Reframing the "International" in UK International Scholarship: Perspectives on Diversity and Equity beyond English as Lingua Franca and Multilingualism

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This article critically examines dominant models of internationalization in UK higher education, focusing on how initiatives such as the UKRI Global Challenges Research Fund and the UK Government's Turing Scheme, along with evaluation frameworks such as the Research Excellence Framework (REF), emphasize uniformity, competitiveness, and broad scope. This approach can lead to a homogenization of academic collaboration, often overlooking the diverse operational, sociocultural, linguistic, and epistemic contexts of scholars involved in the United Kingdom's increasingly internationalized scholarly environment. Drawing on an expanded notion of diaspora influenced by intersectional feminist theory, this article proposes a reconceptualization of what internationalization means in the United Kingdom. Through the case study of two experimental online reading events, *The Re-Reading Room*, at Coventry University, it demonstrates how diasporic academic communities can actively co-create more inclusive and equitable collaborative environments in praxis, challenging the prevailing norms of competition, alignment, and uniformity underlaying the way international scholarship is framed in the United Kingdom.

Evolvements and Tensions in UK Internationalization

In the United Kingdom, universities have advanced their internationalization strategies. They have done so backed by government support through initiatives such as UK Aid or Official Development Assistance (ODA) and the UKRI Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) operational from 2018 to 2021. These efforts are complemented by targeted recruitment of foreign students and staff through initiatives such as the government-funded Turing Scheme as well as by evaluation mechanisms such as the national Research Excellence Framework (REF). The REF assesses scholars by their

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contributions to enhance the international competitive reputation and revenue of their institutions through research collaboration and publishing.

Deirdre McKay (2021) argues that funding schemes such as the GCRF serve as "top-down" framing devices that impose a specific vision of "the global," primarily viewing research as a "matter of demonstrating [competitive] global scope or scale" (186). She argues that these operational frameworks often assume that international partners have similar resources and conditions as those in the United Kingdom, such as digital connectivity and institutional support. These assumptions can sideline the development of research environments and practices attuned to the diverse operational, sociocultural, linguistic, and epistemic realities in the increasingly internationalized sphere UK scholarship evolves in. Intense management for global competitiveness channeled through research and designs can potentially diminish scholars' agency over the way in which they pursue their research in international environments, in a more ethically aware and equal way, for example. Additionally, institutional policies and approaches to language usage often favoring normative English undermine the linguistic diversity in UK contexts and limit the participation of non-native English speakers in research collaboration.

In response to these dynamics, this article proposes to reconceptualize what framing and practicing international scholarship could mean in UK academia. It does so through expanded notions of diaspora, informed by intersectional feminist perspectives (Brah 1996; Risam 2019). By adopting diaspora as an alternative framework for understanding "the global," this approach shifts focus to the agency of diasporic academics. It explores how they collaboratively develop situated social knowledge practices that challenge and reshape the prevailing concept of "the global" in UK academia as a dynamic element of scholarly identity and praxis.

Various scholars have invited more situated views on international collaboration calling for a more nuanced perspective on the diversity of languages in use and the creative ways in which researchers work within multilingual communities, for example (Blommaert 2010; Céspedes 2023; Lee and Canagarajah 2018). In support and expansion of these efforts, this article hypothesizes that diasporic scholarly communities—beyond dealing creatively with increasing linguistic diversity—employ unique, context-specific practices that can challenge broader systemic issues within contemporary international scholarship, such as inequity in access and representation. As this article will discuss, they do so through approaches valuing diversity, relational engagement, and cooperative interactions over scale and competitive impact.

How exactly do diasporic scholarly communities organize to manage the challenges posed by linguistic, epistemic, and sociocultural diversity in academic settings? What strategies and practices do they employ to facilitate equitable participation across diverse linguistic, epistemic, and sociocultural contexts? What are the prospects for academics

to promote equity and diversity within international scholarship in an institutional environment that tendentially is averse to do so?

To address these questions, this article will focus on a specific case study emerging in the arts and humanities in UK academia—namely, *The Re-Reading Room*, two experimental online reading events hosted at the Centre for Postdigital Cultures (CPC) at Coventry University attended by an international set of participants. Through participant observation, informal discussions, and interviews conducted during and after the events, I examine how the participants actively resisted the prevailing drive to homogenization and competition through emphasizing a horizontal and collaborative approach committed to diversity and equity.

I am aware of the limited capacity of *The Re-Reading Room* to systematically address the broader systemic issues mentioned above. I also acknowledge its limited expressiveness, partly due to my dual role as both host and observer of this experiment, and its discipline-specific nature. Nonetheless, I hope it can serve as catalyst for discussions about equity and diversity in various situated instances of international academic collaboration. Additionally, it offers tentative practical insights for academics to, within their own spheres of influence, actively foster more diverse and equitable research environments.

Challenging Prevalent Frameworks: The Need for More Diverse and Equitable Academic Environments

With increasing academic mobility, targeted international recruitment, and expanding academic networks and collaborations, UK research centers and classrooms have become spaces for exchange among individuals from different geographical, cultural, linguistic, and epistemic backgrounds (Canestrino, Magliocca, and Li 2022). Thanks to the internet, meeting technologies, and ambitions within open access publishing to make texts digitally available without charging readers, scholars, in principle, can more easily engage with knowledges emerging out of different contexts and they can do so in collaboration with diverse communities, in and outside of their institutions (Kiesewetter 2023). These evolvements have awakened an understanding of the scholarly community as networked, multiple, transient, and perpetually being reshaped (Translation Toolkit, n.d.). This section examines these evolving dynamics, questioning the sufficiency of existing strategies to foster diverse and equitable environments for academic collaboration in an increasingly internationalized field. Through this lens, this section will look especially at specific framings of "the global"; how these are implemented through research designs and institutional policies; and how these influence the dynamics, relationships, and interactions in collaborative environments.

UK universities—supported by governmental organizations and funders—strive to extend their international reach. See, for example, the UK Aid or Official Development Assistance (ODA) funding provided by the UK government. This funding is channeled, among other things, through grants such as the GCRF operating between 2016 and 2021. The competitive scheme was supported by a variety of Research Councils throughout disciplines: from the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) to the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC). It aimed to bring the "strengths of the UK" to broader development challenges by supporting "cutting-edge research that addresses the challenges faced by developing countries" (Newman, Bharadwaj, and Fransman 2019, 22). Such strategies are considered crucial for amplifying the UK's influence, particularly in the post-Brexit landscape, where universities are keen to maintain and expand their international presence. This ambition is outlined in *Future International Partnerships*, a document released by Universities UK International (2020), a membership organization consisting of UK university vice-chancellors and principals. The document takes up the UK government's vision to position the United Kingdom as a "global centre of research and innovation following its departure from the EU" by maintaining UK universities' "high reputation and position in global rankings" (Universities UK International 2020). The strategy outlined in *Future International Partnerships* includes promoting international collaborations across disciplines, creating international knowledge exchange networks with businesses abroad, and developing strategic partnerships with universities worldwide to enhance cooperation and boost student and staff mobility.

Indeed, within the internationalizing strategies of UK universities, the mobility of UK academics plays a pivotal role. Programs such as the UK government-funded Turing Scheme incentivize academics to teach or train in institutions across Europe and beyond (Turing Scheme, n.d.). Other schemes such as the British Council's Commonwealth Scholarships and Fellowships aimed at citizens of the Commonwealth countries are "awarded to talented individuals with the potential to make a positive impact on the global stage" (British Council, n.d.).

Alongside participating in strategic funding and partnerships, "making a positive impact on the global stage" for researchers in the United Kingdom—increasingly also the arts and humanities—is more and more connected to demands to publish in high-ranking journals with high impact factors (Knöchelmann 2023). These metrics are often calculated on the basis of databases and digital repositories such as Web of Science or Scopus, provided by the data analytics company Clarivate and the publisher Elsevier, respectively. These platforms aggregate citation data across a vast array of journals, calculating metrics to assess the overall research impact of universities (Academic Ranking of World Universities metrics, Times Higher Education metrics), the influence of individual publications (Impact Factor, h-index), and the citation performance of individual researchers (h-index, total citations).

English, in this context, is promoted as a commodity for gaining the "international" label: for publishing in high-ranked journals, engaging in international research projects, attending global scientific meetings, and studying abroad (Chan et al. 2020; Chen, Posada, and Chan 2019; Moore 2017). In this vein, UK universities increasingly offer tailored English language support for international students and staff to succeed internationally (Coleman 2012; Jenkins 2013). At the same time, universities in non-English-speaking countries in Europe and beyond privilege English over national languages as part of their bi- or multilingual setup (Céspedes 2023; Moore 2017).

The above examples present a vision of a more widely interconnected academic sphere while ensuring that UK universities remain competitive in an international context. Deirdre McKay (2021) critically argues that funding schemes such as the GCRF, through operationalizing this vision, act as framing devices for a specific idea of "the global," in which research is primarily seen as "a matter of demonstrating global scope or scale" (186). Indeed, UK academics in all disciplines—under forms of impact-measurement such as those exemplified by the REF—are compelled to justify the relevance of their knowledge activities in terms of enhancing international competitive reputation and revenue (Savransky 2016); for example, through securing funding for large-scale research projects and through publishing in high-ranked journals promising measurable impacts that contribute positively to their institutions' REF scores. This emphasis reinforces a market-driven, competitive approach to academic research (Knöchelmann 2023; Moore 2019).

By reference to international collaborations funded through the GCRF scheme, McKay (2021) highlights the effects that the underlying framing of "the global" has on research designs, as well as sociocultural dimensions in research creation. For example, she discusses how the United Kingdom's restrictive immigration policies in some cases made it impossible to host research partners from the Global South in the United Kingdom. Instead, these partners were expected to host UK colleagues, which undermined equal relationship-building essential to collaboration. Various collaborators lacked substantial institutional support, facilities, and technological equipment. Consequently, they found themselves overburdened when project design required them to deliver the public engagement and impact strategies within their own countries. Additionally, the competitive drive for extensive metrification connected to the scheme led to various co-authored papers published in top English-language journals throughout GCRF collaborations. McKay stresses that co-investigators in the Global South, often collaborating closely with NGOs or government partners, may not have benefited from these publications. Rather, the publications might have restricted their opportunities to publish in local academic platforms or other venues better aligned with their professional and career goals.

McKay (2021) emphasizes how a substantial amount of research designs implemented in the GCRF framework—with its management for global scope, scale, and competition—were based on the assumptions that international partners could match the mobility, digital connectivity, response capabilities, research objectives, and institutional frameworks of UK scholars. The connected expectation, specifically of researchers from the Global South, was to conform to standards and frameworks designed in the United Kingdom, disregarding the autonomy, the different contextual and operational realities, capacities, and needs of the various collaborators involved. This led to an inequitable power balance in international research collaboration. As McKay concludes, this model reinforces Western-centric center-periphery dynamics, including a flow of influence and control in knowledge creation from a putative "center" in the Global North to the "peripheries" of the Global South (Beigel, Gallardo, and Bekerman 2018; Wallerstein 1974). At the same time, the competitive drive underlining the GCRF scheme tendentially disabled the agency and ability of participating scholars to engage in the co-development of more equitable research environments and practices aligned with the needs and priorities of all partners (McKay 2021).

A similar reinforcement of Western- or UK-centric standards and expectations emerges regarding language use in research and publishing environments. These, in Anglophone countries such as the United Kingdom, are dominated by non-English speakers, across discourse communities, due to labor mobility, targeted recruitment of foreign students and staff, and the extensive nature of academic networks. Jennifer Jenkins (2013) estimates a ratio of approximately five non-native speakers for every native speaker. Juliet Henderson (2011) remarks that in UK universities, despite constituting the majority of English users worldwide, non-native English speakers are treated like minorities: They are considered "the agonistic 'foreign element' that legitimize an institutional claim to be international in a local context . . . the validity of their different Englishes [is not] formally acknowledged within curricular practices such as assessment criteria" (282). Rather, these different Englishes are subject to homogenizing activities such as language tests or normative internal editing and review of grant proposals and articles. Similarly, Jenkins (2013) observes that variants in English are often seen as a deficiency, requiring remediation rather than respect: "the prime concern is how to help international students 'fit in' better linguistically with the locals rather than how the locals might adapt their own language practices to fit in better with their international student (and staff) population" (207). Thus, "we are dealing with . . . an ideological positioning of Anglo-English as a dominant form" set as standard by management, which staff and students are expected to follow (282). As she explains, this ideological positioning is twofold: The "authenticity" ideology values a language for its roots in a specific social and geographical community, implying that value comes from sounding local and authentic. Conversely, the ideology of "anonymity" suggests that the power

of hegemonic languages stems from their perceived neutrality, sounding as if they are from "nowhere." This ideology promotes a standard language that embodies a universal quality, devoid of any regional or ethnic markers or accents, which is seen as the ideal in academic and professional settings.

This leads to a situation in which academia is dominated by non-native English speakers, yet it is still influenced by Anglophone traditions (Mauranen 2012; Fortanet-Gómez and Ruiz Madrid 2014). The emphasis on effective English skills in academia—besides fostering an assumed authority of native speakers—creates a link between perceived language proficiency and professional identity. It can lead non-native English speakers to question their expertise compared to native English speakers (Huttner-Koros and Perera 2016). In collaborative projects, non-native English speakers may feel less confident presenting their research or contributing to discussions, doubting their ability to adequately convey the depth of their knowledge in English (Tenzer, Pudelko, and Zellmer-Bruhn 2021; Canestrino, Magliocca, and Li 2022). Variations in English fluency can also create disparities among researchers. For example, non-native researchers who had opportunities to train their English skills (through study exchanges or in bi-lingual education in private schools, among other things) may have an advantage over those who lacked opportunities (Huttner-Koros and Perera 2016). In academic publishing, writing in English, for non-English-speaking researchers, often involves intricate translation, seeking approval by native speakers, and multiple rounds of revision (Hanauer and Englander 2011; Huttner-Koros and Perera 2016). Despite these efforts, non-native English authors' English manuscripts are often considered "poor" or "awkward" when reviewed by English-language journal editors.

When research is predominantly communicated in English, it becomes constrained by English language parameters, discourse conventions, norms, and perspectives, which risk creating conditions for epistemic marginalization (Chan et al. 2020; Mboa Nkoudou 2020; Wierzbicka 2014). Additionally, the emphasis on standard English contributes to a stratification within academic communities, where access to collaboration and recognition often depends on English proficiency, while non-native English speakers navigate research under conditions that disadvantage their cultural, linguistic, and epistemic backgrounds.

Calling for a more differentiated perspective on the diversity and nuance of language(s) in use in situated instances of internationalized research collaboration, scholars such as Marina Bondi (2005) and Catherine Nickerson (2005) emphasize that contemporary academic English already is a hybrid language that is characterized by diverse underlying traditions and worldviews carrying a discourse in which, as Carmen Pérez-Llantada (2012) writes, "anglophone normative rules merge with culture-specific linguistic features instantiating a rich variety of non-normative writing styles" (192). Similarly, Lucía Céspedes (2023) observes the "naturalization of the presence and use

of the English language through creative translingual practices" (6) in the context of a specific discourse community (PhD students at the Institute for Theoretical and Experimental Astronomy in Córdoba, Argentina). Translingualism refers to the dynamic synergy between languages, emphasizing the creative and generative aspects of situated linguistic practices. It views languages not as discrete entities but as fluid systems of semiotic resources—accents, registers, genres—that individuals mobilize to produce meaningful communication in diverse, situated contexts. This approach recognizes the varied, evolving value of these resources across different social spheres (Lee and Canagarajah 2018; Blommaert and Horner 2017).

What would be important here, as Gorgi Krlev and André Spicer (2023) stress, is "epistemic respect." This is, "showing esteem when an argument is original, sound and striking, no matter where it originated . . . even when the argument is at some distance to their own thinking and experience." However, as research such as the above-discussed works by Henderson (2011) and Jenkins (2013) reveal, such an epistemic respect is often not given in a UK context. On the contrary, as Jenkins stresses in reference to the work of the phonetics scholar John Coleman, UK universities seem to not foster diversity for diversity's sake but "to attract feepaying international students, gifted teachers and researchers, and the most talented postgraduates to enhance the university's reputation" (207).

In view of these evolvements, calls for a heightened support of multilingualism have emerged in scholarship on higher education and research (Balula and Leão 2019; FOLEC-CLACSO 2021; Shearer et al. 2020). Simultaneously, multilingualism has begun to form part of policy debates in institutional, national, and international contexts, as evidenced by discussions in the European Council for Higher Education and Accreditation and UNESCO (Chan et al. 2020). Institutions such as the University of Cambridge, the University of Manchester, or the King's College London increasingly sustain Language Centres offering language courses for students, staff, and external learners, promoting language learning as a vital skill in academia: for international engagement, career advancement, and multicultural awareness, for example.

Even if concepts such as multilingualism and translingualism can offer a more nuanced perspective on the diversity of language(s) in use in situated instances of academic practice in the United Kingdom, they do not, in principle, imply a critique of the more systemic issues (such as the perpetuation of center-periphery dynamics threatening equity in research collaboration) underlying the "near total supremacy of English over at least certain disciplines" (Céspedes 2023). It is not unthinkable and—considering how policy-makers, funders, and institutions actively promote diversity while keeping to adhere to stringent market-driven homogenization practices in pursuit of global scope, scale, reputation, and excellence—even likely that

neoliberal UK institutions consider themselves to be caring corporations in the sense of "carewashing" (Chatzidakis et al. 2020; Chatzidakis and Littler 2022;). Here, "powerful business actors are promoting themselves as 'caring corporations' while actively undermining any kind of care offered outside their profit-making architecture" (Chatzidakis et al. 2020).

As this section reveals, the UK's internationalization strategies, framed around UK- and Western-centric notions of global scope and competitive success, overshadow the diverse operational, sociocultural, linguistic, and epistemic realities that shape the internationalized sphere in which scholarship evolves in the United Kingdom. At the same time, scholars—due to sociocultural, linguistic, and epistemic challenges appearing across discourse communities—struggle with communication and collaboration barriers exacerbated by the dominance of normative English use. Additionally, the competitiveness in scholarship tends to disable a more dialogic, horizontal, and collaborative engagement between different communities while stifling the sense of agency among scholars regarding their influence on how to pursue their research in increasingly internationalized environments.

Recognizing these challenges, in the next section, I reconceptualize international scholarship along with expanded notions of diaspora emerging in the context of intersectional feminism (Brah 1996; Risam 2019). I will explore how diaspora can be understood as an alternative interpretative frame for "the global," moving beyond the prevalent focus in UK academia on homogenization, scale, and competitiveness. Rather, I will shift the attention to the role that diasporic academics and the situated social knowledge practices they develop play in their increasingly internationalized work environment. Through doing so, I want to support calls for a more nuanced and flexible perspective on the diversity of language(s) in use (Blommaert 2010; Céspedes 2023; Lee and Canagarajah 2018). Additionally, I want to explore how scholars participating in international collaborations—while dealing creatively with multilingualism—can address broader systemic issues within contemporary international scholarship, such as inequity in access and representation: even in an institutional environment that tendentially is averse to do so.

Diasporic Communities and Inventive Practices in Academic Collaboration

In the context of decolonial digital humanities, Roopika Risam (2019), by reference to earlier intersectional feminist works such as those of Avtar Brah (1996), has theorized the networked, multiple, transient, and fluid contemporary scholarly community through expanded notions of diaspora. In the first part of this section, I explore how this

social constructionist approach, with its focus on political rationalities, situated practices, and modes of subjectification, has enabled the exploration of the term without the necessity of a specific place of origin or belonging (Brubaker 2005; Mohan 2008; Safran 1991). Rather, it contributes to broader cultural hegemony critical and intersectional feminist arguments reassessing the way in which institutional strategies both assume and help constitute international perspectives, spaces, subjects, and practices by emphasizing the agency of individuals and communities in resisting domination, shaping their own social realities, and envisioning alternative futures to transform cultural hegemony and the power structures it produces (Anzaldúa 1987; Escobar 1995, 2018; Gilroy 1993; Hall [1990] 2021; Mohanty 1984, 2003). Similarly, in what follows, I want to emphasize that, while dominant ideas of the "global" have a strong ordering effect, these are, like all framing practices of scholarly vantage points, not monolithic.

In the second part of this section, I will, by reference to *The Re-Reading Room*, offer a specific and situated perspective on how such a rebuttal to the standardized measures of impact and success in a UK context can look like in practice. *The Re-Reading Room* manifests as a specific and situated instantiation of a diasporic scholarly community in an arts and humanities context that values diversity, relational engagement, and cooperative interactions over individual achievement.

For Brah (1996) "diaspora" signifies an emergent space, a way of interpretation, and an analytical method conditioned by the complexities of living and working across multiple physical, cultural, linguistic, and psychic boundaries. Brah's understanding resonates with foundational ideas in intersectional feminism, where scholars have conceptualized their identities along more relational and fluid understandings (Anzaldúa 1983, 1987; hooks 1990; Sandoval 1998). For example, Gloria Anzaldúa (1983), from her perspective as a queer Latin American activist-scholar, describes the multiple positionings she derives meaning from:

> I am a wind-swayed bridge, a crossroads inhabited by whirlwinds. Gloria, the facilitator. Gloria, the mediator, straddling the walls between abysses. "Your allegiance is to La Raza, the Chicano movement," say the members of my race. "Your allegiance is to the Third World," say my Black and Asian friends. "Your allegiance is to your gender, to women," say the feminists. Then there's my allegiance to the Gay movement, to the socialist revolution, to the New Age, to magic and the occult. And there's my affinity to literature, to the world of the artist. What am I? . . . They would chop me up into little fragments and tag each piece with a label. (228)

Similarly, Brah's understanding captures the impossibility for many contemporary academics to claim a stable and singular nationally, culturally, or linguistically fixed identity. Instead, Risam (2019) notes that in today's scholarly communities where migration

is part of employments, the locus of identity is expanded "beyond the state, whether this is a place, a virtual community, or shared knowledge and experience that manifest in scholarly practices" (75). Risam explains that the idea of diaspora can be extended to include scholarly practices that constitute a knowledge diaspora: knowledges—due to information sharing, digital interconnectedness, and migration—are partial, hybrid, perpetually transmitted and negotiated across physical and virtual spaces transcending geographical, institutional, cultural, and linguistic boundaries. Around these shared knowledges, new relationships and communities emerge through "the broader set of investigations possible at the intersections of the digital and the humanistic" (Risam 2019, 75). As Risam contends, embracing a logic of diaspora to describe the dynamic landscape in which scholarship evolves nowadays helps to shift attention to the significance of situated practices of scholars collaborating at the intersections between different institutional contexts, activities, research cultures, knowledges, and languages. According to her, it is in these practices where the experiential aspect of working across the existing differences and increasing diversity in international scholarship becomes manifest and where a rupture with homogenizing competitive imperatives becomes possible.

The notion of diaspora proposed by Risam (2019), when interpreted as an organizational framework, emphasizes a perspective on international scholarship that stands in contrast to how "the global" acts as a framing device of research in a UK context (operationalized through funding schemes like the GCRF and impact-measurement policies such as the REF, for example). Rather than prioritizing alignment in pursuit of global scope and reputation over the nuanced realities and relationships in diverse research contexts, international scholarship appears as a multidirectional and multidimensional space in which diverse institutional and disciplinary contexts, situated activities, research cultures, knowledges, and languages coexist horizontally. Most importantly, these meet occasionally, rub against each other, and intermingle around situated joint engagement evolving, in the context of academic collaboration, across institutional, geographical, cultural, and linguistic boundaries. In other words, in Risam's concept, "the global" is reframed as a social space which appears through the temporary entanglements and relationships emerging from the community-building efforts of various actors. Here, "the global" is perpetually (re-) constructed as an essential part of scholarly praxis and identity rather than implemented "top-down" through research policies, funding schemes, and assessment mechanisms, for example.

In the remainder of this article, by reference to *The Re-Reading Room*, I will discuss what new perspectives on scholarly praxis this alternative vision of international scholarship can offer. What cultural, ethical, and social sensibilities regarding knowledge equity and diversity, as well as novel modes of connectivity, responsibility, and agency

in scholarship, emerge in *The Re-Reading Room* that the current focus on market-driven competitive metrics tends to overlook?

Multilingualism and Beyond: Expanding the Scope of Academic Interaction in The Re-Reading Room

The Re-Reading Room consisted of two experimental online reading events I facilitated at the Centre for Postdigital Cultures (CPC) at Coventry University in 2021. The events unfolded around reading an excerpt from the Mexican writer and poet Cristina Rivera Garza's book *Los muertos indóciles: necroescritura y desapropiación* (2013)/*The Restless Dead: Necrowriting and Disappropriation* (2020) (provided to participants in the original Spanish version and the English translation). The aim was, in brief, to address technological, sociocultural, and linguistic barriers to (online) collaboration and to experiment with methods and practices potentially fostering a more inclusive and diverse environment.

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1997) stresses that, due to the increased quantity of digitally available text and the institutional pressure on academics to deliver outputs, reading in academia is often driven by competition and utilitarianism: one skims texts with one's own publishing record in mind. The subjectivities, practices, and relationships unfolding in institutional reading groups tend to remain interlaced with similarly competitive patterns. This, in academic reading groups and other forms of collaboration, often is exemplified in behaviors such as trying to make the better argument, outsmarting, or lecturing others (Hepler et al. 2019). Additionally, academic reading groups tendentially evolve in narrow institutional and disciplinary boundaries (de Mourat, Ricci, and Latour 2020).

Fostering diversity in collaboration, consequently, for *The Re-Reading Room* implied inviting participants from different academic hierarchy levels, disciplines beyond an arts and humanities context, in and outside Coventry University, in and outside of academia, and different regions, speaking different languages. The two iterations of the event were attended by 21 people—artists, librarians, publishers, and researchers. Among the latter were PhDs, early career researchers, and professors from the arts, literature studies, architecture, cultural studies, anthropology, political sciences, and education studies.

Only three native English speakers attended the two iterations of *The Re-Reading Room*. The majority of the participants were non-native English speakers with various degrees of English fluency. Besides their maternal languages, most spoke one or more other languages, as second or third languages: among them, the colonial "niche *lingua francas*" (Moore 2017, 293) Dutch, French, German, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish,

and Turkish. Other languages included Serbian and Romanian, as well as regional languages such as Swiss German. The participants were born and educated in Austria, Canada, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Italy, Mexico, Portugal, Serbia, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Many of them were working outside of their countries of origin—primarily in the United Kingdom, Europe, and the United States—reflecting the entangled nature of contemporary academic positionalities across national, cultural, and linguistic boundaries.[1]

During *The Re-Reading Room*, the open-source conferencing platform Big Blue Button (BBB) and the open-source annotation software hypothes.is (allowing for simultaneous, collaborative annotating of online texts), were used. I chose open-source technologies because—when thinking about equitable and diverse participation in knowledge creation and sharing—it is important to consider the governance and participatory nature of the technologies in use too (Kalir and Garcia 2019; Zaveri 2020). Before the reading events, I provided the participants with guidance on BBB and hypothes.is and offered try-out sessions for those unfamiliar with these technologies. Other means to foster equitable and diverse participation included a tentative, editable "code of conduct" (CoC) to create awareness around some of the social inhibitions and inequity issues that often remain unacknowledged in academic online settings;[2] two "grounding exercises" at the beginning of the event to situate the participants in their individual physical and psychic settings while also establishing a sense of intimacy in the larger group; and an exercise to activate the BBB chat function to introduce writing as a valid form of participation for those preferring written over spoken communication (Kiesewetter 2023).

Despite the plurilinguality of the participants, I proposed English, the only language spoken by *all* the attendees, as the main auxiliary language used during the reading group. However, rather than accepting its construction as neutral, by means of the CoC, the participants were sensitized for the nuances of the "Englishs" spoken during the event. For example, a passage in the document encouraged participants to engage in forms of active listening—that is, to be open to, patient with, and to hold space for the different levels of English proficiency—while another paragraph invited them to participate in their mother tongues, in written and spoken form, to be collaboratively translated by the attendees. An informal discussion directly after reading the text partially evolved in breakout rooms.

1. Originally, I also invited participants from India, Australia, and South Africa, but time differences and various conflicting commitments among the invitees on the dates suggested for *The Re-Reading Room* were a difficulty.
2. Among the potential issues listed were the tendency of native English speakers to dominate exchanges with non-native English speakers, the preference of analytical approaches to understanding texts over more personal ones, and the use of complex terminology without explaining it.

Prior to reading Garza's text, I introduced reading protocols, or short reading instructions. These invited participants to, during reading the text together, go beyond conventionalized ways of interacting with and around texts—such as trying to intellectually analyze it or attempting to "outsmart" others. The first protocol participants engaged with prompted them to read the beginning of the text out aloud in their maternal languages and dialects. This protocol, together with the CoC, was intended to sensitize participants for the limitations of English, its vocabularies, and perspectives.

During and after *The Re-Reading Room*, the participants were encouraged to give feedback in the informal discussion following reading the text as well as via email after the events. In their feedback, one participant remarked that they experienced the community established during the event—for example, through the CoC as well as the exercises the participants engaged with—as highly exclusionary. However, others mentioned that the same exercises helped to establish a sense of trust between the attendees. An additional element contributing to this appraisal might have been that, with native English speakers being the minority, the experience as speakers of English as a second language shared by many attendees made it easier to "ignore" the authority of native English speakers that often is assumed in Anglophone contexts. These attendees could perceive their "professional identities differently; i.e. not in conflict with the Anglophone identities of their . . . workplace . . . [but through belonging] to a professional group . . . subsumed under the Anglophone hegemony of scholarly . . . communication" (Huttner-Koros and Perera 2016, 17).

The reading protocols, to a certain extent, helped to complicate this hegemony. Most of the participants, at first, struggled with the protocols: with deviating from their usual ways of reading, with non-understanding, or with finding ways to understand differently. But eventually, it became easier to let go. Several participants pointed out that the reading protocols asking them to read aloud simultaneously in their maternal languages and dialects engendered a self-critical reflexivity. For example, this requirement introduced questions regarding their own positioning in relation to larger (meta-) questions and issues in international scholarship virulent in a UK context: Who is taking part in scholarship, in which language, and based on whose terms? And who does not, or cannot, contribute? For some participants the reading protocols emphasized the importance of—when working internationally across cultures, epistemes, and languages—developing equitable conditions and nuanced strategies for listening, of acknowledging others, of losing control, of abiding to cacophony, of doubting the universality of one's own knowing, and of tuning in with different knowledges.

As revealed in the above considerations, establishing equitable conditions for collaboration across, and with respect to, difference and diversity in an international context cannot be reduced to a linguistic realm: it requires an active (re)consideration of the technological environments, the sociocultural structures, and behavioral dynamics

and the potential barriers resulting from these elements, such as insecurities related to technology and language or domineering behaviors of other participants. A considerate approach to facilitation is key for outlining and addressing these barriers. This facilitation can, at least partially, be considered the responsibility of the collaboration initiator or host. For example, in *The Re-Reading Room*, the BBB and hypothes.is try-out sessions offered to participants helped to minimize gaps in techno-literacy, and the tentative CoC and participatory exercises made it possible to address inequality issues related to domineering behaviors in collaboration or the use of complex terminology without explaining it, for example.

Regarding language use, the reading protocols—along with the CoC inviting participants to write and talk in their maternal languages—helped to question the naturalization of normative English and the assumed authority of native English speakers. Providing breakout groups, in which participants situationally communicated in and across their maternal languages such as Spanish and Italian rather than in English, helped the attendees in switching spontaneously between the use of English as a lingua franca and multilingualism. Here, the approach taken by participants of *The Re-Reading Room* mirrored what Emilee Moore (2017) calls "doing understanding." Doing understanding "refers to the situated and jointly constructed performance of receptive competence in relation to the linguistic resources mobilized by interlocutors" (297). While another resource might be more efficient—such as the use of English by default—engaging with modes of "doing understanding" acknowledges the linguistic diversity and capacity present in a specific context and drawing on this capacity to collaboratively establish strategies for understanding.

Along with these elements, also actively including—by means of the reading protocols—space for deferral and misunderstanding contributed to establishing equitable conditions and a sense of community and trust among the participants. This, in the context of *The Re-Reading Room*, became visible in the way participants actively started to engage in listening and paying attention to others and in how they turned instances of non-understanding into an opportunity for bringing out and negotiating dimensions of historical, political, and cultural context that might have remained invisible and undisputed in more streamlined approaches to collaboration. This meta-commentary, during *The Re-Reading Room*, evolved around a self-critical awareness of issues of organization and gatekeeping in international science, such as who is actually taking part in scholarship, in which language, and based on whose terms.

In resonance with the intersectional feminist framework influencing Risam's (2019) ideas on contemporary scholarship as diaspora, *The Re-Reading Room*—to speak with the cultural hegemony critical Africana and English scholar Carole Boyce-Davies (1994)—emerged as a new space, an area of transformation and change where "we can no longer accept a factual or natural account of history and culture, nor simply seek

to retrieve a hidden authentic identity . . . [thus, we can] begin to unravel the ordering and structuring of dominant cultural codes so that we . . . may better utilize the locations we occupy as sites of resistance—spaces where critical positioning, or a process of identification, articulation and representation can occur" (113). This echoes Risam's idea of scholarly diasporas as particular sociocultural formations, loci of "identities in formation," and emergent sites of alternative scholarly organization and praxis. In the face of the concrete situation and the emerging experiential particularities, during *The Re-Reading Room* it became possible for the participants to deviate from competitive academic subjectivities and relationships such as the ones dominating the UK context of higher education and research. Through reading—as a form of experiential articulation embodying and connecting the heterogeneous, sometimes conflicting, experiences of working within and across an increasingly diverse field of scholarship—they found a form of community, subjectivity, and practice driven by self-reflexivity, horizontality, and creativity rather than by competition, efficiency, and profit-thinking.

It is precisely through the lens of this reading practice where a tension and rupture with a dominant capitalist logic of scholarly activity as exemplified in the REF became manifest, while the participants of *The Re-Reading Room* jointly engaged in creating other modes of fostering collaboration across difference and diversity. This tension and rupture, during *The Re-Reading Room*, became visible in the way participants refrained from the instrumentalist use of English and instead engaged with goals beyond simply getting the job of understanding done quickly, in order to communicate efficiently and broadly. For example, they abided with slowness and deferral, in order to engage in meta-commentary as well as in active and generous modes of listening and understanding across, and with respect to, cultural, epistemic, and linguistic differences.

The Re-Reading Room, as a form of organization—interwoven as it was with the neoliberal logics pervading the institutions it emerged in—can by no means been set up apart from these logics. However, as it reveals, and as intersectional feminist and cultural hegemony critical scholars such as Risam's (2019) might confirm, something escapes, something always escapes. In the case of *The Re-Reading Room*, the participants' relationships and practices driven by horizontality, solidarity, and creativity embodied J. K. Gibson-Graham's (2008) concept of "diverse economies." As part of their feminist approach to economics, these scholars advocate for valuing a variety of alternative economic practices beyond the capitalist sector. Several factors are crucial to sustain these alternative practices, not least of which are the ephemerality of transient scholarly communities, their provisional and messy character, their proneness for disruption and misunderstanding, a considerate approach to facilitation, and the willingness of different actors involved to take on the responsibility to situationally and interactionally establish conditions and strategies for more equitable collaboration.

These alternative practices, as I have shown, are highly situated, cannot always be formalized, and are often not recognized or acknowledged as important in an academic environment where international collaborations predominantly evolve under the maxim of efficiency and profitability. Nonetheless, I hope that *The Re-Reading Room* can offer some tentative guidance to other scholars through affirming that it is possible to, within everyday academic collaboration, more actively seek out the escapes that Risam envisions—even though under neoliberal forms of impact-measurement the agency of scholars regarding the co-development of more equitable research environments and practices might appear as rather limited.

Alternative Paths: Crafting Equitable and Inclusive International Scholarship

This article has scrutinized the underlying frameworks of UK internationalization strategies and their effects on scholarly relationships and practices, uncovering the tension between UK-centric standards in higher education and research and the operational, sociocultural, linguistic, and epistemic diversities that characterize scholarship in the United Kingdom. For example, funding schemes such as the GCRF channel normative assumptions on international partners' capacities and needs (among other things regarding mobility, technologization, or institutional support), leading to unrealistic expectations towards partners and an inequitable power balance in research collaboration. Similarly, institutional language policies and practices in the United Kingdom often favor normative approaches to English, leading to collaboration barriers and insecurities for non-native English speakers whose variants in English use often are seen as deficient regarding the successful conduct of their scholarship. Simultaneously, national research assessment schemes such as the REF gauge researchers primarily by their ability to enhance international competitive reputation and revenue. This evolvement negatively impacts scholars' sense of control over their role in shaping how international scholarship is understood and pursued (e.g., regarding the co-development of more equitable research environments and practices).

Exploring expanded notions of diaspora as an alternative interpretative framework for "the global" helped to illustrate the limitations of current top-down implemented internationalization strategies prevalent in the United Kingdom. It has done so by shifting the attention to situated instances of international academic collaboration. *The Re-Reading Room* helped to explore the active roles that diasporic academics can play in shaping how "the global" is perceived and performed in UK academia, as they navigate the complexities of working in an increasingly diverse world. Underlining the agency of scholarly communities in situationally and actively shaping alternative notions of

"the global," it exemplified that a departure from conventional competitive metrics of academic success is possible.

The Re-Reading Room stands as a partial and situated testament to the potential of academics in the arts and humanities to collaboratively foster more equitable collaboration, thereby resisting the commodification and homogenization typical of neoliberal agendas. The conclusions drawn are, thus, specific to the settings and participants involved. As *The Re-Reading Room* exemplified, a non-competitive ethos and a sense of community and trust between collaborators are key when seeking to jointly establish equitable conditions and developing linguistic and non-linguistic strategies for equitable collaboration. Acknowledging and actively including the proneness of today's heterogeneous scholarly communities to misunderstanding and deferral can support the emergence of alternative subjectivities, sensitivities, and practices that might be subdued in more streamlined or competition-driven approaches to collaboration: for example, it can foster modes of active listening, paying attention to others, or forms of self-critical meta-commentary regarding the more systemic issues underlining international scholarly knowledge creation today. This co-creation goes beyond merely employing inventive strategies for language use. Rather, it involves an active (re)consideration of technological environments, sociocultural structures, and behavioral dynamics and the potential barriers to participation resulting from these. Besides being a collaborative task, a considerate approach to facilitation can also help minimize these barriers. For example, offering guidance on technologies used during a collaboration can decrease insecurities resulting from different levels of techno-literacy, while tentative CoCs and participatory exercises can address common inequality issues in participation, such as the use of complex terminology without explaining or defining it.

The findings from *The Re-Reading Room* suggest that, with little chance for a larger, systemic transformations in research and higher education environments in the United Kingdom, it seems to largely remain the responsibility of academics themselves to promote and pursue more equitable environments and practices for collaboration—for example, within research projects, reading groups, workshops, or editorial initiatives. However, more appreciation and support, not least on the institutional level, is needed for the ongoing labor and time required for facilitating and collaboratively developing equitable conditions and linguistic and non-linguistic strategies for collaboration across, and with respect to, the growing diversity in international scholarship.

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