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Abdulrazak Gurnah to give the 2023 Schiller Address

Welcome: Petra Olschowski, Baden-Württemberg Minister of Science

The Tanzanian-born British Nobel Laureate in Literature Abdulrazak Gurnah will deliver this year's Marbach Schiller Address on 12 November 2023 at 11 a.m. With linguistic precision and narrative force, he creates social epics in his unique poetic voice, humorous and ironic, to tell of the effects of colonialism, of flight and migration, of the subjugation, uprising, and parallel existences of cultures. His works regularly engage with German colonialism in East Africa at the beginning of the 20th century and the continuity of this form of violence under National Socialism. Petra Olschowski, Baden-Württemberg Minister of Science, Research and the Arts, and Sandra Richter, Director of the German Literature Archive Marbach, will give opening remarks.

The Schiller Address is held annually to commemorate Friedrich Schiller's birthday. Speakers of this commemorative address previous to Abdulrazak Gurnah include Daniel Kehlmann, Anne Weber, Christian Drosten, Cem Özdemir, Jan Philipp Reemtsma, Orhan Pamuk, Jan Assmann, Brigitte Kronauer, Berthold Leibinger, and Richard von Weizsäcker. In Gurnah's novel *Afterlives* (2020), Schiller is read in the midst of the colonial war; for the young Muslim Hamza, Heine's *On the History of Religion and Philosophy in Germany* (1834) becomes an almost prophetic text. As Gurnah notes in an interview with *Deutschlandfunk*, he wants to show that there exists »another consciousness« beyond ideology and violence.

Gurnah's literary breakthrough to a wider audience came in 1994 with his fourth novel *Paradise*, which was shortlisted for the Booker Prize. Born in Zanzibar in 1948, Gurnah left for England at the age of 18 to pursue his studies. He first taught at Bayero University Kano in Nigeria (1980–82) and then as Professor of English and Postcolonial Literatures at the University of Kent in Canterbury until his retirement in 2017. He writes short stories and novels in English (*Memory of Departure* [1987], *Admiring Silence* [1996], *Desertion* [2005]). His essays focus on African literature and postcolonial authors such as Salman Rushdie and V. S. Naipaul.

[German Version](#)

Kontakt

[Alexa Hennemann](#)

Leiterin Referat Kommunikation

Telefon +49 (0) 7144 / 848-173

Telefax +49 (0) 7144 / 848-191

E-Mail alexa.hennemann@dla-marbach.de

[Dr. Dietmar Jaegle](#)

Stv. Leiter Referat Kommunikation / Publikationen

Telefon +49 (0) 7144 / 848-604

Telefax +49 (0) 7144 / 848-191
E-Mail dietmar.jaegle@dla-marbach.de

[Vinca Lochstampfer, M.A.](#)
Referentin Social Media / Tourismus, Marketing
Telefon +49 (0) 7144 / 848-103
Telefax +49 (0) 7144 / 848-191
E-Mail vinca.lochstampfer@dla-marbach.de

[Frederike Teweleit-Lutze](#)
Mitarbeiterin Veranstaltungsmanagement
Telefon +49 (0) 7144 / 848-120
Telefax +49 (0) 7144 / 848-191
E-Mail frederike.teweleit-lutze@dla-marbach.de

[Katja Kesselheim, M.A.](#)
Sekretariat
Telefon +49 (0) 7144 / 848-174
Telefax +49 (0) 7144 / 848-191
E-Mail presse@dla-marbach.de