

Institution: University College London
Unit of Assessment: 27 – Area Studies
Title of case study: East looks west: engaging European publics with ideas of constructed difference
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>Professor Wendy Bracewell's collaborative, cross-disciplinary project focuses on Europe's limits and divisions as depicted and debated in East European travel writing from 1550 to the present day. The research she has led has had an impact in two distinct areas. In the anglophone West, and particularly in the UK, it has contributed to increased cross-cultural awareness and understanding, and influenced the development and delivery of public education. In eastern Europe, the research has raised the profile of this genre of writing amongst the public and amongst specialists.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>The <i>East Looks West</i> (ELW) project led by Professor Wendy Bracewell at UCL's School of Slavonic & East European Studies challenged scholarly approaches to travel writing that treated this genre primarily as a technology of Western power and depicted east Europeans as the immobile objects of Western travellers. Historically, travel writing from eastern Europe was little known outside its countries of origin, while even in eastern Europe, it tended to be studied as a minor literary genre. ELW discovered a wealth of east European travel writing about Europe and demonstrated how east Europeans used this genre for their own purposes relating to audiences at home and abroad. An important finding was the wide diversity of responses to perceptions of European difference, from 'cultural cringe' to insouciant superiority. ELW showed that east European travel writing played an important role in the complex transnational interactions that created understandings of European belonging and otherness, modernity and backwardness, civilisation and barbarism, 'East', 'West' and indeed 'Europe'. Ultimately, ELW proved that travellers from eastern Europe have been active agents in creating/using these ideas, rather than being simply the objects of others' representations.</p> <p>The research directly underpinning impact was led by Professor Bracewell at UCL in an AHRC project entitled 'East Looks West: East European travel writing on Europe, 1550–2000' (01/09/2001 to 31/12/2005) which led to the publication of two collective volumes: an anthology of texts [a in section 3] and a collection of essays [b], as well as a bibliography [c] and a popular anthology [f]. In addition to being sole or co-editor, she contributed key chapters, selected and edited the texts for the scholarly anthology, and translated about 30% of them. Her collaborator in the AHRC project was Alex Drace-Francis (post-doctoral scholar and lecturer at UCL until 2005, then of Liverpool, now University of Amsterdam), a collaboration which continues to the present. Drace-Francis co-edited and contributed research to the collective volumes.</p> <p>More broadly, research led by Professor Bracewell between 2001–2013 has identified materials, collated and translated key texts, and provided a framework for the use of travelogues to study ideas of European identities. Professor Bracewell and her colleagues elaborated a definition for 'east European travel writing' and established a periodisation for its development; made surveys of the place of travel writing in the national literatures of the region (in many cases providing the first systematic bibliographies of these texts); published annotated translations into English; convened conferences and public events in the UK and abroad focusing on travel writing as a window into the world, but also into the writers' own cultures; and published studies aimed both at scholarly and more popular audiences.</p>
<p>3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)</p> <p>[a] Wendy Bracewell, ed., <i>Orientalisms: an anthology of East European travel writing, ca. 1500–2000, East Looks West</i>, vol. 1 (Budapest and New York: Central European University Press, 2009). [Available on request.]</p> <p>Favourably reviewed in the following authoritative sources: <i>Slavic Review</i>, <i>East Central</i></p>

Impact case study (REF3b)

European Journal, Slavic and East European Journal, Slavonic and East European Review, Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas, Austrian History Yearbook, H-NET reviews. “Makes an important contribution to the lively debates about mentalities, identities, feelings of belonging, about knowledge and power, cultural transfer and cultural change and enriches cultural studies with rare or even unknown documents.” – *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 58.2, 2010.

[b] Wendy Bracewell and Alex Drace-Francis, eds., *Under Eastern Eyes: a comparative introduction to East European travel writing on Europe, East Looks West*, vol. 2 (Budapest and New York: Central European University Press, 2008). [Two chapters by Bracewell; listed in REF2.]
“An important contribution to European studies conceived in the broadest possible sense.” – *Slavic and East European Journal* 53.4, 2009.

[c] Wendy Bracewell and Alex Drace-Francis, eds., *A bibliography of East European travel writing on Europe* (Budapest and New York: Central European University Press, 2008) [Available on request.]
“The first comprehensive survey of this kind.” – *Slavonic and East European Review* 90.3, 2012

[d] Wendy Bracewell and Alex Drace-Francis, eds., *Balkan Departures* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2009) [Two chapters by Bracewell; available on request.]
Reviewed favourably in *Slavonic and East European Review, Anthropological Notebooks, Journal of Transport History, Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas, Slavic and East European Journal, Narodna umjetnost, Revue des études sud-est européennes.*

[e] Wendy Bracewell, ‘Lovrich’s joke: authority, laughter and savage breasts in an 18th-c. travel polemic’. *Études Balkaniques* 2-3 (2011), 224–249. [Listed in REF2.]

[f] Wendy Bracewell and Alex Drace-Francis, eds., *Where to Go in Europe: A Garland of Travellers’ Toilet Papers* (London: SSEES & UCL Centre for Publishing, 2013) [Available on request.]

Key peer reviewed grants:

- Wendy Bracewell (PI). ‘East Looks West: East European travel writing on Europe, 1550-2000’, AHRC: £174,211, duration: 01/09/2001 to 31/12/2005. End-of-grant reported received ‘outstanding’ grade. Outputs: [a], [b], [c] and [f].
- Wendy Bracewell (PI). ‘East European And Balkan Travel Writing On Europe In Comparative Perspective’, AHRC: £14,438, duration: 01/09/2003 to 30/04/2004). Output: [d].
- Wendy Bracewell (PI). ‘East European Travel Writing And The Invention Of Europe’, Leverhulme Trust Major Research Fellowship: £88,305, duration: 15/09/2009 to 14/09/2011. Output: [e].

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

East Looks West (ELW) expanded horizons, particularly in eastern Europe. By encouraging audiences to engage with different perceptions of the world, ELW has challenged stereotypes, increased self-awareness in East and West, promoted cross-cultural communication, and contributed to debate on issues of difference and foreignness. ELW research has **contributed to the cultural life of east European audiences** by creating a new awareness of, and dialogue about, the richness and diversity of travel writing from the region. Its publications have helped to show the value of East European travel writing as a source for the cultural history of Europe, and **created new resources now used in higher education** in eastern Europe and beyond.

Through publications and media partnerships **research contributed to cultural life and stimulated discussions of travel and identity** across eastern Europe. Indicative evidence includes Romanian blogs (e.g. on the utility of ELW approaches to East/West divisions) and news reports (e.g. ELW illuminating cross-cultural perceptions in the new EU) [1]. Bracewell’s article ‘Lovrich’s Joke’ [e] was selected for translation and broadcast on Croatian national public radio (9–

Impact case study (REF3b)

10 May, 2013) for its provocative use of 'cultural cringe' to unpack Croatian attitudes to 'Western' cultural authority [2].

More specialised audiences influenced by ELW include collectors. Two Greek examples are a) the uniquely valuable 30,000 volume E. J. Finopoulos collection of travel books on the Balkans and Levant, and b) the private Lekkas collection on Ionian history. Using ELW research, their consultant librarian alerted these collectors to the significance of travel book production in Eastern Europe, and made it possible to identify new items for purchase, enlarging both the scope and utility of their collections and contributing to a major scholarly and cultural resource. The Finopoulos collection was recently donated to the Benaki Museum, thus making these texts available to a wide public [3].

Research publications are used as **unique educational resources** which enable teachers at higher education institutions to pose new questions and introduce unfamiliar perspectives, particularly across local linguistic boundaries, allowing the use of texts that were otherwise inaccessible. For example, ELW resources counter mono-causal interpretations of the 'Western invention of Europe' in history syllabi (Collegium Artes Liberales, Warsaw; Central European University, Budapest; University of Szeged; McMaster University, Canada; University of St Andrews), while courses in travel literature and cultural studies at the Universities of Cyprus, Bucharest and Prague use ELW research to contrast eastern and western European travellers and introduce specifically east European perspectives [4]. A Bucharest public symposium used *Under Eastern Eyes* [b] to focus discussion of Romanian reconfigurations of identity, and a teachers' handbook from the University of Athens uses *Where to Go in Europe* [f] to explore foreign city-soundscapes [5]. Indeed, the availability of ELW publications on pirate download sites such as LibraryGenesis, hosted in Russia, is further evidence of demand!

Where to Go in Europe [f] was an important channel using accessible and amusing content to promote public engagement with the research. This anthologised travellers' lavatorial anecdotes to show how a universal necessity has been used to construct East/West divisions and thus **engage an English-speaking public with the ideas of constructed differences** examined in the research described in section 2. First printed in 2009, and praised by Times Literary Supplement Editor Peter Stothard on the TLS Blog [6], all 200 copies were rapidly distributed. In May 2013, students in UCL's MA in Publishing produced an expanded edition of 650 print copies and an e-version, launched through a series of exhibitions, readings and interviews attended by some 200 visitors, predominantly young, non-academic Londoners and tourists. Lively comment focused on a new awareness of cultural construction, prompted by travellers' expectations (e.g. "what is a normal toilet?"). In the first two months following the re-issue (to 31 July 2013), a third of the print-run (208 copies) was sold at a RRP of £4.99. Sales were to a broad audience beyond the academic community, such as a book club whose convenor cited the combination of accessibility and serious message. Other responses emphasised the effectiveness of toilet humour as a prompt to self-reflection: as an Amazon reviewer stated: "The book's pervasive humour, by inviting us to laugh at these constructed differences, simultaneously does its part in working to dissolve them"; "shows that differences, within the Balkans, and also East/West, are never so clear and consistent as imagined" [7].

In 2009, Professor Bracewell organised a series of public engagement events together with the Leverhulme writer-in-residence Tony White, using ELW research into east European representations of London, which **provided an important London forum for public debate on experiences of migration**. *Destination London* (19 October to 7 November 2009) events included podcasts of readings, a radio broadcast on east European London in collaboration with Resonance FM, a book launch, a public panel of travel writers, and writing workshops which promoted cross-cultural communication between migrants and hosts. The reach is demonstrated by the attendance: around 200 people (about half of east European heritage) attended and many commented that it was their first engagement with academic research on migration. The significance of this impact is demonstrated by the fact that all available books sold out (worth over £1,000). The lively discussions at the event were echoed in the positive visitor feedback received ("Tonight really helped me understand my feelings as an immigrant in London, and as a Londoner

back at home in Poland”). Subsequent coverage of the event in the Croatian press (*Večernji list*, Zagreb, 24 Nov 2009; one of the two largest dailies in the country), noting the significance of London as a Croatian destination, applauded ELW’s recognition of ‘a new outlook on the city’ created by immigrant travel writing [8].

The success of the 2009 event was repeated in 2013 at *Through Different Eyes*, part of UCL’s Festival of the Arts, 11–12 May 2013. This actively sought to use research to challenge stereotypes in the context of UK debate on east European immigration, and thus **contribute to social cohesion and cultural understanding**. Some 50 participants, British, Polish and Romanian, used travel writing to look ‘through different eyes’, in a reading group and discussions with artists, writers and workers. The positive feedback indicated that the experience was transformative for both migrants and hosts, deepening discourse about migration by including the voices of those who are more often depicted than heard. Comments included: “many times it revealed not only the ignorance about the ‘foreigner’ but also the contradictions in the ‘eyes’ of the viewer!”; “I think that we can understand a country, no matter which, when we stop comparing with what is familiar to us”; “We are not so different, but what a gap between us! If only that type of exchanges of ideas would happened more often, maybe the gap was smaller”; “the other side of the story is how outsiders have themselves reshaped the city and have actively transformed it”. The events were reported by UK migrant blogs, showing reach within the community. One Romanian migrant, after reading an 1840 *ELW* travelogue of London, blogged his own version: “I follow in Codru’s trail and see London today as a very different city. But Codru has opened my eyes to things I did not see before”. This text was subsequently republished by a website showcasing oral histories of migration for a popular and academic audience in Romania and was accompanied by a report, applauding the attempt to understand migration ‘from within’ in contrast to UK tabloid journalism [9].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

[1] Sample blog post (May 2010) on discussion sparked by research: <http://bit.ly/GKw3is>, and an interview with a researcher in the Romanian financial daily, *Financiarul*, 16 May 2013, <http://bit.ly/17Rwxge>.

[2] Corroborating statement provided by the translator of 'Lovrich's Joke' (Assistant Professor, University of Split); available on request.

[3] Corroborating statement provided by the consultant to E. J. Finopoulos Athens and D. Lekkas and research librarian at the Benaki Museum; available on request.

[4] A portfolio of syllabi with examples of use in higher education is available on request.

[5] Bucharest public symposium chaired by critic Liviu Papadima, Dec 2011: <http://bit.ly/17SaTsh>. University of Athens’ teachers’ handbook (see page 65): <http://bit.ly/15jJuyq> [PDF].

[6] *Where to Go in Europe* 2009 edition: privately printed, 200 copies. Notice in the TLS: <http://bit.ly/19ckhFu>.

[7] 2013 edition: co-published by UCL Centre for Publishing & SSEES, 25 May 2013, 650 copies. *Where to Go in Europe* Evaluation Report available on request. Statement provided by book club convener is available on request. Amazon customer reviews: <http://amzn.to/17RBVjs>.

[8] Destination London Evaluation report: <http://bit.ly/15XPES0> [PDF]. Coverage in Croatian press: *Večernji list* (Zagreb) 24 Nov. 2009: <http://bit.ly/GKQfjo>.

[9] *Through Different Eyes* Evaluation Report is available on request.