic monarchy that has been cut off and reduced. Since the Davidic dynasty did not fulfil its responsibility, the reference to Jesse might be to downplay the dynastic rule.[32] This negative implication of the imagery seems apt for a post-exilic precarious state of the Davidic monarchy and forms the rationale for assigning the poem in the post-exilic times. However, on equal footage, it can imply the failure and dysfunction of the Davidic monarchy during the years of Ahaz or perhaps Hezekiah. However, the "stump" has a positive connotation in the overall poetic imagination and shows that as long as the "stump of Jesse" remains, there is hope. This positive sense is heightened in the backdrop of the lopping of the Assyrian power in 10:33, 34.

Sweeney sees the stump imagination as a part of Josianic redactional effort to promote Josianic reformation and Josiah as the promised ruler.[33] However, without a clear reference to the enigmatic figure of "shoot," we can only speculate about the shoot's identity. The imagery, set against the backdrop of the Davidic dynasty's failure and the cutting down of Assyrian power, points to hope in Yahweh's action of bringing fruit from the dead and broken stem of Jesse.

The identity of "shoot" is intricately related to that of the "branch נצר" in 1b. The branch נצר from his (Jesse's) root שׁרשׁ will bear fruit (1b). What does the image of the "branch" denote? The image of a new king as נצר may be associated with comparable usage of צמח "branch" in Jer 23:5, Zechariah 3:8 and 6:12 denoting a royal promise of Davidic rule and hence the title "branch" in 11:1 may reflect royal ideology."[34] In Isa 4:2, the phrase "the branch צמח of the Lord" is employed about the restoration of Jerusalem. In Isa 14:19, taking on a judgmental tone, נצר refers to the fall of the king of Babylon. In Isa 60:21, the

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[32] Beuken, "Emergence of the Shoot of Jesse," 95. See also Stephen T. Sumner, "The Genealogy and Theology of Isaiah 11:1," *Vetus Testamentum* 68/4 (2018): 643–659.

[33] Marvin A. Sweeney, "Jesse's New Shoot in Isaiah 11: A Josianic Reading of the Prophet Isaiah," in *A Gift of God in Due Season: Essays on Scripture and Community in Honor of James A Sanders* (JSOTSup 225; ed. Richard D. Weis and David M. Carr; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 116.

[34] S. Wagner, "נצר, *nsr*" in *Theological Dictionary of Old Testament*, vol IX (ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringreen and Hein-Josef Fabry; trans. David E. Green; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 550.

returning remnant of Israel is called the נצר of Yahweh's planting, denoting Yahweh's choice of Israel. Though the usage of the term "branch" is varied in Isaiah, in this royal poem (Isa 11), it must be a reference to a ruler from the line of David, who was to rule Israel in righteousness ushering in the Edenic life of bliss and tranquillity.

The democratisation of Davidic promise in the post-exilic setting is a significant aspect of our understanding of the "shoot" and the "branch." Scholars have argued that the shoot and the branch represent a collective figure denoting the post-exilic community of Judah.[35] However, Jacob Stromberg concedes that hope for a Davidic king was very much part of the expectations of at least some sections of the post-exilic communities and hence the text (Isa 11) looks forward to a future Davidic king rather than a post-exilic community.[36] The Davidic association of the "shoot of Jesse" is conceivable even in the post-exilic setting.

The "shoot of Jesse" is a reference to the Davidic motif and the text is couched in royal ideology, yet the "shoot" is never called a king, and the reference is made to Jesse and not to David. This ambivalence is perhaps because of the prophetic critique of Jerusalem's monarchy.[37] John N. Oswalt makes a sharp remark that a title such as "king" would be too tainted for this figure to bear.[38] Though the text envisages a Davidic rule, it is not harking a nationalistic hope in the Davidic dynasty. Rather, the figure of the shoot of Jesse is configured by the prophetic discourse as a self-expression of the colonised people of Israel. Boehmer writes about how the colonised writers harnessed their own religious and national myths and traditions, along with the literary styles and discourses of the colonisers, although in a hybridised way as a tactical means of self-

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[35] Clements argues that on account of the later democratisation of Davidic promise in the post-exile, 11:10, referring to "root of Jesse" instead of "shoot of Jesse" (v. 1), was inserted into the text by a redactor to interpret "shoot of Jesse" as a collective figure denoting the post-exilic community of Judah. Clements, *Isaiah 1-39*, 125. Cf. Berges, *The Book of Isaiah*, 115-116. Clements' views sound appealing, but falter because reference to a community is unlikely in Isa 11.

[36] Stromberg, therefore, argues that the post-exilic insertion of 11:10 was intended to connect the ingathering of nations in 11: 11-16 to the motif of Davidic promise in 11:1-9. Jacob Stromberg, "The 'Root of Jesse' in Isaiah 11:10: Postexilic Judah or Postexilic Davidic King?" *JBL* 127/4 (2008): 665–667.

[37] See Gerhard Von Rad, *Old Testament Theology, Vol. II: The Theology of Israel's Prophetic Traditions* (trans. D. M. G. Stalker; Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1970), 170-172. J. J. M. Robertz, "The Old Testament's Contribution to Messianic Expectation," in *The Messiah: Developments in Earliest Judaism and Christianity* (ed. James H. Charlesworth; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 45.

[38] John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1-39* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 245.

expression of the marginalised.[39] The prophetic oracle celebrates the Davidic tradition as a counter-discourse to the imperial discourse, while at the same time staying clear of its hegemonic nationalistic usage.

For Aster, the messianic king in Isa 11 is anti-Assyrian, as is highlighted by the portrayal of many differences in the ideal ruler from that of the Assyrian kings.[40] The Assyrians are portrayed as proud and as plunderers (10: 6, 13), but the ideal ruler is portrayed as one who rules in justice and righteousness and favouring the afflicted (11:4). Commenting on the verse, Delitzsch writes that "the axe is laid to the imperial powers, and it falls without hope, but in Israel, spring is returning."[41] The prophecy of the shoot functions as a prophecy directed against Assyrian imperialism when read in its literary context that begins from 10:5.[42] In the post-exilic settings, the presentation of the "shoot of Jesse" in undercutting the Assyrian imperial claims serves as a "hidden transcript" of resistance against the mighty Persian Empire.[43]

In contrast to the lopping of the tall trees in 10:33, 34, which represents the breaking of Assyrian power, the Davidic promises acquire a new vigour, as a new shoot is going to come forth from the stump of Jesse. In presenting the shoot as an ideal ruler, the prophetic imagination affiliates and mimics the imperial modes of rule, but disrupts, disavows and subverts its hegemonic and oppressive values. The Shoot Oracle mimics and at once disrupts the imperial discourse by ascribing a universal rule of the Lord much like the empire (11:9). The rule of Yahweh is brought about by the administration of righteousness and justice by the shoot of Jesse, unlike the imperial rule marked by motives of greed, plunder and oppression.

In light of the above discussion, it is clear that a Davidic association of the "shoot of Jesse" cannot be eschewed. However, the prophetic imagination of the "shoot of Jesse" is marked by hybridity because a one-to-one signification of the "shoot of Jesse" with that of the Davidic dynasty is not seen here. This blurring of a nationalistic association is significant in envisaging a new future

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39 Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature: Migrant Metaphors,* 96. Also, Samuel, *A Postcolonial Reading of Mark's Story of Jesus,* 32.

40 Aster, *Reflections of Empire in Isaiah 1-39*, 234.

41 Franz Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the prophecies of Isaiah*, Vol. I (Grand Rapid: Eerdmans, 1950), 283.

42 Hyun Chul Paul Kim, *Isaiah: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (Macon: Smyth and Helwys, 2016), 75.

43 James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985). In this work, Scott focuses on the hidden and less visible forms of resistance that happens in the everyday life of the peasants and the powerless. See also, James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*: *Hidden Transcripts* (London: Yale University Press, 1990). Hidden transcripts happen "offstage, where the subordinates may gather outside the intimidating gaze of power" and where 'a sharply dissonant political culture is possible" (see p. 18).

for Israel that stays clear from fault lines of the national discourse propagated by the Davidic household. At the same time, the prophetic imagination celebrates the "shoot of Jesse" as a narrative of self-expression that resists the imperial discourse. This hybrid imagination is evident in the poetic celebration of nature of the rule of the "shoot of Jesse" in the following verses (11:2-9).

2 Nature of the Ideal Age: A Mimetic-Disruptive Imagination

The Shoot Oracle is a poetic envisioning of a new thing—a new event—that is unexpected and unimaginable, but will, nonetheless, usher in the deep prophetic longing for a life of justice and peace (11:2–9). In 11:2–5, the prophet envisions an ideal ruler who would govern in a radically new kind of reign, driven by the charismatic powers of Yahweh and responsive to His will—unlike the Davidic monarchy, which had been a source of disappointment for the prophets.[44] The charismatic endowment by Yahweh would ultimately usher in the rule of Yahweh. Isaiah 11:2 specifies that the spirit of Yahweh will be the chief agency of the rule of the "shoot of Jesse." The enablement by Yahweh's spirit is reminiscent of Yahweh's direct rule with earthly rulers as vice-regents of Yahweh's rule.[45] This reduced role of the ruler, according to Wonsuk Ma, emphasises that the agency belongs to Yahweh. In his view, the more Yahweh's kingship is realised, the less royal nature is assigned to the ruler; a trend that continues in the post-exilic Isaianic period.[46] Greg Goswell views the transformation as totally dependent upon Yahweh, as the role of the Davidic ruler is limited. He observes that the omission of a Davidic ruler in the cosmic transformation described in Isa 65:17-25 and Amos 9:11-15 shows a much-reduced role of a Davidic figure in an action that is realised fully by divine action.[47]

The ideal ruler's attributes of divine wisdom and understanding (חָכְמָה וּבִינָה) (11:2), "fear of Yahweh" (יִרְאָה יְהוָה) (11:3) assume significance in light of the boasting of the Assyrian king in 10:13, "By the strength of my hand and by my wisdom I have done it. For I have understanding…"[48] The Assyrian king boasts of his strength to further his imperial agenda of plundering lands. In contrast, the ideal ruler, empowered by the Spirit, brings justice to the poor and the oppressed (v. 4), ultimately leading to the harmonious co-existence of all

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44 Marvin E. Tate, "King and Messiah in Isaiah of Jerusalem," *Review and Expositor* 65/4 (1968): 421.

45 Wonsuk Ma, *Until the Spirit Comes: The Spirit of God in the Book of Isaiah* (JSOTSup 271; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 39.

46 Ma, *Until the Spirit Comes*, 211.

47 Greg Goswell, "Messianic Expectation in Isaiah 11," 127, 131–132.

48 See Patricia K. Tull, *Isaiah 1-39* (Smith & Helwys Bible Commentary; Georgia: Smyth & Helwys, 2010), 228.

creatures (vv. 6–8). The prophetic imagination subverts the imperial hegemony and its mode of rule by adopting an affiliative and disruptive stance.

The prophetic poem envisions that the ideal ruler will execute righteous judgment for the cause of the poor דַּלִּים *(dalim)* and the afflicted of the earth לְעַנְוֵי אָרֶץ (*l*^{e}*'anwēy 'āreṣ*) (11:4). His judgment will be directed towards the wellbeing of the poor and the oppressed, as they are the ones who have been at the receiving end of all injustice. While the references to דל are quite common in Amos, Isaiah employs it precisely in 10:2 and 11:4. Isaiah 11:4 assumes importance when it is seen in resonance with 10:2, in which the prophet denounces the חֹקְקִים (*ḥōq*^{e}*qîm*), meaning "those who decree." In the light of 5:8, חֹקְקִים refers to those who make new decrees to control land and taxes while withholding justice for the *dalim*.[49] The "rod" of God's anger is Assyria in 10:5, 15 and 24, but in contrast, 11:4 portrays the righteous ruler possessing the "rod," which does not display a show of physical power but the power of speech, by which the ruler legislates in favour of the poor. This judgment, Patricia Tull observes, ends not only the oppression of the imperial power but also the Judean class hegemony described in 10:1-4.[50]

In 11:5, the prophet envisions that righteousness and faithfulness will be the prime characteristics of the ruler. He will not be dressed in military attire and will not be adorned with weapons of warfare; rather, righteousness and faithfulness will characterise him. The "shoot" will not rule by force but by divine inspiration and virtue.[51]

The paradisical Edenic condition of life described in verses 6-8 is a consequent condition of life brought about by Yahweh's action manifested through the "shoot of Jesse." The imagery of the wolf and the lamb, the leopard and the young goat and the calf and the young lion envisions a life in which the powerful and the powerless co-exist without fear of harm. The powerful preying upon the weak in 10:2-4 (plundering of orphans and widows), 10:13-14 (Assyria plundering the lands), 9:12 and 20:21 (Israel and nations against one another) is a resounding theme from chapter 9 but culminates in the powerful imagery of mutual co-existence in chapter 11.[52] The establishment of justice and peace associated with the rule of the "shoot of Jesse" is significant in the backdrop of the destructive military campaign and aggrandising propaganda of the Assyrian

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[49] H. J. Fabry, "דל *dal*," in *Theological Dictionary of Old Testament* (vol III; ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringreen and Hein-Josef Fabry; trans. John T. Willis, Geoffrey W. Bromiley and David E. Green; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 223-224.

[50] Tull, *Isaiah 1-39*, 230.

[51] Aster, *Reflections of Empire in Isaiah 1-39*, 234.

[52] See Tull, *Isaiah 1-39*, 231.

Empire.[53] Eidevall's work on the use of images for enemies in the book of Isaiah is enlightening in understanding the use of animal metaphors in the Shoot Oracle.[54] The use of animal metaphors in the oracle evokes images related to the Assyrian rulers, for instance, the lion metaphor was employed by the Assyrian rulers to convey their invincibility. Similarly, Eidevall shows how the serpent becomes an image of the Assyrians, in that the oppressive king in 14:29 is represented by a snake. In contrast to these imperial and terrifying use of animal imagery, Isaiah presents the animal imagery to envision a life of peace and harmony.

The imagination of an ideal life here destabilises the nationalistic imagination propelled by the house of David as also it thwarts the imperial order marked by greed, violence and power. The imagination is a third space of newness envisioned in Yahweh's justice—an imagination of destabilising and yet creative possibilities. Though the shoot imagery affiliates with the Davidic promise and mimics the imperial style of a universal rule (11:9), it destabilises both, offering a thoroughly hybrid and subversive envisioning.

It is significant, however, to note that Yahweh's sponsorship of the new event does not imply that humans have no role to play or should wait idly for its consummation. The whole oracle envisions a prophetic ideal of a just and peaceful society—a prophetic dream towards the realisation of which humanity must strive. This eschatological conception, as Clements rightly observes, is not a call for resignation to future destiny but rather an urgent call to work toward the ideal kingdom in the future.[55]

3 Zion Tradition Hybridised

The realm of the ideal life (11:9) is "my holy mountain," and it is undoubtedly the Zion/Jerusalem tradition that is impinged upon by the prophet (Ps 48:1, 2; Isa 2:1-4). The transformation, however, is not restricted to Zion, as the knowledge of Yahweh will encompass the entire earth. The phrase, דֵּעָה אֶת־יהוה (*dēʿāh ʾet-YHWH*), that is, "knowledge of Yahweh," implies a relationship and commitment to Yahweh and his ways, which makes possible the "fulfillment of his pleasure" in all.[56] Botterweck conceives דֵּעָה אֶת־יהוה as an all-inclusive gift given by Yahweh to his people for their salvation. He views verse 9b as a

[53] Beuken, "The Emergence of the Shoot of Jesse," 107.

[54] Eidevall, *Prophecy and Propaganda,* 26, 57.

[55] R. E. Clements, "The Wolf Shall Live with the Lamb: Reading Isaiah 11:6-9 Today," in *New Heaven and New Earth: Prophecy and the Millennium* (ed. P. J. Harland and C. T. R. Hayward; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 86.

[56] Watts, *Isaiah 1-33,* 211.

precondition that defines cosmic peace.[57] In verse 2, it is specified that the spirit-endowed "knowledge of Yahweh" will be an inherent quality of the "shoot of Jesse," ushering in the global presence of the knowledge of Yahweh (v. 9).

The invocation of Zion tradition is obvious here and it concerns YHWH's choice of Jerusalem as the city of God.[58] Zion is a unifying theme of the book, as it is set within the framework of 2:1-5 and 66:18-21, which portray Zion as the centre of the world and the rallying point of nations.[59] The Zion tradition has been closely linked to the Davidic dynastic promise, as the monarchy used Zion's election to legitimise and consolidate its rule. The Zion tradition, however, serves a theological function of declaring the exclusive rule of Yahweh. Ben C. Ollenburger asserts that Zion represents Yahweh's exclusive rule and emphasises justice and refuge for the poor.[60] The Zion/Jerusalem tradition in Israel's religion therefore has an ambivalent function because though it served the political function to hegemonise the Davidic dynasty, its theological function is important in the prophetic literature (pre-exilic prophets Isa 11:9; 28:16; Amos 1:2 and the exilic/post-exilic prophets Ezek 40-48; Isa 52:1-12; 54; 60-62; Zech 2).[61]

The positioning of Zion displays a hybridised usage of the Zion tradition because it is not a harking of nationalism but a space of self-assertion. This space counters the imperial power. Isaiah 11:9 imagines the ideal rule of Yahweh as centred on Zion, called "My holy mountain"—a rule founded on the knowledge of Yahweh that will encompass the whole earth. Imperial overtures toward Zion/Jerusalem will be thwarted, as Yahweh Himself will establish Zion. The reference to "My holy mountain" in Yahweh's speech echoes the language of a king, with Zion as Yahweh's exclusive territory, which then extends to the whole earth. The Assyrians had an elaborate mechanism for disseminating their royal ideology. However, Yahweh's authority was not exerted in an imperial style but

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57 Johannes G. Botterweck, "ידע yāḏa'," in *Theological Dictionary of Old Testament*, (vol. V; ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringreen; trans. David E. Green; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 479.

58 The word "Zion" has a polyphonic meaning in the Bible, as it points to the temple in Jerusalem, to the city of Jerusalem and, in a metaphorical sense, to the people of Israel. Jon D. Levenson, "Zion Tradition," in *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (vol. 6; ed. D. N. Freedman; Garden City: Doubleday, 1992), 1098-1102.

59 Eidevall, *Prophecy and Propaganda*, 187.

60 Ben C. Ollenburger, *Zion the City of the Great King* (JSOTSup 41; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1987), 16. For a discussion of the Zion tradition and its various nuances, see Jon D. Levenson, "Zion Tradition," in *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (vol. 6; ed. D. N. Freedman; New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1098-1102. J. J. M. Robertz, "The Davidic Origin of the Zion Tradition," *JBL* 92/3 (1973): 343.

61 For a discussion on the ambivalence and hybridity of Zion tradition, see Sam, "Jerusalem/Zion."

through the dissemination of His intimate knowledge and relationships.[62] The invocation of the Zion tradition and the image of the knowledge of Yahweh filling the universe affiliate with and mimic the imperial modes of rule but disrupt its logic. In the post-exilic setting, the establishment of Zion by Yahweh echoes the theme of Jerusalem becoming Yahweh's dwelling place and the centre of the universe (Isa 60-62; Zech 14:16-18). This narrative signifies a reversal of the destruction and humiliation inflicted upon Jerusalem and Judah by Babylon and Persia.

The exegetical study of the passage has brought out significant insights concerning the nature of the shoot and the ideal life imagined by the oracle. Since the oracle has eschatological and messianic connections, the following sections briefly discuss the oracle from eschatological and messianic angles.

4 The Ideal Life: An Eschatological Third Space

The ideal paradisical condition of life the prophet promises is eschatological, as an eschatological tradition and its elements are visible. The imagery of 11:6-8 reverberates again in the oracle of the creation of new heavens and a new earth in Isa 65:25. The eschatological envisioning by the prophet, however, is not an abstract and distant conception of the future. A historical and material embedding of the oracle is visible in the prophet's overall context of the 'shoot' oracle. It is set against the backdrop of the failure of monarchic rule, portrayed by the reduced and vestigial 'stock/stump of Jesse' in 11:1 and the imperial aggrandising manoeuvres described in 10:5-14. As Von Rad rightly concedes, eschatological conception in the Old Testament is to be understood in its actuality and its expectation of something soon to happen, a new action quite unlike the old saving actions.[63] The historical mooring of the eschatological imagination is important to understand the function of the oracle.

Reading eschatology in a spatial sense, Vitor Westhelle proposes a shift from a traditional longitudinal view of a far-off future to a latitudinal perspective of a nearby space.[64] Writing against the backdrop of the displaced people in Latin America, he says that in the Old Testament, the locations of marginality are the origin of eschatological expressions of "hope as well as unfathomable despair."[65] It is not about delaying hope but an urgency of acting in the present moment, the

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[62] Bradley J. Parker, "The Construction and Performance of Kingship in the Neo-Assyrian Empire," *Journal of Anthropological Research* 67/3 (2011): 359. See also Machinist, "Assyria and Its Image in the First Isaiah," 719-737.

[63] Von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, vol. II, 115–118.

[64] Vitor Westhelle, *Eschatology and Space: The Lost Dimension in Theology Past and Present* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 78–79. The longitudinal perspective takes eschatology to the distant future, while the latitudinal dimension understands the reign of God as nearby spaces for those who live in the eschaton or the margins.

[65] Westhelle, *Eschatology and Space*, 24.

"here and now."[66] In the spatial sense, eschatology is an experience immersed in daily affairs, a materiality for those at the margins. Such eschatological discourse is the "weapon of the weak" to subvert mighty empires and oppressive regimes.[67] This eschatology is not an abstract concept but a present reality, representing the envisioning of an end to all oppression for those on the margins, in the here and now.[68]

Engaging with Bhabha, eschatology takes on a third space imagination, a fluid space marked by hybridity and yet embedded in the daily experiences of those at the margins. Aligning it with Bhabha's thoughts, it is an "intervening space" where identities and cultures are made and remade in a continuous process of negotiation, it is reaching the beyond "to touch the future on its hither side."[69] It rejects the present order of life dictated by nationalism or imperialism. It imagines a wholly new world—a world in the making and on the way, a third space of impossible possibilities.

5 The Shoot Oracle and Its Messianic Overtones

The Shoot Oracle, while reflecting a messianic overtone from the later Jewish period, became increasingly associated with messianic expectations. This interpretation came to dominate later Jewish readings and influenced New Testament understandings or allusions to the text (Rom 15:12; Rev 5:5; 22:16).[70] The text was taken up as a messianic proof text in the period of the Dead Sea Scrolls (4Q285; 4Q161; 1QSB).[71] However, the Messianic affiliations of the

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66 Catherine Keller's counter-apocalyptic takes a similar approach as she defines apocalyptic theology as a "way of conceiving a sustainable, just and lovable future by living it already. There is no way there but here and now." Catherine Keller, *Apocalypse Now and Then: A Feminist Guide to the End of the World* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 30. For postcolonial eschatology, see Y. T. Vinayaraj, *Faith in the Age of Empire* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2020), 119–124.

67 The phrase is from the title of the book by James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985). Speaking about biblical apocalyptic discourse, Westhelle depicts apocalyptic discourse as the "tactics" of the colonised, which go undetected by the imperial powers. Vitor Westhelle, "Revelation 13: Between the Colonial and the Postcolonial, a Reading from Brazil," in *From Every People and Nation: The Book of Revelation in Intercultural Perspective*, edited by David Rhoads (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005),190. See also Vitor Westhelle, *After Heresy: Colonial Practices and Post-colonial Theologies* (Eugene: Cascade, 2010), 33-46.

68 Vinayaraj, *Faith in the Age of Empire*, 119–124.

69 Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 10.

70 For a discussion of the Messianic employment of Isa 11, see Hans Wildberger, *Isaiah 1-12* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 483–484.

71 John J. Collins, *The Scepter and the Star: Messianism in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 28. See also Collins, "'He Shall not Judge by

"Shoot of Jesse" have been debated in scholarly circles. The exegesis of the text undertaken in this article has shown that such a messianic significance, particularly as a prophetic reference to Jesus, is to take the scripture out of its context. However, as John Goldingay observes, many of the texts in Isaiah, though they cannot be deemed to have a deeper or fuller meaning, do have the potential for different contours and meanings when read in various contexts.[72] The oracle of the "shoot of Jesse" could be taken as a messianic reference and can be applied to Jesus in a secondary sense, as the shoot imagery can be taken to shed light on the life and ministry of Jesus. The thrust of the oracle, however, lies in envisioning an ideal rule of Yahweh in the immediate future. The fact that the prophet can imagine an alternative world is a matter of theological value and a testament to faith in Yahweh's ultimate will for justice and liberation.

E CONCLUSION

The 'shoot of Jesse' is celebrated as a counter-imperial, hybrid and subversive figure. This assertion is reasonable from a postcolonial deliberation of the Shoot Oracle undertaken in this article. The counter-imperial texture of the oracle is amplified by the chopping of the Assyrian Empire in 10:33, 34, followed by the sprouting of the "shoot" to usher in the rule of Yahweh. This counter-empire prophetic imagination resembles Fanon's combat or resistance literature very much.[73] The imagination of Isa 11, however, goes beyond the binaries of colonial and colonised to usher in the rule of a hybrid figure and a non-hegemonic order of life. The 'shoot' is a subversive, hybrid figure, which, while countering the imperial modes of the rule of the empires, also undercuts the hegemonic codes of the Davidic monarchy. It is worth noting that Isa 11, in countering imperial rule, is not a call to return to a mythical glorious past; rather, it disrupts the

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What His Eyes See': Messianic Authority in the Dead Sea Scrolls," *Dead Sea Discoveries* 2/2 (1995): 156; L. H. Schiffman, "Messianic Figures and Ideas in the Qumran Scroll," in *The Messiah: Developments in Early Judaism and Christianity* (ed. James H. Charlesworth; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 124.

[72] John Goldingay, *The Theology of the Book of Isaiah* (Illinois: IVP Academic, 2014), 36. The messianic significance of the passage has been noted by Marvin E. Tate. In his view, the text betrays an adequate model of Israelite kingships. See Tate, "King and Messiah in Isaiah of Jerusalem," 409–421.

[73] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, took part in the Algerian resistance movement against French colonialism. His writings speak of counter-colonial resistance and the development of national culture. Fanon's postcolonial articulation, however, positions the coloniser-colonised in a binary relationship, thereby perpetuating the modes of domination. A Fanon-styled combat-resistance reading of First Isaiah has been advocated by Christopher B. Hays, "Isaiah as Colonized Poet: His Rhetoric of Death in Conversation with African Postcolonial Writers," in *Isaiah and Imperial Context* (ed. Mark G. Brett, Tim Bulkeley, and Tim Meadowcroft; Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2013), 51–70. However, the larger narrative of First Isaiah seems to suggest a hybridised inclusive stance, a perspective that deconstructs the binary of colonial and the colonised.

national royal ideology associated with the Davidic dynasty. The envisioning of the 'shoot' and the ideal life in 11:6-8 is more attuned to Bhabha's hybridity model, as his postcolonial theories take postcolonial discourse beyond the counter and combat-resistance style. The "shoot from Jesse" radically imagines a ruler who is unlike the imperial or monarchical rulers.

The 'shoot' imagery needs to be understood in the context of envisioning the rule of Yahweh—the King who is supreme over all empires (v. 9). The prophetic imagination in mimicking the imperial power, however, ruptures the basic logic of the imperial and the native hegemonic order of life and imagines a radically new order of life marked by mutual co-existence and an order of life that is not hegemonic. This ambivalent imagination of what Bhabha calls "not quite, not white" subverts the imperial discourse with its logic of superiority and purity. [74] The new order of life is not about domination and hierarchy, but a total re-ordering of life based on the justice and righteousness of Yahweh. The imagination of the Shoot as a hybrid figure calls us to envision life in its fluidity and complexity, make space for inclusivity and reject hegemonic orders and values of life that are parochial, narrow and fundamentalist in outlook. The prophetic act of radical imagination is an act of resistance and counter-discourse. The prophetic imagination not only disavows the present world but also shows that an alternate world is possible.

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[74] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture,* 131.

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