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(Un)wanted bodies and the internationalisation of higher education

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Abstract

In this paper, we foreground the bodies of students and academics in studies of the internationalisation of higher education (IHE) and consider how internationalisation processes are shaped by embodiment and the geographies of (em)placement. Over the past 20 years, IHE has been extensively discussed within academic and policy circles. Such accounts have often been dominated by macro-level concerns. Within these discourses, the international mobility of students and academics have been a central focus. Although scholars within the social sciences are increasingly attentive to the social, cultural, and political dimensions of IHE, there has been little explicit discussion of bodies and the ways in which international mobilities are corporeal, involving in place/out of placeness and the politics and policies governing embodied (im)mobilities. This paper has two main objectives mapping on to two substantive sections. The first is to highlight the importance of the body within recent geographical scholarship and to juxtapose this with a notable absence within IHE research. The second is to consider where the body is present (explicitly or otherwise) in the bountiful literature on IHE and to draw out the meanings of this, arguing that paying attention to bodies exposes the (re)production of exclusionary hierarchies. The paper contributes to a growing corpus of work on the body within geography and extends critical geographies of the internationalisation of higher education.

Keywords

belonging, bodies, embodiment, global hierarchies, international academics, international students, international higher education

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1 Introduction

> 'From next year, with a few exceptions, students coming from overseas will be barred from bringing their dependants with them when they come to study in the UK […] What they don't see are women with small children, families without child-supporting networks back home, and students who – reasonably – would not like to be separated from their partners for a long time' (Malik, 2023, n.p.).

Over the past 20 years, the internationalisation of higher education (IHE) has been extensively debated within and across geography and the social sciences (Adriansen and Madsen, 2021; Beech, 2015; Brooks and Waters, 2011; Knight, 2012; Prazeres et al., 2017; Spangler and Adriansen, 2021; Teichler, 2004; Waters, 2017; Waters and Brooks, 2021). Many academic accounts have been preoccupied with what could be termed macro-level concerns: global, national, and institutional policies and governance (e.g. Dale and Robertson, 2009; Robertson, 2005), and the influence that neoliberalisation (Kim, 2009; Marginson and Rhoades, 2002) and academic capitalism (Jessop, 2018) have had on these developments. The 'skills' or 'knowledge' associated with higher education have been habitually viewed as portable assets (cf. Raghuram, 2021) and the broader discussion has framed internationalisation as either a neutral or openly beneficial process for all those involved (Madge et al., 2009). The mobility of students and staff has long been associated with the internationalisation of higher education and is widely viewed as one of its pillars (de Wit and Altbach, 2021). And yet the conceptualisation of student/staff mobility (and their social geographies) remains rather circumscribed. Silence often persists around the corporeality of international students and academics; often, their personhood is negated, and their bodies are largely written out of the story. When their bodies are mentioned, they are habitually marked as different: foreign, migrant, immigrant, (dis)abled, racialised, or transnational. They are (dis)placed in ways that are contradictory and unpredictable. As the quotation opening this paper indicates, international (student) bodies are also, disingenuously, assumed to be 'unencumbered' when it comes to significant others.

Academic debates dovetail with policy pronouncements, wherein the 'international body' is deemed either a desirable commodity or something to be shunned and controlled. Many nation-states covet international talent and reward wanted (desired) individuals with permanent residency or citizenship (Yang, 2018). The Scottish Government, for example, will launch a Talent Attraction and Migration Service (TAMS) in 2024, attempting to boost the number of international students staying in Scotland after graduation (Scottish Government, 2024). These desired bodies are emplaced firmly within the boundaries of the nation-state. International students are actively sought for their 'fees' (the so-called 'cash cow' discourse, see Robertson, 2011; Lomer et al., 2021). Conversely, states may actively shun international bodies, preventing or controlling their entry and/or expelling students immediately after their study visa expires (Falkingham et al., 2021). Discourses concerning reducing or capping international student numbers circulate, as recent discussions in Canada attest (Paas-Lang, 2023). In a different context, the UK government announced that international students will no longer be able to bring dependents with them (as indicated in the opening quotation) and subsequently extended this to include skilled migrants (such as international academics); a move that seeks to reduce immigration numbers and facilitate the meeting of immigration targets. It also, however, disregards the fact that many international students and academics have caring responsibilities or may depend on the companionship of significant others (Malik, 2023). The policy will (intentionally or otherwise) prevent international students/academics from feeling at home – putting down roots – whilst maintaining a sensation of being out-of-place (Spangler, 2023). This is an aspect of international student and academic mobility that we explore below.

Furthermore, international students and academics are frequently subjected to discrimination and racism (Bhopal and Pitkin, 2020; Lee, 2006; Mählck, 2013). Within Anglo-American and western European higher education, to be perceived as white is often to experience belonging, whilst embodying

'the good researcher' (Mählck, 2013: 69). Many white western international academics and students thereby benefit from their embodiment. Conversely, black and minority ethnic staff and students may be made to feel out-of-place (Kobayashi and Peake, 2000; Tolia-Kelly, 2010). Esson and Last (2020) introduce some of these issues in relation to UK higher education and geography; in a special section of *Area* (see also Bhakta, 2020) that includes Ahmet's (2020) discussion of the experience of black and minority ethnic postgraduate students attending London-based universities. It makes a powerful case for the ways in which feeling out-of-place operates in practice (e.g. in relation to architecture, social spaces and constant representations of white scholars hanging on walls). It can be assumed that these feelings may be experienced equally by both international staff and students within these spaces, even when, in other respects, staff and students may be *differentially* positioned in relation to the state and their academic institution (staff, for example, may feel more secure in relation to their visa or financial status, housing tenure and future prospects compared to international students).

Undoubtedly, the COVID-19 pandemic has elevated the importance of bodies within internationalisation of higher education studies. The closing of nation-state borders and a cessation or reduction of international flights made researchers more aware of how bodies and their mobilities had been hitherto taken for granted. A flurry of academic publications, addressing the implications of pandemic restrictions on international students in particular, have thereby followed (e.g. Fløisdorf and Adriansen, 2023; Hari et al., 2023; Mittelmeier and Cockayne, 2023; Waters, 2020). Many international students were unable to travel to their study destinations and remained 'stuck' at home – participating in classes online and from a distance (Fløisdorf and Adriansen, 2023). International academics were likewise either 'stranded' or 'exiled' (often taking the last possible flight home) (Gourlay, 2020; Nachatar Singh and Chowdhury, 2021). The resulting mental health concerns for international students have been partially considered (e.g. Malet Calvo et al., 2022), while they remain surprisingly unaddressed in respect of staff. Amongst other things, the restrictions imposed by states in the wake of COVID-19 have rendered the embodied nature of internationalisation more visible than previously.

In this paper, we contribute to a growing corpus of work within geography on embodiment and centre the bodies of students and academics in discussions of the internationalisation of higher education. We define 'the body' after Moss and Dyck (2003) as: 'multiple and varied discursive formations that inscribe corporeal vessels signifying human being(s). In this sense, there is no single, universal *body*. There are only multiply differentiated *bodies*' (p. 58). Additionally, and inspired by Massey (2005), we advocate a relational understanding of bodies. At an ontological level, this entails approaching bodies not as fixed, detached and individual entities, but as encumbered. The individualist understanding of bodies is inherent in much research and policy within internationalisation of higher education, as exemplified in the introductory quote. Instead, we approach bodies relationally with multiple identities, we understand bodies in all their messy attachments to significant others, and we recognise the productive possibilities attached to recognising higher education internationalisation as embodied. A relational understanding of bodies makes it possible to study bodies as interconnected and constructed through social encounters. We use the definition of internationalisation of higher education offered by de Wit et al. (2015) as: '*the intentional process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions and delivery of post-secondary education, in order to enhance the quality of education and research for all students and staff, and to make a meaningful contribution to society*" (de Wit et al., 2015: 281, highlighted in original). There are five common instruments of internationalisation: outgoing student mobility, incoming student mobility, academic mobility, English as a medium of instruction and internationalisation at home. This paper touches upon the first three of these, which all concern embodied mobility. In non-Anglophone countries, internationalisation is often operationalised through *language* (notably, English Medium Instruction) as an ostensibly self-evident prerequisite for mobility (Galloway et al., 2020). Language becomes both a testable skill and a bodily

attribute and thus work on language is highly relevant for our analysis. The chosen definition of internationalisation highlights its processual nature; it conceptualises higher education institutions as interconnected through flows and networks. This dynamic understanding is important for this paper, as it resonates with a relational understanding of bodies.

We contend that focussing on messy bodies and their geographies is productive, in that it illuminates which bodies are *wanted* and which are *unwanted*; which *belong* and which will be always *out-of-place.* We thereby highlight neglected issues around global hierarchisation and the production of inequalities within the internationalisation of higher education whilst also introducing a much-needed critical perspective. As geographers, we are attentive to the importance of location and scale, therefore we focus on how nation-states desire and/or detest migrant bodies; how international students and academics are made to feel in- or out-of-place through the active 'othering' of their bodies by nation-states and their institutions; whilst recognising the fundamental role that significant others play within experiences of the internationalisation of higher education. Many of these issues find resonance with recent work on critical geographies of migration (Mitchell et al., 2019) and we will briefly discuss these below. It should be noted that higher education institutions consist of more than the bodies of 'students' and 'academics' (there are many other persons present within this space). Furthermore, the demarcation of students and academics is also, to a certain extent, artificial – students can also be academics and vice-versa whilst at the same time adopting multiple other roles and identities. However, for the sake of clarity, we focus only on the explicit discussion of international students and academics here (Cheng et al., 2023).

The remainder of the paper has two main objectives mapping on to two substantive sections. The first objective is to highlight the importance of the body within recent geographical scholarship and to juxtapose this with its notable absence within IHE research. Section one consequently offers a brief discussion of literature taking up the notion of body in geography. This is followed by a review of scholarship across geography and the social sciences on the internationalisation of higher education, highlighting how the bodies of students and academics have been omitted and considering the implications of this disembodying. The second objective is to consider areas where the body *is* present (explicitly or otherwise) in the bountiful literature on IHE and to draw out the meanings of this. This second section of the paper therefore analyses the notion of (un)wanted bodies, with a focus on three overlapping themes: (1) states and (un) wanted bodies; (2) othering and (un)wanted difference; and (3) students'/academics' embodied entanglements with significant others. We consider the polarised ways in which bodies within IHE are often positioned as wanted (valued) or unwanted (burden/alien) or as in-place or out-of-place, and reflect upon what this tension means for how bodies might be understood within IHE.

II The body in geography and migration research, and its absence in IHE

As outlined above, in this section of the paper we first consider how 'the body' has been discussed within geographical scholarship to date before focussing specifically on work on critical geographies of migration, within which the body has been conspicuously present. We then reflect upon the relative disembodiment of IHE scholarship and its implications.

1 The body in geography

Tuan (1977) has famously written about the body in *Space and place*: *The perspective of experience*. For Tuan, the body is an integral aspect of space: in short, because the body is in space and takes up space. He was concerned with how the body could be lost in space or, conversely, feel at home. However, Tuan's agenda was a humanistic one, finding similarities in the experiences of bodies across cultures and time; what he proposed was not a critical geography of the body.

Critical debates around the 'place' of the body in geography emerged in the 1990s with a few key papers in this journal – for example, Longhurst

(1997), which builds on Rose's (1995) *Progress Report* on 'Geography and gender'. Longhurst reveals the costs of the mind/body dualism found throughout geography discourse at the time. In *Mind and body spaces*: *Geographies of illness*, *impairment and disability* (Butler and Parr, 1999), one of two edited volumes from Routledge's *Critical Geographies* in 1999 (the other is Teather, 1999), the discussion of mind/body dualities continues. The spatialities of disability and mental health are exposed through the places where those suffering ill health live. In her 2004 book, Longhurst sought to identify '*some of the ways in which 'we' both disavow and invoke different kinds of bodies in geographical knowledge' as a form of feminist practice*' (p. 1). This includes acknowledging bodies in all their 'leaky' and 'messy' glory. Longhurst's (1995) feminist critique of the tendency to side-line bodies in research has been instrumental in changing the terms of the debate, wherein she argues that '*the historical privileging of the conceptual over the corporeal* [has resulted] *in the production of hegemonic*, *masculinised and disembodied geographical knowledges*' (p. 97). Colls (2007) has likewise called for a critical engagement with bodily matter and materialisation in understanding how societies function. Across the discipline of geography, over the past two decades, bodies have increasingly been prioritised within certain sub-fields. Colls and Evans (2014) build on Longhurst's scholarship (2004, 2005) in their research on obesogenic environments and the production of (problematic) obesity. Their work is both geographical and foregrounds the importance of bodies, challenging the ubiquitous representation of obesity as being in need of intervention and/or diseased; instead drawing attention to the geographies that both produce obesity and pathologise fat bodies in the first place. Also invoking bodies, Holton (2020) has explored the geographies of hair, arguing that it complicates the (messy) borders of bodies whilst also representing '*different cultural*, *ethnic*, *racialised and gendered identities…. it is powerful*, *yet can also denote suppression*, *dysfunction and sickness*' (n.p.). Gökarıksel's (2009) piece on religious practices presents some different reflections on hair, embodiment and its social geographies. Over the years, the pages of *Progress* have been instrumental, in fact, in introducing the idea of bodies to many areas of (geographical) scholarship, including retailing and consumption (Crewe, 2001), art (Hawkins, 2013; see also McCormack, 2008), indigeneity (Radcliffe, 2018), health and environment (Senanayake and King, 2019), legal geographies (Jeffrey, 2020), political ecology (Nichols and Del Casino, 2021) and studies of urban enclaves (Waldman and Ghertner, 2023). Perhaps most significant for our arguments has been work on migration, asylum and displacement and we briefly highlight some major contributions in this area, below, before connecting this to work on IHE.

2 Migration and embodiment

Internationalisation researchers can learn from how migration scholars have conceptualised embodiment. The ways in which the state perceives and categorises migrant bodies at different scales, for example, has been discussed by Mountz (2018), who focuses on the infliction of violence and trauma (both at the border and within the most intimate and personal spaces of the everyday) on bodies. Häkli and Kallio (2021) argue that it is not enough for asylum seekers to be seen as bodies (they are still viewed as an anonymous and passive mass). Rather, the struggle for embodied personhood (the body as person), they argue, is at the centre of asylum seeking, because such a perspective allows for the possibility of agency and resistance, as well as empathy.

How the state views and categorises migrants can reflect changes in and to migrant bodies over time. Amrith (2021) discusses ageing bodies in relation to the experiences of temporary migrant domestic workers. In the context of Singapore, aging domestic workers are repatriated once they reach retirement age (in this case, 60 years old), after which they are not permitted to renew their employment contracts and must return home. Their bodies go from productive (wanted) to unproductive (unwanted) literally overnight, with geographical consequences apparent in their impelled 'return'. As we will argue, IHE often requires similar (temporary) relationships to the host state, involving an analogous control of bodies in space and a discursive tendency to in/

exclude in a way that responds to various temporal rhythms and stretches over time (Enriquez-Gibson, 2022).

Gilmartin and Kuusisto-Arponen (2019) explore the role of bodies and borders in critical geographies of migration and highlight a recent focus on the 'biopolitical' (alongside a more enduring interest in the 'geopolitical'). They make two key points: (1) the bodies of migrants are habitually categorised and hierarchized resulting in their marginalisation and exploitation and (2) there is much to learn from the embodied experiences of migrants at work. Kuusisto-Arponen and Gilmartin (2019) also consider the role of embodiment in the forced migration of children, highlighting the importance of care and its relational nature. Indeed, this is a point we are keen to make here – that embodied academic mobility is also related to caring relationships with significant others. And Yeoh et al. (2019) discuss 'corporeal geographies' in the context of labour migration within Asia. They highlight the stratification of migrant bodies by race and gender, but also stress the significance of 'transitoriness' and the reduced possibilities for permanence within labour migration. Academic migration is also, often, temporary, resulting in a sense of precarity and uncertainty for many international scholars (Jöns, 2007) and students (Chacko, 2021).

The regulation of bodies from the Global South is a theme taken up in Mayblin and Turner's (2021) work, where they discuss technologies of bodily control within visa regimes, including identity checks and body scanners, used to mark different bodies as superior or inferior. The maintenance of borders between countries in the Global North and Global South is specifically about controlling the mobility of (un)wanted bodies. At the same time, regional entities such as the European Union have, over the years, sought to eliminate obstacles limiting the mobilities of (wanted) people within its own borders, by removing restrictions such as visas. This apparent contradiction – of different bodily regulation depending on the origin of the body in question – is evident in migration policies throughout the Global North.

Clearly, such a snapshot of work on critical geographies of migration and embodiment cannot do justice to a burgeoning field. For the purposes of this paper, however, it is productive to consider what scholarship on IHE might glean from this. First, there is the political nature of embodied mobilities. Politics is not always at the forefront of IHE research, whereas contemporary migration scholarship is more explicitly political. Second, this work exposes how migrant bodies are categorised and hierarchised according to, for instance, gender, race, language, and class and how this is achieved actively by state and other institutions. Third, we can see how embodied migrants are embedded in messy webs of care relations with others, with implications for their experiences of migration. Lastly, recent work on migration has tended to highlight temporality, elevating the importance of 'temporary' mobilities. The perception that international students and academics are often temporary has, without doubt, made them appear somehow less significant within broader discussions of the implications of IHE. This, we argue, is a misunderstanding of their prominence.

3 Disembodied IHE scholarship and its implications

Over the past 20 years, intellectual interest in IHE has expanded in line with the speed in which universities are internationalising. Within contemporary HE, internationalisation has moved to the centre of universities' agendas. It involves countries and institutions and manifests in various (educational, human resource and immigration-related) policies, but rarely are bodies considered in relation to these, let alone prioritised.

Intriguing are instances where the body is ostensibly evoked, but in reality is absent. In this next sub-section, we consider some examples of this. Concepts such as 'brain drain', 'brain gain' and 'brain circulation' are used extensively within discussions of IHE: Knight (2012), for instance, makes widespread reference to the term 'brain'. She describes '*the great brain race of the twenty-first century*' (p. 21) and proceeds to outline different ways in which the brain is relevant to this debate: '*brain gain*, *brain drain*, *and brain train*' (p. 21). This notion of brain suggests an inherent corporeality. Knight (2012) writes: '*The original goal of helping students from developing countries move to*

another country to complete a degree and return home is fading fast as nations compete to retain brain power' (p. 28). Retaining brain power means, of course, retaining bodies; in this case, of students/graduates who become knowledge workers. And yet, the discussion makes no reference to bodies, and individuals are instead represented as disembodied brains; brain is a euphemism for knowledge or skills, but nothing more. There is no allusion to the 'messy' body invoked by Longhurst (2004) which invokes a person's feelings and emotions as well as physiology (including ailments and illness, neurodiversity, injury, menstruation, pregnancy, menopause and so on). There is no discussion of the experiences or motivations of these brains, nor any consideration of how nation-states, for example, go about 'retaining' brains (Knight, 2012). As described by Mählck (2013) in relation to Swedish higher education (HE): '*the field of HE and research policy is* […] *often displayed as a war over the best brains*, *thereby presenting a representation of a* ***disembodied researcher*** […]' (p. 72, emphasis added). The disembodied researcher is not simply an oversight but supports a particular neoliberal narrative within contemporary higher education that inevitably dehumanises the subject.

This depiction of the movement of brains (gained, drained, circulated) evokes unexplored geographies. Who is 'gaining' what, for example, and why? The nation-state is generally privileged within these discussions – brains are lost or gained *by countries* rather than communities, institutions or families. It replicates wider discussions around states' attempts to court capital through migration and the 'ideology of the market' (Mitchell, 1993, 2003). Individuals are important in so far as they are workers with brains or skills (Bauder, 2008). For Cheng (2015), this is a question of 'biopolitics' and how states view and seek to exert control over their populations (through their bodies). Furthermore, and beyond the nation-state, brain drain/gain narratives serve to reinforce persistent understandings of the world as divided into the Global North and Global South, wherein countries located in the South lose their talent, through emigration, to countries in the North, which invariably gain in manifold ways (Vinokur, 2006).

In a critique of the brain drain discourse, Rizvi (2005) argues for a postcolonial perspective on international student mobility, shedding light on student subjectivities and aspirations and more broadly on the cultural politics of identity, mobility, and globalisation. Yet, Rizvi does not deal with bodies in his analysis of students' narratives. This is surprising, given that identity is so often framed in relation to (racialised) bodies (Tolia-Kelly, 2010). Within the student accounts (Rizvi, 2005), some individuals mentioned family obligations (as a reason for returning home after study). The importance of family relations within brain circulation was thereby implied, but does not directly enter the analysis. Brain circulation has also been used by Jöns (2009), amongst others, to denote academics' circular mobility. Jöns's work explores the long-term effects of academic mobility to Germany in the second half of the twentieth century and shows how this facilitated the country's reintegration into an international research community after the Second World War. She also highlighted the gendered dimensions of academic mobilities (see also Leung, 2013). Whilst her scholarship represents a significant contribution to debates around academic mobility, gender remains a relatively disembodied (and categorical) concept.

In summary, perspectives on IHE that take into account individuals' bodies are still relatively unusual and yet there are serious implications of neglecting corporeality in these discussions. The experiences of individuals for whom their gender, race, religion, ethnicity or health/(dis)ability and relationships with significant others are profoundly important are disregarded. Side-lining the messy diversity of bodies may also mean inadvertently ignoring discrimination and racial inequalities, limiting the abilities of institutions and states to devise and enact policies to counter this – in support of mobile students and academics. And, of course, such perspectives deny the full range of uncontainable human experiences that can emerge from the mobilities related to IHE. In what follows, we turn to discuss the importance of bodies within IHE directly.

III Geographies and bodies within IHE

Now, we highlight instances where the body is either implied or discussed within scholarship on IHE,[1]

with a view both to initiating a conversation about the role of bodies and to drawing fruitful connections with wider research on geographies of embodiment.

1 States and (un)wanted academic bodies

Reflecting on the hierarchisation and categorisation of different migrants, Dixit (2021) discusses how visa regimes in the Global North control international academics' bodies. She uses her own experiences of rejection to highlight the racialised experiences of academics. Dixit considers how '*the operations of the visa system reinforce existing hierarchies between the* '*safe*' *spaces of the Global North* […] *and the* '*unsafe*' *spaces of the Global South*' (2021: 66). The experience of visa rejection, Dixit argues, can strongly reinforce feelings of non-belonging. She writes: '*migration and borders are racialised*, *as bodies from the Global South are surveilled*, *categorised and*, *often*, *barred from entering Global North spaces*' (p. 70). Different bodies are positioned differently with respect to one country or another when it comes to global mobility. The unpredictability of whether one's body will be deemed 'safe' only serves to reinforce the feelings of extreme anxiety that scholars from the Global South often experience.

In the aftermath of September 11, 2001, the tightening of visa controls across many countries in the Global North included restricting international student visas (Kell and Vogl, 2012). Later, in 2017, the 'travel ban' announced by United States President Donald Trump, preventing immigration of individuals from a definitive list of (largely middle eastern and/or Muslim) countries had a direct impact upon international students' physical mobilities, with strong discriminatory undertones based on the embodied characteristics of skin colour and religion (Rose-Redwood and Rose-Redwood, 2017). Kalemba (2022) has made similar arguments about how the state (in this case, Australia) differentiates between potential international student bodies to admit the '*right kind of migrants*' (p. 573) and, conversely, to exclude the undesired.

The use of biometrics in tracking and controlling staff and student mobility is also directly linked to nation-states' attempts to manage migrant bodies. Warren and Mavroudi (2011) provided an early account of the use of biometrics in the immigration experiences of international students and academics to the UK. They claimed that '*BRPs* [Biometric Residence Permits] *can be seen as expanding the geographies of bodily surveillance*' (p. 1498). In this case, biometric data included a digital photograph of the face and digital fingerprints. These observations relate directly to a broader conversation about the use of biometrics in immigration and border control (e.g. Amoore, 2006; Hyndman and Mountz, 2020).

Language testing is one of the key instruments used by states to regulate migration, when 'country of origin' is no longer deemed an acceptable reason for exclusion (Shohamy, 2017). A notorious, historical example of language testing in migration regulation is the Australian Dictation Test, designed to implement the White Australia Policy at the turn of the 20th Century (McNamara, 2009). The language and content of a 50-word dictation test was manipulated to reflect racist views around whether a migrant was wanted or unwanted. Undesired migrants were intentionally presented with language or content they were unlikely to know (e.g. an unwanted Czech Jewish applicant fluent in several European languages was tested in Scottish Gaelic), thus preventing their subsequent entry (McNamara, 2005). In the United States, language criteria were explicitly added to immigration legislation in the 1906 Act; citizenship applicants were required to '*sign their petitions in their own handwriting and speak English*' (Kunnan, 2009: 39). The requirement to read and write had already appeared in the previous Act from 1893, but without specifying the language. At the beginning of the 20th century, there were several attempts to require reading and writing skills as a way of preventing the entry of 'undesirable immigrants' (cited by Kunnan, 2009: 40; Immigration Restriction League, 1915). Reading and knowledge tests based on language, such as those on the US Constitution, were often designed to restrict certain racialised groups of people (such as eastern Europeans or Asians), frequently successfully (Kunnan, 2009). These longstanding ideas have continued and spread and are used to categorise and control the bodies of international students and academics today. What makes language a particularly complex

category in the regulation of mobility, however, is that while clearly defined and standardised languages are important for monolingual nation-states (Blommaert, 2006), peoples' *actual* language repertoires and embodied language identities (see next section) are much messier (Makoni and Pennycook, 2005).

In Finland, as in most other international student admitting countries, there are language requirements for incoming students. International students entering English Medium Instruction programmes are expected, by the admitting university, to provide English language certificates (Saarinen and Nikula, 2013). However, students from Anglophone countries (UK, US, Ireland, Australia, Anglophone Canada and New Zealand) are exempt from this requirement as well as students with similar degrees from a European Union (EU) or Nordic country (i.e. non-Anglophone countries). In the case of EU or Nordic students, exemption reflects an ideological aspiration for 'political closeness' and increased intra-regional mobility; young people from these countries represent *wanted* bodies and their mobilities are facilitated. Students from dozens of countries where English is an official language (such as Pakistan, Nigeria or Jamaica, for instance) on the other hand, are not exempt, thereby suggesting that this policy is not about language *per se*, but is ideological in its rejection of certain (unwanted) bodies. The 50-plus English speaking countries that are not exempted from this language requirement are largely former colonies with predominately non-white populations. It is hard, therefore, not to see these as *de facto* racist policies, applied for purposes of entry at the level of the nation-state to police the bodies of international students and the boundaries of the country.

Language tests themselves are problematic from the perspective of bodily control of international students and academics. Pearson (2019) discusses the ethical implications of IELTS (International English Language Testing System) and suggests that the recent growth of testing (IELTS has 3.5 million takers annually) has made it a global gatekeeper, regulating student mobilities. As the tests have been shown to be biased towards Anglophone students (Ugiagbe et al., 2022), and access to them is often restricted to urban, wealthy, highly educated families and social elites (Green, 2019), language testing has become another tool for governing the unequal mobilities of bodies over state borders.

As this section has shown, states have a pivotal role to play in controlling the bodies of international students and academics; without the state there would be no international mobility. The way in which states enact this control is fundamentally related to the treatment of bodies. In the next section, we shift our attention to the 'othering' of bodies at scales below that of the state.

2 Othering and (un)wanted difference

By failing to acknowledge bodies in IHE, the violence enacted on individuals through discrimination (including racism and ableism), 'othering', and a general lack of care, are obscured (Tolia-Kelly, 2010). In what follows, we consider examples, emergent in the literature, of how bodies matter in international student and staff mobility. We begin by extending the discussion of language and the state, above, to consider language as 'embodied' and constituting bodily control.

Language is a very distinct and messy form of embodiment, involving the mouth (lips, teeth and tongue) whilst also reflecting the socio-cultural milieu within which one has been 'raised'. It matters because it is linked to discrimination and, often, racialisation. Increasingly, geographers are engaging with accent and its relationship to discrimination (Donnelly et al., 2022; Hall, 2020) and 'race' (see Ramjattan, 2019; Rosa, 2019). Linguistic and bodily traits mix messily in discussions about languages and their speakers (Ramjattan, 2019); language is inescapably embodied. To talk about language as *skill*, separable from the speakers and their bodies, is much akin to treating mobile academics as incorporeal mobile brains. Ways of speaking, including 'accents' (see Adriansen et al., 2023) lead to inferences being drawn about *who* the speaker is. As Creese and Kambere (2003) point out, accents not only often signal immigration status but are '*embodied by racialized subjects*' (p. 566).

Widely advertised 'accent reduction courses', for example, offered by various institutions and targeting

migrants, can deploy very invasive, remedial and pathologizing methods to achieve 'results' (including physical adjustments of the tongue and lips). The modification of bodies, in the quest for acceptability (and belonging), is thereby a central aim (see for instance Ennser-Kananen et al., 2021; Ramjattan, 2019). In the Australian context, Dovchin (2020) has discussed international students' experiences of 'linguistic racism', in the form of 'accent bullying' and stereotyping. What makes this a particularly difficult issue to research is that accents are not linguistic categories as such, but are based on the *perceptions* of listeners. In other words, the interpretation of accent may depend on the speaker's appearance, rather than being an 'objective' assessment of resonance. This, in turn, means that 'accent modification' does not necessarily produce desired results of becoming a wanted body. The entanglements of language and bodies are, therefore, messy and unpredictable.

Language is an '*enactment of a collective order*; that is *a way of structuring societies*' (Gal and Woolard, 1995: 130), and the consequences for regulation of bodies based on language have included social withdrawal, a sense of non-belonging, low self-esteem and anxiety amongst international students with poor levels of spoken communication and non-native accents. However, accents can also work in a migrant's favour. As Enriquez-Gibson (2019) explained in her own auto-ethnographic account of being an international academic, the desire to 'place' a 'foreign' body is ever present:

> 'I am misrecognised because of my accent, I sound American, sometimes, British, but most of the time cosmopolitan in the sense of Bourdieu (1992). My local accent in a foreign body has privileged me and allows crossing boundaries more smoothly at times and yet the monoglot ideology could still be a silencing instrument that does not recognise the resources that I and migrants like me possess' (Enriquez-Gibson 2019 p. 302).

Here she evokes the complexity of regulated monoglot ideals (Silverstein, 1996) and multilingual realities (Blommaert, 2006; Makoni and Pennycook, 2005), and the ensuing impossibility of placing a body within a one-language-one-identity nation-state and their regulations.

Race can be mobilised alongside other traits too (such as gender) in the process of 'othering'. In her study of transnational academic mobility, Mählck (2018) uncovers the experiences of black Tanzanian and Mozambican PhD students within an academic department in Sweden. They experienced discrimination (expressed not through language but through ignoring and silence), which they attributed to both their race and their gender, resulting in inequality in supervision experienced as bodily sensation:

> 'When we sat in the room and he [the supervisor] was sitting in the chair next to me, he never looked at me, always talked above my head. He would talk in Swedish with other people. He made me feel very small, invisible – yes, it is always there, you know, with white people, the question of skin colour. I don't think he was used to working with black people' (Mählck, 2018: 260).

Lee and Rice (2007) have explored the experiences of international students at universities in the United States, noting that: 'Students from Asia, India, Latin America, and the Middle East reported considerable discrimination while students from Europe, Canada, and New Zealand did not report any direct negative experiences related to their race or culture' (p. 393), again underlining the differential experiences of groups of students, some clearly *advantaged* by their race and culture.

Feelings of homesickness, loneliness, and displacement and, conversely, belonging, security, and feeling at home (e.g. Spangler, 2023) can be directly linked to mental health. The mental health concerns of international students are finding their way into discussions of international student mobility (Gilmartin et al., 2021), but research in this area remains scarce. While there are a small number of studies of academics' mental health - for example, *The epidemic of poor mental health among higher education staff* (Morrish, 2019) and a review of stress, coping, health and well-being amongst academics (Shen and Slater, 2021) - these studies

regrettably do not address international staff. Conradson (2016) writes about the increase in mental ill health amongst higher education students. Evidence would suggest that international students are as likely, if not more likely, than home students to suffer poor mental health during their studies (ICEF Monitor, 2022). They are less inclined to access support services and less likely to have friends and family close by to provide emotional support. A growing body of work suggests that international students' mental health should be a priority for higher education institutions (Bradley, 2000; Forbes-Mewett and Sawyer, 2019). Conversely, there would appear to be very little written on international academic mobility and physical health – for example, on international students and academics with disabilities (see Johnstone and Edwards, 2020; Soorenian, 2022). This perhaps reflects a problematic assumption that individuals with disabilities face significant and often insurmountable barriers to studying or working abroad.

3 The role played by significant others

Here, in this final substantive sub-section, we probe further into the messy relationality of bodies and their significant others. We opened this paper with a brief discussion of the UK government's decision to disallow dependents for international students on undergraduate or Master's programmes. Whilst deemed 'callous and uncaring' by some commentators, viewing international students as unencumbered is unsurprising when placed in the broader context of their recent discursive framing in Anglo-American debates (where fees for HE are charged) – students are 'cash cows' and academics represent 'knowledge'. Our focus here on significant others takes inspiration from Holloway et al. (2010), who argue that the 'life worlds' of students and staff are important, '*broaden[ing] our spatial lens, in terms of what 'count' as educational spaces*' (p. 583). We understand 'significant others' to include close family, friends, and pets, reflecting our framing of bodies as relational, fluid and attached.

Work on capacity-building programmes in the Global South is illustrative of this point. These programmes can be seen as a type of internationalisation (Adriansen et al., 2016) involving the mobility of people and/or materials (Adriansen, 2020). However, the literature within the field does not, routinely, address bodies and their relationships , thereby often neglecting the hardships endured by staff and students living abroad on scholarships and separated from others. Exceptions are found in Mählck (2013, 2018), Whyte and Whyte (2016) and Madsen and Adriansen (2019). Whyte and Whyte (2016), for example, include 'family' in their discussion of the dilemmas of knowledge production within universities in Uganda. They outline how donor funded PhD-programmes pay for Ugandan scholars to stay at Danish universities, but do not provide funds to cover costs for their families, even though the visit may last up to one year. However, the funding is generally so valued that individuals are willing to leave loved ones behind, including small children, in order to participate in the experience. In their critique of the donor programmes, Whyte and Whyte (2016) discuss the significance of family obligations for academic colleagues who: '*have heavy responsibilities for large extended families whose members are poorer and less well connected than they are. They are constantly trying to help with family problems and are obliged to attend family events like funerals and weddings*' (p. 49–50). This often places a huge burden on mobile academics, very similar to the situation for transnational migrants more broadly (Schiller and Fouron, 1999). Likewise, in their report on 30 years of Danish funded capacity building, which has enabled African academics to join international collaborations, Madsen and Adriansen (2019) exemplify how long-term personal relationships play an important role in empowering academics in Africa to embark on an international research career. This often includes notions of bodily acceptability, for example, the do-s and don't-s of behaviour at a Danish society dinner party. They cite the example of a supervisor meeting his mentee at the airport with a coat, worrying that she would be unable to endure the cold weather in Denmark without it. Stories such as this, recognising both the importance of personal relationships and the need for care, are surprisingly rare in the extant literature.

Acknowledgement of the importance of significant others within IHE has been made by those seeking to challenge the restrictive nature of the

category 'international student/academic'. Ploner (2017) writes that the narratives produced by his mobile research participants:

> 'contest currently dominant student classification regimes (i.e. 'UK,' 'Non UK,' 'domestic,' 'overseas,' 'traditional,' 'non-traditional,' etc.) as boundaries between genres, places and identities become blurred and are constantly negotiated by individuals as students, migrants, refugees, citizens, sojourners, travellers, mothers, fathers, wives, husbands, colleagues, etc.' (p. 438)

He makes the point that 'international students' may be defined in a myriad of other (non-student) ways, most notably in their relationships to others (see Brooks, 2012, on student-parents). Raghuram (2013: 141) has also reflected upon this point:

> 'Students traverse other boundaries and categories too… For instance, there is a small body of work that explores how familial decision-making is central to student migrants. This literature extends across generations exploring both the value of student mobility to families (Waters, 2006) and the limits to mobility placed by partnering and children (Ackers, 2008)…. recognising their multiple identities including the importance of family in migration stories.'

It has long been understood that the wider family (notably parents and grandparents) have an important role to play in migration decision-making, including for international students (Beech, 2015; Hu et al., 2022; Pimpa, 2005 – see Yang, 2018 for a detailed discussion of this in relation to Indian students in China). De Winter et al. (2021) found that romantic relationships had a significant bearing upon (were negatively correlated with) whether undergraduate students in Belgium chose to partake in an international mobility scheme. Parents in particular play a role in international students' experiences, even 'at a distance', as documented by Walton-Roberts (2015), where control over women's/daughters' mobility and bodily (especially sexual) behaviour is particularly pronounced. For academics, family obligations (such as caring responsibilities for children) have largely been framed as a constraint on mobility, especially for women (Ackers, 2004; Toader and Dahinden, 2018). Furthermore, entanglements with significant others are not necessarily 'positive' but can, as Walton-Roberts (2015) has documented, be a sign of coercive control.

Interestingly, there is a very small literature on the role that pets can play in the experience of academic mobility. A case study of Chinese students in Italy, for example, shows that time spent abroad can also function as a '*zone of suspension*' (Lan, 2020: 170), where students are able to do things differently away from the family home, including keeping a pet. Likewise, Struzik and Pustulka (2017) have dismissed the tendency to view pets, in studies of international mobility, as mere luggage. Instead, they have stressed the role that pets (and also children) play in shaping academic mobilities, including influencing decisions on how and when to travel, where the needs and wants of the whole family are taken into account.

IV Discussion and concluding remarks

The internationalisation of higher education involves the systematic inclusion of some bodies (notably students and academics) and the exclusion of others, with consequences that comprise the reproduction of global hierarchies and consequent inequalities. And yet, to date, the embodiment of internationalisation processes – the fact that bodies are central to IHE – has been largely absent from academic discussions. This paper has drawn attention to and explored this absence, whilst also considering examples of where bodies are present within the literature, if implicitly so. Seeing bodies as relational with multiple identities and messy attachments to significant others, we argue, makes it possible to understand the internationalisation of higher education as interconnected and constructed through social encounters. Drawing attention to bodies in this way, we argue, not only provides a richer understanding of internationalisations' geographies but also exposes some profound inequalities and violences enacted, at different scales, upon individuals. Neglecting these not only leads to a partial and circumscribed understanding of IHE but means that the global, national and institutional hierarchies that it produces and the inequalities that result go unchallenged.

Through our discussion, we understand better which bodies are *wanted* and which are *unwanted*; which *belong* and which will be always *out-of-place;* and, as geographers, we are attentive to the importance of location and scale. We have highlighted the spatial and social mechanisms by which the (un) wanting of bodies takes place, including through state policies and strategies, institutional practices, or direct discrimination by individuals. As suggested by Amrith (2021), whether a body is desired or rejected can also change with the passing of time.

We have identified three ways in which bodies are significant to this debate, in relation to: (1) states, (2) othering and difference and (3) significant others. Considering nation-state policies and student/staff mobilities first, we drew on literature that focussed specifically on the often-contradictory ways in which states covet (particular) bodies through their immigration and HE policies, at the same time as they actively reject and revile others. States sometimes create the conditions to facilitate home-making and permanent settlement of mobile individuals through, for example, the offer of long-term residency and citizenship whilst also ensuring that other, less desired groups, feel always out-of-place and temporary (Wilson, 2017). Second, we considered students' and academics' (differential) experiences of discrimination at institutional and organisational scales below the nation-state, as a direct consequence of their perceived gender, race, disability, or nationality. As a result of these experiences, some individuals feel out-of-place whilst others effortlessly 'fit in'. Finally, we examined how bodies are inextricably linked to the existence of significant others, including family members, friends, and pets. Significant others, while often absent from explicit national or institutional policies, may help mobile individuals feel at home and in place, wherever in the world they are located or, conversely, they may push them away. Nevertheless, they shape and directly impact upon their experiences (Kuusisto-Arponen and Gilmartin, 2019). Linking bodies relationally to others exposes the complex, messy, and often ignored corporeal geographies of IHE.

Geographical research on the internationalisation of higher education has shown that it is not a neutral process (Madge et al., 2009) and has furthermore emphasised that it can lead to the reproduction of profound global hierarchies and, consequently, inequalities. Our focus on bodies illuminates alternative ways in which these global hierarchies are actively reproduced through internationalisation: by states (through, for example, immigration policy), institutions such as universities (who reinforce post-colonial exclusions based on language 'requirements') and socially (through the interaction of individuals who may discriminate based on religion, accent, race, and so on). Our discussion expands and deepens extant scholarship on the geography of internationalisation in, we suggest, essential ways.

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Note

1. Whilst being cognisant of the limitations of this approach, we have restricted this review to work published in the English language and located (primarily) within the social sciences.

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