



The World Is What It Is: The Authorized Biography of V.S. Naipaul

Patrick French

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V.S. Naipaul is the most compelling literary figure of the last fifty years. Producing, uniquely, masterpieces of both fiction and non-fiction, his is a gift born of a forceful, visionary impulse. With great feeling for his formidable body of work, and exclusive access to his private papers and personal recollections, Patrick French has produced a luminous and astonishing account of this enigmatic genius. V.S. Naipaul was born in Trinidad, into an Indian family. French examines early privations, Naipaul's life within a displaced community and his talent and fierce ambition at school, which won him a scholarship to Oxford at the age of seventeen. He describes how, once in England, homesickness and depression struck with great force, and the ways in which Naipaul, supported by his first wife, overcame his 'double exile', culminating in the production of early masterpieces such as *A House for Mr Biswas*, *An Area of Darkness* and *In a Free State*. Through the uncertainties of life in London, and later in Wiltshire, Naipaul and his wife were to stay together for over four decades, even after he embarked on an intense twenty-five-year love affair. As his reputation grew, as prizes and accolades were bestowed, as a second wave of breathtaking creation generated *A Bend in the River*, *Among the Believers* and *The Enigma of Arrival*, Naipaul found and sustained an extraordinary position both outside and at the centre of literary culture. Researched with the full cooperation of its Nobel Prize-winning subject, Patrick French traces with sympathetic brilliance and devastating insight the roots of V.S. Naipaul's unparalleled gift, in what will become a landmark in biography.

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