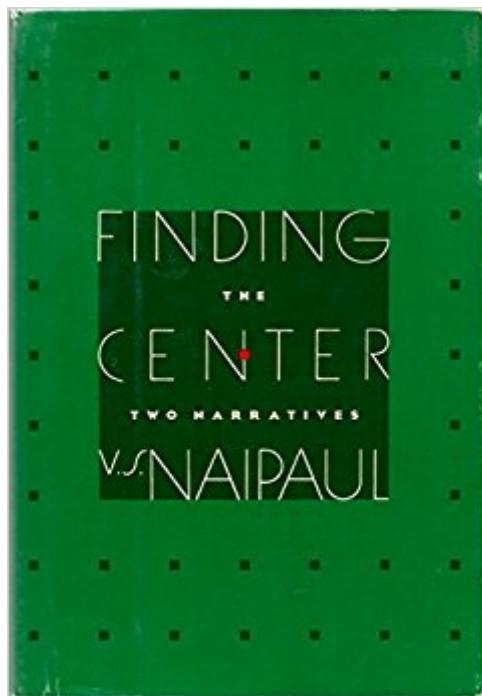


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Finding The Center



Synopsis

Finding the Center by Naipaul, V.S.

Book Information

Hardcover: 176 pages

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Customer Reviews

In the essay, "Prologue to an Autobiography," Naipaul recounts his beginnings as a writer and renders a touching portrait of his father. In "The Crocodiles of Yamoussoukro," a study of the Ivory Coast, he delineates two sections of the modern African mind: the Westernized "day" mind and that of the ageless, magic-haunted "night." PW called both narratives "small works of art."

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-- bookended slyly with a travel and politics story, showing how smoothly good he'd become. Funny this book has sloped away. (The memoir is included in "Literary Occasions," along with a great piece on Conrad that first ran in his Eva Peron book. Somehow, though, that's a less exciting book. It seems like an assignment, a dead piece of past. This book is vital.) You get to see young N fresh in London, learning to write. And -- edgy, nervous, hoping -- how he learns to turn a story. The center he finds is the job; then, in part 2, he does the job. Wonderful work, with -- as a bonus -- one of the best paperback covers in recent decades. Sell the print!

It is a rare book of two essays that dealt with the author's own personal experiences in two entirely different worlds. Prologue to an Autobiography, the first one was more personal than the second

one and it was related to his background in Trinidad and Indian ancestry. I enjoyed reading it mainly because of my Indian background, and if there was something intrinsic I might have missed it because of the same reason. I need to read it over. However I found something remarkably valuable in the second essay, The Crocodiles of Yamaoussoukro. It was more of a travel type dealing with foreign (African) culture with certain intrinsic revelations about the human nature itself. It showed presence of spirituality behind the primitiveness. Acceptance of the way things happen was delicately brought out through people from Ghana when they say "Yesterday we were all right. Today we are poor. That is the way it is. Tomorrow we may be all right again. Or we may not. That is the way it is." ; and through Arlette when she says things like "But the world is sand. Life is sand" when she tries to explain the instability of Life. Naipaul draws the parallel themes between this practical acceptance of Africa and that of the Hindu doctrine of Karma. Naipaul is probably the most focused writer of our times. Only he could have written such observational essays. I highly recommend them to any one with an open mind and a desire to finding one's own center.

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