

Resisting Orientalism in Hwang's *Fresh off the Boat* **Gihan A. Mahmoud**

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Abstract:

Orientalism, according to Edward Said, is a constructed idea of the Orient that differs from its real image, as it positions the West over the Orient in a hierarchical order. Thus, the discourse of Orientalism accentuates the polarity of self/other. The Other is hence often restrained by the stereotypical representations of the domineering group. These anachronistic depictions are signs of how Orientalism breaks in upon the Other's space and identity. However, the power of Orientalism can be resisted through exposing its aspects to criticism. In that way, Orientalism can ironically give power to the subservient subject. That is what

David H. Hwang, an Asian American writer, tries to do in his *Fresh off the Boat* (1979). In this play, he aims at contesting and resisting Orientalism through criticizing the representation of Asian Americans in America. Then he suggests ways through which they can re-appropriate their stereotypical representations and set themselves free from the fetters of Orientalism. The most effective means of doing that, according to Hwang, is through adhering to one's mythic past. That is to say, for Asian Americans to achieve relocation, they must refer to the literary legend of the past. In brief, this proposed paper will attempt to point up how Hwang resists Orientalism in his play *FOB*.

Resisting Orientalism in Hwang's *Fresh off the Boat*, Vol.5, Issue No. 3, July 2016, p.p 163 - 189

Key Words:

Orientalism – Edward Said –
David Hwang – Asian Americans
– Self and Other- Postcolonialism
– Resistance – Assimilation or
rejection – FOB

الملخص:

إن الاستشراق وفقاً لما ذكره إدوارد سعيد هو فكرة مختلفة عن المشرق، وهي تختلف عن الواقع حيث إنها تضع الغرب في مكانة أعلى من الشرق في ترتيب هرمي. وبالتالي فإن خطاب الاستشراق يؤكد إشكالية الذات والآخر، ولذلك فإنه يتم تقييد الآخر عن طريق التمثيل النمطي له من جانب الفئة المسيطرة، وهي الغرب. فهذا التمثيل المفبرك يعد دليلاً على تعدد الاستشراق على مساحة الآخر وهويته ولكن على الرغم من ذلك فإنه من الممكن مقاومة الاستشراق عن طريق نقد جوانبه المختلفة. بذلك ومن المفارقة أن الاستشراق يعطى قوة للشخص المقهور. وهذا ما يحاول ديفيد ونج الكاتب الأمريكي ذو الأصل الآسيوي - إبرازه في مسرحيته "المهاجرون الجدد" (١٩٧٩) فونج يحاول من خلال هذه المسرحية أن

فونج يقاوم الاستشراق من خلال توجيه النقد لطريقة تمثيل الأمريكيين من ذوي الأصل الآسيوي في أمريكا. وكذلك يقترح ونج طرقاً مختلفة يستطيع من خلالها هؤلاء الأمريكيين تغيير التمثيل النمطي لهم، وكذلك التحرر من قيود الاستشراق. ومن وجهة نظر ونج فإن أكثر هذه الطرق فاعلية هي التمسك بالماضي الأسطوري. بمعنى آخر فإنه من أجل التوطين يجب على الأمريكيين ذو الأصل الآسيوي الرجوع إلى أساطير الماضي. ولذلك فإن هذا البحث المقترح يهدف إلى إبراز وسائل مقاومة ونج للاستشراق في مسرحيته "المهاجرون الجدد"

الكلمات الدالة:

الإستشراق - إدوارد سعيد - ديفيد ونج - إشكالية الذات والآخر - المقاومة - الأمريكيين ذو الأصل الآسيوي - مسرحية "المهاجرون الجدد"

The aim of this study is to pinpoint the problem of dislocation of the immigrant Asian Americans in the United States and to underscore the Asians' attempt to rebel against the racial

intolerance that they suffer from at the hands of the mainstream Americans. This aim will be achieved through examining the ways through which Steve, the protagonist of David Hwang's *FOB* (1979), a Chinese immigrant, resists the stereotypical image of the Asian Americans as "Others." Edward Said's concept of "Orientalism" will be adopted to analyze the element of opposition in the play.

Edward Said is considered one of the leaders who laid the basis for Postcolonialism as a theory together with figures such as Gayatri Spivak and Homi Bhabha. His theory of postcolonialism focuses on the fabricated image of the Orient as propagated by the Westerners. According to Said, Orientalism, as a concept, refers to "the impressions and imitations of the East in art and culture."

(Bahety 21). Not only does Orientalism, for Said, refer to the east but it is used to refer to Asia in general. In fact, the image of the Orient was deludingly drawn by "the legions of travelers, writers, artists, and thinkers of the nineteenth century who were intrigued by what they called 'the Orient' " (Bahety 21). For Said, Orientalism is the way the Europeans view the Orient, present it and even shape it. It is "a kind of Western projection onto and will to govern over the Orient" (Said, *Culture and Imperialism* 1-2). He further declares that "a European or an American experiences the Orient first of all as a representative of Western society, and only secondly as an individual" (Jouhki 27). The Orient was always marginalized and it was rarely, if ever, given the chance to present itself. As Jouhki

states, "The observations, texts and experiences of the Orient have been credible only after a Western expert has filtered and refined them in his work" (41). Thus, Orientalism has hindered the Orient from presenting its real image.

According to Said, what is distinguishable about Orientalism is "the European position of strength or even domination in relation to the Orient. 'The weak Orient' was contrasted with 'the powerful Europe'..." (Jouhki 32). It is the Western man who can describe, identify, nominate an Orientalist. It is "only an Occidental could speak of Orientals...Typologies distanced the nonwhite from the white, and traditions and education kept the Oriental/colored in his separate place for the Occidental/white to study him" (Jouhki 33). Said

asserts that the Orientalist believes he is uniting the Orient and the Occident together but, unfortunately, in doing so he asserts the mastery (leadership) of the West in all fields (Said, *Orientalism* 246). Thus, the West is the operator and the Orient is the recipient: "the West is the spectator, the judge and jury, of every facet of Oriental behavior" (Said, *Orientalism* 109). As a result, Orientalism becomes substitutable with the supremacy of Europe and its control over the Orient (Said, *Orientalism* 197). Hence, the orientalist, for Said, were "analyzed not as citizens, or even people, but as problems to be solved or confined..." (Said, *Orientalism* 207). Therefore, Said's aim is to redefine the Orient as seen by its people and not by the European Orientalists. He believes that "since one cannot

ontologically obliterate the Orient [...], one does have the means to capture it, treat it, describe it, improve it, radically alter it" (Said, *Culture and Imperialism* 94-5). Thus, the writer's role is to "organize the Orient, locate himself in relation to it, translate it into his text, structure and imagine, thematize it in order to contain it and finally, to represent it or speak on its behalf" (Jouhki 30).

The situation of the Asian Americans in America is a lucid example of Said's belief about the Orient. The term "Asian American" was first used in the nineteen sixties but before that, they were always labelled as Orientals (Bahety 6). In fact, throughout American history, Asian Americans were judged according to "nativist, racist and Orientalist ideologies" (Adams 8).

Since their arrival in America in 1848, Asians were treated as 'others'. As strangers, they were degraded, humiliated, and rejected by mainstream Americans. As declared by Bunker and Ratner, "legally the Chinese experienced discrimination legislation against them as soon as they arrived in the United States" (144). It is noticeable "how Asian Americans in the United States throughout its national history were racialized as foreigners no matter how much they might have assimilated into mainstream white culture, how they were subsequently subordinated by laws designed to equate citizenship with whiteness, and how their images were insultingly distorted by newspapers and fiction to rationalize such mistreatment" (Song and Jean Wu xvi). Sucheng Chan too confirms that nonwhite

people were always misrepresented, rejected and dismembered throughout the Western history and that verifies the antagonistic way by which they were treated (47). The way the Asian Americans were represented in media and literature showed them as uncivilized and immoral. As Bahety asserts, "well-known stereotypes and images of crowded Chinatowns with opium dens, gambling houses and brothels are still prevalent in contemporary cinema" (5).

Despite all the attempts of the Asian Americans to maintain and establish an identity, the stereotypical images about them represented an impediment in the way of achieving this aim. They were "labelled by negativity, defining them as not only a racial, but also an ideological, moral and civilizational antipode to

Americans" (Bahety 37). Thus, they were constrained in "this state of in-between-ness or, as Susan Koshy coins it, a state of 'about-to-be-ness'" (467). That is to say, they were about to build a separate identity as Asian Americans who are worthy of respect. Even those of the Asian Americans who were successful were looked upon as representing a certain racial group (Adams 198). This degradation of Asian Americans reached the extent that the media rejected them claiming that they "pollute the American political process" (Lee, *Orientalism* 1-2).

For the previous reasons, the Asian American writers as minority writers found it a necessity to subvert the stereotypical ideas about Asian Americans as "Others"; they fought against the idea of othering, bi-polarization and classification

of Americans, whether mainstream or immigrants as "us" and "them". They believe that it is "only by rejecting the narrow, simplistic conceptions of race and ethnicity can a truly pluralistic American culture emerge – an inclusive culture that acknowledges our contradictions, honors our differences and celebrates our commonalities" (Berson, introduction, xiv). Safi Mahfouz also asserts that "suppressing the voices of American minority playwrights also deprives mainstream audiences from getting a thorough and unbiased understanding of ethnic minorities living in the country" (163). Likewise, Margara Averbach argues that people at the center believe they can exclude those at the margin without any significant consequences; however, this is totally wrong (6). Connor

substantiates Averbach's view by arguing that both those who are at the center and those who are at the margin complement each other forming the American identity (747). Uniting them together will strengthen the American society and at the same time eradicate all tensions within it (Mahfouz 186).

In the case of Asian Americans, understanding Orientalism is crucial. According to Viswanathan, it has "empowered the subjugated subject." He asserts that this conviction [empowerment of the subject] ... provides the dialectical energy for considering negative representations back to their perpetrators..." (xv-xvi.) Thus, the false stereotypical ideas about the Asian Americans, according to Orientalism, have to be presented first and deconstructed as the first step in resisting them and forming an

identity. As Helen Tiffin puts it, "Post-colonial counter-discursive strategies involve a mapping of the dominant discourse, a reading and exposing of its underlying assumptions, and the dismantling of these assumptions from the cross-cultural standpoint of the imperially subjectified 'local'"(98). This thought is what David Hwang believes in and tries to present in *FOB*.

FOB, Fresh Off the Boat (1979), the play under study, is written by David Henry Hwang. It is one of his best plays in which he portrays the Asian American dilemma as for the search for identity. Through this play, Hwang tries to "liberate Asian American drama and take its myths and traditions to the mainstream stage" (McGrath 351). In this play, Hwang "challenges stereotypes and offers in their place far more

complex characters who deserve more attention" (Abbotson 42). One of these characters is Steve, an emblem of resistance.

According to Noha Farouk, "Hwang classifies two major groups: the rejectionists and the assimilationists, into people who cling desperately to their cultural heritage, and those who willingly choose to discard their Asiatic roots and adopt the values of white society" (162). The main character who represents the assimilationists in the play, *FOB*, is Dale, an American-born Chinese, while Steve, the protagonist, is the rejectionist. The play starts with a racist speech by Dale about the immigrant Asian Americans, whom he calls the Fresh off the Boat. Dale claims: "F-O-B. Fresh off the Boat. FOB. What words can you think of that characterize the FOB? Clumsy, ugly, greasy

FOB. Loud, stupid, four-eyed
 FOB. Big feet. Horny..." (*FOB*
 13). This description of the FOB
 as used by Dale reflects the
 debasing, dehumanizing,
 demeaning stereotypical image of
 the Asian Americans. As stated by
 Sondra Hale, "the other is
 transfixed by the gaze, is reduced,
 exaggerated, exoticized,
 eroticized, romanticized,
 truncated, and always
 decontextualized" (3). Dale even
 refers to the FOBs as subhuman
 objects: "FOBs can be found in
 great numbers almost any place
 you happen to be, but there are
 some locations where they cluster
 in particularly large swarms"
 (*FOB* 13). In this utterance,
 immigrant Asian Americans are
 referred to as animals. According
 to Richard Dyer, stereotyping is a
 way by which "subordinated social
 groups ... are categorized and kept

in their place" (12). As declared
 by Said, "Modern Western
 societies ... shape and set limits on
 the representation of what are
 considered essentially subordinate
 beings; thus representation itself
 has been characterized as keeping
 the subordinate subordinate and
 the inferior inferior" (*Culture and
 Imperialism*, 80).

Steve's question to Dale: "Why
 will you not let me enter in
 America?" (*FOB* 25) highlights
 the dilemma of the Chinese in
 America. They suffer from
 dismemberment, bigotry and racial
 intolerance. They are treated as
 "Others" who have no rights, a
 stereotypical image that Steve
 aims at subverting. This dilemma
 is further emphasized by Grace's
 words: "It's tough trying to live in
 Chinatown. But it's tough trying to
 live in Torrance, too" (*FOB* 33). In
 fact, the Chinese are double

victimized in their homeland as well as in America. In China, they were maltreated by ethnic groups, namely the American-born Chinese and in America, they were ridiculed, abused and degraded by native-born Americans. As clarified by Geok, Lim and Ling, as soon as Chinamen reached America, "they were disenfranchised, denied the right to become U.S. citizens, they were prohibited from owning land or real estate, they had no voice to talk in court, and they were forced to attend separate schools" (200).

Dale, as an assimilationist, believes that the only way for him to be accepted as an American and to be admitted into the white society is through denying and neglecting his Chinese cultural roots and through adopting the Americans' racist attitude towards the Chinese Americans as an

ethnic group. He believes that this is how all Asian Americans should react in America. He assures Steve that assimilation and relocation are a necessity since he is on American soil; there is no need to resist or reject: "Coming to America, you're gonna jump the boat. You're gonna decide you like us ... You're gonna decide to become an American. Yeah, don't deny it – it happens to the best of us. You can't hold out – you're no different. You won't even know it's coming before it has you" (*FOB* 29). He refers to his parents and his attempts at assimilation in: "They're yellow ghosts and they've tried to cage me up with Chinese-ness when all the time we were in America. So, I've had to work real hard – real hard – to be myself. To not be a Chinese, a yellow, a slant, a gook. To be just a human being like everyone else. I've paid my

dues. And that's why I am much better now, I'm making it, you know? I'm making it in America" (*FOB* 35).

Dale mistakenly believes that by disregarding his Chinese roots, he will be himself and have an identity, whereas in reality, he is giving up his identity to be accepted in America. Also, his words "to be just a human being" confirms the stereotypical idea about Asian Americans perceived as inhuman, an act of racial intolerance and discrimination. However, as Abbotson asserts, "sadly, it is he (Dale) who is the ghost, since he has no identity, having given up his heritage in an effort to embrace another that refuses to even see him. Having worked hard not to be Chinese, he ends up being no one" (44).

These beliefs in the superiority of the West, the inferiority of the

"Others" and the necessity of assimilation are what Hwang aims at challenging or reversing through his portrayal of the character of Steve in *FOB*. This takes us back to Said and his concept of resistance. Although Edward Said confirms that Orientalism is a way "by which European culture was able to manage — and even produce — the Orient" (*Orientalism* 3) and that it is a "Western style for dominating, reconstructing and having authority over the Orient" (*Orientalism* 3), yet he still believes in the possibility of change and resistance. As proclaimed by Abraham, "through both his daunting scholarly production and inspiring political activism, Edward Said enacted a rhetoric of resistance, situated within and often constrained by the harsh political realities of the

American and international public spheres" (25). He perceived of "dignity, defiance, and resistance — as emancipatory expansive, and necessary prerequisites to the fulfillment of human freedom" (24). Said even criticizes Foucault for not writing with an intention of eliminating all forms of pain and injustice that humans suffer from (*The World*, 247). In his concept of resistance, Said follows both Raymond Williams and Antonio Gramsci in that "if power 'is constructed by humans,' it follows then that it is neither 'invincible' nor 'impervious to dismantling.'" ("Foucault" 154). As stated by Al-Abbood, Said "postulates that subjects can resist from a position inside as well as outside the operation of power — in the sense that subjects can resist from a different power position, for one can be 'outside power' in

the sense of being part of another form of power" (49).

On examining *FOB* in terms of Said's concepts of Orientalism and resistance, one will notice that Steve is a real embodiment of the concept of resistance. He works hard to subvert the stereotypical idea about the FOB through being himself different FOB. As Bahety confirms, "in order to deconstruct stereotypical representation of Asians in America, Asian Americans are left with no option but to re-appropriate those stereotypes" (26). The first form of resistance used by the protagonist is obvious in the way he is dressed. As mentioned in the stage directions, "he is dressed in a stylish summer outfit" (*FOB* 14). Through wearing such clothes, Steve aims to redefine the immigrant Asian American. The *Fresh off the Boat*, as represented

by Steve, is no longer a poor man escaping from poverty to the land of dreams. Not only is that clear in the way he is dressed but also in Grace's reference to his parents: "Steve's father manufactures souvenirs in Hong Kong" (*FOB* 27). This image of the protagonist's father counters the stigmatized idea about the FOB as poor, stupid and helpless. Grace confirms this idea when telling Dale: "All I'm saying is that the people who are coming in now- lot of them are different-they're already real Westernized. They don't act like they're fresh off the boat" (*FOB* 40). In fact, one of the main purposes of Post colonialism, represented by Edward Said and others, is to "deconstruct the stereotypes produced by colonialist texts" (Varisco 273).

Moreover, Steve's use of language is a manifest form of

resistance. Despite the fact that he is in America and that he can speak English fluently, he insists on using the Chinese language. In fact, Steve uses the Chinese language to indicate that he adheres to and has pride in his Chinese roots. According to Steve and Hwang himself, having pride in one's origin and culture is the only way to resist and renounce the stereotypical ideas about the Fresh off the Boat. By using the Chinese language, Steve is presented as the spokesman of all Chinese Americans who are despised by native Americans. In fact, he is a rejectionist who resists the idea of sacrificing one's own identity as a Chinese just to be accepted by the Americans.

This point is clear in Steve's first dialogue with Grace at the beginning of the play:

Steve: (In Chinese) Yeah.

*Grace: One whole roll.
You know how much of it got on
here?*

*Look. That much.
That's all.*

*Steve: (In Chinese) Yeah.
Do you serve chong you bing
today? (FOB 14)*

Also, later on, in a dialogue with Dale, Steve insists on using Chinese:

*Dale: So, how do you like
America?*

Steve: Very nice

*Dale: "Very nice." Good,
colorful Hong Kong English.*

*English – how
much of it you got down,
anyway?*

Steve: Please repeat?

*Dale: English – you
speak how much?*

*Steve: Oh – very little.
(FOB 29)*

Food too is a signifier of resistance. Steve keeps asking for Chinese food, namely chong you bing, which reveals his desire to hold on to his Asian cultural roots, customs and traditions as a way out of the present dilemma of the Asian Americans. At another instance, Dale is shown asking for American food while Steve is asking for Chinese food as obvious in the following dialogue:

*Dale: Do you have ... uh-
those burrito things?*

Grace: Moo-shoo?

Dale: Yeah, that.

Grace: Yeah ...

Steve: Do you have bing?

(Pause) (FOB 28)

The fact that Dale asks for American food signifies his attempt to totally assimilate in the American society. On the contrary, Steve resists assimilation as obvious through insisting to eat Chinese food. For Steve, one way to maintain an identity is to closely stick and be proud of one's culture. As declared by Daniel Martin Varisco, "according to Postcolonial literature, culture is seen as an important vehicle for identity formation" (271).

Moreover, a very significant dialogue that highlights Steve's resistance is the one between Dale and Grace, an ex-FOB who always tries to bridge the gap between Dale and Steve (*FOB* 37). When Dale tries to teach Steve how to wipe the table as a way of degrading him and making him sacrifice his dignity to be accepted in America, Steve rejects. He

refuses to be led by Dale or to make sacrifices like him. That is why he stops. This act is manipulated through the non-verbal language of the play as the fact that "Steve stops" (*FOB* 37) is stressed through repetition about three times in the stage directions. In fact, Steve will not allow anybody to humiliate him or to push him to turn into an assimilationist. So stopping here signifies resistance. Thus, Grace comments on Steve's action saying: "see, he's different. He probably has a lot of servants at home" (*FOB* 37). Therefore, Steve succeeds to a certain extent in altering the stigmatized idea about the Fresh Off the Boat. Dale affirms that "He's (Steve's) in America, now. He'd better learn to work" (*FOB* 37). That is to say, he has to make sacrifices to be

relocated in the American society, an act which Steve utterly rejects.

Another tool of resistance used by Steve in the play is role-playing. He plays the role of a god, namely Gwan Gung, the Chinese god. According to David G. Goodman, the new theatrical movement launched on the American theatre in the sixties by such figures as David Hwang was characterized by "the identification of a character or characters with an archetypal, transhistorical figure (a god) into whom they metamorphose" (10). When Steve fails to gain recognition from Grace as a Chinese, which reflects his position as an "Other", he compares himself to a god: "Silence! I am Gwan Gung! God of warriors, writers, and prostitutes" (*FOB* 16). By comparing himself to a god, Steve has multiple purposes. First, as

Taehyung Kim declares about ethnic characters, Steve tries to find shelter in mythology from the harshness of the present reality and the continuous maltreatment of the "Other" by those who believe they are superior (106). Second, Gwan Gung is a symbol of Chinese pride and grandeur. Steve, as presented by Hwang, highly estimates the Chinese traditional culture and believes that it is crucial to establish an independent cultural identity. The best form of resistance, according to Steve, is to have pride in one's past as a way to build a better future.

Unlike Steve, other Asian Americans pay no heed to their culture, history or origin as Grace assures Steve that "no one gives a wip about you round here. You're dead" (*FOB* 18). They sacrificed their identity and neglected their

past believing that this is the most effective way to live the present with a new identity, an American one. As stated by Joann Faung Jean Lee, for Asians in America, "knowledge of an Asian culture was not important beyond the point that it would be enriching just to have a greater understanding of second language and culture (one not necessarily tied to their heritage)" (Introduction x). Bahety too confirms that for Said, "Orientalism not only violated the Others' space but also their identity. On the one side, their history, an essential category of national identity, is 'spirited away' through essentializing, effacing the past 'as in the common, dismissively contemptuous American phrase, 'you're history' (Said *Orientalism* xvi)" (31).

By contrast, Steve, in a state of denial, accuses Grace saying, "you do a good job to make it seem like Gwan Gung has no followers here" (*FOB* 20). Later on, when Grace chooses to go with her cousin to a restaurant because of his luxurious car, Steve complains saying, "you would turn down Gwan Gung for your cousin?" (*FOB* 21). He couldn't believe that because of assimilation, people can neglect their Chinese history and origin and lose pride in them. They are ready to sacrifice their Chinese identity to be relocated in America, a fact that Steve totally denounces. Thus, Steve refuses to go out with Grace's cousin and confirms that "Gwan Gung ... bows to no one's terms but his own" (*FOB* 21). He adds that "Gwan Gung figured there were so much revenge and so much evil in those days that he could slay at

random and still stand a good chance of fulfilling justice" (*FOB* 16-17). This utterance by Steve reflects his belief that through assuming the role of Gwan Gung, he can avenge his race from those who have always humiliated and degraded his race. However, Grace comments on his words saying, "only your head goes to battle,' cause only your head is Gwan Gung" (*FOB* 17). These words are very significant as they can reflect Grace's belief that Steve's aims only exist as dreams in his mind or just thoughts as to how to fight certain stereotypical beliefs about the *Fresh off the Boat* but practically he can change nothing.

Another tool of resistance used by Steve is the car. In more than one instance in the play, Steve is seen arguing with Dale as to whose car they will use. In one of

the dialogues, the conversation goes as follows:

Dale: Look, we take my car, savvy?

Steve: Please, drive my car.

Dale: I'm not trying to be unreasonable or anything.

Steve: My car – just outside (*FOB* 27)

In another instance, Dale assures Steve: "I'll drive" (*FOB* 43) and Steve replies, "my car can take us to the movie" (*FOB* 43). In my opinion, these arguments about the car concretize the struggle between assimilation and rejection. That is to say, driving the car is symbolic of who will take the lead: the assimilationists or the rejectionists who stick to their roots. By insisting to use his car,

Steve shows insistence to take the lead, win the battle against assimilation, and resist the unfair treatment of the Chinese by Americans. He defends the right of the Asian American to be recognized through his insistence to use his car and not that of Dale, the assimilationist. In this same situation, Steve is seen confirming that "Gwan Gung will not go into battle without equipment worthy of his position" (*FOB* 27). These words prove my assumption that Steve believes he is involved in a battle, a struggle between "self" and "Others", between assimilationists and rejectionists. One of the "equipments" that Steve uses in this battle is the car. It is a means of resisting the stereotypical idea that the Chinese Americans are a poor inferior race.

Another tool of resistance used by Steve is education. Steve assures Grace, "Excellent. I have also come to America for school" (*FOB* 17) and when Grace inquires about the importance of going to school, Steve replies, "Wisdom. Wisdom makes a warrior stronger" (*FOB* 17). Steve believes that one way to win his battle of being recognized and respected as an immigrant Asian American is to be wise and well educated. Also, by seeking education, Steve subverts the stigmatized idea of a poor illiterate Fresh Off the Boat who comes to America for money.

Another very significant element in unfolding Steve's journey of resistance is the game entitled "Group story". In this game, there were three bears, one of which had malignant cancer of

the lymph nodes. On his way to Sinai hospital, where it would "have a cure for this fatal illness" (*FOB* 44), it lost its leg. In my opinion, the bears can stand for the Chinese immigrants who are considered a plague or an infection to mainstream Americans. The bear's illness reflects the Chinese's suffering in their homeland. By losing one leg during its journey of cure, the bear can epitomize the Chinese immigrant who lost a very precious part of him, his dignity or identity, by going to America. This assumption is further confirmed in Dale's words: "So, the bear tried to swim over, but his leg got chewed off by alligators" (*FOB* 44). When arriving at the land of cure, the bear was humiliated by its citizens: "One-legged bear, what are you doing on my land?"

(*FOB* 44). If the bear is viewed as a stand-in for Chinese immigrants, so here there is a reference to the idea of the double victimization of Chinese people in their homeland, when they got sick and in the land of cure, America.

Steve was about to kill the bear but Grace interfered as Fa Mu Lan, a woman warrior. As Dale unfolds, "she stood between him and the bear, drawing out her own sword" (*FOB* 45). She promises Steve: "Spare the bear and I will present gifts" (*FOB* 45). This can be a reference to the compromise, the deal or the consensus that has to be reached by the mainstream Americans and the Chinese Americans to live together on American soil. By offering Steve a gift, Grace stands for the Americans who offered the Chinese immigrant a

fake dream, the Gold Mountain dream, to remain forever under their control. By handing Steve a blindfold, it is obvious that America wanted the Chinese immigrants to be blindfolded, just followers who have no identity of their own. This fact is confirmed in Said's words that Orientalism "imprisoned the Orient so that it 'was not (and is not) a free subject of thought or action' " (Jouhki 25). In fact, Orientalism for Said is "more valuable as a sign of Western power over the Orient than as a scientific discourse corresponding with reality" (Jouhki 25).

Yet, in my opinion, by putting on the blindfold, Steve is able to feel the suffering of the Chinese immigrants more. Then, "(together they (Grace and Dale) become like Steve's parents.

They chase him about the stage, waving the tablecloth like a net)" (*FOB* 46). This is a reference to being trapped in the net of the Gold Mountain dream. It is an attempt to have control over Steve, The Chinese immigrant. However, Steve resists till the very end. He is seen saying: "No!", "Why", "No!", "Hard", and "won't" (*FOB* 46-47). He even repeated "won't" four times. He refuses to be an assimilationist as he does not believe that assimilation is the way out for the Chinese in America. He tries to repel once more through taking pride in the Chinese past and mythology. He brags, "I FOUGHT WITH THE FIRST PIONEERS, THE FIRST WARRIORS THAT CHOSE TO FOLLOW THE WHITE GHOSTS TO THIS LAND!" (*FOB* 47). He adds, "I WAS

THEIR HERO, THEIR LEADER, THEIR FIRE!" (*FOB* 47). Steve's words are written in capital letters to emphasize his persistence to repel till the very end.

By the end of the play, in the monologue, Steve tries to concretize the suffering of the *Fresh off the Boat* in America through a very touching scene in which he begs for food and expresses his readiness to work the meanest jobs in America: "All America wants ChinaMen go home, but no one want it bad enough to pay our way." (*FOB* 49). Moreover, he refers to the double victimization of the Chinese Americans in: "This land does not want us anymore than China" (*FOB* 49). However, Grace interferes and gets Steve bing to eat. She says, "Good. Eat it all down. It's just food. Really.

Feel better now? Good. Eat the bing. Hold it in your hands. Your hands ... are beautiful. Lift it to your mouth. Your mouth ... is beautiful ..." (*FOB* 49). These words are very significant. By eating bing, Steve is restoring his power to resist through sticking to his Chinese roots and culture. By describing the parts of Steve's body as beautiful, Grace aims at making Steve appreciate once more his Chinese origin and heritage. It is only through this that Steve can fight back the idea of being an "Other". It is his only way to maintain his Chinese identity and win the battle against discrimination and rejection. This is obvious in Steve's dialogue with Grace:

Steve: Our hands are beautiful.

Grace: What do you see?

Steve: I see. I see the hands of warriors.

Grace: Warriors? What of gods then?

Steve: There are no gods that travel. Only warriors travel

(*FOB* 49)

Steve decides to fight the battle against dislocation, displacement, rejection and racial intolerance until he wins. He is the warrior who will defend the rights of the Chinese Americans to have an identity and to be respected by the native Americans.

To sum up, according to Said, the Orientals are not only degraded and portrayed with distorted images but they are also "pervasively denied the possibility of making themselves present" (Varisco 238).

However, change is never impossible. As Said asserts, "in human history there is always something beyond the realm of dominating systems, no matter how deeply they saturate society, and this is obviously what makes change possible" (*The World*, 246-7). Thus, the real liberation called for by the Post-colonialists, as Said declares, "is the liberation of mankind from imperialism" (*Culture and Imperialism*, 274) and the "reconceiving of human experience in non-imperialist terms" (*Culture and Imperialism* 276). Ogede too confirms Said's view saying: "Efforts will continue to be made to challenge the hegemonic force of representation, and of course, this force is not completely pervasive, and subversions are often possible. Self-

representation may not be a complete possibility, yet is still an important goal" (282).

In David Hwang's *FOB*, this possibility of change is obvious through the portrayal of the character of Steve as an emblem of resistance. He resists through various means some of which are having pride in his Chinese origin, history and culture and subverting the stereotypical image of the immigrant Asian American. Thus, as Lai Sai Acon Chan asserts, "Hwang's vindication of the stereotypical dumb, greasy, ugly fresh-off-the-boat gives way to a new taxonomy of Asian Americans proud of their fobish roots" (6).

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