



## Gurnah and Naipaul: Intersections of *Paradise* and *A Bend in the River*

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The thirty years between V. S. Naipaul's first publication in 1957 and Zanzibar-born Abdulrazak Gurnah's in 1987 spans at least three major epochs within the field of postcolonial studies: the era of liberation/decolonization; the neocolonial or socialist period of the first generation of self-rule or independence; and the advent of the transnational neoliberal era, now known as globalization. There are other ways to characterize the timespan, but this periodization is helpful in articulating the relationship between these two writers. Naipaul is well known for having forged his own course, outside and often in opposition to the trajectory of postcolonial anticolonial discourses, anticipating as it were an entrepreneurial option within the emerging markets of, first, commonwealth, then postcolonial anglophone, and, now, first-world cosmopolitan literatures. Gurnah's work also covers the transition from decolonization to neocolonial and socialist phases, but it emerges from deep within a diasporic distance and from its own urgent entrepreneurial response to the narrative territory of its place of origin, a territory claimed in part by Naipaul's generation and a failed nationalism. In other words, while these writers draw on the capital both of their anglophone literacy and of the experience of colonization—and, in the case of Gurnah, post- or neocolonization—their contiguity also suggests a significant shift in what I call anglophone African difference, and which, I claim, Gurnah artfully stages in his 1994 novel, *Paradise*.<sup>1</sup>

Among the well-documented features of *Paradise* is that from its title onward it embarks on major exercises of intertextuality. Set at the turn of the nineteenth into the twentieth century, with a plot that encompasses the last of the major caravan trading trips from the East African coast

into the interior as far as the eastern Congo, the novel addresses events that are concurrent with those depicted in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. At the same time, as its title suggests, it also explores the concept of "paradise," not only as it has been articulated within Islamic discourses, the religion of most of the characters from both the coastal region and at the trading posts along the caravan's routes, but also as a riposte to Conrad's metaphor. A third major textual evocation occurs via the novel's young protagonist, the Mswahili Yusuf, who is bonded to the powerful Omani merchant Aziz and whose fortunes are almost framed by his biblical and Qur'anic namesakes, Joseph and Yusuf. As Pietro Deandrea points out, the name makes Conrad Yusuf's namesake, too (2009, 175). And a fourth set of intertexts, less well known, include contemporaneous Kiswahili works, each deriving from either commissioned Arabic scripted Kiswahili texts or from spoken accounts given to German translators and interpreters. The best known of these is *Maisha ya Hamid bin Muhammed el Murjebi yaani Tippu Tip: Kwa maneno yake mwenyewe* (1902–3), the autobiography of the last of the major slave and ivory traders of the region, Hamid bin Muhammed, also known as Tippu Tip. However, the source from which the novel draws most extensively for its caravan sections, including its routes and encounters, is "Safari Yangu ya Bara Afrika" ("My Journey Up-Country in Africa") by Selemani bin Mwenye Chande, recorded between 1893 and 1896, while the source from which Gurnah is perhaps able to gather most information about the complexities and nuances of the region's practices of slavery is Mtoro bin Mwinyi Bakari's *Desturi za Waswahili (The Customs of the Swahili People)* (1981). Gurnah also incorporates a remarkable Kiswahili travel account from 1896, Salim bin Akabari's "Safari Yangu ya Urusi na ya Siberia" ("Journey to Russia and Siberia").<sup>2</sup> Informed by these intertexts and source materials, Gurnah's novel mobilizes historical fact within and against the dense discursive and textual realms within which the region and its populations are enveloped, in the process pitting these realms against each other. As various scholars have noted, Gurnah does this both to unsettle the Eurocolonial binary oppositions that have become habitual in so many renderings of postcolonial critique and to challenge many first-generation postcolonial rewritings of the precolonial past.

It is within this textual universe that I want to pay attention to one more intertext, V. S. Naipaul's *A Bend in the River* (1979). It too plots itself from the East African coast into the interior, closely following Conrad's

narrative and symbolic choices, though starting the journey into the interior from the east coast, not the west, and inserting a Muslim protagonist. In these and other important ways, Naipaul's novel does appear to have anticipated Gurnah's "intertextual replacement of the Koranic story of Yusuf by Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*," but I hope to show that Gurnah's novel also supplements Naipaul's in productive and usefully subversive ways (Olaussen 2012, 206–7).

Significant work has already explored Gurnah's engagement both with *Heart of Darkness* and with Qur'anic and biblical material, the story of disenfranchisement, slavery, liberation, and triumphant reconciliation long predating the modern story of slavery, indenture, abolition, and emancipation on the continent. With such parallels, Gurnah disrupts the historical clock, unsettling the complacency of an uncritical anticolonialism of rigid binaries and its counterdiscursive ripostes.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, Gurnah's evocations of paradise play upon the often overlooked difference between the Islamic Garden as both the place of origin (without original sin) and return—a reward in the afterlife for the properly observant Muslim—and the Judeo-Christian concept of the Garden of Eden as the original condition only.<sup>4</sup> This is nicely emblematic of how Gurnah slyly entangles the reader in alternative histories, mythologies, and related versions of the past, throwing into critical relief the current hegemony of the (anti)colonial order of things.<sup>5</sup> Jacqueline Bardolph, for example, has noted Gurnah's "counter-histor[ies]" are "not so much opposed to the colonial narrative as to the various fictional versions of African history, from Ngugi, Armah or Achebe" (1997, 84), and Gurnah himself has also written about this as a difference from an earlier generation of writers and their treatments of the African past (see Gurnah 1993). More recently, Emad Mirmotahari (2011) has suggested that to a certain extent *Paradise* also parallels *Things Fall Apart*, and like J. U. Jacobs he finds in the novel far more engagement with *Heart of Darkness* than does Bardolph. He sees *Paradise* "in conversation with" *Heart of Darkness*, Gurnah's novel fine-tuning Conrad's construction of what Mirmotahari calls "African" (2011, 21). Referencing the famous debate about what constitutes literature as "African," Mirmotahari provocatively suggests an inclusive understanding of the term. Linking Gurnah and Conrad, he starts from the premise that "*Paradise* shows how Muslim perceptions and discourses of the African 'interior,' if anything, both resembled and *preceded* modern European colonial discourses. *Paradise* is not a rewriting of *Heart of*

*Darkness*, it is in some ways an adaptation of it. *Paradise* shows how a text titled *The Pacification of the Tribes of the Lower Niger* was also ‘written’ by one African society about another” (30). The suggestion here is that there is in African history no pristine or single precolonial moment outside of colonial discursive frameworks, since such frameworks are not the creation solely of Eurocolonial forces, having been long established in pockets of different Islamic hegemonies, Arab or otherwise, and in the local as well as European discourses of slavery.

Mirmotahari’s claim also suggests colonial writing on Africa itself now emerges from one of many Africas, in as much as it has been so embedded in various African cultures as to have become part of them. Thus he locates Naipaul’s *A Bend in the River* within African rather than postcolonial letters, as more “African” than postcolonial, though still occupying both categories. As he argues, “internalized neoimperialist visions are also truths in the epistemology of African (post)coloniality. *A Bend in the River* is, as calamitous as the proposition might sound, an African novel by virtue of its effects” (2011, 106). The calamity is two-way of course—for Naipaul as well as for his critics. And the same logic could also place Conrad’s novella in an African tradition. My reading of Gurnah’s and Naipaul’s novels, however, addresses another set of issues raised by the question of their anglophone African difference.<sup>6</sup> These include the accumulative effect of Naipaul’s other fiction and writing on Islam prior to 1994, the year *Paradise* appeared. For this reason, I see Gurnah’s incorporation of Naipaul as suggesting an engagement that is ante- and antinationalist but nevertheless remains assiduously and canonically postcolonial.<sup>7</sup>

Naipaul remains exemplary as the postcolonial writer whose politics eschew all anticolonial rhetoric on the basis of what he sees as endemic nationalist failures.<sup>8</sup> Diaspora-based postcolonialism often feeds off analyses of the decolonized nationalist telos, either as utopian or as dystopian. The difference, therefore, between the nation-specific (or exiled) temporal postcolonial (such as, say, Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Ngugi wa Thiong’o, and Nuruddin Farah) and the diaspora-based spatial/ideological postcolonial (such as Amitav Ghosh, J. M. Coetzee, and Naipaul) involves an existentialist urgency, rooted in an ideology of individualism, a cosmopolitanism anchored in a relentlessly disjunctive postmodernism. Gurnah can be read as offering an important refinement of the Naipaulian paradox characterizing the latter group. This view is akin to Simon Lewis’s in his essay on Gurnah and M. G. Vassanji, another East

African novelist, where, acknowledging the generational difference with Naipaul's, he notes the writing of "a postcolonial subject rather different from the more familiar hybrids of Achebe, [Tsitsi] Dangarembga, [Salman] Rushdie, or [Derek] Walcott." Lewis adopts Klaus de Albuquerque's term "apatrides" (stateless) to describe the postcolonial particularity of this generation and its "rootlessness," producing a "non-native," "non-identity" identity that "results in odd, even embarrassing nostalgia for colonial childhoods—a sort of homeland of the past" (de Albuquerque 1996; Lewis 1999, 222–23).

This "homeland of the past" does inform both writers in fundamental ways, acting as a wellspring for the imagination that becomes or is always already a contested ground: in the enterprise of imaginative play, whose dividends lie where, or at whose expense? Naipaul has earned his share of wrath and praise for the many volumes in which he pursues this question; Gurnah, as far as I know, has received only praise.<sup>9</sup> The migrant intellectual and the native informant can be cohorts as well as adversaries, within the widening postcolonial register. So, while this notion may seem banal, it still remains important in a collective effort to rethink the postcolony through the complex comprised of the colony it was, the nation it became, the nation it could have become, and the one it did not become. Jennifer Wenzel (2006) thus explores the workings of "nostalgia" in understanding postcolonial or "third world" evocations of the past. Responding to what Renato Rosaldo describes as "imperial nostalgia," Wenzel identifies an "anti-imperialist nostalgia" that "holds in mind hope for changes that have yet to be realized, changes that were always yet to be realized. Anti-imperialist nostalgia acknowledges the past's vision of the future, while recognizing the distance and the difference between that vision and the realities of the present" (2006, 7).<sup>10</sup>

Reconstructing the past, Gurnah critiques nationalist—or what Kelly Askew calls "post-socialist" (2002, 271; 2006, 36)—nostalgia for engendering alienation and undermining what Sharae Deckard calls the "possibility of communal resistance to oppressive state formations" (2010, 121). In reading *Paradise*, Deckard compares the Naipaul brothers' disdain for "the racial politics of 'black' purity frequently implicit in the strategic nationalisms of African fictions" and Gurnah's own "critique of Nyerere's imagination of protosocialist communalism" (121, 125). Between these poles, "nostalgia" may well obscure problematic currents in African literature and history, but it does not mask the territorial operations of

those discourses, a key concern inhabiting Gurnah's engagement with V. S. Naipaul and his work.

An important aspect of this engagement involves Gurnah's filling in the history of Salim, Naipaul's protagonist in *A Bend in the River*. Early in the novel, Salim claims, "When we had come no one could tell me . . . the past was simply the past" (BR 11). *Paradise* reconstructs just this "past," displacing the narrative territory the earlier novel had established for itself, a territory that until Gurnah's novel (and arguably Vassanji's early work) had remained unchallenged in anglophone fiction about the region and the era. Gurnah also reformulates Naipaul's preoccupation with global Islam even as he carefully articulates some of its historical coordinates within this African setting. For example, along with the encroachment of European control, *Paradise's* setting stages the last generation of the caravan trade from the coast deep into the interior, *within* the framework of the eclipse of an Arabocentric (*ustaarabu*) and Islamic hegemony, a topic with which Naipaul has long been occupied. Important to Gurnah's engagement with the past, too, is Wenzel's reworking of anti-imperialist nostalgia, which is based in the already determined outcomes of the politics of liberation and independence in a period when the future was defined by its break with the colonial past; anti-imperialist nostalgia, that is, is aligned with the (unrealized) utopian underpinnings of decolonization and postcolonial nationalism. So where Naipaul repetitively (deterministically) charts dystopian outcomes, Gurnah attends to preconditions, where dystopian possibilities already function to undermine the promise of different outcomes. In the same way, then, that Wenzel also notes Conrad's conflation of time and space in his characterization of the inland journey as a journey back in time (2006, 3),<sup>11</sup> we can read Gurnah's "look back," as it were, to be informed by a knowledge of the outcomes of Naipaul's fictional choices.

To suggest, therefore, that Gurnah "is not a political writer" because his work does not espouse one or another polemic associated with either nationalism or liberation is to discount the ways that the political implications of his work are, like Naipaul's, aligned with a more neoliberal stance than with radical, revolutionary, or reactionary positions (Whyte 2004, 13).<sup>12</sup> What I am calling neoliberalism, here, refers to a free-market notion of writing in which personal experience is released from or eschews the regulation of (or conformity to) its originary, identificatory group and instead capitalizes itself into an emerging or ongoing literary

marketplace, diasporic, postcolonial, or minoritarian. At the same time it looks to reinvest the materiality of the personal or the individual history (back) into the collective consciousness of its place of origin, despite its own marginal status there. (Part, if not most, of its capital is underwritten by the Euro-American academy, an ironic but inevitable outcome of the broader economics of globalization itself; although all of Gurnah's novels, including those set within the diaspora, are rooted in the East African littoral, he himself is located in the academy.) This collective consciousness is imbued with the sense of the nation in formation now left behind, the (failed or unexpected) state it became, and the cosmopolitics of diaspora. Although in this light, Gurnah's difference with Naipaul is one of degree, it is a transformative degree. Where Naipaul obsesses in the personal, Gurnah dwells in the broken collective.<sup>13</sup>

When Gurnah animates the coastal and trading history that Naipaul's Salim suggests does not exist because it is not locally known, remembered, or recorded, he embarks on a writing-again that is less corrective than it is expansive. To be sure, in Naipaul's dense second chapter, Salim offers an overview of the complexities of the world of the Indian Ocean and its demographic entanglements, among Indian, Arab, island, and mainland groups, and a sketch of the rise and fall of the Omani Sultanate and its caravan routes and inland settlements and domains. But in doing so, Salim's economy of description is both partial and severe. For example, Salim offers this anecdote as the sole "family story" he has: "I remember hearing from my grandfather that he had once shipped a boatful of slaves as a cargo of rubber. . . . He didn't tell it as a piece of wickedness or trickery or a joke; he just told it as something unusual he had done—not shipping the slaves, but describing them as rubber" (*BR* 11). Whatever else he knows about this past he ascribes to "books written by Europeans." The subtle reductionism here is disguised within the equally subtle gesture of Salim's rhetorical displacement of subjects for objects, which in turn is itself embedded within his assertion that his book learning, made possible by Europeans, tells him less about slavery than about why his grandfather chose rubber.

Gurnah's novel challenges this reduction of the past in terms of Salim's limited version, in terms of the *kind* of book knowledge he so privileges, and most particularly in terms of Naipaul's orchestration of his protagonist's relation to that book knowledge, underwritten by his own, which is of course far more extensive. Accordingly, Gurnah does

not merely replicate, from the east coast, Marlow's journey from the west coast to the continent's interior. Although he does, like Naipaul, plot a journey inland from the east, Gurnah's is more in keeping with the actual historical routes of the east coast slavers and ivory traders, drawing on equally rich, if not more dense, textual terrain—colonial, Islamic, Kiswahili, and local. His discursive registers are as bookish as Naipaul's but far more diverse, interlocutory, local, global, and linguistically savvy.<sup>14</sup>

Naipaul's representation of history not only tendentiously compresses but seems designed to distort and misinform as well. The failure of Salim's family to account for its past might be read as a prudent, even necessary, reticence, given the nature of their trade, while the "book knowledge" Salim offers is simply inaccurate on several counts, most particularly with regard to the site of slavery itself. His claim that "no one was shipped off to plantations. Most of the people who left our coast went to Arabian homes as domestic servants" does not even begin to describe the complex network of the distribution of slaves, including of course the shipping off of many to plantations;<sup>15</sup> ascribing to the enslaved a "desire to remain as they were," furthermore, utterly obscures the complex levels of rigid dependency of power (*BR* 13, 12).<sup>16</sup> Of course, as is well known and much documented, Naipaul has always had little concern for historical accuracy per se; he remains more interested in maintaining the Naipaulian brand of detached "observation" that remains "true" to a *universal* (neo-liberal) ideology of (personal) "responsibility." As Edward Said famously put it, Naipaul "specializes in the thesis . . . that we 'non-Whites' are the cause of all our problems, not the overly maligned imperialists" (1986, 53). Thus, while a major portion of *Paradise* describes the everyday life of slaves—Yusuf and Khalil, and later Amina and Hamdani—in offering a depiction deeply informed by the local historical record, Gurnah also pointedly stages a series of encounters that incorporate a Naipaul figure, his work, his characters, and his signature worldview.

The studied passivity of Yusuf, for example, resembles that of Naipaul's Salim, and both are ciphers in relation to the plots. As if in response to the older novel's opening line, "The world is what it is; men who are nothing, who allow themselves to become nothing, have no place in it" (*BR* 1), Gurnah's Yusuf is perforce a "nothing," a *rehani* (bonded slave), having been pawned to the merchant Aziz at the age of twelve to discharge his father's debt. Gurnah thus poses a material fact against an existentialist condition, and in so doing exposes a sentimental

ahistoricity in Salim's worldview and, arguably, Naipaul's. If, however, we also pair Yusuf with Ali/Metty, Salim's "domestic worker"—slave—from his family compound on the coast, we see how these two fictions are linked in representing the resiliency of enslavement's development into caste as a literal matter more than a figurative one.

In addition to focusing on the individualist ideology implicit in Salim's initial declaration, *Gurnah* belies the dictum by refashioning how the "world" that is what it is might be understood.<sup>17</sup> While Naipaul's fiction is set in the post-independence era, *Gurnah*'s is set roughly sixty years before, when formal slavery had been either recently ended or under attack by abolitionist forces. His protagonist, Yusuf, takes far longer to reach the deep interior than does Naipaul's and, more like Marlow, makes extended stops along the way, episodes during which much of the work of the novel takes place. At the start of Yusuf's residence near "a small town under a huge snow-capped mountain,"<sup>18</sup> for example, the narrative voice describes gatherings of coastal traders, specifically Arabs and Somali, who are often joined by a lone Sikh, who "rarely spoke, but Yusuf saw him chuckling in the wrong places sometimes, drawing puzzled and irritated looks from the others" (*P* 51, 71). The traders exchange stories of danger and hardship, and bring news of developments both near and far: they

spoke of other nights when animals and men had circled their encampments with malice. If they had not been well armed, or if their nerve had failed them, or if God had not watched over them, their bones would be left on a dusty nyika somewhere, being picked clean by vultures and worms.

Everywhere they went now they found the Europeans had got there before them, and had installed soldiers and officials telling the people that they had come to save them from their enemies who only sought to make slaves of them. (*P* 71–72)

The use of "nyika" is somewhat anomalous within the narrative's indirect discourse, much like "siesta" earlier in the novel (*P* 12, 15). Nevertheless, that term, referring to hinterland, is understood to be part of the root name for the mainland, "Tanganyika," a name used by the British that points toward what would become, but what was yet to be conceived as, a national unit. The first part of the name is from the coastal town of Tanga, setting for the powerful Arab merchant and trader Aziz's headquarters and a major trading hub of the time.<sup>19</sup> The second paragraph, moreover, is

an almost verbatim account of the historical record of both German and British abolitionist propaganda and policy (Rockel 2006, 11–23).

However, the overt echo here is of Naipaul's essay, "Conrad's Darkness," where Naipaul recalls the discovery he made during his own quest to become a writer. Focusing on the moment in Conrad's text when Marlow stumbles upon *An Inquiry into Some Points of Seamanship*, Naipaul writes, "And I found that Conrad—sixty years before in the time of a great peace—had been everywhere before me" (1981, 233). Much has been made of this passage, with its logocentrism, homage to colonial tutelage, and the naturalization of Pax Britannica; and Gurnah's evocation here continues the practice with a series of ironic twists. Recognizing that the coastal traders preceded the European presence, he sees earlier displacement where Naipaul sees earlier discovery. We also soon learn the lone Sikh is one of a group of isolated characters who, like Salim, are each coordinates in the largely Indian network of merchants and entrepreneurs—a commercial infrastructure originally funding and then succeeding the caravan trade in both the colony and the postcolony. Gurnah's merchant, Aziz, functions in parallel with Salim's patron, Nazruddin. Between them, of course, are Salim's grandfather and his "floating" memories (BR 11).

The figure of the lone Sikh thus offers yet another reworking of "world." Known as Kalasinga, he, like Salim, is Indian, but unlike Salim he is a first-generation immigrant not to German East Africa/Tanganyika but to South Africa, where we later learn he grew up.<sup>20</sup> In a way, Kalasinga is a figure for Naipaul himself, whose literacy allows for serendipity, just as, in *Heart of Darkness*, Marlow discovers Towson's manual. That Marlow later finds it belongs to the Harlequin figure, "the borderer on someone else's story" (Suleri 1992, 152), introduces an unexpected mediator between Marlow and the world he (already) knows.<sup>21</sup> Similarly, Kalasinga is both a kind of Naipaul hovering within the border of Gurnah's fiction as well as a mediator for Yusuf, with whom he increasingly spends time as Yusuf becomes initiated into the world of literacy. In other words, Yusuf's development-through-literacy, a process of *Bildung*, is carefully ascribed to the intervention of the figure of an isolated Indian subcontinental in the *nyika* of the region. Among the skills Yusuf learns in his time with Kalasinga (a motor mechanic) is reading and writing in "rumi," "the English alphabet" (P 102).<sup>22</sup> Of course, "English" within the setting is another isolated, even anomalous occurrence, spoken only by those with

proximity to the British, who at this stage only control territory to the north, and off the coast exercise political muscle by “protecting” Zanzibar. However, the Raj in India had at this point been long established, and considering how the Cape Colony rounds out the circuit traced by Kalasinga, we can see how Gurnah represents the linguistic infiltrations from non-English English speakers—the composition, that is, of anglophone difference.<sup>23</sup>

That what I am calling the Naipaul figure is a Sikh is significant as well. Naipaul’s Salim is a Muslim, though he is neither practicing nor observant. Naipaul, of course, is a largely nonobservant Hindu (but for what he sees as his Brahmanesque fastidiousness, which he never fails to record). While Islam is the dominant religion within the littoral, it is not overwhelmingly so in the Indian diaspora as a whole, where a variety of Muslim groups (both Sunni and Shia) coexist with Hindus, Sikhs, Goans, and Parsis, among others, and where languages as various as Hindi, Gujarati, Kutchi, Punjabi, and Baluchi are spoken. Nevertheless, being a Muslim—the religion of the dominant Omani Sultanate of the nineteenth century—grants Salim some vestige of authority in speaking about Arab imperialism, as it allows him to establish his group difference. In light of what Imraan Coovadia among others sees as the closeness of Naipaul’s own genealogy to that of Salim, amounting to a “distinction without a difference,” Gurnah’s deliberate casteing thus represents a pointed intervention into the politics of difference (2009, 94). Most Sikhs come from the Punjab, which Salim identifies as “north-western India,” the area “from which we [Salim’s family] had originally come” (*BR* 11). In this way, Gurnah recovers the place of origin that Salim is at pains to keep at a distance.

Perhaps the sharpest of Gurnah’s recharacterizations of the “world” emerges halfway up the mountain in Olmorog,<sup>24</sup> when Kalasinga, Hamid, and Yusuf stay with Hussein, another isolated storeowner. Hussein is from the island of Zanzibar, his local name for which is Unguja, and when in like company it is a place about which he has an obsessive “need” to speak (*P* 82). In a curious and clever melding of contemporary and medieval geographies, Hussein’s nostalgia for a place to which he could but chooses not to return (since “there even slaves defend slavery”) is coupled with his incremental move into fantastical mythologizing (88). He starts by describing the geohistorical blocks that characterize Eastern Africa: the coast, the islands, the Great Lakes, and the mountains. Then he continues:

“Those mountains on the other side of the lake are the edge of the world we know. . . . The east and the north are known to us, as far as the land of China in the farthest east and to the ramparts of Gog and Magog in the north. But the west is the land of darkness, the land of jinns and monsters” (83).<sup>25</sup>

Important here is the specificity of the geography. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Hamed bin Muhammed, known as Tippu Tip—whose story Aziz recounts to Yusuf while sojourning in Tayari (*P* 130–33)<sup>26</sup> and whose biography supplies the novel with some of its historical information—controlled the area east of Lake Tanganyika as far as Kasongo, upriver on the Lualaba from Stanley Falls, site of Conrad’s Inner Station. “The land of jinns and monsters” is less fanciful and more descriptive in the light of what was indeed known or about to be known, since part of Hussein’s response includes, “But I have heard that it’s the equivalent of five hundred years’ journey on foot,” as a not-so-subtle reference to the Atlantic trade in slaves (84). Similarly, when a little later the story of a traveler to Russia (“Rusi”) is recounted, what emerges in relief are the vast parameters of a global Islam, abutting the Caucasus, whose name was deployed in early theories of race and racial divisions (105).<sup>27</sup> The mix of descriptive and mythological geographies pairs the 1896 travel account of Salim bin Akabari with the travels through Islamic countries Naipaul recounts in *Among the Believers* (the basic theses of which are distilled into his 1991 essay “Our Universal Civilization”). Revealingly, where Akabari expresses as much surprise at those he encounters as do they toward him, almost a century later Naipaul’s account of his travels suggest what could be described only as a creeping Islamophobia.

In Olmorog, Kalasinga’s fascination with mythological stories is offset by his irritation with the fancifulness seeping into Hussein’s account, but when Yusuf asks, “what lies beyond the darkness to the west?” Kalasinga startles the group by announcing, “I am going to translate the Koran.” “Into Swahili.” When it is pointed out that he cannot speak Kiswahili<sup>28</sup> or read Arabic, he responds, “I will translate it from the English translation,” and his rationale is pure Naipaulania:

To make you stupid natives hear the ranting God you worship. . . . It will be my crusade. Can you understand what it says in Arabic? A little perhaps, but most of your stupid native brothers don’t. That’s what makes you all stupid natives. Well,

maybe if you did understand, you'd see how intolerant your Allah is. And instead of worshipping him you'd go find something better to do. . . . Because I care for my fellow human beings, even if they are only ignorant Allah-wallahs. Is this a religion for grown-up people? Maybe I don't know what God is, or remember all his thousand names and his million promises, but I know that he can't be this big bully you worship. (P 84–85)

While Kalasinga has a point, the element of parody here is quite strong.<sup>29</sup> Most of the world's observant Muslims do recite Qur'anic Arabic without understanding the language,<sup>30</sup> but Kalasinga's crusade reveals him as an agent of Western mediation depending upon English translation and thus on an emerging anglophone register, within which religious texts, first, and then novels such as *Paradise* itself, are couched. At the same time, introducing the question of translation nicely undermines the logocentrism of monotheism, alluding to the instability of its sacred texts.

Casting believers as "stupid natives," however, subverts the endemic cultural chauvinism of *ustaarabu* and its own colonial discourse of civilization and barbarism that, in concert with Salim's dismissals of Arab imperialism, Gurnah also stages. Although the island and mainland coastal populations share an Islamic faith, this does not transcend the social and class divisions inherent in an Arabocentric hegemony that structurally defines itself against a mythology of inland and mainland barbarism. "Washenzi," the epithet for unbelievers, barbarism, the miscegenated, and illegitimacy, is all that "waungwana" is not (P 6, 99). Underwriting all these cultural distinctions is the status of slavery, attaching both to a person and to associations with a group's geographical origins.<sup>31</sup> Kalasinga's intervention addresses far more than language alone; after Kalasinga has made lewd comments about a bare-breasted female customer in the shop, Hussein's rebuke highlights the capriciousness of the competing moral frameworks: "You mock us for the intolerance of our God, and for our stupidity in bearing with Him, and then you call people savages" (85). The same can be, and has been, said about Naipaul, too. He habitually engages in provocations such as calling the Islamic world "Mohammedan," the baldest of Orientalist insults, and characterizes non-Arab Muslims as "doubly colonized, doubly removed from themselves" ([1991] 2002, 508). Quoting Conrad's *Outcast of the Islands* (1896), Naipaul also characterizes the religion as "fundamentalist" by definition and as "philosophical

hysteria.” In particular, his thesis that Islam “abolished the past” not only helps account for Salim’s own detachment from history but reinforces the sense of Arab exceptionalism that Gurnah’s novel implicitly critiques as well (Naipaul [1991] 2002, 507–9, 513).

So, it is not hard to conclude that as the agent for these possibilities Kalasinga is also metonymic for all Indians within the novel whose role is to enable, either by funding caravans or acting as liaisons between Europeans and the mix of locals. The merchant Aziz notes, “the Indian knows how to deal with the European” and Kalasinga himself is the character who cautions the group to “learn who they [Europeans] are, then” (133, 87).<sup>32</sup> What emerges is that this history of commerce and entrepreneurship is part of the vanguard of both Arab and European domination and colonization, an often overlooked fact.<sup>33</sup> And in this history Indians function as mediating compradors—just as Naipaul himself might be seen as mediating between the worlds of colonial and postcolonial anglophone literatures. We also learn that Kalasinga’s proper name is Harbans Singh, the same name as the hapless politician in Naipaul’s early novel about Trinidad’s first general election, *The Suffrage of Elvira* (1958).<sup>34</sup> About his district, Naipaul’s Harbans complains, “Elvira, you is a bitch!” ([1958] 1985, 147), while Gurnah’s Harbans also habitually spews vitriol about Indian subcontinentals other than his own kind (206), fiercely distinguishing himself, almost in a parody of Salim’s studied abstraction about the mix of Indians in Africa, and of Naipaul’s own much repeated investment in his own difference.<sup>35</sup>

Kalasinga/Harbans Singh also nurtures a reputation for launching stories about his sexual liaisons for others to embellish—“In these stories Kalasinga is always slow to rouse, driving women to distraction. But once roused, he won’t dismount”—gesturing toward his acts of cultural dissemination as well (*P* 76). That this gesture is performed at Olmorog, however, complicates its significance. Olmorog is the site of one of the recent failed enterprises of the Germans to change the local indigenous group from pastoralists into sedentary dairy farmers, an instance among many where the narrative’s indirect reported speech alludes to the encroachment of German colonization and the consequent social transformations.<sup>36</sup> Here, as later in the novel, linguistic, demographic, and social instabilities constantly clash even as they fuel each other.

Just as Kalasinga’s original name establishes a link to Naipaul, Gurnah’s Yusuf is linked to Naipaul’s character Metty. Metty embodies

Naipaul's theory of *créolité*, as when, for example, he goes not by his given name Ali but by his adopted one, "Metty," a play on the French *métis*, an instance of Naipaul's habit of imprinting the Caribbean onto his African settings (*BR* 33). In his mixed ethnicity—describing him, Naipaul writes, "the blood of Asia had been added to those people"—Metty is prefigured in Yusuf's status as Mswahili, the emergent coastal people produced by generations of intermarrying among coastal indigenous groups, overseas traders from many ports around the Indian Ocean, and inland caravan and slave populations (14).<sup>37</sup> Where Salim treats such mixing as a clandestine matter, Gurnah's novel represents the normalization of such coastal mixing, through marriage and adoption, in the case of Yusuf's family and Khalil's. Beyond questions of their ethnicity, however, Yusuf and Metty are linked by the effect of their appearance itself. It is Metty's visual appeal to the locals in the interior that brings his difference to Salim's notice and modifies his understanding of such difference, though he still thinks along "racial" lines. After a brief physical description, Salim concedes: "I saw what the local people saw; in my own eyes he became more handsome and distinctive. To the local people he wasn't quite an African, and he aroused no tribal uneasiness; he was an exotic with African connections whom they wanted to claim" (32).

It remains hard to grasp Naipaul's—or is it Salim's?—distinction between "tribe" and "African" here, though partly what's at stake is the distinction between the local and the faraway. It is clear, however, that what could simply be a political perception is given a "racial" dimension. And that Salim sees Metty as exotic is also a symptom of Salim's failure to recognize that they are both potentially subversive. Where Metty's attractiveness compounds Salim's continued misrecognition of him, then, Yusuf's "beauty" provokes a strange excess of recognition.<sup>38</sup> His beauty is constantly remarked upon wherever he goes, soliciting admiration from men and women, young and old, yet (but for its being characterized as "manly" in one instance) it is never described, calling attention to a difference apparently without substance. In this, it adds to Gurnah's parodic response to Naipaul, critiquing his insistence on the gratuitous, even anachronistic racialization of all his characters.

When Naipaul's novel repeatedly falls back upon Hegelian paradigms to characterize the peoples of Africa—they are outside History, stuck in perpetual childhood, lack self-reflection—it is not surprising that the master-slave dialectic emerges foremost in his novel's treatment of

the topic of slavery.<sup>39</sup> The way Salim registers Metty's attractiveness is a symptom of his misrecognition of him. With his typical economy, Naipaul frames this politics around a single concern: size. As the novel closes, Salim thinks, "I had been growing smaller and smaller in Metty's eyes and now I failed him altogether. . . . So the old contract between Metty and myself, which was the contract between his family and mine, came to an end. . . . He seemed to understand this, and it made him unbalanced" (BR 264). Misunderstanding the dialectic, Salim recasts it as a contract, as if from the start equal parties were involved, suggesting that the original "slavery" was ultimately benign in practice.

With Metty accounted for in terms of a failed Hegelian dialectic, leaving him lost and unbalanced, Naipaul then turns to Ferdinand, his "new man of Africa," as again, Naipaul figures separation in terms of questions of size. When he is rescued from detention by Ferdinand, now the new commissioner, Salim's speculations remain in the conditional: "What idea would he have about himself as one of the President's officials? In his own eyes he would have risen; I would have got smaller. It had always unsettled me a little—the knowledge that the gap between us would get bigger as he grew older." This is followed closely by Salim's description of Ferdinand in his "unexpectedly ordinary" office, "withdrawn and ill," sitting under the ubiquitous photograph of the president, "larger-than-life," with "a face full of life" (BR 271). The "gap" Salim fears can also be understood as the "time-lag" identified by Homi Bhabha, via Frantz Fanon, as the "*belatedness of the black man*" (Ferdinand's evolution through the course of the novel) within colonial discourse as well as the "cultural void—with its discursive 'time-lag'—[which] is part of a strategy of cultural survival in conditions of political contestation which necessitates a relocation of the specificity of difference or the incommensurable."<sup>40</sup>

This "relocation" is written into the references to Conrad that are embedded within the description of Salim's experience of incarceration and that graft him and his "difference" (rather than either Metty's or Ferdinand's) to the vision that would seamlessly close the gap between Conrad's fiction and Naipaul's—a vision in which instead of the past haunting the present, it *becomes* the present. While detained, Salim becomes hyperaware of his body because "your body is all you have" (BR 268). As he witnesses the maltreatment of other prisoners, his new awareness alerts him to a collective trauma of the sort Conrad describes: "They were not enemies, they were not criminals, they were nothing earthly

now, nothing but black shadows” ([1899] 1988, 20). Salim observes: “You could tell from their faces, that in their minds and hearts and souls they had retreated far. The frenzied warders, Africans themselves, seemed to understand this, seemed to know that their victims were unreachable. . . . Those faces of Africa! Those masks of childlike calm that had brought down the blows of the world, and of Africans as well, as now in the jail” (BR 269). With the presence of African warders here, and of Africans who deal “the blows of the world,” this passage connects the inhumanity of colonial slavery of the past to the postcolonial depredations of the present. Like Marlow’s “thrill,” Salim’s embrace of all humanity appears to damn equally, masking its historical myopia.

Naipaul’s emphasis on size and his dehistorical leveling of colonial and postcolonial violence constitute another target of Gurnah’s parody, even as he too indicts the biopolitics of the colony and postcolony alike. But in alluding to the Qur’anic Yusuf, Gurnah also engages questions of gender and sexuality, and their instrumental role in the mechanics of power.<sup>41</sup> Where Metty’s “exoticism” is a symptom of Salim’s failure to recognize the collapse of their Hegelian dialectical relation, Yusuf’s beauty operates as a focal point of the novel’s pervasive homosociality and homoeroticism, currents that remain submerged in Naipaul’s fictional world.<sup>42</sup> As an element in his critique of masculinist aggression, Gurnah’s rendering of these dynamics involves its own deliberate politics of size. At the very start, as a young child still living with his parents, Yusuf occasionally mingles with a group of boys, sons of migrant laborers. Discussing the facts of life, they determine that “babies lived in penises,” and as they then compare the size of their own penises, we learn that the colloquial name for the organ is “abdalla” (P 7). Later, we see the notoriously predatory “merciless sodomiser” (47) overseer of the caravan, the “mnyapara ya safari” (34), is named Mohammed Abdalla (Islamic names are necessarily signifiers of the many names of Allah, and as such always already reinforce the religion’s phallogocentrism).

More deeply embedded as a phallic trope is the *magendo*, the contraband, secreted in Hamid’s store upcountry that will compensate for the failures of Aziz’s last caravan. (The *magendo* recalls Salim’s contraband ivory, Metty’s reporting of which led to Salim’s imprisonment.) Finally we learn that the deeply pungent smell emanating from the contraband sacks comes from rhino horns, immensely valuable as a putative aphrodisiac.

Holding out the promise of redemption for Aziz's enterprises, the horns also signal that the caravan trade is yielding to a growing black market that, in the new locutions and dispensation of European colonial control, will become the underground world of "poaching" and smuggling.<sup>43</sup>

Gurnah traces the shift of power from Arab to German hegemonies by focusing on characters: Mohammed Abdalla is eclipsed both by Nyundo, the interpreter deep within the interior, and by Simba Mwenye,<sup>44</sup> the new assistant *mnyapara*, from Morogoro—a well-traversed town between Tabora (Tayari) and the coast. As the caravan nears the lake after its sojourn in that town, the Omani center in decline, Mohammed Abdalla breaks into a dance one evening while the musicians play. Though he is hampered by a nagging injury, Abdalla's performance is nevertheless spirited, a glimpse of former glory, and at its end "he stroked himself briefly before stepping out of the firelight." Almost immediately, Nyundo leaps into the light and dances an obscene and graphic parody, complete with a lewd invitation: "Not like it was before, but it's still something. And it still works" (135). As the parodist, Nyundo mocks the old (phallic) order, rather than mimicking it.

Nyundo also illustrates the limits of Kalasinga's/Harbans's intervention, linguistic and otherwise, since this far into the interior the indigenous locals vie equally with the Arab traders for sway with the German forces, and Nyundo's role as interpreter mediates between them, establishing a power he exercises in the act of (withholding) translation. Similarly, Simba's act of burying the dead when they come upon the slaughter of a village, littered with decomposed and hideously hacked corpses, introduces a sudden and unexpected gesture of decency, unmotivated by anything other than fellow feeling: "We are their brothers, from the blood of the same Adam who fathered all of us" (P 127). This startles both the Muslim *mnyapara* and the Muslim merchant Aziz. However, when Chatu holds Aziz and the caravan captive, the moral order articulated by Simba is dashed. In an extraordinary standoff, Aziz explains the value of life and the value of goods; because human life in the world of commodities outside slavery is worthless, and any threat to it—including to his own—is meaningless, he therefore prolongs the hostage negotiations, ensuring the priority of the mercantile protocapitalist base deep within this, as it turns out, not-so-remote setting: the novelistic and historical site of both Conrad's and Naipaul's locations of darkness.

Gurnah's final gesture to Naipaul and *A Bend in the River* occurs long before the end of his novel. Parting ways at this stage, before the return to the coast and the events that take Yusuf into the inner sanctum of the walled garden<sup>45</sup> of Aziz's home, his banishment from it, and his sudden pivot into the German line, is, I would like to suggest, a fitting place to part company. The scene unfolds with Aziz in a depression while the exhausted caravan stays by the lake after having escaped Chatu, but only with German help. Mohammed Abdalla suggests that Yusuf alone can get through to Aziz the idea that it is time to return to the coast: the merchant no longer pays attention to his foreman. But "Yusuf saw that Mohammed Abdulla had an erection under his cloth and immediately rose to leave." This final salute sends Yusuf to Aziz, and plans to leave are finally begun. To approach Aziz, Yusuf uses the designation "Uncle" for the first time, despite referring to him as such with Khalil, Aziz's manager-slave who oversees the shop on the coast, whose refrain, "he ain't your uncle!" is a constant reminder of their material situation. In the ensuing silence between master and his slave, Aziz and Yusuf, a metaphor is employed to capture the extent of what appears to be the seal of Yusuf's powers of repression: "Yusuf felt the reel of his life running through his hand, and he let the reel run without resistance" until the realization that he is now unable to "keep the memory of his parents fresh in his life," releasing him, as it were, from ever needing to (P 174).

While the "reel of his life" figures his memory as a spool of film or, less anachronistically, a spool of thread or string, the phrase also suggests a Barthesian *l'effet de réel* (even to the extent that the phrase is a near anagram of "felt the reel"). Nothing has been clarified between Aziz and Yusuf, but an unusual meditation on Yusuf's status follows—unusual because it is rare to see the character in anything like a moment of existential introspection. Reflecting on his bondage, he realizes that, like Khalil, Kalasinga too contributes to the constellation of displaced, migrant, and nomadic men dotting the emerging landscapes burdened with perpetual nostalgia, or an always deferred desire, stuck in "one smelly place or another, infested by longing and comforted by visions of lost wholeness" (P 175). This bleak recognition recalls the vision that opens *A Bend in the River* of "men who are nothing, who allow themselves to become nothing" (3). Yusuf faces a sort of Naipaulian nihilism here, but if such recognition is the *l'effet de réel*, it is crucially premature—only half of the story.

*Paradise* therefore retires the Kalasinga/Harbans character when it does because such a figure cannot recognize the kind of impasse that Yusuf is faced with, or the circumstances that obtain for a *rehani* back on the coast. Evocative of Naipaul's own "incomplete knowledge," this failure of recognition locates precisely the anglophone African difference between *Paradise* and *Bend in the River*, which has been unable to recognize either an "alternative modernity" or a concurrent alternative colonialism (Naipaul 1984, 20). As Nina Berman points out, Yusuf's sudden choice to follow the German press gang "has challenged scholars who have sought to make sense of the novel's ending" since its publication (2013, 52).<sup>46</sup> Pursuing that challenge, she turns to the German source material, which clarifies the sharp (military) alternatives available to the enslaved and other disenfranchised populations of the coastal trading regime. In representing competing hegemonies, Gurnah cleaves closer to the historical record than to either the generic requirements of the bildungsroman or the texts that follow in the wake of Conrad. Like many other critics, Berman also reads *Paradise* as a bildungsroman, but further suggests that its conclusion conforms to a postcolonial rewriting, or subversion, of the genre's expectations because of the fundamental contradictions of such an outcome's conditions of possibility. Its irresolution, in other words, mingles the presumption of individual choice underlying the traditional genre with the determinism produced by the overlapping regimes of the competing colonial operations.

When *A Bend in the River* concludes with a massacre, it is necessarily obscured by a complex troping of sight determining what can be seen and understood, and what can only be imagined. Rather than highlighting any character's "choice," the novel can only fold back into the tropological play of Conrad's fiction, tethering Salim to the inevitability of joining his Intended in London after a narrow escape. The last glimpse of the frightened faces caged on the drifting barge offer a grim visual coda to a postcolonial tableau that is indistinguishable from a colonial one, color codes and all. *Paradise*'s final scene, grim itself with its moment of identification as Yusuf watches the dogs begin to feed on the fresh excrement of the new recruits, offers instead an image of the *bare life* in question, framed by its own recognition.



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## Notes

1. Gurnah's *Paradise* was shortlisted for the 1994 Booker Prize (*Paradise* is hereafter cited as *P* and Naipaul's *A Bend in the River* as *BR*).

2. Heinrich Brode first published "Autobiographie des Arabers Schech Hamed bin Muhammed el Murjebi, genannt Tippu Tip" in Germany, in *Mitteilungen des Seminars für Orientalische Sprachen* 3/4 (1902/03). The translation I have consulted is *Maisha ya Hamid bin Muhammed el Murjebi yaani Tippu Tip: Kwa maneno yake mwenyewe*, with a historical introduction by Allison Smith and translated by Whitely. See also Chande 1965 and Abakari 1965.

See also Mtoro bin Mwinyi Bakari's *Desturi za Waswahili (The Customs of the Swahili People)* (1981). Excerpts, including those on slavery, of Bakari's *Desturi* are included in *Swahili Prose Texts*.

The biblical Joseph story is in Genesis 39 and the Qur'anic is Sura 12. In Persian literature, the Yusuf and Zulekha story has been retold by the fifteenth-century poet Jami, whose version according to Maria Olausson "stresses the beauty" of Yusuf, a feature Gurnah borrows (2012, 207). Jacqueline Bardolph (1997) is credited by most critics with having identified Tippu Tip's autobiography and Salim bin Abakari's travel account as source material. She does not credit Mwenye Chande's and Bakara's accounts. Bardolph also misidentifies (albeit with hesitation) Lake Tanganyika as Lake Victoria. The only other work I've found that credits some of Velten's other informants is Sharae Deckard's, which also offers the most extensive and comprehensive historical information (2010, 91–130). She suggests too that Henry Morton Stanley's novel, *My Kalulu: Prince, King and Slave: A Story of Central Africa* (1887), is another intertext. I expand on this source material in my essay, "Swahili Histories and Texts in Abdulrazak Gurnah's *Paradise*," forthcoming in *English Studies in Africa*.

3. For Gurnah's treatment of Conrad, see Deandrea 2009, Jacobs 2009, Maslen 1996, and Deckard 2010.

Susheila Nasta (2005) offers an excellent breakdown of Gurnah's referential universe in *Paradise*, including a reading of the Qur'anic and biblical Yusuf/

Joseph stories. Like Bardolph, though, Nasta omits some of the key Kiswahili sources. Maria Olausen's "Shifting Paradigms" (2012) offers a succinct reading between, and clarification of, the Qur'anic and biblical versions of the Joseph/Yusuf story, discussing the novel's location within an Indian Ocean discursive framework of "alternative modernities" and providing a nuanced context for the gradations of servitude within the region and the era. Amin Malak's *Muslim Narratives and the Discourse of English* (2004) includes a chapter, "The Qur'anic Paradigm and the Renarration of Empire: Abdulrazak Gurnah's *Paradise*," which also helpfully disentangles the biblical and the Qur'anic. See Mirmotahari 2011 for a sustained study of all its Islamic embeddings. The Joseph/Yusuf story entails the prophet's abandonment by his jealous brothers, his adoption/enslavement by an Egyptian family, his resistance to the wife's attempt at seduction, his imprisonment, his ability to read prophetic dreams that releases him from prison, his solving the Egyptian crisis of famine through his ability to interpret dreams, his stewardship of Egypt through the famine, and, finally, his redemption of his family and his name.

4. For example, David Callahan's insightful essay, "Exchange, Bullies and Abuse in Abdulrazak Gurnah's *Paradise*" (2000), overlooks these nuances (57).

5. I am borrowing Isabel Hofmeyr's phrase, "alternative modernities," as does Olausen, to make the link between Gurnah and his place within the south-south intellectual realm of Indian Ocean studies (Hofmeyr 2007).

6. Robert Balfour (2006) offers another comparative reading of Gurnah and Naipaul, and Sushila Nasta also comments on Gurnah's "implicit critique of V. S. Naipaul's narrow stereotyping of the native 'African' sensibility in his postcolonial novel, set in the Congo, *A Bend in the River*" (2005, 319). Jacobs also mentions that *A Bend in the River* offers the same reverse journey (2009, 79). Mirmotahari does not offer a comparative reading of *Paradise* and *A Bend in the River* but reads each in two separate chapters.

7. Malak suggests that Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* (1969) is another intertext that offers, along with Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, "enigmatic, enchanting figure[s]" (2005, 58–59). Salih's novel is ripe for a more detailed comparison, and it, too, is set in a "small village at a bend in the Nile where the river, after flowing from south to north, suddenly turns almost at right angles and flows from west to east" (Salih 1969, 52, 62).

8. See Huggan and Tiffin 2010, 112.

9. Deckard notes that Gurnah's books have long been beyond the price range of a home readership. See Deckard 2010, 219n83.

10. I have not engaged the more complex immersion into the anticolonial past's relational imaginary to the postcolonial future that David Scott and, more recently in a different register, Paul Saint Amour have undertaken. I hope to do so in a more extended study. See Scott 1999 and 2004, and Saint Amour 2015.

11. The conflation of time and space in Conrad's fiction is not an original observation, obviously. For the constitutive use of this conflation in the exercise of the "colonial matrix of power," or "coloniality," see Mignolo 2011.

12. I should note that Philip Whyte (2004) starts his essay with an evocation of (postcolonial) "nightmare" from Naipaul's 1967 novel, *The Mimic Men*.

13. Deckard offers the best overview of Gurnah's "politics" and includes a helpful review of the region's incorporation into the globalized economy via the neoliberalization of the Tanzanian state (2010, 120–30). I am aware of the parallel debate over what constitutes "world literature" and its putative imbrications with "globalization." My concerns are less broad, even less metaphorical. For a timely update, see Cheah 2014.

14. Naipaul's allusions, other than those to Conrad, include Virgil, Shakespeare, Dante, Hegel, Placide Tempels, and—in *In a Free State* (1971), "A New King for the Congo" (1980), and *A Congo Diary* (1980)—Naipaul himself. The route of Salim's journey is closer to Naipaul's own made during his sojourn in Uganda in 1966. Nevertheless, Naipaul's research obviously included histories and accounts such as Stanley's *Through the Dark Continent* and, perhaps, even Tippu Tip's autobiography; but the novel stifles such sources too, much as Conrad did, in the interests of aesthetic choices. More recently, in his *Masque of Africa: Glimpses of African Belief* (2010), Naipaul offers a robust endorsement of accounts by his favorite Victorian explorers, including John Hanning Speke's *Journal of the Discovery of the Nile* (1864), James Grant's *A Walk across Africa* (1864), Henry M. Stanley's *Through the Dark Continent* (1899), and Mungo Park's *Travels in the Interior Districts of Africa* (1816), when he cites them unquestioningly as reliable sources for an exploration of "African" belief systems as well as the history of Arab traders in the region during the nineteenth century. What's extraordinary is not so much that Naipaul's travel writing still maintains the same formulae it always has, but that there is still an audience happy to consume the contempt, misinformation, barely veiled condescension and often raw racism that Naipaul continues to offer.

15. Simon Lewis notes the mischaracterization of the trade as solely "Arab" in an observation of *Aziz's* in *Paradise* (132) and cites Walter Rodney as one authority who acknowledges European plantations and their enslaved labor in the region (see Rodney 1981, 95–97). It's worth noting that, according to

Patrick French, the figure of Blair in Naipaul's *A Way of the World* (1994) is "inspired" by Walter Rodney, whom Naipaul met in Dar es Salaam during his 1966 sojourn in East Africa (French 2008, 467). This is no guarantee that he read Rodney's later work, of course.

16. Imraan Coovadia discusses the habitual rhetorical gestures of provocation and the comedic in both *Bend* and much of Naipaul's travel writing, seeing them as claiming either that slaves approve their enslavement, or that the institution of slavery is benign (2009, 32–35). Of Salim's account of the one family story, quoted above, Coovadia writes, "One imagines this story being told as a proud joke (106).

17. This focus on "world" has already been commented upon by Tina Steiner (2010). The phrase "wider worlds" is from an interview in which Gurnah discusses Walcott's depiction and sense of "world" (Gurnah 2004). While my essay emphasizes the comparison with Naipaul, it is worth noting that Walcott has often incorporated a "Naipaul figure" (V. S. Nightfall, for example) and made similar comparisons between his own and Naipaul's understandings of common terms (see Walcott 1993).

18. The mountain is Kilimanjaro and the town is Moshi, which, like Stanleyville/Kisangani in *Bend*, is never named in the novel. Moshi is the town the German railway reached in 1912 from its point of origin in Tanga on the coast. Few name places are given in *Paradise* (some are fictional, some not), but nothing like the conflation and compression of places that Naipaul practices occur. (Naipaul conflates all of East Africa—especially in *In a Free State*—and all coastal history with Zanzibar's in *A Bend in the River*.) Jacobs's "Trading Places" offers an excellent reading of the novel's "topotopography" (1990, 81–82).

19. I should immediately note that Abdul Sheriff's magisterial study, *Slaves, Spices and Ivory in Zanzibar* (1987), begins with an explanation of the *nyika* as "a belt of poor, low-rainfall scrub" that "failed to provide an adequate productive base for many of the [coastal] city states" (8–9). It is the name for a specific area of terrain rather than just a generic term.

Kelly Askew offers an account of the naming of the protectorate by the British (2002, 44–45). See also Iliffe (1979) 2009, 247. Among the etymologies Askew offers, one translates as "to wander in the bush." Askew's book also gives an extensive history of the city of Tanga. The closest I have come to finding the origin of the name for Lake Tanganyika, a name in usage long before both Kelly's and Iliffe's explanations, is Richard Burton's account in "The Lake Regions of Central Equatorial Africa" (1859, 234), where its variants include Changanyika and Zanganyika and reputedly means "meeting of waters." We are not told in what language, though we are told it is so used by the Wajiji, and other locals.

20. I'm grateful to Zarina Patel, of *Awaaz Magazine*, who directed me to the following explanation for why, in Swahili, "Kalasinga" was adopted as the generic name for Sikhs in East Africa. She also directed me to the grandnephew of the original S. Kala Singh, who still resides in Nairobi, but whom I did not contact. The account: "A sturdy, tough and an adventurous Sikh from the State of Patiala migrated to Kenya in 1896 at the age of 16. His name was Kala Singh. He started a progressive business under the name of Munshiram & Co. and became engaged in very widespread business activities. He travelled through forests, barren lands and mountains, all in the times when there were no means of travel in any form. His exclusive adventures brought him in touch with the indigenous tribal people. S. Kala Singh particularly opened up the Masai reserve and made it accessible for people other than the Masai. This assisted in progress in trade and easy contacts for better understanding for the different peoples of Kenya. The traits and qualities of S. Kala Singh are still persistent in the Sikhs in East Africa so they are referred to as 'KALASINGHAS.'" Another anecdote also mentions that he attracted much attention because of his turban and, when bathing, his flowing and very long hair.

Gurnah locates Kalasinga's childhood in "South Africa" rather than the Cape Colony, which is what it was until the Union in 1910, another indicator of the novel's time frame (*P* 103).

21. In Gurnah's *Desertion* (2005), Rashid, the narrator who reads for a PhD in literature in Britain after leaving Zanzibar just prior to Independence and the Revolution, credits a bookseller's recommended texts with lighting "a torch to illuminate a darkened path" (Gurnah [2005] 2006, 218–19). One of these books is Naipaul's first published novel, *The Mystic Masseur* (1957). It should also be noted that in *A Bend in the River* the figure of Salim is complemented in complex ways by the figure of Indar, the educated (East African Asian) expatriate "expert" who was his childhood friend on the east coast. French claims that Indar serves as the author's mouthpiece on several occasions (French 2008, 384–86).

22. Yusuf has already learned his "numbers" from Khalil, a *rehani* like himself, while apprenticing at the shop.

23. There are English-speaking Europeans in the area who use Kalasinga's services.

24. A made-up name but close enough to the original "Olmolog." This area was made famous when it was later leased to the British by the Maasai in the 1940s for wheat farming; the wheat scheme failed and the British reneged on the original agreement, forcing the Maasai to pay for its rehabilitation. See Hodgeson 2004, 111; *P* 87).

25. Hussein then mentions Yusuf's namesake, the Qur'anic Prophet Yusuf, a reference explored by Dianne Schwerdt (1997, 99–100).
26. Actual name, Tabora ("Tayari" means "ready," "ripe," or "done" in Kiswahili). This segment of Aziz's account not only draws upon Selemani Mwenye Chande's account but quotes chunks of it verbatim—including the genealogies and lineage of the Arab leaders within the Tabora region.
27. The account follows Salim bin Akabari closely. In the characters' subsequent conversation about Gardens in India and the possibility of the original Eden still being on earth, Gurnah taps into late nineteenth-century racial theories locating both Eden and the original human beings, or our original Adam and Eve, in northern India. See Horsman 1981, 33.
28. Hamid, the storekeeper in Moshi (Aziz's agent to whom Yusuf is apprenticed), is perhaps drawing a distinction between literate coastal Kiswahili and the variety that is mainly oral and spoken by non-Mswahili. The difference is indicated in the use of the prefix "Ki." Also see Mazrui and Shariff 1994, ix.
29. Mirmotahari sees no irony in this passage, reading it for its comment on translation: "Rather than obscuring or disfiguring the original text, translations, and even translations through several languages, can actually unlock and enhance a text, giving it multiple selves" (2011, 33).
30. Though, of course, all religious instruction about doctrine is offered in whatever the local language may be. It would be disingenuous to suggest that simply because most Muslims worldwide learn to recite the Qur'an in Arabic without understanding the language, they don't understand their faith.
31. Jonathon Glassman's work is the most recent detailed source on Swahili coastal and island ethnic and cultural composition and politics. See Glassman 2000 (395–428), 2004 (720–54), and 2011. Also see Sheriff and Ferguson 1991.
32. The novel is clear in its identification of the groups collectively engaged in protocapitalist formations: Omani traders, Indian financiers, and Europeans. In addition to what's quoted here, Aziz acknowledges that there are "[Europeans] here for the same reason you and I are" (121).
33. There's no small irony that Indians, here, fulfill the role Thomas Macaulay outlined in his infamous "Minute on Indian Education": "We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern" ([1835] 1952, 729). Also note Winston Churchill's comment: "It is the Indian trader who, penetrating and maintaining himself in all sorts of places to which no white man would go or in which no white man could earn a living, has more than anyone else developed the early beginnings of trade and opened up the first slender means of communication [in East Africa]" ([1908] 2009, 49).

34. The name is a common one, to be sure. The protagonist in *The Mimic Men* (1967) is also named [Ralph] Singh.

35. In particular, see its first articulation in Naipaul's *An Area of Darkness* ([1964] 1981, 45–46). In all his work, Gurnah is always careful to represent the complex mix of Indian populations. Here, Harbans/Kalasinga Singh distinguishes himself from “Banyans,” Gujarati-speaking Hindu financiers and from Ismailis, a Shia sect (led by the Aga Khan). Another character, the stationmaster, has a Parsi name, Sidhwa, and so on.

36. The group is Maasai, never named but described with enough detail to announce them. Deckard notes that they are subjected to the “ethnographic gaze” within the novel (2010, 115). Aside from the trade they participate in, the fact that Hussein sews their shukas (shawl- or toga-like garments) also indicates the deep imbrications of indigenous life with the then global trade. This action is also at one end of the Kilimanjaro–Meru corridor, site in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries of an anomalous agricultural Maasai group as well as early German and Boer settlements.

37. Glassman claims to be the first to use the designation. Mswahili were “acculturated slaves” originally from the inland, who were eager to assimilate into the coast (2011, 22–64).

38. While it is a feature well within the analogy of the Qur'anic Yusuf story and Jami's poem, Yusuf's beauty also helps account for the character's talismanic status within Aziz's caravan.

39. For more on Naipaul's reliance on Hegel, see Mustafa 1995, 141–52.

40. See Bhabha 1992, 56–68, and 1994, 236–56.

41. The Qur'anic Yusuf story, like the biblical one, ends with a somewhat triumphalist (re)assertion of Yusuf's virtue and powers of reading and interpretation of others' dreams on a somewhat larger scale than Salim's interpretation of Ferdinand's. The Qur'anic Yusuf saves Egypt and his family.

42. Schwerdt argues that Yusuf's beauty “feminizes” him, as does his slave status, making him as much a prey of the women as of the men in the novel. She then reads the several deferrals of his sexual fulfillment as analogous both to the sexual metaphor of colonial penetration and the castration anxieties generated by the risk of “emasculatation” should the enterprise not succeed (1997, 98–99). Much of Naipaul's fiction, including *Bend in the River*, cannot separate sex from violence, making such encounters ubiquitous markers of political expediency and crude territoriality. Salim's liaison with Yvette, Raymond's wife, is an ugly case in point. Also see Houlden 2013, 91–104.

43. It's not hard to speculate that Gurnah is more than familiar with Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, which opens with the discussion of singularity and multiplicity within "global" perceptions that Deleuze and Guattari use to begin delineating their difference with Freud's readings, and to posit their own thesis of *becoming*. Their exemplification includes "the rhinoceros horn" versus "a field of tiny rhinoceros horns," whereby "the little bumps 'become' horns, and the horns, little penises" ([1980] 1987, 27). Also quoted in Wolfe 2003, 172.

44. The name belongs to an actual historical figure, mentioned as one of the leaders encountered by Mwenye Chande on his safari. Chatu, the adversary who has held Aziz and his merchandize at this point in the plot, is also based on a historical figure, Chata, from the same account. See Pesek 2006, 395–412, for an excellent overview and analysis of this kind of trading literature that Gurnah draws upon and incorporates. Indeed, the scene that follows could well be a performance associated with a *shauri*, an event/ceremony during which traders and other interested parties negotiate. Pesek does not refer to Gurnah.

45. In translation, the Arabic word for "paradise" is "garden."

46. See Berman 2013, 51–64. I'm especially grateful to Tina Steiner for making this special issue on Gurnah's work that she edited available to me at the time of its publication, just as I was finishing this essay (Steiner and Olausson 2013).

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