

New Press International Fiction



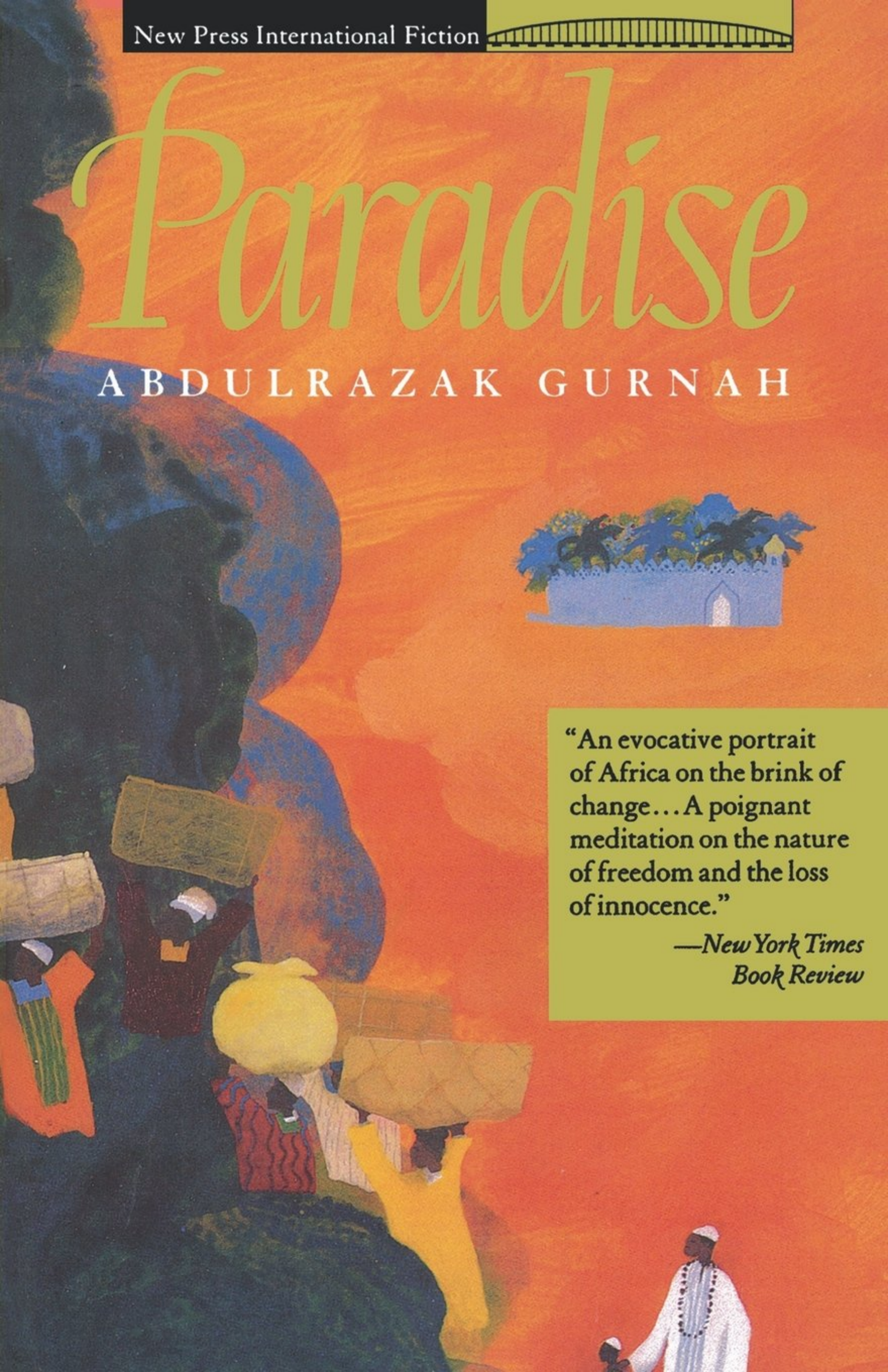
Paradise

ABDULRAZAK GURNAH



“An evocative portrait of Africa on the brink of change... A poignant meditation on the nature of freedom and the loss of innocence.”

—*New York Times*
Book Review

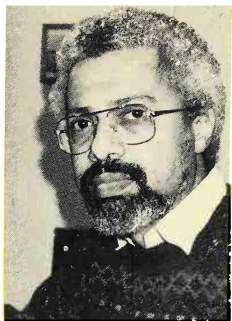


Paradise is at once the story of an African boy's coming of age, a tragic love story, and a tale of the corruption of traditional African patterns by European colonialism. It presents a major African voice to American readers—a voice that prompted Peter Tinniswood to write in the *London Times*, reviewing Gurnah's previous novel, "Mr. Gurnah is a very fine writer. I am certain he will become a great one." *Paradise* is Abdulrazak Gurnah's great novel.

At twelve, Yusuf, the protagonist of this twentieth-century odyssey, is sold by his father in repayment of a debt. From the simple life of rural Africa, Yusuf is thrown into the complexities of precolonial urban East Africa—a fascinating world in which Muslim black Africans, Christian missionaries, and Indians from the subcontinent coexist in a fragile, subtle social hierarchy.

Through the eyes of Yusuf, Gurnah depicts communities at war, trading safaris gone awry, and the universal trials of adolescence. Then, just as Yusuf begins to comprehend the choices required of him, he and everyone around him must adjust to the new reality of European colonialism.

The result is a page-turning saga that covers the same territory as the novels of Isak Dinesen and William Boyd, but does so from a perspective never before available on that seldom-chronicled part of the world.



Abdulrazak Gurnah was born in 1948 in Zanzibar and is the author of *Memory of Departure*. He teaches literature at the University of Kent in Canterbury, England.

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PARADISE

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

Memory of Departure
Pilgrims Way
Dottie

PARADISE

Abdulrazak Gurnah

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For Salma Abdalla Basalama

THE WALLED GARDEN

I

The boy first. His name was Yusuf, and he left his home suddenly during his twelfth year. He remembered it was the season of drought, when every day was the same as the last. Unexpected flowers bloomed and died. Strange insects scuttled from under rocks and writhed to their deaths in the burning light. The sun made distant trees tremble in the air and made the houses shudder and heave for breath. Clouds of dust puffed up at every tramping footfall and a hard-edged stillness lay over the daylight hours. Precise moments like that came back of the season.

He saw two Europeans on the railway platform at that time, the first he had ever seen. He was not frightened, not at first. He went to the station often, to watch the trains come noisily and gracefully in, and then to wait for them to haul themselves out again, marshalled by the scowling Indian signalman with his pennants and whistle. Often Yusuf waited hours for a train to arrive. The two Europeans were also waiting, standing under a canvas awning with their luggage and important-looking goods neatly piled a few feet away. The man was large, so tall that he had to lower his head to avoid touching the canvas under which he sheltered from the sun. The woman stood further back in the shade, her glistening face partly obscured by two hats. Her frilled white blouse was buttoned up at the neck and wrists, and her long skirt brushed her shoes. She was tall and large too, but differently. Where she looked lumpy and malleable, as if capable of taking