



Imperial America: Reflections on the United States of Amnesia

By Gore Vidal

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Gore Vidal has been described as the last 'noble defender' of the American republic. In Imperial America, Vidal steals the thunder of a right wing America—those who have camouflaged their extremist rhetoric in the Old Glory and the Red, White, and Blue—by demonstrating that those whose protest arbitrary and secret government, those who defend the bill of rights, those who seek to restrain America's international power, are the true patriots. "Those Americans who refuse to plunge blindly into the maelstrom of European and Asiatic politics are not defeatist or neurotic," he writes. "They are giving evidence of sanity, not cowardice, of adult thinking as distinguished from infantilism. They intend to preserve and defend the Republic. America is not to be Rome or Britain. It is to be America."

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

The commercial success of *Perpetual War for Perpetual Peace* and *Dreaming War* shows that Vidal's Jeffersonian anti-imperialism is fashionable again with the left wing of the book-buying public. In time for the election season, Vidal has dashed off three rambling anti-Bush diatribes and collected eight articles from the *Nation*, *Esquire* and other magazines, written from 1975 to 2004. Many of the selections take the form of mock State of the Union addresses, and while Vidal's consistency over the years is admirable, reading 11 variants of the same stump speech becomes monotonous. Vidal typically includes denunciations of Lincoln, Teddy Roosevelt and Truman for their part in constructing America's "National Security State." He believes that the Cold Warriors invented a phony Communist bogeyman and that "Israeli fifth columnists" such as Norman Podhoretz control America's policy in the Middle East. Vidal would end the war on drugs and nationalize health care and natural resources. And he would change the Constitution to make America a parliamentary democracy and break the monopoly of what he calls the "Property party," with "its two wings: Republican and Democrat." Vidal is at his most convincing and entertaining when he's jeering at democratic pieties about America, which he believes is actually an oligarchy run by a military-industrial-financial elite that he calls "the bank." Vidal may be in tune with the zeitgeist again because his polemical writing resembles the new blogger punditry: conversational, tart, fervent, digressive, susceptible to idiosyncratic theories but capable of worthwhile provocations.

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From Booklist

Like *Perpetual War for Perpetual Peace* (2002) and *Dreaming War* (2003), this final volume in Vidal's trilogy attacking the "Cheney-Bush junta" contains some new analysis padded out by previously published essays (most of these are from the 1980s). This time, Vidal tackles the American imperial impulse, placing the Cheney-Bush wars in Iraq and Afghanistan in the context of America's 1846 seizure of California and the later annexation of colonies in the Pacific. Vidal's vast knowledge of American history and his blazing wit set him apart from the other Bush bashers, and even his old stuff will be fun to read for those sharing his point of view. Some of the material is dated, though, such as an analysis from 1985 of Reagan's Christian apocalypticism, which never really gets connected to imperial America or its current leaders. And the book's organization leaves something to be desired; some observations are repeated almost verbatim 100 pages apart. Still, Vidal's fierce, vitriolic voice remains relevant. The highlight of the book is the opening essay, a scathing critique of what Vidal calls Cheney-Bush's "hijacking" of the election and their subsequent administration, and so it's a bit disappointing that most of the material here is older. Vidal's historical analysis is often fascinating, but fellow Bush-bashers will wish for more current intelligence. *John Green*
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Users Review

From reader reviews:

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