



Empire of Self: A Life of Gore Vidal

Jay Parini

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An intimate, authorized yet totally frank biography of Gore Vidal (1925–2012), one of the most accomplished, visible, and controversial American novelists and cultural figures of the past century

The product of thirty years of friendship and conversation, Jay Parini's *Empire of Self* digs behind the glittering surface of Gore Vidal's colorful career to reveal the complex emotional and sexual truths underlying his celebrity-strewn life. But there is plenty of glittering surface as well—a virtual *Who's Who* of the twentieth century, from Eleanor Roosevelt and Amelia Earhart through the Kennedys, Johnny Carson, Leonard Bernstein, and the crème de la crème of Hollywood. Also a generous helping of feuds with the likes of William F. Buckley, Norman Mailer, Truman Capote, and *The New York Times*, among other adversaries.

The life of Gore Vidal teemed with notable incidents, famous people, and lasting achievements that call out for careful evocation and examination. Jay Parini crafts Vidal's life into an accessible, entertaining story that puts the experience of one of the great American figures of the postwar era into context, introduces the author and his works to a generation who may not know him, and looks behind the scenes at the man and his work in ways never possible before his death. Provided with unique access to Vidal's life and his papers, Parini excavates many buried skeletons yet never loses sight of his deep respect for Vidal and his astounding gifts. This is the biography Gore Vidal—novelist, essayist, dramatist, screenwriter, historian, wit, provocateur, and pioneer of gay rights—has long needed.

From the Hardcover edition.

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