

2015 EAAS TRAVEL GRANT REPORT

Travel grant offered by: European Association of America Studies

Grant recipient: Marian Suciu

Recipient home institution: Faculty of Letters, Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania

Host institution: British Library, 96 Euston Road, London, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

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Due to the generosity of the European Association of American Studies, through the Intra-European Grant, I was able to conduct my research at the British Library in London for thirteen days. During this period I was able to access various primary and secondary resources on Asian American literature, literary criticism and history which would have otherwise been impossible to access at my home institution. Fortunately, through this grant I was able to get access to these resources, which are now of much use in the writing of my doctoral thesis on Korean American and Chinese American masculine identity.



In the first day, after reading Wendy Ho's essay, *Seeding Asian masculinities in the U.S. landscape: representations of men's lives in Asian American literature*, in the critical anthology edited by RaierEmig and Antony Rowland, *Performing masculinity*, I decided to concentrate only on the identity of Asian American men in literary works written by Americans of Chinese and Korean descent for two reasons. Firstly, I realized that this particular topic was ignored for a long time and only recently have scholars published some studies on the subject, therefore I can make a significant contribution to the critical literature. Secondly, I also became aware that the topic of my initial project was too broad, and it would have been impossible to read everything that was written about Korean American and Chinese American writers, who wrote about the adaptation of both male and female Asian immigrants to the American life, in thirteen days.

I continued my research by selecting quotes about the heroic masculine identity in Chinese American literature from the *Preface* and the first chapter, *Introduction to Chinese- and Japanese-American literature*, of *Aiiiee! An Anthology of Asia-American writers*. Moreover, I wrote them down in my notebook, because they offer an important starting point in proving the existence of a type of Asian American masculine identity, which is based on the Chinese masculine identity clearly depicted in Kam Louie's book, *Theorising Chinese*

masculinity: society and gender in China, book which I consulted at the British Library towards the end of my stay in London. I found another useful resource written by the same author, *Chinese, Japanese and global masculine identities*, an article published in *Asian masculinities: the meaning and practice of manhood in China and Japan*. Moreover, by continuing to look for books on Chinese masculine identity, I also found Roger T. Ames and David Hall's article, *Sexism with Chinese characteristic*, in the book edited by Cheng Li, *The sage and the second sex: Confucianism, ethics and gender studies*, and this helped me understand how different the Chinese model of manhood is from the Western one even more.

I tried to understand the East Asian model of manhood in general, and how Asian immigrants adapted this model to their new home in particular, while I concentrated my research on the Western model of masculinity in order to discover why the Asian American model of masculinity was not successful. For example, I read books such as: *The violences of me: how men talk about and how agencies respond to men's violence to women* by Jeff Hearn, *Crime as structured action: gender, race, class, and crime* by James W. Messerschmidt, *Inclusive masculinity: the changing nature of masculinities* by Eric Anderson, *Masculinities* by R.W. Connel, *Masculinity and femininity exist only in the mind of the perceiver* by Sandra Lipsitz Bem, *Modernism and its masculinities* by Natalya Lubty, *Intimate partner violence: race, social class, and masculinity* by Elizabeth A. Mansley, *The new politics of masculinity: me, power and resistance* by Fidelma Ashe, and *Cultures of masculinity* by Tim Edwards.

In order to understand why Asian immigrants in general, and especially Chinese American men, were considered by white Americans as being feminized men or homosexual, rather than being treated as heroes and intellectuals as they depict themselves, I had to consult history books that described the situation of the Asian immigrants and how they ended up doing traditionally female jobs. For example, I read books such as: *The formation of a Chinese immigrant working-class patriarchy: reinventing gender expectations within the structural confines of U.S. society* by Yu Shi, *Contemporary Chinese America: immigration, ethnicity, and community transformation* by Man Zhou, *Korean women in America: 1903-1930* by EunSik Yang, *The children of Chinatown: growing up Chinese American in San Francisco 1850-1920* by Wendy Rouse Jorae, *The 1.5 generation: becoming Korean American in Hawaii* by Mary Yu Daico, and *Haunting the Korea diaspora: shame, secrecy and the forgotten war* by Grace M. Cho.

This grant also helped me get access to primary resources that would have been impossible to access in Romania. For example, I got a chance to read books such as: *Chinaboy* by Gus Lee and *Who's Irish* by Gish Jen. Moreover, I was lucky to read these books, because not only did their authors depict an old type of masculinity, but they also suggested a new way in which the Chinese American man could show his masculine identity.

Finally, I want to add that during this research period I was also able to access literary criticism on the primary resources I am using. Moreover, these resources offered me an additional help in supporting my own arguments on the masculine identity of Asian American citizens. For example, after a long period of searching for resources which could

support my research on the manhood of the main character from Chang-rae Lee's novel, *Native Speaker*, I was lucky to find articles and books such as: *A River of Han: Eastern Tragedy in a Western Land: A Study of Korean American Literature* by Stephen Joyce, *Contesting Genres in Contemporary Asian American Fiction* by Betsy Huang, *Recasting the Spy, Rewriting the Story, the Politics of Gender in Native Speaker by Chang-rae Lee* by Tina Y. Chen. Furthermore, not only did I get the chance to read primary resources such as Gus Lee's novel, but I also had time to go through a critical article that offered me some starting points in my approach to analyze the heroic masculine Asian American identity (*Chinese American Masculinities: From Fu Manchu to Bruce Lee* by Jachinson Chan).

In the end, I want to thank the European Association of American Studies for the generous grant which offered me a unique opportunity to get access to a prestigious and important library, where I found important resources that are necessary to build the foundations of my doctoral thesis, which will focus mainly on the heroic and intellectual type of masculine Asian American identity.