

When one of *them* is in our place: Early childhood settings as spaces of resistance

Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood

1–10

© The Author(s) 2016

Reprints and permissions:

sagepub.co.uk/journalsPermissions.nav

DOI: 10.1177/1463949116647289

cie.sagepub.com

**Sonja Arndt**

University of Waikato, New Zealand

Abstract

When *they* come to *us* in *our* place, what happens, for *them* and for *us*? This article investigates conceptions of Otherness through the story of an immigrant early childhood teacher, seen as the stranger, foreigner, who comes to *our* place, our early childhood setting. It provokes and challenges orientations, towards teacher-foreigners in a teaching team, towards difference and towards considerations of *our* place, as culturally drenched in local knowledges, values and practices, as relationally complex and as a possible site of resistance. This article disturbs and complicates dominant constructions of the Other by positing teacher-subjects through a Kristevan lens as dynamic and constantly evolving. Tracings of Kristeva's philosophical influences and treatments of Otherness help to present entangled historicised, contemporary and future insights into the recognition and marginalisation of teacher-foreigners. Finally, the teacher's story becomes further challenged with Kristeva's suggestion that each one of us is a foreigner inside, Other to ourselves, when *they* come to *us*, in *our* place.

Keywords

Foreigner, genealogical tracings, immigrant teacher, inner stranger, Kristeva, philosophy of the Other

Prelude

The immigrant teacher's story woven through this article draws on the collective experiences and stories of a group of immigrant student teachers, who were my students, and who migrated to Aotearoa New Zealand to teach in local early childhood settings. With this article, I honour their experiences and thank them for their stories, of being the Other, in our place.

Introduction

When *they* come to *our* place, what does that mean? Who are *they* and who are *we*? In this article, *they* refers to immigrant early childhood teachers who have come from elsewhere to our early

Corresponding author:

Sonja Arndt, Department of Professional Studies in Education, Faculty of Education, University of Waikato, Private Bag 3105, Hamilton 3240, New Zealand.

Email: s.arndt@waikato.ac.nz

childhood settings. *We* refers to those of us who consider ourselves to be the locals – teachers in local early childhood settings. The article investigates self/Other constructions through the story of a metaphorical immigrant early childhood teacher who comes to *our* place. The aim of the article is to provoke and challenge orientations towards difference, and to *our* place, this immigrant teacher's new setting, culturally drenched in local knowledges, values and practices, and a possible site of resistance. Julia Kristeva's (1991) philosophical notion of the foreigner offers a critical lens through which I explore questions of Otherness, alongside tracings of her conceptions of the Other in Hegelian, Marxist, existentialist and psychoanalytic perspectives. These tracings inform the analysis, while the teacher's story grounds it in the landscape of early childhood place-based materialities and meanings (Anderson, 2010).

The philosophical treatments of Otherness drawn on in this story attempt to elevate useful threads and connections. I do not attempt a comprehensive explication of them, nor of Kristeva's complex and polyphonic positions towards foreigners. Rather, these perspectives serve as analytical tools to enhance our (forever) incomplete insights and contributions to the discourses of foreignness and the Other within early childhood settings. The teacher's story culminates in a final twist in Kristeva's (1991: 1) assertion that '[s]trangely, the foreigner lives within us', and that it is only by 'recognizing him within ourselves' that 'we are spared detesting him in himself'. My argument in this article follows Kristeva's notion that, as subjects, we are constantly in construction, and that we are all foreigners within.

While there are many variations of the collective narrative of my student teachers' stories, this version recalls how, as an experienced early childhood teacher, one of them left her homeland for a new and better place, to become the teacher she had always wanted to be. Uprooting her life, family and familiarity, she travelled to this new and promising country on her teaching adventure. Very quickly, being the Other became difficult, in the different social, policy, linguistic and cultural environment, and a great uncertainty and discomfort – Kristeva (1991: 6) calls it a harrowing 'demented whirl' – gripped her, as multiple cultures and lifestyles came together (Lewin et al., 2011; Rhedding-Jones, 2001). Burning with both happiness and despair, at once elated and depressed, in certain circumstances she notices still now that orientations towards her as the Other create resentment sometimes, and anxiety (Ansley, 2010; Kristeva, 1991; Rivalland and Nuttal, 2010). Still now, she oscillates between norms and codes of behaviour, between her tightly held teaching beliefs that are continually challenged, and an exhilaration of tearing away to this new 'promised infinite' (Kristeva, 1991: 4), her new position in our early childhood centre. The fragile acceptance/rejection tightrope of normalised practices and expectations (Biesta, 2010) and the levelling (Kristeva, 1991) of superficial celebrations of her 'rich', 'colourful' culture create a state of both suffering and sometimes also pleasure. Unprepared to let go of her beliefs, she carries her wounds in secret, unknown even to herself, all the while maintaining a certain inaccessibility as she strives towards understanding her new realities. Privately she is also ready to flee, fearing deep down that the elusive Utopia of her dream job does not exist. She works hard to create her niche, through an unsettling perfectionism, trying to 'do it right', but unsure for whom. Her ideals for children are so very different from the local teachers' ideals.

The immigrant teacher's foreignness, seen through a Kristevan lens, is fluid. The foreigner 'touches it, brushes by it, without giving it a permanent structure' (Kristeva, 1991: 3), riding its highs and lows, deeply affected by it but never resting in one reality. This view recognises the teacher's swings between binary oppositions, highs and lows, arrogance and sensitivity, hope and cynicism, never remaining one or the other and, seemingly, never resting in-between. I argue here that her presence is a cause for resistance, to easy, rich and beautiful answers, by recognising that we all create, live in and perpetuate the dominant norms in our teaching teams (Tesar, 2014). To

urge such resistance, I suggest that we, actors or place-makers, who author our place, should more openly co-author a sense of place (Anderson, 2010), so that it is relevant to all, Others/selves and team members, in early childhood settings. To support this suggestion, I now borrow some insights from tracings of Kristeva's philosophical influences to provoke further thought through the foreigner teacher's story. I begin with some insights from Hegel.

Hegelian knowing

Hegel offers two key insights into conceptualising the teacher as Other. First, he sees the Other as knowable and, second, his model of dialectics proposes a mode of enquiry into apparently contradictory concepts, to help achieve greater knowledge. Knowledge and thought, in this view, are an act or a behaviour (Findlay, 1977), and conscious thought is reinforced as the way to acquire knowledge of a subject through different levels of awareness. Apart from suggesting active thought as instrumental in acquiring knowledge, the possibility of knowing an Other is notable, as it renders the Other in our early childhood environment as knowable. According to Hegel (1952: 53), knowledge 'exists *for us*', is self-active, and we can become conscious of knowledge as a 'moment of knowledge; ... the moment of truth'. Knowledge, then, becomes internalised only once consciously acquired, and this becoming consciousness is the truth moment. Through Kristeva (1991: 8), the foreigner teacher, persisting in her 'secret working-out ... neutral wisdom', might be seen as experiencing Hegelian moments of truth, as she makes sense of her discomforts and challenges. Kristeva (1991: 8) sees a foreigner's 'multiplying masks and "false selves" where [s]he is never completely true nor completely false' as a protection. The immigrant teacher relies on such layers to hide her inner truth moments and her different levels of consciousness, knowledges and truths in her new setting.

Importantly, for the teaching team in an early childhood setting, Hegel suggests that perceiving an Other depends on the mind (Dosse, 1997). In the mind, it progresses from a 'sense certainty', where we confront an object/subject but take little notice, to a 'perception', where we might begin to distinguish properties and qualities in an immediate way but not be able to integrate them into our greater understanding of the object/subject, on to an 'understanding', where we recognise an object/subject as important to our mutual relationships (Findlay, 1977). Such a developing consciousness of the Other increasingly situates the immigrant teacher within the context of our early childhood environment in a conscious shift beyond the surface-level 'loveliness of diversity'. Recognising our conscious knowing in a Hegelian act of 'truth finding' implicates us as teachers and team members in confronting orientations in our mind. For Hegel, then, the Other is knowable, relatively static, but also dialectical.

Hegel's dialectical view of concepts that are inherently contradictory, each within itself and amongst themselves, helps us to recognise the foreigner teacher's binary shifts. The fundamental dialectic of self and Other arises from this model (Peters, 2012), as does that of master and slave (Mairet, 1948), a reciprocally productive servitude of the other where the master gains status while the slave gains opportunities. This dialectic helps us to see the foreigner teacher as simultaneously privileged and subjugated – the 'exotic' bringer of 'richness' to the curriculum, she nevertheless remains in the margins, relegated to abiding by entrenched dominant practices and norms. The immigrant foreigner teacher's subjugation indicates that, contrary to Kristeva's (1991: 19) suggestion that this dialectic has 'been abolished', our politicised and cultured early childhood settings do marginalise difference. Subjugation and privilege are concerns that Marx views through the idea of dominant ideologies. A follower of Hegel, Marx elaborates the master–slave dialectic through the dominant ideology and its Othering of workers, repositioning the teacher Other's alienation in a context that eerily mirrors the contemporary educational landscape.

Marxist ideological influences

For Marx, alienation is caused by the dominant ideology, which he sees as both driving and oppressing the population, and marginalising those who fall outside of it. He believed that workers are ‘alienated through labour’, a concept that reinforces the call for early childhood settings to become spaces of resistance. First referred to as ‘estranged labour’, the concept focuses on the alienating effects of a capitalist ideology (Marx, 1844), which causes an ‘abstract hostility between sense and spirit’, and where alienation is ‘produced through man’s own labour’ (Bottomore and Marx, 1963: 175). Workers, Marx claims, suffer from the ills of capitalism through alienation, for example, from the product they create, from the satisfaction of productive activity, or from their work becoming a blind activity, when it is disconnected from their human rhythms. Alienation further occurs when the focus on monetary relationships and exchange, rather than the ‘satisfaction of mutual need’ (Wolff, 2011), alienates them from other human beings. These are insightful premonitions in the face of contemporary neo-liberal, economically and outcomes-driven early childhood ideologies (Duhn, 2010; Farquhar and Gibbons, 2010; Peters, 2013), which place us all in danger of a mutual, collective process of alienation from our work, from our human rhythms and from the other teachers in our settings.

The foreigner teacher in this story works hard to prove herself, motivated by her own as well as national and international early childhood policy expectations – and shortcomings (May, 2014; UNICEF, 2008). She at once craves and rejects community relationships – experiences which could lead to both cynicism and a longing for connections, as Kristeva (1991) suggests. This teacher may find solace, then, in the Marxist idea that what is essential is ‘true’, genuine community (Wolff, 2011), which arises organically within a group of people – us, for example, as fellow teachers. Placing one’s faith in external forces such as religion, God or the state, according to Marx, shows a loss of faith, and strength, in the self. Alienating the self from one’s own convictions in such an ‘unnatural separation of parts that belong together’ (McQueen and McQueen, 2010: 130) is seen as a result of capitalist ideology, where employers are forced to exploit workers, the cogs in their machine, and workers have no other option than to comply (Marx and Engels, 1992; Wolff, 2011). It is not only the immigrant teacher who extenuates her own alienation, in this view, subverting but perhaps simultaneously seeking to dominate the local early childhood ideology through her inner strength and faith in herself, but, it seems, all teachers in our settings are implicated. Similarly to what has been called the contemporary ‘liquid modern’ educational climate (Bauman, 2009), punctuated by instability and short-term commitments, Marx’s sentiments towards the Othering of the self from the self situate the immigrant teacher in a certain double bind – between the ideologies of her previous realities and those of her new place. Split between her home, the place where ‘no one questions your right to be ... that marks you as non-alien’ (Silva, 2009: 694), and the local early childhood milieu, she struggles in a chaotic balancing act to find her place. Nietzsche and other existential thinkers elevate the importance of dominant ideologies, and especially of resisting them, through a focus on authenticity and breaking away from the crowd.

Existentialist influences

Spirit-breaking Grenzsituationen

Existentialist philosophical thought arises from what Jaspers called *Grenzsituationen*, or extreme ‘border experiences’ (Kaufmann, 1973). For the foreigner early childhood teacher, such experiences seem to play out through a Kristevan (1991) foreigner lens, which moves existential influences and their focus on authenticity and on existing outside of theoretical or ideological rules (Wartenberg, 2008) further towards what we will see shortly as the absurdity of life, through

Camus. First, Nietzsche offers some useful insights. For example, he challenges the very foundations of good and evil, and of living within a godly imperative. Further, he holds that what is commonly considered to be morally wrong may actually be more good than that which is commonly seen as good (Kaufmann, 1973). In other words, foreign ways of life that are often marginalised, considered to be not 'good' or 'moral' but 'bad', 'wrong' or 'immoral', may not even be so 'bad', and the foreigner may not be the 'enemy', who, in 'primitive' societies, had to 'be destroyed' (Kristeva, 1991: 2). Instead, for the teacher in our story, striving to believe in an existential, self-reliant, authentic and creative, unstifled life and society drives her own strength in negotiating the *Grenzsituationen* in familiarising herself with her new early childhood place. As a subject forever in process, Nietzsche's (1996: 3) proclamation that 'we remain unknown to ourselves' renders her truth/knowledge as always contingent and, as for Kristeva, in construction.

Nietzsche's *Übermensch*

Nietzsche (2005: 9) implores the populace to aspire to greatness, to 'something beyond themselves', through the teachings of 'the *Übermensch*'. Since, according to Nietzsche, God is dead, he urges self-reliance (Higgins and Solomon, 2005), and the notion of the *Übermensch* epitomises a heightened way of being in and beyond the common human condition. It justifies humanness by the exceptional, by greatness, nobility, pride and victory, which Nietzsche upholds in place of such Christian virtues of humility, meekness, poverty and altruism (Higgins and Solomon, 2005). For the immigrant teacher, the belief in multiple hierarchies and dualisms, Hegelian-like dialectics, moralities of the powerful and noble, and of the plebeian, slave, poor and weak, rather than *one* human condition (Nietzsche, 2005), highlights and recognises the tensions arising in her complicated border crossings (Anderson, 2010). On the one hand, she may strive for the *Übermensch*, rising above mediocre, homogenous sameness and unspectacularity (Higgins and Solomon, 2005). Equally, however, she may relegate herself alongside those who are marginalised like her, in the place-defining cultural ordering of the early childhood place.

We could say that chaos reigns for the immigrant teacher, in her negotiation of linguistic, spiritual and pedagogical tensions, complicating what she previously believed of her new milieu. Through the notion of the *Übermensch*, Nietzsche (2005) promotes chaos and warns of losing it. Along with Hegel, he banishes other-worldly hopes, dreams and desires so that all that matters is one's current reality: one should 'remain true to the earth' (Nietzsche, 2005: 10), grounded and unspiritual. Human beingness in light of this death of God calls for a nihilistic reconsideration of altruistic and egalitarian values: pity and self-sacrifice, Nietzsche claims, are driven by a desire for power, rather than the benefit of weak, vulnerable 'victims'. Good and evil follow a desire to 'express and enhance one's vitality and to control one's circumstances' (Higgins and Solomon, 2005: xxiii). Doubting her very sense of herself in the chaos of nihilistic reconsiderations of her own 'goodness', in her confrontations and struggles with the depths and elations of conscience and guilt, obligations and duties, and freedom and responsibilities, the foreigner teacher could be imagined also to rejoice gladly in Nietzsche's (1996: 39) accompanying conception of taking a break. She may appreciate the call for a capacity for some 'active forgetfulness' to create for one's self 'a little silence, a little *tabula rasa* of consciousness'.

Man and his utter solitude

Our understanding of the teacher's achievements, breaks and struggles can be enhanced through the existentialist thought of Kierkegaard, Heidegger and Sartre, who view conscious Othering from the norms of dominant ways of being through a preoccupation with 'man and his utter solitude'

(Kaufmann, 1973). To stand authentically in one's loneliness, for Kierkegaard, for example, involved extreme solitude embedded within Christendom, while for Heidegger and Sartre, existence was an atheist affair. Kierkegaard refuted claims such as Nietzsche's that solitude is only possible if one stands alone and outside of others, norms and also God. All three agree, however, on the need for breaking with the crowd, leaving the herd, standing alone, to achieve authenticity and – here they follow Nietzsche – also greatness.

Kierkegaard's focus on the inner being and subjective experiences of life choices, on the 'totality of an individual's existence' (McDonald, 2012), is an apparent reaction to Hegelian idealism, and alerts us to the intricacy and intimacy of the immigrant teacher's own loneliness. Hegel's self-Othering writing, using pseudonyms (McDonald, 2012), reflects the immigrant teacher's linguistic loneliness, often haunted by a bittersweet memory of her mother tongue, and her sometimes awkward struggles with the language that she must now master. The psychological subtleties of self-inquiry, of stripping away layers of humanity to come closer to humanity, resonate with the foreigner, who, as Kristeva (1991) suggests, uses her imaginary mask, an anesthetised skin within which she retreats. Subsuming the concern for all of humanity behind her mask, she labours in what for Sartre is a consuming, 'bad faith' (Wartenberg, 2008), a concern primarily for the self, in her attempt to come closer to her 'new' humanity.

Sartre's (1948) idea of 'bad faith' Others through the anguish and abandonment caused by self-deception. Such anguish is complicated by its implication of ourselves with all of humanity. It occurs through abandonment, for instance, of faith in ourselves, and by God. While for Sartre, as for Nietzsche, God does not exist, if 'he' does for others, they need to determine how to interpret and/or follow 'him'. Othering through abandonment causes anguish because 'we ourselves [must] decide our being' (Sartre, 1948: 39). We are condemned to be free, alienated from everybody else, where each individual exists as a stranger to all others, left to his/her own decisions and choices, at the various boundaries (*Grenzsituationen*) but collectively responsible, at the same time, to all humanity. Following this view, every action is a choice, and every individual is obliged to invent rules and actions for themselves. The immigrant teacher, more overcome often by the fear, but – like Kristeva's foreigner – also the exhilaration, of such freedom, can become increasingly estranged from others and from herself through the unexpected, nihilistic transformations that engulf her. Following Sartre (1948: 45), how 'we decide our being' occurs in relation to others, so '[t]he other is indispensable to my existence, and ... to any knowledge I can have of myself'. Sartre's (1948: 45) proclamation that 'at once, we find ourselves in a world ... of "inter-subjectivity"' recognises this conflicting tension for both foreigners and 'locals'. All choices are thus embedded inter-subjectively in implication and consequence, in an ongoing construction of a sense of place through their performance.

Rather than upholding 'man' as the ultimate, supreme being, Sartre speaks of the self surpassing outside of one's self, of being Other to one's self, where pursuing transcendent aims enables man to exist. 'The relation of transcendence as constitutive of man' in the sense of self-surpassing transcendence 'with subjectivity' (Sartre, 1948: 55) positions the foreigner teacher inclusively within the realm of all humanity. Being itself is a crucial existential concern, which Sartre sees as either unconscious being (being-in-itself) or conscious being (being-for-itself) and conscious of its own consciousness (Landau, 2012). The question of the human condition now brings me back to Camus and his notion of the absurd.

The human condition and the absurd

As indicated earlier, Camus too argues against religion (Berthold, 2013). This is the point that reverberates in his conception of the absurd: 'the feeling of being radically divorced from the world

and thus a stranger both to others and to oneself' (Carroll, 2006: 465). The absurdity of the human condition implicates at once a deep scepticism towards the 'ultimate purpose in life' and a responsibility for one's own life purpose and decisions. Authenticity and faith in one's self is once again seen as important in this view, as '[I]iving the contradictory notion of the absurd means refusing to pretend to feel what one does not feel, to say what one does not mean, or to appear to be what one is not' (Carroll, 2006: 465–466). The absurd can be seen as a revolt against the gods – religious, political, ideological or philosophical gods. In amongst such absurdity, the foreigner teacher embodies Camus's perception of the 'forlornness of the human situation' and the incommensurable 'longing for meaning' (Berthold, 2013: 138) as she strives towards a more accepted sense of belonging in this place. In the 'irrational silence of the world' (Camus, 1955: 21), the need and calling for faith is strong. For Camus, it presents as the existential division between self and God. For Kierkegaard (1974: 30), the forlornness appears as a 'bottomless void that underlies everything' and, for him, the call is to a Christian faith. For the foreigner teacher, the longing for meaning may be strong in her own commitment to her God, her educational beliefs and her preferred practices, and this construction of the absurd mirrors the forlornness of her new situation. Her search for meaning and understandings of her new place and her new teaching team disrupts what, up to this point, has always been true to her. This inner awakening and turmoil leads us to tracings of the realm of the unconscious, of Kristeva's inner stranger.

Kristeva's inner stranger and the unconscious

Expectations that we should 'acknowledge ourselves as foreigners' or 'live as others' (Kristeva, 1991: 1, 2) demonstrate Kristeva's concern with the individual unknown in the realm of the unconscious. The foreigner, she says, lives inside each one of us. In uniting foreigner and local culture and practices in our teaching space, the unconscious appears to distance Other knowledge from the frameworks and binaries of Hegel, Marx and the existentialist thought outlined above. Freud's view of 'what it is to be human' (Sarup, 1992: 1) underpins Kristeva's concern with the inner self. His introduction of the notion that individuals are not autonomous rational actors and thinkers, and that all action has a meaning beyond what is known, exposes the idea that repressive forces in the mind influence the ego, the conscious decisions, and that unconscious forces reveal repressed, abandoned past experiences (Dosse, 1997; Sarup, 1992). This view validates the inexplicable heights and depths of the foreigner teacher's attempts to find meaning in the humiliation, rejection and selective privileging in her new place. Mostly overlooked and working in the margins, her food, for example, may be ridiculed, only to be elevated on the centre's 'international day' to showcase a traditional dish from her homeland.

Following on from Freud, Lacan focuses on Otherness through language and linguistics in psychoanalysis, and in his 'Theory of the speaking subject' (Sarup, 1992) he shared Freud's view of the unconscious being structured like a language (Dosse, 1997). Lacan's influence on conceptions of foreignness draws together the social and the political, conscious and unconscious, the 'politics with the person' (Sarup, 1992: xvii), to finally address the insecurities inherent in the foreigner teacher's – or all of our – transformations. His view on distinctive formative structures of subjectivity in the formation of the 'I' and the differentiation of the Other from the other, depending on the radicalness of alterity, is significant. The (big) Other involves another subject who is radically and unassimilably unique, and the symbolic order which mediates his/her relationship with the subject.

Lacan's view of the unconscious as a logically structured, self-sufficient self, rather than a series of disorganised, instinctual drives, appears to acknowledge this tension. Perhaps this separate entity, uncontrollable by an individual, is the Other within each one of us (Sarup, 1992) which

Kristeva urges us all to recognise. It could well be the opening of that previously unobtainable, 'secret wound' that the teacher was unable or afraid to reveal, or the insight into connections through knife-edge border crossings or *Grenzsituationen*. Lacan's view of the speaking subject further helps to position the foreigner teacher through her new language. Even when she is feeling confident, when it becomes audacious and uninhibited, Lacan helps us to see it as separate from her unconscious. Her linguistic efforts arise instead from conscious attempts to assimilate, and do not dwell, as her mother tongue does, in her unconscious, since speech and language originate outside of consciousness (Johnston, 2014; Sarup, 1992). The unconscious highlights concerns with the Other as contingent, contextualised and inter-subjective, as already discovered above. What it adds is the awareness of the separation between the conscious and the unconscious – that is, between each one of us and the unconscious Other by which we are inhabited, both endlessly displaced and shifting, not static but fluid.

Concluding comments

The conflicting educational, curricular and pedagogical tensions in the teacher's life, in what Kristeva (2002: 4, 3) calls a 'temporary stability' and often 'disturbing abyss' of foreignness, are the focus of this philosophical interrogation. Her assemblage of foreignnesses has framed my investigation in snapshots and entanglements of philosophies of Otherness that have variously prioritised temporal, situational and relational states of being and knowing. Conscious as well as unconscious tensions, in her position and ours, in being in and knowing our early childhood place, have illustrated some of her foreigner experiences from different angles. The insights offered by these angles disturb particular standpoints towards social, ideological, moral and psychoanalytical self–Other relations.

Whether, as Kristeva (1991: 1) proposes, the foreigner 'who was the "enemy" in primitive societies' can now 'disappear from modern societies' remains an elusive question. The tensions between views of foreignness, as fluid or static, as knowable or not, create a picture of unpredictability and flux that renders Otherness and the immigrant foreigner teacher as constantly in construction (Kristeva, 2008), and thus unknowable. What it means for her to be in our local early childhood setting differs in each view, as the struggles and tensions span strict either/or dialectics, alienation driven by the dominant neo-liberal ideology (and its capitalist tendencies), concerns with questions of humanity, aspirations for *Übermensch*-type qualities, inner strength, authenticity and, lastly, a recognition of the ongoing and intimate displacement of the unknown Other in the unconscious. The immigrant teacher and we, the locals, are driven by unconscious drives and desires, by calls to faith – in God or our selves – disrupting any sure possibility of us ever knowing each other. The teacher, hiding behind her mask, to pray, to desire, to wait until she feels like she might fit in, stands strong in her faith, in herself and for her beliefs to resist the dominant ideology. Yet still, the absurdity of the human condition counters her strength, placing her into conflict with herself. We reach a point where we can see her now in Kristeva's (1991) final challenge – of acknowledging the unconscious to create a space for the unknown. Through the disturbances created by these philosophical tracings of Kristeva's foreigner, I argue that perhaps we might all recognise some of those elements of Otherness within ourselves, and follow Kristeva to stop 'detesting' the foreignness in others. Recognising that we are unknown even to ourselves might just be the key to our resistance as we realise the Kristevan dream: that it is not just the immigrant teacher, but all of us who are foreigners in what might then become early childhood places for *all of us*.

Funding

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial or not-for-profit sectors.

References

- Anderson J (2010) *Understanding Cultural Geography: Places and Traces*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Ansley G (2010) Knifing threatens ties with India. *NZ Herald*, 5 January. Available at: http://www.nzherald.co.nz/world/news/article.cfm?c_id=2&objectid=10618423
- Bauman Z (2009) Education in the liquid-modern setting. *Power and Education* 1(2): 157–166.
- Berthold D (2013) Kierkegaard and Camus: Either/or? *International Journal of Philosophy and Religion* 73(2): 137–150.
- Biesta G (2010) Why ‘what works’ still won’t work: From evidence-based education to value-based education. *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 29(5): 491–503.
- Bottomore TB and Marx K (1963) *Early Writings*. London: CA Watts.
- Camus A (1955) *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays*. Trans. O’Brien J. New York: Random House.
- Carroll D (2006) Albert Camus (1913–1960). In: Kritzman LD (ed.) *The Columbia History of Twentieth-Century French Thought*. New York: Columbia University Press, pp. 463–468.
- Dosse F (1997) *History of Structuralism*. Trans. Glassman D. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Duhn I (2010) ‘The centre is my business’: Neo-liberal politics, privatisation and discourses of professionalism in New Zealand. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood* 11(1): 49–60.
- Farquhar S and Gibbons A (2010) Early childhood education. In: Thrupp M and Irwin R (eds) *Another Decade of Educational Policy: Where to Now?* Hamilton, New Zealand: Wilf Malcolm Institute of Research, pp. 83–98.
- Findlay JN (1977) Foreword. In: *Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hegel GWF (1952) *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Higgins KM and Solomon RC (2005) Introduction. In: Nietzsche F, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Trans. Martin C. New York: Barnes & Noble, pp. xv–xxxi.
- Johnston A (2014) Jacques Lacan. Available at: <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2014/entries/lacan/>
- Kaufmann W (1973) Existentialism: The partially examined life. MP3. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VMA535wvtK4>
- Kierkegaard S (1974) *Fear and Trembling*. Trans. Lowrie W. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Kristeva J (1991) *Strangers to Ourselves*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Kristeva J (2002) ‘My memory’s hyperbole’ (1984), from *New York Literary Forum*. In: Oliver K (ed.) *The Portable Kristeva*. New York: Columbia University Press, pp. 3–21.
- Kristeva J (2008) ‘Does European culture exist?’ In: *Dagmar and Václav Havel Foundation VIZE 97 Prize*, Prague, 5 October 2008. Available at: <http://www.vize.cz/download/laureat-Julia-Kristeva-en-speech.pdf>
- Landau I (2012) Sartre’s absolute freedom in being and nothingness: The problems persist. *Philosophy Today* 56(4): 463–473.
- Lewin J, Meares C, Cain T, et al. (2011) *Namasté New Zealand: Indian employers and employees in Auckland*. Research report no. 5, October. North Shore City, New Zealand: Integration of Immigrants Programme, Massey University.
- McDonald W (2012) Søren Kierkegaard. Available at: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kierkegaard/>
- McQueen P and McQueen H (2010) *Key Concepts in Philosophy*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Mairet P (1948) Introduction. In: Sartre J-P, *Existentialism and Humanism*. London: Methuen, pp. 5–19.
- Marx K (1844) Estranged labour. Available at: <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/manuscripts/labour.htm> (accessed 24 May 2014).
- Marx K and Engels F (1992) *The Communist Manifesto*. Ed. McLellan D. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- May H (2014) New Zealand: A narrative of shifting policy directions for early childhood education and care. In: Gambaro L, Stewart K and Waldfogel J (eds) *An Equal Start? Providing Quality Early Education and Care for Disadvantaged Children*. Bristol: Policy Press, pp. 147–170.
- Nietzsche F (1996) *On the Genealogy of Morals: A Polemic*. Trans. Smith D. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Nietzsche F (2005) *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Trans. Martin C. New York: Barnes & Noble.
- Peters MA (2012) Western models of intercultural philosophy. In: Besley T and Peters MA (eds) *Interculturalism, Education and Dialogue*. New York: Peter Lang, pp. 29–52.

- Peters MA (2013) *Citizenship, Human Rights and Identity: Prospects of a Liberal Cosmopolitan Order*. New York: Addleton Academic.
- Rhedding-Jones J (2001) Shifting ethnicities: 'Native informants' and other theories from/for early childhood education. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood* 2(1): 135–156.
- Rivalland CMP and Nuttal J (2010) Sameness-as-fairness: Early childhood professionals negotiating multiculturalism in childcare. *Early Childhood Folio* 14(1): 28–32.
- Sartre J-P (1948) *Existentialism and Humanism*. Trans. Mairet P. London: Methuen.
- Sarup M (1992) *Jacques Lacan*. Hertfordshire, UK: Harvester Wheatsheaf.
- Silva K (2009) Oh, give me a home: Diasporic longings of home and belonging. *Social Identities* 15(5): 693–706.
- Tesar M (2014) Reconceptualising the child: Power and resistance within early childhood settings. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood* 15(4): 360–367. DOI:10.2304/ciec.2014.15.4.360
- UNICEF (2008) *The child care transition*. Innocenti report card 8. Florence: UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre.
- Wartenberg TE (2008) *Existentialism*. London: One World.
- Wolff J (2011) Karl Marx. Available at: <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2011/entries/marx/>

Author biography

Sonja Arndt is a Lecturer in Early Childhood Education at the University of Waikato, New Zealand. Her research deals with reconceptualising notions of foreignness and treatments of Otherness, in particular as situated in the culturally bound place of early childhood settings. Sonja's research is located at the intersection of early childhood education and philosophy of education, using philosophy as a method and as its conceptual/analytical framework.