




Mehdi Ghasemi

Flight to Finland: A Noverametry



A combination of novel, drama and poetry
all in one line on the issue of immigration
that every Finn and immigrant residing in
Finland should read

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A Noverametry

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Affectionately dedicated to

UUU

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who believe there is no skin between us

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Front Cover Photo: Mehdi Ghasemi

Cover and Interior Design: Mehdi Ghasemi

Publisher: BoD™ – Books on Demand, Helsinki, Finland

Manufacturer: Books on Demand GmbH, Norderstedt, Germany

ISBN: 978-952-339-384-4

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10. Season Four:

Traveler in the White Dark

Learned Custos, Esteemed Opponent, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As the first African American playwright who received Pulitzer Prize for drama, Charles Gordone devoted major parts of his professional life to the pursuit of multi-racial affinity and unity. Gordone's plays also challenge the racist, classist and sexist stereotypes ascribed to African American men and women. This can be seen in the attention he pays to the intersectional issue of race, class and gender inequality. Oh my God! I'm defending my doctoral dissertation! Thank you Finland! Intersectionality holds that various biological, economic, cultural, political and social categories such as race, class, gender, sexual orientations and other axes of identity interact, creating a system of oppression that reflects the intersection of multiple forms of domination or discrimination. How far I've come! This journey is also coming to an end. I have only some more hours to go. The relationships among these various axes are like a mathematical equation, in which each axis has a single, direct but additive effect on the equation. It is worth noting that intersectionality is a concept often used in critical theories to describe the ways in which over-

lapping oppressions are interconnected to debase a person or a community; however, it can also apply to the intersecting orientations and institutions that interrelate to grant privilege to a person or a community. Intersectionality of persistence, determination and hard work plus commitment, expertise and experience of my supervisors plus my family's support here and there made this possible.

Just a question before I proceed with my lectio. While writing this noveramatry, several titles came to my mind: Flight to Finland, Flight to Funland, Flight to Finland, Flight to Fundland and Flight to Fanland, and eventually I went for the one right in the middle! Which one would you choose if you were in my shoes? Please underline it.

In my dissertation, I approach a number of Gordone's plays from the perspectives of intersectionality. I remember the first day I started. So cold it was, 'scold and right from the first day I learned that I have to fend against harshness. I draw upon the ways Gordone uses to challenge the dominant hierarchal systems in which whites hold hegemonic power and accordingly predominate in roles of political and social leadership and economic control to which I refer as "whitestream." The by-passers all looked down and watched their steps. Oli tosi liukas.¹ I show how his plays lend themselves to a range of intersecting theories to utter the concerns of African Americans and release them from the dominant ideologies that have entangled them throughout histo-

ry. A moment of looking up was enough to change your position from vertical to horizontal.

Five years passed since that slippery day, five years of hard work, five years full of memories, sweet and sad. I remember the first day we got on a bus in Finland. We knew nowhere and nowhere knew us. Two old ladies sitting behind us were talking in Finnish. I listened carefully and this was what I heard: yo yoo misteman suoamalistonut lasudenessa vartaradiossa arkaises aikaseminehka golla yoo yoo mukaan me gerra queen aikasemin puurakenteine torile samma miks voivoi palyoon tulossa loppu soravame olkomalaikiyainen noni vieraspaikkakuntalainen yoo yoo gadso gire verotosi tale balyonkun dulen ya sa lopoo kun kosgematoni illiman mutta koko sooks valateksia ya gireteinpain yoyo ostavanraha lassikoondele heivan yos me veroayorata.² Igotbutnothingandjustthere ymmärsin, että suomen kieli ei ole vaikeaa, ja jos menet suomen kielen kurssille 24/7 noin vain 10 vuotta, voit varmasti oppia ja puhua sen kuin robotti.³

In his play *No Place to Be Somebody*, Gordone writes the story of a black bartender named Johnny Romero who tries to interpret his piece of the American Dream in a New York City neighborhood where most venues are run by white mafia. Pete Zerroni who leads the white mafia disapproves of blacks in his territory and he burns down their places. Under such harsh circumstances, Johnny and a number of denizens of his bar still work and wait for the fulfilment of their dreams which turn to be an illusion or

rather a delusion. My dream to see this day but how would be life after PhD? Miten mencee?⁴ Indeterminacy kills but indeterminacy is the beauty of life. Fixity kills. Johnny's best friend named Gabe Gabriel is an unemployable mulatto actor. This is my BIG day after all. May 10 may be as memorable as my birthday. It may be another scarlet day in my calendar. Gabe is cast neither as a white man, since he is too dark for white roles, nor as a black man, since he is too light for black ones. Due to this problem, he resorts to writing and performing his own plays. Five years of determination is coming to an end, five perspiratory years will be coming to an end, five years of diligence came to an end. I have come to defend with a very sharp pen which is mightier than the sword, a strong black suit made of good fabrics and a bottle of orange juice "100% natural, without preservatives, artificial colors, flavors or added sugars." Gabe addresses his audiences directly and speaks of his own problems which self-reflexively and self-reflectively reveal both the artifice and artificiality of his plays.

I now respectfully beg my esteemed opponent appointed by the Faculty of Humanities to present his criticisms of my doctoral dissertation.

This dissertation, entitled *Postrace Drama: A Study of Selected Plays by Charles Go'done*, offers a series of relevant readings of selected plays by Charles Go'done. It shows ability to carry out independent scholarly work as required from a doctoral



Flight to Finland starts with the narrator's doctoral defense session and his|her lectio and ends with the concluding remarks of custos and in-between s|he moves back and forth to recount his|her narratives of living and studying in Finland. The Noverametry employs some characters from different eras of Finnish history, including The First Woman Voter, The First Finnish Immigrant, The Finnish Refugee, King Charles Frederick, etc., to recount their chronicles. The book should be read by all Finns as well as all immigrants residing in Finland. It helps Finns to see themselves from a different perspective and offers immigrants a review of Finnish culture and history.



Mehdi Ghasemi received his PhD from the Department of English at the University of Turku, Finland. In his dissertation, he has examined a number of Suzan-Lori Parks's plays from the perspectives of postmodern drama and African American feminism, focusing on the terrains which reflect quest/ion of identities for African Americans. He has already published four scholarly books and ten papers in peer-reviewed journals.



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