



Crossing over; taking refuge: A contrapuntal reading

Author:Elaine M. Wainwright¹**Affiliations:**¹Department of Theology, University of Auckland, New Zealand²Department of New Testament Studies, Faculty of Theology, University of Pretoria, South Africa**Note:**

This article had its origins in a keynote address given to the 2012 conference of the Society for Asian Biblical Studies (SABS) held in Koto Kinabalu, Malaysia, 13–16 June. It is a privilege to be able to return to this paper and to rework it for this celebration volume of *HTS Theologiese Studies/Theological Studies*. Prof. Dr Elaine M. Wainwright participates in the research project 'Biblical Theology and Hermeneutics', directed by Prof. Dr Andries G. van Aarde, Honorary Professor of the Faculty of Theology at the University of Pretoria, South Africa.

Email:

em.wainwright@auckland.ac.nz

Postal address:

Private Bag 92019, Auckland, New Zealand

Dates:

Received: 08 May 2014

Accepted: 30 May 2014

Published: 20 Nov. 2014

How to cite this article:

Wainwright, E.A., 2014, 'Crossing over; taking refuge: A contrapuntal reading', *HTS Theologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 70(1), Art. #2720, 6 pages. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts.v70i1.2720>

Read online:

Scan this QR code with your smart phone or mobile device to read online.

In this article, I undertake a contrapuntal reading (a type of reading developed within post-colonial studies) engaging the Gospel of Matthew and the current global and local contexts of migration. The work demonstrates the mode and the significance of such readings and ways in which the approach could be brought to bear in a range of contemporary contexts and in relation to any number of current global and local issues.

Introduction

On 12 May 2012, Justice Groups around Australia were sharing the startling account of Ranjiri and her family, stunned by the severity of her treatment and alerted even more forcefully to the web of secrecy that surrounds the process of negative security assessment which can bedevil some refugees and asylum seekers to/in Australia for months and years. We do not hear Ranjiri's story in her own words; they have been silenced in the very process described here but we do hear it, in this instance, through the voice of another, Steve Cannane, a news journalist and current affairs reporter of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, commonly known as the ABC.

Cannane (2012) writes:

Sri Lankan woman Ranjini and her two young sons have been taken into Sydney's Villawood Detention Centre. They now face indefinite detention in Australia (after spending more than a year living in the community). They are unable to find out the reasons behind ASIO's decision and have been unable to appeal against it. They have been granted refugee status (earlier) and cannot be sent back to Sri Lanka ... When Ranjini got married last month (April 2012), things were looking up. The widowed mother of two had been granted refugee status, released from detention, and had fallen in love with a man who could help care for her sons. ... But yesterday Ranjini was called into an interview with immigration officials and asked to bring her sons. She took them out of their school in suburban Melbourne. They had no inkling they would be flown to Sydney and locked up. There were no goodbyes to friends and family (Ranjiri's husband is an Australian citizen), and no chance to pack a suitcase.

Just six days later an editor in *The Age* newspaper (2012) reflected on Ranjiri's story in light of:

The serious human-rights implications of a system that is beyond scrutiny on the grounds of national security. Ranjini is simply the latest asylum seeker – the 47th in ASIO's current caseload – to be caught in the web of secrecy.

This journalist acknowledged that ASIO (Australian Security Intelligence Organisation) has a role to play in the security of Australia's citizens, the most recently arrived to the most ancient of residents, its indigenous peoples. The critique, however, was based on the fact that there is no transparency as to the criteria for negative assessments placed on some refugee visas nor in relation to ASIO's time frame.

In 2014, as I return to this article in which I seek to bring selected Matthean narratives to rub up against, in a contrapuntal reading, contemporary Australian practices in relation to asylum seekers and refugees, I find that the situation is much more dire than in 2012. As I took up writing in early April, Villawood once more featured, linking 2014 to 2012. At the beginning of April 2014, the Department of Immigration and Border Protection planned to move more than 83 asylum seekers from Villawood in Sydney to Curtin situated in a remote location in the Kimberley region of Western Australia and Yongah Hill, 5 km from the town centre of Northam and 97 km north-east of Perth (Laughland 2014). Despite protests by legal representatives and members of the public, especially in light of a number of those being moved having a case against the government that was due to be heard just two days after the transfer, the transfer went ahead. Scott Morrison, the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection, claimed that the transfer was as a result of the need for renovations at Villawood.

Copyright: © 2014. The Authors. Licensee: AOSIS OpenJournals. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution License.



The incarceration of asylum seekers by the Australian Government, especially in remote locations and now offshore in Manus Island, Papua New Guinea and Nauru, a remote island in the Pacific, renders the fate of asylum seekers who travel by leaky boats to reach a place of asylum once again insecure. This was made most evident in the recent death of Iranian asylum seeker, Reza Berati, and the injury of 60 of the detainees at the Manus Island detention centre. Stories of beatings carried out by security guards and locals make it clear that the Australian Government is not protecting the lives of those seeking asylum on its shores. Indeed, they are placing their lives at greater risk than some of those they faced to make it to Australia.

These are but brief glimpses into a situation that many see as the violation of the human rights of thousands of asylum seekers. In this article, I use this situation in Australia which spills over into Oceania and Asia¹ as a prism through which we can look onto a sea of movements of peoples across our globe and more specifically in the region: millions of people 'on the move', people 'out of place', people migrating willingly, forced to by circumstances or trafficked into near slavery. Of the asylum seekers who come to Australian shores, each person's story is unique but so few of them are heard. They cry out, however, for our attention in our world today. In this article I want to bring stories and data of those crossing over and taking refuge within the Asian and Oceanic regions into dialogue with three chosen texts from the Gospel of Matthew in order to provide one small window onto ways in which biblical scholarship can have a voice in the contemporary ethical dialogue about migration in its multidimensional complexity.

Crossing over, taking refuge

This phrase, *crossing over, taking refuge*, already evokes people on the move, but also people on the move for a wide range of reasons and in a variety of modes. Such complexity is characteristic of migration generally in this our era and it is borne out by the movement of asylum seekers to Australian shores in large numbers and in the face of grave danger faced along the way. Maryanne Loughry draws attention to this complexity with her question 'Who else is in the boat or in the lorry?' the title chosen for a recent article (Loughry 2011). 'People on the move' may be economic migrants seeking new opportunities for their families but they may also be forced into immigration by political and social unrest in their countries of origin, by persecution and constant danger; they may be asylum seekers; they may be environmental refugees displaced by ecological disasters or they may be trafficked. Such movements of peoples whilst not new, migration being a perennial phenomenon, are now in proportions globally as never seen before; it was estimated that in 2010 there were 214 million refugees internationally, a number that is only expected to grow and would now be exceeded given the

1. As I write in early April, 2014, it is believed that the Australian Government is negotiating with Cambodia to 'dump' asylum seekers in that country which itself is still struggling to emerge from an era of internal genocide and massive displacements. See Whyte (2014).

Syrian refugees in Jordan and Lebanon as well as further afield (International Organization for Migration [IOM] 2010). Of these international refugees, 27.5 million or 13% are in Asia (IOM 2010). In the face of such figures, the number arriving by boat on Australian shores is small. This does not, however, lessen the urgency of the issues nor its interrogating of biblical scholars and their scholarship.

Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (2009) makes quite a radical claim in relation to the contrapuntal reading I am proposing in this article in the face of this urgent contemporary concern, namely that:

The word of G*d can only be heard as a Living Word by engaging creatively with this din of voices from very different political contexts, voices searching for freedom, equality, justice, and well-being in times of violence and empire. (pp. 3–4)

The theme of 'crossing over' or 'taking refuge' is not alien to the biblical narrative; indeed it lies at the very heart of Israel's sacred story. Their ancestors crossed over into Egypt, taking refuge from waves of famine in their own land and were well received by their host country. But, like many migrants, they were vulnerable to political and economic changes in their host nation and it was their ill treatment under a new Pharaoh that called forth the compassion of the One Who Is of Exodus 3:14:

Then God said, 'I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings, 8 and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the country of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. 9 The cry of the² Israelites has now come to me; I have also seen how the Egyptians oppress them. 10 So come, I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt'. (Ex 3:7–10)

But this text immediately gives us pause also because this land flowing with milk and honey that the Israelites are going to be given, according to their sacred story, is already a land which belongs to others; to the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites. The 'promised land' in all movements of migration is a land that is 'home' to another. The biblical narrative of originary migration whether of the Abrahamic or the Mosaic bands is dominated by gift and promise, elements which might well inform contemporary discussions of migration, but to ignore that the destination country is already inhabited by peoples who have a different story to those migrating is to do violence to the human community in its complexity. Such violence has characterised recent Australian history since 1788, with white settlers considering the continent *terra nullius* thus obscuring 40–60 thousand years of indigenous occupation of the land as the Israelite occupation obscured millennia of occupation of the land later to be known as Israel.

2. Edward Said (1994:36, 59) says of a contrapuntal reading that it allows a 'simultaneous awareness both of the metropolitan history that is narrated and of those other histories against which (and together with which) the dominating discourse acts' so that 'various themes play off one another, with only a provisional privilege'. In this study, it is not so much in histories as in readings of both texts and contemporary contexts that various themes play off one another.



The biblical text and the phenomenon of migration and seeking refuge function contrapuntally as migration, diaspora and the biblical text intersect in ways that will enhance our understanding of each other on one occasion and in ways that will sound forth discordantly on another such occasion. I have chosen the verb *anachōreō* and the thread it weaves in the Gospel of Matthew to provide the biblical texts and understandings that will function in the proposed contrapuntal reading. The verb carries many of the connotations that we have seen to characterise the ‘crossing over’ in our times. It can mean ‘to depart from a location ...; to withdraw, retire, take refuge; ... (and) to go back to an area from which one has departed (BAGD). It is a verb characterising movement, a verb that will be important for our contrapuntal engagement with migration and diaspora.

Matthew 2:13 begins with the word *anachōresantōn*, the aorist active participle of *anachōreō*. In its initial use in this verse, *anachōreō* links back to the narrative of the *magoi*, who have made a long journey from their homeland in search of a new birth, a new political era presaged by a star: they were ‘people on the move’, people in search of new possibilities. Their coming, however, alerted Herod, the incumbent political leader in Israel, to this new birth, to the potential for political and sociocultural change. The new comer/s by his, her or their coming will always open up the potential for change, indeed their very coming itself participates in this change. They can, however, also pose a threat and, alerted to this, the visitors from the East go back to the area from which they had departed by another route (see v. 12 which uses *anachōreō* to describe that departure).

The threat shifts then to the one who was the focus of their visit, Jesus and his parents. Like the *magoi*, they too are warned in a dream (one of the means of communication for those attentive to the divine), warned to flee from Herod. Verse 14 will use the same verb as used in verse 13 to describe the flight, namely *anachōreō*. This time, it is not a going back to the area from which one departed but rather taking refuge away from one’s homeland, from the place of one’s birth. The destination country for this new group of refugees is Egypt, a destination that carries powerful religious imagery, but this time they are political not environmental refugees as were their ancestors.

As the story continues, many questions rise up for those reading this biblical text through the lens of migration and diaspora. The images that artists provide and with which we are familiar, both European and Asian, depict a lone family en route, travel being a key characteristic of migration. The images tend to be stylised in a way that removes them and the narrative from the experience of migration. The family is alone in a way that is quite uncharacteristic of contemporary migration, especially of refugees. And when we read the story more closely, we find that Joseph is given divine warning of Herod’s wrath and his very fleeing with the child and his mother (to use the language of the text) sparks Herod’s wrath and results in his putting to death all the male children in

the region of Bethlehem up to two years old. Such rage can evoke for contemporary readers images of the murder of hundreds of children in contemporary Syria in the context of violent struggles for power that can echo the threat that Herod experiences according to the text.

Jesus is safe but what of the other children and their parents. Are they the next wave of refugee migration to Egypt at the turn into the 1st century CE? Do these refugees catch up with the Joseph family and if so, what type of exchange might have happened? Did this lead to the ongoing isolation of the Joseph family on arrival at their destination or did the families travel on and remain together on arrival? What type of political scene did they encounter in Egypt; does our intertextual reading with Exodus, suggest that initially it may have been a friendly reception (Ex 1:1–10). How many other Jewish refugees had gone before them as a result of Herod’s oppressive reign? And what was their experience during that time of diaspora living ‘until the death of Herod’ (Mt 2:15)? The narrative, with all eyes fixed on Jesus, does not allow us to find answers to these questions but our exploration, attentive to the experience of contemporary migrants, leads us to raise them.

A further intertext given us by the gospel writer does turn our attention to the deep pain of this migration. It is that evoked in Matthew 2:18 by the wailing and loud lamentation of Rachel. Jeremiah 31:15 associates her with the exile, the people leaving Jerusalem and heading north through Ramah as the Joseph family (and probably their Bethlehem friends and village people) headed south. Rachel refuses to be comforted as do the parents of the children of Herod’s massacre. The God of the Jeremiah poem (Jr 31:15–20) is moved with compassion, with womb compassion as evoked by the twice repeated Hebrew root *rhm* in verse 20. It is, however, a womb compassion that promises hope rather than explicit deliverance from all the exigencies of the present migration and the time in diaspora. This story is a difficult one for the migrant because only the chosen child is rescued. The others meet a cruel and untimely death. This single focus speaks back then to the text and its theme of ‘chosenness’ which can mask exclusion and injustice in relation to those not chosen.

As the Matthean text unfolds, return to one’s homeland for the political refugee does not necessarily mean freedom even though the reason for escape may have gone or changed and such was the case for the Joseph family. Archelaus, the son of Herod the Great inherited the tetrarchy of Judea at the death of his father in 4 BCE and demonstrated cruelty equal to that of his father. Judea was not, therefore, a safe place for the Joseph family to settle and hence Joseph ‘withdrew’ to the district of Galilee, a displaced family within their own land. The verb *anachōreō* occurs again carrying connotations of ‘taking refuge’ as well as ‘withdrawing’ as it is so often translated (Mt 2:22). Just what it would have meant for a village family from Bethlehem with its approximation to the political centre, Jerusalem, to move to another village, that

of Nazareth which may itself have been under the watchful eye of Judeans stationed in Sepphoris and populated by indigenous Galileans, is hard to imagine (see Sawicki 2000). The text in its simplicity and economy of language obscures the negotiation of difference and the experience of hybridity that, without a doubt, has to be negotiated by the many families for whom migration is long-term. That Jesus is recognised on his final journey to Jerusalem as 'the prophet Jesus from Nazareth of Galilee' (Mt 21:11) suggests, narratively, an erasure of Bethlehem and Judean origins, an erasure that many people 'on the move' know.

Anachōreō: A contrapuntal reading of migration and Diaspora continues

I have already begun a contrapuntal reading of the Matthean use of *anachōreō* of migration and of diaspora, listening to the different voices as the Matthean narrative resonates with contemporary stories and data. As we continue such a reading I want to track the use of *anachōreō* in the adult life of Jesus. Early in Matthew 3, Jesus is on the move, appearing at the Jordan where the prophet John is baptising (3:13). The Matthean account states specifically that Jesus came to be baptised by John, to be incorporated into his prophetic movement of preaching the *basileia* of the heavens as near at hand (3:2 – John's role and cf. 4:17 – Jesus' own preaching). Following John's arrest (by whom the Matthean reader is not told at this point), Jesus withdraws into Galilee (4:12), not, however, back to Nazareth where he could be perhaps more easily recognised as associated with John, but to the bustling lakeside town of Capernaum.

Later in the narrative, *anachōreō* will again characterise Jesus, this time following the death of John the Baptist at the hands of Herod Antipas, ruler of Galilee and Perea during the first four decades of the 1st century CE (Mt 14:1–12; and v. 13). Just where John was held in prison is not the concern of the narrative, nor is the location of the banquet at which the daughter of Herodias dances for Herod. What becomes evident to the contrapuntal reader is that Herod exercises power as it is granted him by Rome and hence Herod and his family represent the colonial power of Rome. They have taken on all the trappings of the Empire: its political power over anyone who might question their activities as John did, together with the economic resources representative and supportive of such power, visible in the buildings constructed in Tiberius, the place of Herod Antipas' seat of power. John, the political prisoner was expendable and so Jesus who shares John's proclamation becomes a political refugee in his own land, seeking to avoid a similar death. How many of today's asylum seekers are fleeing similarly oppressive political regimes in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Sri Lanka to name just three of the source countries of those who today 'withdraw' from there in a boat, echoing Matthew 14:13: *anechōrēsen en ploion*.

Jesus goes to a lonely place apart, whilst today the boats are full, the routes are dangerous, and often the asylum seekers

and refugees will be caught between governments and people smugglers as was evident from journalist, Natalie O'Brien's 9-month investigation into the sinking of a boat, the *Siev X*, with 105 Hazara Asylum seekers and three crew on board. It was bound for Christmas Island out of an undisclosed Indonesian port on 02 October, 2009 (O'Brien 2012). It seems that the voyage was being monitored by spies within the people-smuggling networks and the Australian Federal police days before the fatal journey 'going away from there in a boat' began and that the two groups knew the boat was in difficulty from the time that their taking on water commenced. They allowed four hours or more before beginning an emergency rescue process in order not to reveal the collaboration between the Australian Federal Police and their spies amongst the people smugglers in Indonesia by which time the boat seems to have sunk with all on board. Of one woman on board, Fatima nek Bakht, who had told her story to an Australian film-maker just before the voyage began, it was said that 'the Taliban killed her husband and five of her children, so she had sold everything she owned to get out of Afghanistan and onto a boat that would take her and her surviving boys to safety' (O'Brien 2012). One cannot but hear echoed in this story Jesus' challenge to the rich young man: sell what you possess ... and come follow (Mt 19:16–22), a costly journey that asylum seekers make in order to know life without daily danger to their very life itself.

Before turning to the next Matthean use of *anachōreō*, I want to explore another crossing over and coming to the other side. In Matthew 8:23 Jesus gets into a boat and crosses over to the other side, into territory that is not his own, in which he is a foreigner. Like the group that set off from the Indonesian coast on that fateful October day in 2009, Jesus and his companions in the boat encounter a storm at sea, a *seismos megas* that was 'swamping the boat with waves' (Mt 8:24) just as the terrified refugees on the *Siev X* were reporting to relatives and friends on their cell phones that they were being swamped by the waves of a terrifying storm on the sea. Once again Jesus (and in this instance, his companions also) are rescued as the 105 refugees were not.

This Matthean text is a challenging one, however, as we engage with it contrapuntally, faced as we are today with those crossing over our seas in unsafe boats and those fleeing ecological disasters as environmental refugees. Jesus asleep in the boat in the face of the *seismos megas* evokes intertextually the God who sleeps after the work of creation and to whom a cry for help goes up in time of need as one hears in Isaiah 51: 9–11: awake, awake, put on strength (Batto 1987). In the face of the economic, political, environmental and other factors that have led to the 27.2 million migrants in Asia, the cry of the disciples (save us we are perishing) may well be heard rising up metaphorically in that region. How do we as a global community respond to the call to save, to make safe, to enable and support? We have already seen that claims of divine intervention on behalf of particularly favoured individuals are problematic as are claims that ecological calamities giving rise to waves of displacement are divine



acts. Does that mean we are left with just a random universe or a universe out of control in which displacement becomes a norm? Such challenges have invited significant theological reflection and in this instance, I turn to Denis Edwards (2010) who describes God as:

[A]cting in a way that lovingly respects and accepts the limits of finite processes and entities. ... God waits upon, empowers, and enables the 3.7 billion-year history of life on Earth with modern human beings appearing only in the last 200,000 years... the God of creation is a God who loves to create through processes that involve emergence and increasing complexity and who is a God of immense patience. (p. 51)

In such a context, the Matthean gospel makes clear through the Jesus story that one can understand God as acting in ways that cannot be reduced to individual moments and that this does not mean an absence of a human ethic. Indeed, Jesus proclamation of the *basileia* of the heavens with its accompanying *dikaïosynē*/righteousness or justice (4:17; 5:6, 10, 20; 6:1, 33) makes clear the necessity of ethical engagement in the face of injustice.

We could follow Jesus and his disciples, those crossing over in the boat swamped by the *seismos megas*, into the country of Gadara, a country not their own in which they encounter two residents of that country who are called *daimonidzomenoi* or demon possessed ones. Here we would find that Jesus flees from the Pharisees who are seeking his life in 12:14–15 (another use of *anachōreō*) and who call him demon possessed (12:22–32). This process of demonisation, naming demonic, making demonic, is one that is ripe for exploration in relation to migration and diaspora, asylum seekers and refugees. The foray into this will, however need to be brief.

Walter Wink (1986), biblical scholar and activist, devoted much study to the processes of demonisation and he challenges readers to engage critically with it:

No intelligent person *wants* to believe in demons, but the utter failure of our optimistic views of progress to account for the escalating horrors of our time demands at least a fresh start at understanding the source and virulence of the evils that are submerging our age into night, leaving us filled with such a sense of helplessness to resist. (p. 41)

Two other significant theorists, namely René Girard and Frantz Fanon, have provided us with processes or paradigms that enable our engagement with what is characterised as the demonic. At the heart of Girard's theory is the 'scapegoat', the one who, though innocent, is assigned or burdened with the collective guilt of the group. The group then acts violently toward the scapegoat so that they can be left in peace and do not have to engage with their own pain. If we read Matthew 8:28–34 through the lens of Girard's scapegoating, the two demoniacs have been made to bear all the pain and guilt resulting from colonial oppression by the Romans. It raises the question for contemporary readers in the face of the huge waves of migration, who is made to bear the guilt of the nations who fail to welcome and to integrate the stranger, the one on the move. The demoniacs in Matthew are amongst the tombs, like the living dead, but they rail against their

fate. They are so fierce that no one can pass by. Australia's asylum seekers are also 'outside the city', in Curtin, Yongah Hill, Manus Island and Nauru. Should we wonder when frustration breaks out as it did recently on Manus Island?

This challenges us in each of our contexts, and especially in those countries that are predominantly receiving countries for today's migrants, to be very attentive to how we scapegoat the migrating ones as a group or individuals from amongst them in order to displace our lack of hospitality and welcome as a community. The narrative of the Geresene demoniacs can challenge us to look closely at how society scapegoats the migrant making him or her 'other', 'outsider', bearer of our guilt or lack of hospitality.

Fanon offers another perspective on demonic possession, namely that in situations of oppression or colonisation, such as existed for the indigenous of the region of Gadara, a person can take on what might be seen as a 'mental illness' in our day in order to avoid blaming the oppressor, in this instance, Rome. I am reminded here of the plight of asylum seekers on Christmas Island, and in centres like Villawood. Their cutting of themselves, setting fire to facilities, threatening to jump from roofs and other such actions are portrayed by the Australian Government, supported by the media, as a type of demon possession and thus not needing the attention of the government. If these refugees were released into the community as activists are proposing, the demon refugees would be demystified and the Australian Government would be shown up in all its lack of hospitality as is Rome when those named and seen as possessed are released of their demons. Both Wink and Michael Willett Newheart in his book *'My name is Legion': The story and soul of the Gerasene demoniac*, both of whom draw on Girard and Fanon, provide us with guidance toward significant reflection on the crossing over of migrants into a diaspora which is both subtly and explicitly oppressive of them.

We turn now to the last significant use of *anachōreō* in relation to Jesus, namely Matthew 15:21. Jesus goes away from 'there' which is identified in 14:34 as Genesaret and goes into or to the borders of the region of Tyre and Sidon (eis in this text meaning either 'to' or 'into'). This withdrawal of Jesus follows again on a confronting encounter with the Pharisees but the text does not highlight the nature of the conflict. That the woman named in verse 22 comes out from the region seems to indicate that this is a borderland encounter. She is named as 'Canaanite' in the Matthean narrative, reminiscent of those who were displaced centuries prior by the migrating Israelites as noted earlier when considering the Exodus migration that shaped Israel's religious imagination.

One aspect of this story that emerges as significant in our contrapuntal reading is the designation of the woman as Canaanite and yet her greeting Jesus with the title 'son of David' (v. 22). In dialogue with a recent study of Mark Nanos, I will explore this anomaly attentive to migration, especially long-term migration. Nanos (2009) suggests that the use of the title may indicate:



[R]espect for Judahide dynastic aspirations in a way that Canaanites, and arguably, some Israelites of the Northern tribes since the days of the divided kingdom, would be stereotypically expected to deny. (p. 46)

He draws attention to the movements of peoples within the region that goes back centuries and the nuanced way in which these peoples and their traditions have intertwined. Nanos carefully identifies Jesus' statement in verse 24 with its reference to the house of Israel as not setting up a Jew/Gentile dichotomy but identifying his ministry as one focused on the northern tribal region and its descendants. Traditionally, they had been deported by the Assyrians or intermixed with others in the region (hence the designation Canaanite). This woman belongs, therefore to a long line of intersecting traditions and ethnicities with Nanos suggesting that she may be a descendent of the Northern tribes who were deported, intermarried or were amongst others sent to repopulate the region.

She stands in this story with those millions identified as migrants who bring to any region, and especially over time, rich blends of cultures. They shape a diaspora which Smadar Lavie and Ted Swedenburg (1996:14 identify as a 'hodgepodge of everyday 'out-of-country ... even out-of-language' experience ...' What this story draws to our attention is not just the immediate experience of migration and its creation of diaspora but the long-term where '[b] orderzones' become 'sites of creative cultural creolisation, places where crisscrossed identities are forged out of the debris of corroded, formerly (would be) homogenous identities' (p.15), and this over a long period of time. Jesus further challenges the woman's status as insider despite her belonging to the long line of mixed members of the house of Israel with his statement about throwing the children's food to the dogs (v. 26), a counterpoint suggesting that the 'insiders' can marginalise those who are not pure 'insiders' for a long period of time. This verse and this attitude of Jesus need to be engaged with critically as does the designation of 'Canaanite' that can also function to make her a despised outsider.

She cries out to Jesus on behalf of her daughter who is said to be demon-possessed. There is no indication in the story that she has her daughter with her and so as I read the text contrapuntally and in today's context, I hear in her cry for her daughter that of many mothers, many fathers, many families around our world today who are separated by migration or asylum seeking. They are possessed by the evil that forced them to migrate or that denies them welcome in a host country. That this story concerns two females, mother and daughter, draws attention to the gendering within migration and asylum seeking, an aspect which I have not addressed explicitly here and which could be the focus of another article.

Conclusion

It is correct that today's world can be described as 'People on the Move'. This article has demonstrated, however, that this is not a new phenomenon but that the numbers have grown phenomenally. Bringing today's movements of people into a contrapuntal reading of the biblical text, especially the Matthean use of the verb *anachōreō*, can provide another way of inviting us today as a global people to engage ethically with migration and with the lives of all those who are in the lorry or in the boat.

Acknowledgements

Competing interests

The author declares that she has no financial or personal relationship(s) that may have inappropriately influenced her in writing this article.

References

- Batto, B., 1987, 'When God sleeps', *Bible Review* 111(4), 16–23.
- Bauer, W., Arndt, W.F., Gingrich, F.W. & Danker, F., 2001, *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and early Christian literature*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, viewed in *Accordance Bible Software 9.5.2*, Oak Tree Software, 2011 (abbreviated as BAGD).
- Cannane, S., 2012, 'Family shattered by negative ASIO assessment', *ABC News*, 12 May, viewed 28 May 2012, from <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2012-05-12/refugee-story-lateline/4007202>
- 'Editorial: Detainees deserve natural justice on ASIO', *The Age*, 18 May, 2012, viewed 28 May 2012, from <http://www.theage.com.au/opinion/editorial/detainees-deserve-natural-justice-on-asio-20120517-1ytgm.html>
- Edwards, D., 2010, *How God acts: Creation, redemption and special divine action*, Australian Theological Foundation, Hindmarsh.
- International Organization for Migration (IOM), 2010, *World migration report 2010: Building capacities for change*, IOM, Geneva, viewed 15 May 2012 from http://publications.iom.int/bookstore/index.php?main_page=product_info&products_id=653
- Laughland, O., 2014, 'Asylum seekers fail in legal bid to stop transfer to Western Australia', *The Guardian*, 02 April, viewed 14 April 2014, from <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/apr/02/asylum-seekers-fail-prevent-transfer>
- Lavie, S. & Swedenburg, T., 1996, 'Introduction: displacement, diaspora, and geographies of identity', in S. Lavie & T. Swedenburg (eds.), pp. 3–26, *Displacement, diaspora, and geographies of identity*, Duke University Press, Durham.
- Loughry, M., 2011, 'Who else is in the boat or in the lorry? Mixed flows: Trafficking and forced migration', in H. Haker, L. Sowie Cahill & E. Wainwright (eds.), *Human trafficking*, pp. 24–34, Concillium 2011/3, SCM, London.
- Nanos, M.D., 2009, 'Paul's reversal of Jews calling Gentiles 'dogs' (Philippians 3:2): 1600 years of an ideological tale wagging an exegetical dog?' *Biblical Interpretation* 17, 448–482. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/156851508X329692>
- Newheart, M.W., 2004, *'My name is Legion': The story and soul of the Gerasene demoniac*, Liturgical Press, Collegeville.
- O'Brien, N., 2012, 'As 108 drowned, they cried: "Pray for us"', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 03 June, viewed 04 June 2012 from <http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/as-108-drowned-they-cried-pray-for-us-20120602-1zoix.html>
- Said, E., 1994, *Culture and imperialism*, Vintage, London.
- Sawicki, M. 2000, *Crossing Galilee: Architectures of contact in the occupied land of Jesus*, Trinity Press, Harrisburgh.
- Schüssler Fiorenza, E., 2009, *Democratizing Biblical studies: Toward an emancipatory education space*, Westminster John Knox, Louisville.
- Whyte, S., 2014, 'Internal opposition to resettling asylum seekers in Cambodia', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 04 April, viewed 14 April 2014, from <http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/internal-opposition-to-resettling-asylum-seekers-in-cambodia-20140404-zqzss.html>
- Wink, W., 1986, *Unmasking the powers: The invisible forces that determine human existence*, Fortress, Philadelphia.