

How the Elite Are Trained to Be the Ruling Class in Secret & Are Never Named: Gore Vidal (2000)

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The Memory Hole

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Eugene Luther Gore Vidal (/vɪˈdɑːl/; born Eugene Louis Vidal, October 3, 1925 – July 31, 2012) was an American writer and public intellectual known for his epigrammatic wit, erudition, and patrician manner. Vidal was bisexual, and in his novels and essays interrogated the social and cultural sexual norms he perceived as driving American life.[1] Beyond literature, Vidal was heavily involved in politics. He twice sought office—unsuccessfully—as a Democratic Party candidate, first in 1960 to the U.S. House of Representatives (for New York), and later in 1982 to the U.S. Senate (for California).

A grandson of a U.S. Senator, Vidal was born into an upper-class political family. As a political commentator and essayist, Vidal's primary focus was the history and society of the United States, especially how a militaristic foreign policy reduced the country to a decadent empire.[2] His political and cultural essays were published in *The Nation*, the *New Statesman*, the *New York Review of Books*, and *Esquire* magazines. As a public intellectual, Gore Vidal's topical debates on sex, politics, and religion with other intellectuals and writers occasionally turned into quarrels with the likes of William F. Buckley Jr. and Norman Mailer.

As a novelist, Vidal explored the nature of corruption in public and private life. His style of narration evoked the time and place of his stories, and delineated the psychology of his characters.[3] His third novel, *The City and the Pillar* (1948), offended the literary, political, and moral sensibilities of conservative book reviewers, the plot being about a dispassionately presented male homosexual relationship.[4] In the historical novel genre, Vidal recreated the imperial world of Julian the Apostate (r. AD 361–63) in *Julian* (1964). Julian was the Roman emperor who attempted to re-establish Roman polytheism to counter Christianity.[5] In social satire, *Myra Breckinridge* (1968) explores the mutability of gender roles and sexual orientation as being social constructs established by social mores.[6]:94–100 In *Burr* (1973) and *Lincoln* (1984), each protagonist is presented as "A Man of the People" and as "A

Man" in a narrative exploration of how the public and private facets of personality affect the national politics of the United States.[7]: 439 [6]: 75–85

In 1956, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer hired Gore Vidal as a screenplay writer with a four-year employment contract. In 1958, the director William Wyler required a script doctor to rewrite the screenplay for *Ben-Hur* (1959), originally written by Karl Tunberg. As one of several script doctors assigned to the project, Vidal rewrote significant portions of the script to resolve ambiguities of character motivation, specifically to clarify the enmity between the Jewish protagonist, Judah Ben-Hur, and the Roman antagonist, Messala, who had been close boyhood friends. In exchange for rewriting the *Ben-Hur* screenplay, on location in Italy, Vidal negotiated the early termination (at the two-year mark) of his four-year contract with MGM.[7][47]

Thirty-six years later, in the documentary film *The Celluloid Closet* (1995), Vidal explained that Messala's failed attempt at resuming their homosexual, boyhood relationship motivated the ostensibly political enmity between *Ben-Hur* (Charlton Heston) and Messala (Stephen Boyd). Vidal said that Boyd was aware of the homosexual subtext to the scene and that the director, the producer and the screenwriter agreed to keep Heston ignorant of the subtext, lest he refuse to play the scene.[7][48] In turn, on learning of that script-doctor explanation, Charlton Heston said that Vidal had contributed little to the script of *Ben-Hur*. [49] Despite Vidal's script-doctor resolution of the character's motivations, the Screen Writers Guild assigned formal screenwriter-credit to Karl Tunberg, in accordance with the WGA screenwriting credit system, which favored the "original author" of a screenplay, rather than the writer of the filmed screenplay.[50]

Two plays, *The Best Man: A Play about Politics* (1960, made into a film in 1964) and *Visit to a Small Planet* (1955), were theater and movie successes. Vidal occasionally returned to the movie business, and wrote historically accurate teleplays and screenplays about subjects important to him. *Billy the Kid* (1989) is one, about William H. Bonney, a gunman in the New Mexico territory Lincoln County War (1878), and later an outlaw in the U.S. Western frontier. Another is 1979's *Caligula* (based upon the life of the Roman Emperor Caligula), [51] from which Vidal had his screenwriter credit removed because the producer, Bob Guccione, the director, Tinto Brass, and the leading actor, Malcolm McDowell, rewrote the script to add extra sex and violence to increase its commercial success.

In the 1960s, Vidal migrated to Italy, where he befriended the film director Federico Fellini, for whom he appeared in a cameo role in the film *Roma* (1972)

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gore_Vidal

weekend on book tv

0:08

up next live in depth with author playwright and essayist gore vidal

0:16

[Music]

0:22

in a writing career spanning over 50 years gore vidal has produced 22 novels more than 200 essays a memoir and

0:30

numerous short stories and screenplays this month one of his plays has been revived on broadway and the seventh

0:36

installment in his american chronicles series a novel called the golden age has been released here to join us on book

0:42

tv's in-depth series to talk about his life and work is gore vidal mr vidal thanks for being here very nice to be

0:48

here in my hometown do you remember the first time you put pen to paper

0:55

i sort of remember must have been about six or seven

1:01

and i am starting to read fairly grown up books and i have read a book

1:08

i didn't like children's books but i had been given one called the duck and the kangaroo

1:14

a tale of unnatural affection the duck was in love with the kangaroo

1:20

and i immediately started to write a book what i thought was a book it turned out to be pretty much the duck

1:27

in the kangaroo but i think that was the beginning that when i saw something that triggered me

1:34

it was a movie called the mystery of the blue room i think it was

1:40

and that really started me off i must have been about eight or nine and i really sat down to write a novel

1:46

didn't get terribly far then when i was about 16

1:52

i used to go over the library of congress and i wrote half a book

1:59

i don't know what on earth it was about but i just go there every day and write the rest of the time i was reading

2:06

and what time there was left i was reading aloud to my grandfather senator gore who was

2:12

with whom i lived pretty much until i was 10. and he was blind from the age of 10

2:20

and he got me to read for him and i was the i was his favorite grandchild

2:26

or child because i loved reading and his other children hated it

2:32

and he used to chuckle rather grimly after i'd been reading for five or six hours on n

2:38

said you know john milton's daughters went blind reading to their father he

2:43

would chuckle happily to himself and now let's get to bimetallism this is

2:49

an exciting subject free silver you see was the basis of my founding the state of oklahoma this was

2:56

and we'd be off to the races so i was getting great history lessons along with reading skills

3:04

it was what was nice about it i got to talk to him grandfathers particularly if they're

3:09

senators and blind and have to be looked after aren't the best of company

3:16

but i was his reader so i came into another guy i wasn't just a grandchild i was a reading person

3:22

and he held them in high regard let me tell our audience a little bit

3:28

about what we'll be doing this afternoon and how they can join in in this this series called in depth we have the

3:34

opportunity to spend three full hours with authors who have spent many years writing and producing books gorvida will

3:40

be with us for the next three hours we'll be talking for about 20 to 25 minutes and then opening up our phone

3:46

lines for your questions for him from all around the country we'll put that phone number on the bottom of the screen during this first half hour so you can

3:52

begin thinking about your questions and calling into our studio studios here in washington and we do very much welcome

3:58

your participation lots of opportunity for discussions of all sorts when did you

4:03

decide that writing would be your career i don't think i ever decided that

4:09

i wanted to go into politics that was the family's trade

4:15

and um i sort of aimed more toward that but that

4:20

made something of a historian out of me because i kept studying the issues as i went along my grandfather was born in

4:26

1870 so between his life and my life we've covered half that of the republic and he

4:32

had memories of as far back as the revolution from a great grandfather of his

4:38

so i it was natural for me to write as natural as it was for me to read

4:46

i had no clear idea i was very much a poet and a very bad poet

4:52

very didactic and thundering but in my back of my mind i

4:58

it just the need to invent worlds was obviously pretty great

5:05

so i became a writer in the um

5:11

army i was in the pacific during the war i enlisted at the age of 17

5:17

in the year 1943 and ended up as a first mate of an army

5:24

boat in the aleutian islands where i

5:29

got soaked one day by a wave from the bering sea hypothermia is that the word for it anyway i came out of it with a

5:37

rheumatoid arthritis in the army hospital

5:42

i began to write i needed to say about the first mate of an army boat in the aleutian islands

5:49

i was in the traditional mode right about what you know i was by then 18 or 19.

5:57

and as usual i tried to write when i was at exeter

6:02

at least six novels and some of them i got very far along

6:07

and then the site could never finish anything so here i was writing this narrative about

6:15

the illusions the experience of a great storm which is called

6:20

willowah in the aleut language and what it was like to be

6:28

all of those men i think 20-man crew

6:33

in this forlorn lunar landscape with these dangerous seas

6:39

and extraordinary beaches the beaches up in the oceans are covered with moonstone and jasper

6:46

and all sorts of precious stones no indigenous wildlife except for foxes and

6:54

great black ravens and a lot a lot of guys went crazy up

7:01

there really in the quonset huts because you never saw the sun and

7:07

i didn't go crazy because i had a book to have a story to tell in the army hospital

7:13

i didn't get much done then they made me a mess officer in

7:18

camp gordon johnson apalachicola florida transportation corps and uh

7:26

that was kind of fun they wouldn't let me out i i could have had a medical discharge but they said

7:31

we'll keep you in two more years because you can still do work like this

7:37

and one night i went to see a movie called isle of the dead

7:43

with boris karloff and it was not as a monster but as a

7:48

greek colonel on an island in which there is a kind of mad spirit abroad

7:55

this wonderful picture and after i saw the picture i when i was

8:02

officer of the day which i was on duty at night in the headquarters

8:08

and i went back and this great headquarters had all the lights on i don't remember why

8:13

and there were rows of typewriters and i went over and started typing and

8:19

within a week i had finished willow my first book that i had ever completed

8:25

in due course after three years of the army i was let out in 46

8:31

gave it to a publisher and it was published not just that it was complete but did you know that in fact it was good

8:39

i thought i had accomplished what i had set out to do yes naturally i was compared to hemingway

8:45

everybody was compared to hemingway in those days if you wrote in a sort of abbreviated terse style

8:52

but the reading i had been doing that influenced me if anything did other than

8:59

my imaginary world and the real world i'm describing it would have been hard cranes

9:05

the boat which i've never seen i finally met somebody who had noticed

9:11

that i was being interviewed in new york and the interviewer said you know i got my

9:18

master's degree in college in your book willow i said tell me about it and he did

9:24

because i've totally forgotten it and he said reread it so maybe i will

9:30

but not on air when you look at your relationship with

9:37

senator gore um do you think that was the formative relationship in your life oh yes

9:45

uh aside from a passion for politics which seems to be in the bloodstream of most

9:51

gores as we are witnessing this year

9:57

he gave me a profound sense of history from the loser's side he was from

10:02

mississippi and the gore's come from northern mississippi and albert gore's family comes from

10:08

tennessee just across the border from us it's all the same family and

10:14

we were unionists there were no slaves up there and we didn't want to secede

10:21

and eastern tennessee did not secede but all of mississippi did and my great-grandfather senator gore's

10:27

father enlisted with two brothers and in due course he was uh wounded at

10:34

chickamauga and taken captive and one of his other brothers was was

10:40

killed so my grandfather was then his son he became county clerk

10:49

well my grandfather was just able to tell me about the civil war what it was like what the yankees did when i came

10:54

and burned the town and with that history and that politics

11:02

a writer's subject was born if not a writer would you describe your politics

11:10

well i wouldn't have written so many books if i could describe it in one sentence would i

11:17

i come out of the populist tradition which was his tradition

11:24

populist means people and there was something called the party of the people at the end of the 19th

11:29

century one of the principal organizers in that area was

11:34

my great-grandfather gore and all the gores were political and many of them great artists well it

11:42

was a party to represent first the people who had been ruined by the civil war southerners

11:49

just ruined farmers and uh the bourbons of the southern as they call the

11:54

aristocrats of the southern mississippi they had lost plantations and so on but

12:00

somehow they held on to money we had nothing up in the north so in order to organize against

12:07

reconstruction the bad aspects of it and the hard cold hand

12:13

of the banks in the north were buying up the south and exploiting and keeping

12:19

cotton at five cents or whatever it was playing around with the with our crops and money

12:26

we became violently anti big banks what we call corporate america

12:32

today that was those were the villains and he continued along that line and of

12:39

course the populists were co-opted by the democratic party and william jennings bryan three times

12:47

candidate for president was the heroic leader of the party my

12:52

grandfather nominated him for president in 1907 or eight i guess it was

12:59

at denver and he remembered brian was about 36 when his first nominator sort

13:06

of a windbag but a marvelous ardor and my grandfather said

13:11

the thing about brian is he never developed after he made his cross of gold you shall not press down upon the power of

13:18

the brow of labor this crown of thorns you shall not crucify mankind

13:23

upon a cross of gold the gores naturally were free silver

13:28

which was what my mentalism was all about as my grandfather started the longest

13:34

demonstration in the history of any convention when he nominated brian how long was it do you know i think it

13:39

was about two hours a two hour demonstration and uh they prayed it up and down the

13:46

place went crazy because and he was speaking as the new senator of a new state which he'd helped to create oklahoma

13:54

and so he was a great novel and he was a great artist he said as they were driving away from

14:00

the convention it wasn't that conventional it was the next time brian was nominated

14:05

that brian ran and lost i guess it was this next time as they were driving away in their

14:11

carriage from the convention to all brian said you know i attribute my success in politics to

14:17

just three things my grandfather said i can't remember anything he said but i do remember

14:23

thinking why he thought he was a success about 15 minutes until we begin your phone calls for gorbadol and here are

14:29

the numbers you live in the eastern half of the united states two zero two six two four eleven eleven if you live in

14:35

the mountain or pacific time zones two zero two six two four eleven fifteen

14:40

i was surprised in my reading to learn that in fact gore was not your birth name that you took it as a writer it's

14:47

not true that's not true i was christened by the canon albert hawley lucas

14:53

headmaster of saint albans where i was in school i was christened uh

15:00

eugene luther gore vidal so you chose to emphasize

15:06

no that's too long you can't use that the writer's name

15:12

i was going to go into politics in the state of new mexico

15:17

and was making certain preparations for it when i was in my 20s and i just got the eugene luther off

15:23

after all my father was a jean and i didn't want to be another gene found as i was of him

15:30

and luther just doesn't work so we kept to go of it

15:35

out i did have in the back of my mind that if i were to run for office he was a

15:42

great power in that section in the southwest and a friend of his in fact we used to

15:48

talk about that in um 48

15:53

i'd been out of the army two years published my first two books i would go to new mexico santa fe

16:00

settle in the governor was a protege of my grandfather's

16:06

jack dempsey was his name and i would settle in and become a politician

16:13

and vidal is a latin name which is a help with the hispanic vote

16:20

although our my family was italian but so that is how i got the name

16:27

or gave myself the name by cutting it off the first two

16:32

two words what is your specific relationship to al

16:37

gore well we've never met but i knew his father

16:43

i love it now every time i'm on a program or a distant cousin of albert gore well

16:50

we're not distant at all i have not wanted to meet him because it

16:56

doesn't do you much good if you're a political commentator to be thought to be involved with president i discovered

17:02

that during jack kennedy's reign when suddenly i was not taken seriously at all

17:07

having been taken quite seriously as a commentator because

17:12

they thought that i was an apologist for him and that was because it was irresistible

17:17

not to make fun of richard nixon so it seemed as though i was partisan when i wasn't but i figured out then it does

17:23

no good to be attached in any way to a political figure if you want to talk about

17:28

politics which i tend to do so i had i knew uh young albert was

17:35

going to make himself president if he could and though i liked his father and his

17:41

father my grandfather were friends we're all here in washington i mean you can't say a distant cousins

17:46

we're all last last night i had a wonderful dinner with deborah gordeen another

17:53

cousin and she's just she's the granddaughter of grady gore

17:59

so there's grady gore here in the town with the fairfax hotel he's the rich member of the family there's albert gore

18:06

from uh eastern tennessee who comes here in the house and then goes on to the senate and there's thomas prior gore

18:12

from mississippi but senator from oklahoma where all three cousins are here in the

18:17

town and they all three knew each other i'm talking the older generation so uh

18:24

it's a there's a saying in mississippi if a snake bites the gore

18:30

they all puff up you know you mentioned deborah gordin

18:35

your your cousin people who follow politics closely will remember that she had some troubles

18:41

during the reagan administration i would think that she was young she was foolish she went

18:47

she wanted to work for ronald reagan that's that's trouble enough

18:53

and the acting president has she in fact disavowed herself from public life after

18:58

that experience we haven't talked about public life she's a wonderful decorator a decorator now she has her

19:05

over in georgetown got a wonderful um shop there

19:10

well speaking of public life you talked about your aspirations to politics you ran twice would you talk about those two

19:15

bids and what happened well the first uh oh i i like to read about my humiliating defeat this is

19:23

a right-wing specialty i doubled the vote in 1960 for congress

19:30

from upstate new york the 29th congressional district which is five counties

19:36

very big district and in fact did harry truman come up to introduce you during an event there came up to speak for me

19:42

yes i introduced him and uh

19:49

in 1959 i'd written a play called the best man and i gave it to jack kennedy to read

19:58

he was running for president i was running for the house and

20:04

your eye your eye contact is gone because i'm showing the audience the best man flyer which is just oh really

20:11

as you see everything is behind me on this program what is going on upstage there i feel that there's a whole

20:17

way of life gladiators are fighting while i'm downstaged with that it were that interesting oh come now we'll do

20:24

our best to enliven it downstage here well in fact i've interrupted you right at the best man being written 1959. you

20:32

can pick it up from there so i am running for congress jack is running for president

20:39

uh the best man which is once again on broadway the virginia theater in new

20:44

manhattan this was in a sense a study of a presidential character as a character

20:52

somewhat like adelaide stevenson some something like truman something like

20:57

uh nixon and it was written really sort of to help out jack

21:02

because he had to dixon would be his opponent if he got the nomination

21:08

and it was very very important that he could knock off adlai stevenson who had

21:13

had two runs and we of the liberal end of the democratic party were all

21:18

stephensonians and suddenly jack is the insurgent

21:24

but after two runs we thought that adlai stevenson was

21:29

just not up to it he was a very cultivated charming man wonderful speech

21:34

maker but he was not decisive

21:39

and his great backer was eleanor roosevelt who was my neighbor on the hudson and she she adored him and she

21:46

was she wanted the party to support him and she didn't like jack kennedy one bit first he was a mccarthyite in her eyes

21:52

she was very friendly with joe mccarthy and of course she detested his father
21:59
which shouldn't have held over with him but it did
22:04
and i remember jack sent her son frank roosevelt jr walter ruther who's head of
22:09
united auto workers and me to pay a call on her at valkyrie cottage
22:16
to get her to support adley i saw jack and she read a position paper to us
22:22
which was my day for for the next week
22:27
and they said yes but he won't make up his mind you keep proposing him and he keeps
saying you know
22:33
no i don't know if i'm running or not well she said finally frank roosevelt said
22:41
you know ma we don't want you can't have somebody who doesn't know
22:46
his own mind she said well that's the way he is
22:51
you can't change people and he said well we know that's the way he is and we don't
want him
22:56
and with that she went right on to to support
23:01
adley stevenson went to the convention waved her finger at it said you must support
this man
23:07
i'm losing my thing in my ear that's uh tell the audience that's how you're going to hear
phone calls and about it i
23:12
hear the phone calls which i am sure are what's in now so i practically hear a phone call
now
23:19
they're lined up for you i can promise and in fact how is the presidency different
23:25
today as you re-release this play from the kind of presidency you captured in
23:31
1960 in the jack kennedy era well it certainly makes a monkey out of darwin
23:37
there's been no evolution in 40 years the audience recognizes these types
23:43
my characters they sit there it's sort of a thriller and it's quite funny

23:50

people don't know they've forgotten about realism life is not always tragic and it's not always coming it's a sort of mixture and that

23:57

is what realism was now everybody thinks oh a serious play has got to be lugubrious and comedy has

24:03

got to be you know pratfalls uh real life is mixed and it's it is a

24:09

realistic play and the audiences pick up on just about i haven't changed the word since 1960 so

24:17

it's like the time machine for them they're walking into a 1960

24:23

meeting in which you watch over a three-day period of this convention

24:29

who's two two men fighting it out with an old president being the decisive voice

24:36

and they ask a lot of questions they compare it to today when a convention means nothing because by march

24:43

of 2000 we knew who the two candidates were you don't get the convention until june or july

24:48

so uh it's quite different also we don't talk about money in the play

24:54

there's no hard money soft money no electoral reform so

25:00

more issues are probably touched upon delicately amusingly wittily

25:05

in the play than have been in this entire campaign as we sit here in washington dc with presidential

25:11

candidates roaming the country first telephone call for you is from

25:18

philadelphia welcome to the program and you're on for gore vidal yes hello mr vidal i'm honored to speak with you i met

25:25

james baldwin on your birthday the year before he died and i told him it was your birthday and he said he didn't know

25:31

and he didn't say anything about the fact that you all knew each other until i read your memoir i realized that you

25:37

did know each other so i was wondering if you two ever talk politics and if so how did you find him and if not

25:44

how did you find mr baldwin generally well i like jimmy and i worked

25:50

the year my first book willow came out 1946 ep dutton the publisher gave me a job as

25:56

uh as as a reader and i brought them

26:03

cry holy a book by jimmy baldwin which later became go tell

26:08

it on the mountain the head of ep dutton mr mcrae

26:13

just when he found out the author was black said but don't you understand i'm from virginia

26:19

i said well what's that got to do with it well he turned it down on the ground that he was not going to publish a black

26:25

author first time i'd ever seen it that close jimmy went on however to publish

26:31

elsewhere and did very well uh relations with jimmy himself were always

26:37

kind of edgy he was well he had a lot of problems

26:42

on the one hand he was a wonderful sort of orator and a great sermonizer

26:50

on the other hand he was just in love with showbiz so he he would go from martin luther king on one day to betty

26:56

davis on the next day well it was very odd dealing with such a mercurial character

27:02

but i thought he um he was a great voice in his time but i'm

27:08

not so sure the novels will be remembered i was looking at one of them the other day and it seemed very uh

27:15

sort of showbiz novels that he wrote but uh the sermons still hold up

27:22

next call for you comes from a town that's been in the news quite a bit lately los alamos new mexico

27:28

welcome to the program uh thank you first off i want to say when you began this uh series uh i was

27:34

always hoping you would have gore vidal for three hours and mr vidal you mentioned isle of the dead earlier which

27:40

is one of my favorite movies and the book i particularly enjoyed the viewers with screening history

27:46

in your opening line you say as i now move graciously i hope toward the door parked exit it occurs to me that the

27:53

only thing i ever really liked to do was go to the movies and my sentiments exactly so mama a question

28:00

for you mr vidal which is a great honor to speak to you is have you seen any good movies lately

28:07

i keep seeing them and i keep forgetting their names uh there was a good altman movie i'm a

28:12

member of the academy so i vote on the oscars and so i get to see everything

28:18

there's a very good altman movie last year which had the word cookie in the title uh

28:23

the ones i like i seldom are seldom very successful but i i think we've got a lot of

28:30

interesting movie makers now i like the cohen brothers like tim robbins

28:35

i worked as an actor with tim robbins and bob roberts which i think is a good political movie

28:41

and i went to los alamos when it was a boys school i was there 39 to 40

28:48

and up there on the mesa which has now been burnt a bit and a kind of awful place

28:56

and 10 years before i got there there was another writer to be william burroughs

29:02

so los alamos produced burroughs and vidal i don't know what that means if you had some free time right now

29:09

would you choose to read or go to the movies i do both

29:14

because as a member of the academy i get everything practically on video cassette

29:20

so i play that and i'm reading all the time as well so there isn't much time to do anything but

29:26

look and read before we take the next call can we talk a little bit about home when did you

29:31

choose italy as your your major place of residence i don't know it's a major i

29:37

mean i spent all last winter i have a house in los angeles in the hollywood hills

29:42

and i make the tired joke you know arguably between hollywood and

29:48

ravello italy you can say i don't live in america at all but as america is in my head and this

29:56

america is my subject and wherever i am there is america i sometimes think i've limited myself in

30:03

a way by being so intensely interested in the country and in its politics and

30:09

in the design of its history which is what these and i never called it american chronicle

30:15

that was publishers i call them narratives of empire from bird lincoln to 1876 right up to the

30:22

the golden age what i'm doing is trying to find a design in our history i'm trying to find

30:30

how deliberate was the acquisition of empire was there a plan

30:36

or were there many similar plans that coalesced into this global empire

30:42

that is causing the world so much trouble and is so expensive for us to maintain

30:48

and i think toward the end of palump's test i just saw the book balum says and i say

30:54

the title of the golden age i begin to draw a pattern

31:02

italy is a place just to go to to write and hollywood hills is a place to when i'm

31:08

living in america from which i politic and sometimes do the odd movie

31:15

if we were to find you in ravello writing where exactly would you be

31:21

well i'd be in my studio in a villa

31:28

which is about 700 meters above the sea it's on the cliff

31:33

with a spectacular view of the gulf of salerno in front of me

31:39

and then right across the gulf there's pastum the greek temples from the fifth century

31:44

on a clear day you think you can see them but i don't think we do see them and i would be there sitting in a cube

31:51

room cube like room painted white writing

31:56

in longhand on yellow legal sheets no computer

32:02

no computer how do you revise i have it typed up

32:08

i fax it to london where i have a typist she faxes it back to me she's got a

32:14

floppy disk and i do another version i do generally about five to six versions

32:21

of everything sometimes i try to cheat and stop at four and it's not right

32:27

so that is the work process when do you do your best work are you a morning person

32:33

when i get up which might not be morning but uh i find not only

32:40

the closer you are to the dream state that you've been in before awakening

32:46

the much readier the imagination is not to mention memory

32:54

with age you begin to start to forget names and numbers and so on i find that if i've got a problem

33:01

and i can't think of something and if i just put it on hold

33:08

in the morning it comes to me i have the name that i was looking for or the book that i'm trying to find

33:15

graham green said something the same thing he used to have a house on anacapri

33:21

capri is just up the coast from us and he said that any problem he had

33:28

was always solved the next morning when he got out of course i regarded graham as a

33:35

wonderful man and sometimes a good writer but what we call an easy settler in the
33:42

movie business that means somebody who does a first draft okay that's it it's perfect
33:47

huntsville alabama you're on for gore vidal

33:53

it's an honor to talk to you sir can i can i stop you for a second you're having a little bit of
feedback

33:58

because your television is up too high and that's what's causing the problem for you
turn it down and then go ahead with your question

34:08

i know you went to one of the most exclusive prep schools in the u.s but to what do you
attribute your

34:14

brilliance i'd like some pointers on how you could write a book as brilliant as the
judgment of paris

34:21

well it certainly had nothing to do with any school i ever went to i went to saint albans
here and exited

34:28

her up in new hampshire i have never been so bored in my life i

34:33

had one or two good teachers at both places but the courses i mean the boredom that
34:40

they inflicted this is the period where you had to learn by rote memorize memorize

34:45

i remember innocently when i got to exeter i said so when are we going to get to the
roman empire we don't get to the roman empire

34:51

you'll be translating julius caesar that's all we do they taught nothing of interest to me

34:57

and my marks were very bad and i barely passed what they call then the college board
exams

35:04

but instead at 17 i enlisted in the army i never went back to school i was

35:09

supposed to go to harvard i came back i did go to harvard after my

35:15

first book came out to lecture and there in the audience were at least

35:21

10 boys that i had been to exeter been with at exeter who were very old

35:27

undergraduates having just come out of the war veterans and that was a triumphal moment you know

35:33

that i had gone my own way and not going to university if i'm in any way brilliant or if i'm in

35:40

any way learned it's perhaps a better word because i was in the habit of reading

35:47

all my life with a man who was part of history and a historian as well

35:53

and i was immersed in literature and in history and i never stopped reading

36:00

and i'm always trying to find out things i wanted to know everything when i was a kid i remember i used to make charts

36:07

the history of the world and they now do them but they didn't exist then in which in the first century

36:13

you'd find out what they were doing in egypt what they were doing in china what they doing in north america

36:19

comparative history i just thought that up my side make these enormous charts and then fill in

36:26

the various centuries i think well i am what they call an auto died act

36:34

i taught myself and as somebody said to me in oregon recently when i was

36:41

after speech auto didx have gone to the wrong schools of this guy from harvard

36:47

i said well let others be the judge next is the call from seattle hi um i in

36:55

in 1971 you wrote an article that was a cover story for esquire magazine

37:02

and and it supported ralph nader for president and i was wondering if you were as a

37:09

supporter of his current campaign uh no

37:15

tim robbins and susan sarandon are great friends of mine and we just

37:21

had dinner together they're supporting nader and many of my friends are

37:27

obviously the idea is that he is a virtuous figure and is not going to be elected but he might

37:34

through his candidacy this year set up a green party which would be useful

37:39

in future years well that's the third party route i've done that and uh with dr spock the people's party

37:46

in 1968 70. i don't see any future in that

37:53

we've we've got one political party which is corporate america's possession and it has two right wings

38:00

democratic party democratic wing republican wing i'm really interested in not in a third

38:06

party but in getting us a second party as they got back in 1856 when uh all the

38:13

split started and the republican party was invented and did a great job for the united states

38:20

so i'm i'm for that really rather than a third fourth fifth buchanan party of

38:26

this party a native party and then when asked the question by the press i said well at the end of the day

38:35

i think gore is thicker than nader

38:41

when you mention your current thinking or that america is essentially corporate america you mentioned earlier

38:48

that this is a theme that runs throughout the series in fact has it always been a situation

38:54

of the powerful interests versus the people yes and it is really the essential

39:02

conflict in american life and it's the real party system no matter what the official parties are

39:09

there is the line of jefferson and there's the line of hamilton hamilton was for big industry banking

39:17

national bank world trade forcing ourselves upon other people if

39:24

necessary jefferson was the mind your own business a more agricultural life

39:31

more bucolic and most americans are jeffersonians uh only the bankers at least at the time

39:37

of world war one world war ii were interventionist americans do not want to go abroad to be

39:43

killed in other countries sometimes countries they've never heard of before

39:49

you asked me earlier about my my politics well it is anti-imperialist

39:54

and certainly i'm not anti-banking that would be flat earth politics

39:59

we must have that but it must be kept in balance and our problem is that they

40:05

they are the masters and they have bought the politicians just look at this year that it's going

40:11

to be a billion dollars half a billion anyway paid on this election an election that nobody's going to

40:17

bother with if they can help it because they're not interested the candidates whether they are

40:22

intelligent like my cousin albert or if they are somewhat

40:27

disturbed or disturbing like his opponent basically don't differ much and have

40:35

nothing to say because the people who give them the money to run don't want them to address real

40:40

issues what is a real issue there is only one thing to talk about in

40:45

the year 2000 and that is for 50 years we have been

40:51

a militarized economy a garrison state we've spent over seven trillion dollars

40:56

since 1949 on war that is the theme of my

41:02

american chronicle as it is called uh how the people on the one hand are

41:07

left behind and are exploited in the early days by eastern banks now it's of course it's

41:14

the great corporations that own the country by the politicians the corruption is total now when

41:20

corruption is systemic you can't say well bush is corrupt or gore is corrupt or

41:27

this one or that one the whole system is corrupt the whole means of raising money

41:33

well this starting out with burr you see the fight my first novel in that series you see the fight going on between burp

41:40

and jefferson on these very issues in the fight particularly hamilton and these two men hamilton and jefferson

41:46

define american life jefferson is with the people the hamilton is with the aristos or the

41:53

great business magnates and this is a struggle except the hamiltonians have won

42:00

now what you should talk about is why 51 of our budget 1999 went for war went to the pentagon

42:08

they are now demanding 30 billion dollars a year more over the next decade

42:13

now we're getting away from books i'm going to give a political speech you told me before the program started

42:20

that you just spent some time calculating how much money this country has allocated to weaponry

42:26

yes over what period and what's the number i just gave it to you just this instant you gave it to me i

42:32

apologize say it again 7.1 trillion dollars has gone for war since 1949 okay

42:40

and we have had no enemy except the ones we selected

42:45

as far as i know the vietcong never attacked us we attacked them in the

42:51

interests of corporate america there were a lot of ties between great corporations and south vietnam

42:58

we interfered in their civil war and in their affairs and we have suffered greatly same thing with

43:04

korea 49 was one of the big build-ups started harry truman

43:10

put in them peacetime drafting enormous amount of money for the military

43:17

and uh it was so it was all quite deliberate

43:22

he used uh the fact that greece and turkey this is about 1950

43:28

might fall to the russian bear because england had been protecting greece and england was broke

43:34

we must take their place and he he and dean atchison who was this is all in the golden age so those interested in the

43:41

subject may turn to that but they got together and

43:47

decided to make a real issue that the russians were coming the russians were coming communism was a great danger of

43:52

the united states well communism was a great danger to the russians and to the people their satellite states

43:58

they were no danger to us but officially the good reason for the

44:04

buildup was that truman and atchison were afraid we'd fall back into the depression

44:10

we didn't get out of the depression until 1940 when we started to arm to go to war against

44:16

hitler and japan struck at us that ended the depression now they're

44:23

beginning to see dicey times coming they love general motors they've said what's good for general motors is good

44:29

for the country said the chairman of the board and that meant war

44:35

there's been nothing but war ever since one historian put it very nicely in one

44:41

phrase our policy is perpetual war for perpetual peace

44:47

and that is insanity that is why we have the worst public educational system

44:53

uh in the first world that's why we have no health care for the people the people get nothing back for their

44:58

tax money this is a populist line that you're hearing from me and that is the theme of many of my books

45:05

we get nothing back except all this armament and lately if you've been reading the papers the chiefs of

45:12

the very services are demanding more and more money because it's all deteriorating and there is no enemy

45:19

we create enemies we blow up an aspirin factory in the sudan

45:25

but if the sudanese had any power they'd probably blow up a factory here but they don't and they won't

45:31

and we go right on we're the number one terrorist on earth

45:36

and now you and through my series of seven books you see this evolution

45:42

and how the american people were left out decisions were made over their heads

45:48

by the equivalent of corporate america back in the 18th century and that nowadays

45:55

we have no redress because we have no representative government one senator if you remember scoop

46:00

jackson was known as the senator from boeing not the senator from washington

46:05

that's what happened to us so if we were to have a real election we'd be discussing what i've just been

46:11

discussing our next caller who is from pittsburgh has a question about burr the first in that series go ahead

46:17

uh it's a great pleasure talking to you uh mr burr i've read about a half a dozen

46:22

of your books and they've all brought me great pleasure and entertainment and and information um

46:29

about burr uh i i've drawn a parallel if you will

46:34

um in school i had learned that uh in about the ninth grade i learned that um bur had killed alexander hamilton when

46:41

he was vice president and alexander hammer was secretary of the treasury but they never told us why and i didn't

46:47

find out why until i read your book they do neglect these details

46:54

right and uh um and it's and i've correlated i figured

47:00

that and i says well like 200 years later we're still doing the same thing uh what would have of course president

47:07

clinton brought that that mess on himself but uh you had uh some people behind the scenes

47:13

um putting pamphlets out about you know his activities which is why uh burst shot

47:20

hamilton he had instigated a pamphlet about him yes

47:26

one more thing uh uh live from golgotha which is another one my uh another one of your favorite

47:32

books that i like uh at the end of it there's a japanese uh script and could you

47:37

give me a hint that's what it is well we're giving away the plot of life from

47:43

golgotha but uh nbc has gone back to calvary to play

47:50

they can get through a time warp to film the crucifixion and suddenly there's been a takeover

47:58

corporate takeover of nbc and of most media in america by the japanese

48:03

and so at the very end instead of the agony and the passion of jesus

48:09

you see the japanese goddess the mother goddess of the world suddenly appears on the screen

48:16

and the entire past is being changed and there will be no more jesus only the japanese mother goddess

48:23

so the book ends with two pages of japanese celebrating her virtue and the fact she's all-powerful

48:30

have any further comments for him on bur on burr well the allegations that uh

48:36

that i figured out but did not i use i i don't make reckless guesses

48:44

about what people didn't do if i don't have something to go on

48:50

burr read in the papers that hamilton

48:55

who was a defeated politician at this point but still making a lot of trouble ahead

49:01

written a friend saying there is something i can tell you about colonel burr's character

49:08

uh which is of such a despicable nature that i can only confine it to you in

49:13

private subs i'm paraphrasing the letter well i thought and i thought and i

49:20

thought what on earth could it be burr had the height of an elephant he was the coolest man of his time

49:27

and one of the brightest the only thing the love of his life was his daughter theodosium

49:34

his only only legitimate child and he had brought her up he was a

49:40

probably the first feminist in the united states he said women have the same minds as men if they are educated like men so he

49:47

educated her personally as as if she were a son

49:52

she became a brilliant woman and and he was so close to her that they were like buddies

49:59

and his letters which finally got printed but were known about before

50:04

to her are the letters of of two young men writing each other i mean

50:10

he writes about all of his sex life in paris in some detail

50:16

and he treats her as a son he thought of himself as lord chesterfield writing to his son

50:23

his closeness to theodosia not available

50:40

vice president united states to call out hamilton in a duel and shoot and kill him at

50:46

weehawken well a lot of outcry when i wrote this and i

50:52

i made a note i said i am making a guess here but nobody else has come up with anything

50:58

the current there are two books out now about that period and one by a professor fogelson

51:05

forget his name acknowledges that he he too thinks that what is what

51:11

happened and he's got some evidence in this latest biography of burke

51:16

so here we are some 30 years later and the official historians are

51:21

acknowledging that my intuition was probably correct can we spend a minute talking about the

51:28

entirety of the series when you began it had you plotted out what you wanted to do which figures you were going to

51:34

address no it just it just ambled along

51:40

the first one to be written was actually the last one until now was washington dc that was written in 67

51:48

and it covered the period of uh of roosevelt's administration but i kept roosevelt and

51:56

so on in the background and uh my fictional characters were very

52:01

much in the foreground it was the 30s and into up to eisenhower to about 54.

52:07

that was 67 and then i decided i started to brood about it i thought

52:13

first of all i was teaching myself a lot of american history and i got interested well how

52:20

what how did roosevelt pull it off how did he get us into the second world war we all knew that he'd

52:27

manipulated the japanese into attacking us but how and why and then what what was there

52:34

abroad in the land what mechanism what that he could touch to create opinion as david hume would say

52:41

that would convince the people that this war was a just war hitler of course was a was a great

52:47

monster but it's not necessary for us it's a great line of john quincy adams he says the united states of 1820

52:55

the united states does not go forth to destroy monsters

53:03

yes she could become dictators of the world but in the process

53:08

she would lose her own soul you ask me what my politics is that is pure populism coming from a new england

53:16

uh federalist but of like mind we have enough to do perfecting our

53:22

society without going forth to slay monsters that was pretty much um

53:30

the trigger thinking about how roosevelt got to be roosevelt and we got possession of the world

53:37

so i went back i think i'll go back to the beginning so i go back to the revolution and the most attractive figure to me is aaron

53:44

burr who was also a relative of my stepfather

53:49

and um i'd always known that he had a bum rap from the family but i didn't know who or

53:55

what he was and whoever was one of one of your callers said you know what a mess they make of american

54:00

history in school they fought a bur a duel but you don't know why nor would they try to guess

54:07

so i go back to the revolution i go back to washington and hamilton jefferson

54:13

burb and he has a very sardonic style and i and i use a lot of his own writings

54:20

then i move on to our great tragic period and president

54:25

uh lincoln and i'm able to bring in it a great deal of what it felt like to be

54:31

on the loser's side it's by the south i think has produced so many interesting writers once you've

54:37

lost a war pain has has a great resonance for you

54:43

then i go on to 1876 which is the centennial of the country and we were once again steeped in

54:49

corruption the democrat governor tilden of new york wins the election by i think 200

54:57

000 votes popular vote the republicans who are still in some of the southern states and in the far west

55:04

in control of legislatures reverse the election and rutherford b hayes who lost it

55:11

becomes a republican president rutherford he was known as

55:17

that's 1876 and you get a sense then of the centennial from there we go on to empire

55:26

which shows the plan being made by theodore roosevelt

55:31

henry cabot large brooks adams brother of henry adams a brilliant geopolitician

55:38

uh to create an admiral man who had the theories about sea power

55:45

we deliberately picked a war with spain which was a very weak but imperial power

55:51

we defeated spain we grabbed cuba we grabbed puerto rico

55:56

best of all we got the philippines right off the coast of asia that makes us a pacific power

56:03

which was the dream of theater of the imperialists the jingos what am i politically i'm opposed to

56:10

them uh out of that came the first big armaments that we had done since the

56:15

civil war the great white fleet of theodorosa then we got meanwhile we got the

56:21

hawaiian islands and we were great power in the pacific and we're looking hungrily at the

56:26

mainland of asia brooks adams one of the four conspirators uh

56:32

said he who possesses shantung province possesses the world

56:37

where is shantung province well it's up in northeast china

56:42

and manchuria and it was then the richest piece of territory on earth it had iron it had

56:49

coal it was very very rich for the kind of technology that they needed then the

56:54

japanese had their eye on it the united states had their eye on it germany was even beginning to come and

57:01

you know slither around in the neighborhood so that is empire we are now launched as

57:08

a military power we had promised the filipinos that we would liberate them from spain and they

57:14

could organize their own government once we saw the value of the possession of the philippines

57:20

we went back on it and we refused to remove ourselves and we took over the

57:26

government of the philippines that caused a civil war in which something like 100 000

57:31

filipinos were killed men women and children we went slaughtering

57:37

not long after a major general charge of the marine corps called smedley butler

57:42

wrote a book and he he was commandant during the early part of the century 1920s up to

57:49

the 1930s and he said i was essentially an enforcer for the banks

57:57

as commander of the marine corps he said i was making nicaragua safe for standard

58:04

oil i was making shanghai we invaded shanghai

58:10

safe for city national bank or whatever the bank was called that and he named all of the great

58:16

uh entities commercial entities that he was working for even though he was the united states

58:21

government and he said i was the hitman i was the enforcer for these banks and these

58:29

corporations he said you know i operated in three continents

58:35

al capone only had three chicago districts

58:40

this is not in the history books and that's why i write these books to remind people through

58:45

a form of a novel what was actually said and done and what has been suppressed

58:52

next call for you is from buffalo buffalo you're on the air

58:59

let's try buffalo again all right i think we might have lost them the last in the series before the

59:06

golden age hollywood hollywood uh

59:11

but he asked me what is it about i said well hollywood is about woodrow wilson and warren g harding

59:18

their presidencies i study but i also it was a great deal about the silent days of the movies

59:23

one of the figures that runs through the last two or three novels is william randolph hearst

59:29

who's a very important figure not only did he invent tabloid journalism

59:35

but if there was no news he would invent it which then puts the whole question what

59:40

is history on the table if the historian goes back to old

59:46

newspapers to reconstruct an administration and that's been faked

59:52

how is he to know what is history and the the very end of the golden age there's a whole

59:58

meditation on the nature of history is anything real

1:00:04

so with empire with uh hollywood what i'm doing is i show the silent days of the

1:00:09

movies all of chaplin and so it's kind of fun but you also see the influence

1:00:14

of uh first of government woodrow wilson on hollywood at the time of the first world war he said a guy called george

1:00:21

creel out there and george creel uh was to organize propaganda movies the

1:00:26

huns from hell stuff like that and they did a lot of propaganda wilson appeared in at least two movies

1:00:32

as himself you know with great sentence sentence thoughts

1:00:38

and suddenly washington realized the importance of hollywood and hollywood realized that washington

1:00:44

was very interesting partner they talked today about hollywood and you know so this was something new and

1:00:50

bizarre but it's been going on since 1914 that were symbiosis

1:00:58

then i go into woodrow wilson the first war the disaster of the league of nations

1:01:03

and warren harding who was probably our nicest president he really was a very good man

1:01:09

surrounded by very corrupt people next call yonkers new york yes hello

1:01:16

thanks for having me on the air i wanted to ask mr vidal if you could talk a little bit about the actual

1:01:21

process that you uh have to turn materials that you've

1:01:26

acquired in your historical novels uh and then transform them into a narrative form uh the actual process by

1:01:34

which you compile the the uh the bulk of

1:01:39

the research material that you gather and uh transform and you know put it into a

1:01:45

creative narrative uh well it's a format it's

1:01:51

it's a matter of reading and um i read you know i'll read 100 200 300

1:01:59

books sometimes before i will start i have to own the book so i can write in the

1:02:05

margins and as you read you begin to see

1:02:10

relationships between people that helps you with your characters

1:02:16

then you begin to find things that have been omitted in the official histories and you begin to wonder why

1:02:23

why has it been left out why is general smedley butler forgotten when he had made such a startling uh

1:02:30

gave such a startling world view of our activities it's a matter of not taking a lot of

1:02:36

notes i was helped in this series because i'm working with one family

1:02:43

so i know them and i and now i start with one generation the second generation third i think i've got four

1:02:49

generations in there so i i'm at home with the family i know i don't and they are the fictional ones

1:02:56

the real ones are all interrelated which is a curious thing that i found

1:03:02

doing american history that it's a very small deck of cards that governs the united states occasionally a new card is

1:03:08

added and some old cards are thrown out but it's always pretty limited the players

1:03:16

and you see how from administration to administration there they are for first

1:03:22

40 years of our history 50 years it was pretty much virginians all of whom knew each other

1:03:28

except for the two adams's who came in and each got the heave ho from the virginians they didn't want anybody from

1:03:34

boston and the white house uh you begin to see these patterns

1:03:40

and of course the reading i mean i have the luxury of taking all the best stuff

1:03:45

from other historians i just lift it and transform it and

1:03:50

then i put my fictional characters together with the real people and it's not and

1:03:57

the reason for the fictional characters is that they can observe and have opinions

1:04:03

which is author must not and i can't pretend uh that i know what goes on in abraham lincoln's mind but i

1:04:10

can tell you uh what one of my invented characters thinks of him

1:04:15

and if there's a contradiction in lincoln i can have another inventory that no no no i don't think that's what he meant at all

1:04:21

so this gives me the luxury to comment on what i'm doing and then

1:04:26

the historical novel as i practice it is essentially uh it's history

1:04:33

it's like it's like a libretto and the fictional characters are the

1:04:38

music so you might say in a sense these are sort of operas that the music starts

1:04:43

and these are the fictional characters and then we go through the familiar story
abraham lincoln goes to ford's

1:04:49

theater and we know the plot as we always know the plot of julius caesar or aida

1:04:56

and then we have the fictional characters observing what happens

1:05:01

with pity or with all when you speak of the small deck of cards in fact you are an
example of the

1:05:08

interconnectedness of the power in america oh my heavens yes well a lot of that is of
course my mother's

1:05:15

family the gores were anglo-irish from uh county donegal

1:05:20

who came over in the 17th century well those of us in the south who came

1:05:25

from the british isles in the 17th 18th centuries i think were all related there were so

1:05:31

few of us you know we intermarried not only i've i've never i've never said

1:05:37

it until now i don't think that in addition to the gore family

1:05:43

and my cousinage with albert jr oh god i trembled to think that i'm

1:05:49

going to say this i get a lot of mail you know from people who are relatives

1:05:56

particularly from the south because they know everybody's connections i am a fifth
cousin twice removed i

1:06:03

don't know what twice removed means except i think by election and defeat maybe is
what has meant

1:06:10

of jimmy carter now you know it you know the worst

1:06:15

jimmy carter he had a grandmother i think who was

1:06:20

a k from south carolina and my grandmother who really raised me

1:06:26

mrs t p gore was born 9k from a south carolina family

1:06:33

and i'm told that carter's this was a favorite relative of carter who was the k and she was certainly my favorite one

1:06:39

so kennedy administration jackie she and i had the same step

1:06:45

you often clause are we finished with york and claus who was descended on his mother's side

1:06:50

from an uncle of aaron burr and he had a painting of theodosia rather his friend of his had a painting

1:06:57

of theodosia that i used to look at when i was a child that's the daughter by bird

1:07:03

next calls from san diego yes hello uh mr avidale i would have to say that i hadn't really

1:07:10

uh heard too much of you speaking i've been aware of your uh sort of stature in the uh literature community and as a child

1:07:16

of the baby boomers uh and as a product of the psychologically inadequate education that we have unfortunately

1:07:23

i was just so totally surprised by the shocking clarity which have been sort of explaining the history of the age of

1:07:29

imperialism in the 20th century and whatnot and i just had a quick question regarding the uh

1:07:35

the relationship of william jennings brian that you were speaking of earlier and the the sort of how he was supported

1:07:41

by the green backers which were linked to lincoln's greenback policy and that sort of uh idealism and also when

1:07:48

woodrow wilson uh willie jennings bryant ran last i think in 1908 and then whittaker wilson of course in 12 and if

1:07:54

he of course won the election and uh how wilson the democratic party that was sort of manipulated by wall street when

1:08:01

they passed the federal reserve how that sort of went against everything that william jennings bryant thought

1:08:06

and uh perhaps um in a lust uh for wanted victory it seems

1:08:11

as if the uh the democratic party in 1912 sold themselves out like the republicans did after the post-civil war

1:08:17

era thanks well a lot to work with there thank you for the call that's very well said he's quite right

1:08:24

uh the democratic party then became part of the corporate party along with the republican party and it was

1:08:30

wilson's election that did it uh wilson himself might not have gone that line but wilson wasn't

1:08:38

fell for imperialism wilson was very divided about world war ii and that's where he and my

1:08:43

grandfather parted my grandfather had helped elect him in fact he was

1:08:48

in charge of the 1912 campaign out of chicago

1:08:54

and they didn't get on but wilson did say not to him but somebody

1:09:00

else rather wisely said i wanted to be a domestic president and here i am a war president

1:09:06

and i am and he was in favor of the war but he said i know at the end of this

1:09:11

war those great entities that i have fought the trusts

1:09:17

and the banks will own the united states when this war is over

1:09:23

which is pretty much what happened i'll propose the caller from san diego on woodrow on william jennings bryan

1:09:31

uh bryan demonstrated his anti-imperialism

1:09:36

when wilson uh got us into the war bryan was his secretary of state

1:09:43

and bryan resigned i have not known any man of state ever

1:09:48

to resign a post so high because of a disagreement over policy

1:09:55

but the populists and the the true americans i like to think of it did not want foreign wars

1:10:01

they saw no point why on earth should we be disturbed by the kaiser

1:10:06

so he wanted to to have a fight with france let him have a fight with france it's none of our business

1:10:12

and he's thought to be a buffoon brian because of the monkey trial in tennessee

1:10:18

he was no fool he was a man of principle he had a great speech he explained in his last speech at a

1:10:24

convention he said no matter my faults as a man and as a politician i have kept

1:10:31

the faith in these many events over these uh

1:10:37

years of american history that you've chronicled is there one that you really wish you could have been at in person

1:10:44

no first of all if i'm in a time machine i don't want to go anywhere where there's no anesthetic

1:10:51

just forget it i think we would be very uncomfortable in any of those past places

1:10:59

the one volume i i would like to have written that i didn't and it's now far too late because i can't do this sort of

1:11:04

research anymore but i missed out on the mexican war i surely should have done henry clay and

1:11:12

franklin pierce who's a fascinating president the most overtly nakedly ambitious he

1:11:18

picks a war with mexico in order to grab california and the whole

1:11:24

southwest of the united states that's the fascinating time and lincoln was a young politician opposed to the

1:11:30

war but then went along with it and out of it came of course jefferson

1:11:36

davis and ulysses grant who's probably our greatest prose writer

1:11:42

his memoirs are a masterpiece wrote them penniless isn't that right dying of cancer

1:11:48

he'd lost all of his money in one of the crashes that wall street prepared every cent was gone

1:11:54

so and he was leaving julia his wife with no money so he makes a deal with mark twain who's

1:12:00

also a publisher who paid him an enormous advance and

1:12:06

as he died i think he finished the book one day got the money for his wife the next and died

1:12:13

was it popular at the time oh yes it's in two volumes

1:12:19

and in due course it was disdained by literary people because he was

1:12:25

known to have been a pretty bad president but he was a very great general

1:12:30

but nobody knew and it was gertrude stein i think first pointed it out he wrote the best american prose

1:12:37

i mean we had grander writers like henry james but for the plain style it was perfect

1:12:44

that was what west point did you had to be clear when you sent an order send the second battalion to such

1:12:52

and such a hill you had to be precise you couldn't be windy and it's a beautifully tight austere

1:12:59

rather the way or rather like julius caesar's except caesar's too self-serving caesar

1:13:05

is nothing but trying to trying to convince you it was montaigne said about how

1:13:10

maddening caesar is and he writes about his doings in the gallic wars

1:13:15

we all want to know how how he was such a great general and all he wants to do is convince us

1:13:21

what a great engineer he was he wastes pages after pages on how he built a bridge over a river

1:13:29

brandt doesn't do that he stays with the subject philadelphia next hello um it's a great pleasure for ma'am

1:13:36

great admirer of your works mr vidal and of you and personally i would like to speak about lincoln you

1:13:42

have aptly said that he is the tragic figure of american political history i wonder if you could expand on your

1:13:49

opinion of the impact of his personality both as a president and as an american icon

1:13:55

in the context of your broader themes of of empire and militarism and secondly someplace else you referred

1:14:02

to the american civil war as our peloponnesian war which i think is really a very brilliant

1:14:08

analogy and i wish you could expand on that again it's great pleasure to hear you thank you

1:14:15

well lincoln is the most mysterious of the presidents and um

1:14:21

i i there is an error there's a kind of megalomania about him

1:14:27

in when he was 29 and he was a legislator in springfield

1:14:33

he gave a speech to the young men's lyceum i think it was called

1:14:40

and it was really on power and presidential power

1:14:45

and i don't know it by heart i can give you a little bit of paraphrase that

1:14:52

he said about the man of great ambition

1:14:58

will not be content with simply occupying the presidential chair

1:15:04

first occupied by washington he will not want to be a successor

1:15:11

that will not suit him nor will it suit anyone who is of the race of the lion

1:15:19

and the eagle such a man will be born

1:15:26

and he will seek another field

1:15:31

and to prevail he could free all the slaves

1:15:38

and enslave all free men now this is shakespeare

1:15:43

this is richard iii warning us against himself and he's 29 when he gives it

1:15:51

he goes on and it takes a very hard line

1:15:58

because he and he said all along i have no power to free the slaves

1:16:04

there's nothing in the presidential power there's nothing in congress's power property is property and that is

1:16:10

slavery is a shameful business but i can do nothing

1:16:15

then the south being suspicious of him and the new republican party

1:16:20

full of booze and walter scott decided to start seceding

1:16:28

and he did his best to try to hold them back but they were going anyway they saw the

1:16:33

north intervening in their affairs and he said um

1:16:38

finally as they finally all went he

1:16:45

declared war and it was on a curious issue

1:16:51

that our history books teach us it was to free the slaves the civil war well the slaves had nothing to do with it

1:16:57

lincoln cooked up something that was only in his own brain that it was to preserve the union

1:17:05

and he was he was only always eloquent but he said i have some want the union

1:17:11

to break other others do not people differ but i have an oath sworn in heaven to

1:17:17

preserve protect and defend the united states of america you will not go

1:17:24

i will not acknowledge that you have left he would never say the confederate states of america he never acknowledged

1:17:31

that there was any entity but one united states he was a unionist he was not an abolitionist

1:17:37

right or wrong is something else again i i treat him in a a sympathetically in a balanced way and

1:17:44

sometimes rather critically what he did now i think much of his famous

1:17:49

melancholy and so on was his knowledge that what he had done

1:17:57

was reflective of that speech he gave as a young man at 29. he had transformed the united states

1:18:04

from a rather loose federation of states into a tight union in which hundreds of thousands of young

1:18:11

men had died and cities and cultures were wrecked and he was

1:18:17

had created a bloodbath he also made the united states the most formidable military power in the world

1:18:24

and i've always felt and indeed the code of my you've got lincoln there i'll read you the last paragraph i do

1:18:32

i think he knew perfectly well what he had done and i think well see what i think here

1:18:46

uh john hayes in paris and he was lincoln secretary

1:18:54

and they're comparing lincoln to bismarck bismarck at the same time was doing to the german states

1:19:00

exact same time who were independent uh that lincoln was doing to the american states

1:19:08

and i think said mr schuyler to the princess we have here a subject lincoln and bismarck

1:19:14

and new countries for old and hayes says well it'll be interesting

1:19:20

to see how mr bismarck ends his career says hey who was now more than ever

1:19:27

convinced that lincoln in some mysterious fashion had willed his own murder

1:19:34

as a form of atonement for the great and terrible thing

1:19:41

that he had done by giving so bloody and absolute a rebirth to his nation

1:19:50

our next question is also about lincoln it's from sacramento here on the air

1:19:55

uh good afternoon mr vidal um i have a quote from

1:20:01

i don't know where the quote comes from it says what's from abe lincoln

1:20:06

i see in the near future a crisis approaching that unnerves me and causes

1:20:12

me to tremble for the safety of my country corporations have been enthroned and an

1:20:18

era of corruption in high places will follow and the money power of the country will endeavor to prolong

1:20:25

its reign by working upon the prejudices of the people until all wealth is aggregated in

1:20:32

a few hands and the republic is destroyed could you tell me where this uh comes

1:20:37

from well it's lincoln all right and it was

1:20:43

i can't tell you i've forgotten do you know caller are you still seeking this word

1:20:48

newspaper he found in the newspaper yeah well it's it's it's the lincoln style is unmistakable

1:20:55

so that is lincoln it would have been toward the end and it probably

1:21:00

would have been in a letter it was never in a speech but he would he would occasionally

1:21:08

give heartfelt letters to correspondence or to little newspapers around the country and that

1:21:13

was his way of addressing the people and subjects that were not he couldn't do in the state of the union but

1:21:20

this sounds like one of his meditations which turns out to be prophetic

1:21:26

in your reflection on the role of historical fiction in your newest book the golden age you tell a story about

1:21:34

the reaction by the lincoln files the lincoln brigade yes will you tell that

1:21:39

story well which one i've got so many stories well the one is actually about your speculation that he dosed himself

1:21:46

oh well lincoln told herndon who was for 17

1:21:51

years his law partner in springfield and they shared the same office and he was the only friend i think lincoln ever had

1:21:57

he had well in maturity before that there was joshua

1:22:04

speed but herndon i don't even know if he's a friend but the two men in an office two lawyers

1:22:10

practicing together and herndon is the best all we have for 17

1:22:15

years of lincoln's life and if you some people try to rule him out because he tells things that are inconvenient

1:22:21

lincoln told him how he got syphilis

1:22:26

when he was in his late 20s and he'd gone to a doctor in cincinnati

1:22:31

since he'd be gone to anybody in springfield it would have been everybody would know

1:22:37

and as he said he clung to him he couldn't get rid of the syphilis

1:22:43

so he um finally was cured if you ever are

1:22:49

with mercury which is very dangerous stuff to take and it brings on all sorts of uh

1:22:57

mental and physical debilities lincoln was very odd at times and it

1:23:03

conforms i have a doctor here i think he is who writes me occasionally and he's doing a study of

1:23:10

of lincoln syphilis rather than the treatment for it which is mercury did he have mercury poisoning

1:23:17

and there are great many of his symptoms the melancholy and the suddenly you'd be talking to him and he'd just stare off

1:23:23

into space and not hear you and hideous nightmares he would wake up

1:23:29

screaming in the night in the white house and uh there's a good case to be made

1:23:34

that indeed he had mercury poisoning but at one point they he took something called uh

1:23:41

blue well blue pills a purge for constipation

1:23:48

which had mercury in it also and finally he's getting worried about it because he knows something is going

1:23:54

wrong so he talks to talk about he figures out he'll stop taking these purges and he did and he

1:24:01

became pretty healthy again well all of this was quite well the lincoln brigade a great man has

1:24:08

syphilis with a girl in ohio oh maggots said one greatest story this

1:24:14

is a maggoty story well it's an essential story it has to

1:24:19

do with the health and mind of a president forget his sex life why cover it up and that's what they do

1:24:28

and one of the best things results of my lincoln which has been a formatively successful with

1:24:34

the public and now with many scholars uh i'm i'm really giving it to the

1:24:40

lincoln brigade who keep trying to falsify him far more to the point than that is that

1:24:49

lincoln i am convinced to the day he went to ford's theater still wanted to colonize the freed slaves at the south

1:24:57

in central america he already got hold of some lands down there which is now near

1:25:02

near nicaragua or over in liberia

1:25:08

he said he wanted to do that in his first state of the union and then he sort of dropped it in public

1:25:15

and in due course he freed the slaves in the south during the war but not the ones in the north who from the from the

1:25:21

border states uh which he could have done but he didn't do that because he needed the

1:25:26

white vote there so basically uh this was his plan because he kept saying

1:25:33

he rationalized it he said these are three million people who have been held in terrible slavery

1:25:39

they are without education they were without skills and so on and he got a bunch of free men free black men from new york to

1:25:46

try and persuade their cousins in the south to

1:25:52

go to liberia and one of them said to lingard i have all this in the book he said

1:26:00

why do you think they can't support themselves when they have supported themselves and their masters in

1:26:06

considerable luxury for the last 200 years well he didn't have much of an answer

1:26:11

for that one and finally they said well you know this is our country we've been here as

1:26:16

long as you have we see no reason that we should go off to the jungles of africa

1:26:22

now the latest word from the lincoln brigade is that lincoln did have the notion but

1:26:28

gave it up after his first year in office well this ignores john hay his young

1:26:33

secretary's diary when he writes his colleague nicole he said the ancient was their code name

1:26:41

for the ancient i think this is august 1864

1:26:47

i think has given up his hair brain notion to ship all the slaves out of the south

1:26:53

at last he's been convinced by something had gone wrong then general ben butler

1:27:00

in his memoir unsavory figure but he says that lincoln before had brought up the subject again in the

1:27:07

early spring before ford's theater of 65

1:27:13

about colonizing them elsewhere so one very clever historian uh

1:27:19

came up with the fact that secretary stanton had a secretary of war said no general officer could come to town

1:27:24

without permission fearing a coup i think and butler couldn't have been in

1:27:29

washington which my answer is nobody told general butler what to do if he

1:27:34

wanted to come he came and if lincoln had said that to him uh

1:27:40

why not now this is the extent to which in the age of martin luther king

1:27:45

the white historians have gone out of their minds trying to readjust history

1:27:51

and this is this has been one of the great spurs for me to write these books i can't bear the falsifications

1:27:58

of the data the data is pretty clear they have to twist themselves into knots and history

1:28:04

so it has finally come to this that if you wanted the real truth of the situation you must

1:28:10

turn to a novel and you must reject the court historians who are there to falsify

1:28:16

take one last question before our brief break and it'll be from chicago you're on the air

yes mr vadal an honor sir

1:28:25

i have there were so many questions to ask but here's the one i'm going to ask and it's a what if question

1:28:31

if burr had to remain politically viable after the duel or if hamilton had not died

1:28:38

because of their military capabilities do you believe the early course of the war of 1812 might have been different

1:28:45

for example could we have acquired canada et cetera well

1:28:51

as you know if you read me on the subject whenever in doubt we invade canada

1:28:56

at the time of the revolution when the british occupied i think they'd already occupied new york and

1:29:03

philadelphia first thing general washington does at lexington is send

1:29:09

benedict arnold and aaron byrd up to canada to montreal to the

1:29:14

bankrupt to conquer canada they failed at the time of the war of 1812

1:29:21

one of the first moves made was to invade canada this is when the british were burning down the white house and

1:29:26

they'd taken washington we didn't care about that we wanted canada i think had burr and hamilton

1:29:34

not not one dead in the other under a cloud i think we would have been more

1:29:39

militaristic burr always i'll tell you who drove these two men remember they're

1:29:46

both five foot four or five uh was napoleon bonaparte

1:29:51

in 1800 when burr became vice president napoleon was you know about to be emperor france and going to conquer

1:29:58

europe both hamilton and burr had their eye on mexico

1:30:05

and uh where the spanish were and the mexicans didn't like spanish

1:30:10

and hamilton was dealing with one group of indigenous mexicans for want of a better word

1:30:16

uh to get the spanish out and burr was also maneuvering

1:30:21

to make himself emperor of mexico after he ceased to be vice president and was under a murder charge up in new york

1:30:28

so he goes down the mississippi with a little army all prepared to invade mexico and take over

1:30:34

gets a lot of help moral help certainly from jackson andrew jackson and henry clay

1:30:43

this was the bum rap that jefferson president jefferson put on burr he said burr wants to separate the western

1:30:48

states from the eastern he didn't he wanted to go down the mississippi go to new orleans go over to mexico and

1:30:54

make himself emperor so jefferson arrested him for treason

1:31:00

which he had not committed and it was a bum rap and everybody knew and he was exonerated

1:31:05

but your what if question uh yes i i think that hedberg got on to be

1:31:11

president which was the original arrangement with jefferson was a very

1:31:18

a noble but sly and devious man i must say

1:31:23

richard m nixon who had the most wonderful unconscious mind says in six crises

1:31:30

general eisenhower was a far more sly and devious man than people suspected

1:31:35

and i mean that in the best sense of those words

1:31:41

i agree with uh our caller here that the 18 war of 1812 might have ended with

1:31:48

an invasion of mexico and of canada our conversation with gore vidal is just

1:31:54

halfway over we're going to take a break of about five minutes in length during that we'll show you some upcoming

1:31:59

programming here on book tv on c-span two and then we'll be back for a second 90 minutes of in-depth conversation with

1:32:06

gore vidal in just a moment book tv's live in depth

1:32:12

with gore vidal continues i love you ronnie is a new book by

1:32:18

former first lady nancy reagan it's comprised of letters her husband former president ronald reagan wrote to her

1:32:24

over the years and her reflections on the letters the book is number three on this week's new york times bestseller list

1:32:31

last week mrs reagan signed copies of the book at the ronald reagan presidential library in semi valley california

1:32:37

you can see that event following our live in depth with gore vidal today at about 3 p.m

1:32:42

and later tonight at 9 30 eastern here on book tv only on c-span 2.

1:32:51

this is a new collection of essays called the best american science writing 2000 and next sunday on book tv will

1:32:58

feature a panel discussion with contributors to this book including stephen j gould on the scientist

1:33:03

discredited by darwin natalie angier on the fashion sense of prehistoric humans

1:33:09

and oliver sacks on how his family introduced him to science the panel also includes the book's

1:33:14

editor james glick on the whole field of science writing the best american science writing 2000

1:33:20

next sunday at noon and again at midnight

1:33:26

the southern festival of books takes place in nashville october 13th 14th and 15th

1:33:31

southern writers will gather to take part in book signings and panel discussions and book tv will bring you

1:33:37

live coverage of the festival saturday october 14th here on c-span 2.

1:33:46

here's a list of the best-selling non-fiction books from the conservative book club at number one sellout by david shippers

1:33:53

and examines the impeachment proceedings against president clinton next the triumph of liberty jim powell's

1:33:59

collection of stories about people who have contributed to america's fight for liberty thomas jefferson elizabeth katie

1:34:05

stanton cicero and others at number three the long march by roger kimball looks at the effect of the 1960s

1:34:12

cultural revolution on america book tv is featuring mr kimball's book this weekend

1:34:18

the world according to gore is a critical examination of vice president al gore as he runs for president by

1:34:24

nationally syndicated columnist deborah saunders it's at number four next is from dawn to decadence by

1:34:31

cultural critic and historian jacques barzen it's a look at western cultural life from the 16th century to the

1:34:37

present year of the rat how bill clinton compromised u.s security for chinese

1:34:42

cash is by edward timberlake and william triplett it's number six

1:34:48

seventh is the homeschooler's guide to portfolios and transcripts by loretta hewer

1:34:54

at number eight the irrepressible rothbard by llewellyn rockwell what is a man by historian and

1:35:00

commentator waller newell uses writings from shakespeare plato and the bible to define masculinity and finally number 10

1:35:07

the average family's guide to financial freedom by husband and wife team bill and mary tui

1:35:13

the conservative book club focuses on politics religion history and current events from a conservative point of view

1:35:19

the club was founded in 1964 and currently has 70 000 members for more information call 1-888-getbook

1:35:32

what do you like to read well i love poetry and i love literature

1:35:37

from all over the world right now i'm reading the unbearable lightness of being by milan kundera and

1:35:43

it's an amazing book it's so weird because he is czech and i'm originally

1:35:48

from southern africa but the characters they just they're so great it's like i

1:35:54

can relate to some of the characters in the book i can relate to exactly what is going on in the book and

1:36:00

what he's talking about it's just things that we've all probably thought at some point

1:36:07

in our lives but it's not you know been written down it's not been articulated and when you're reading it you're like

1:36:12

oh my gosh this is makes so much sense so that's what i'm reading right now give me an example of one of those

1:36:19

things that you find so interesting okay what i find so interesting in this particular book

1:36:24

there's a passage where he's talking about when you are an expatriate because his

1:36:31

characters are czechs living in switzerland and he says something about

1:36:37

when these characters do not have a safety net you don't have the

1:36:42

the comfort of having your family there all your friends and speaking the same the language that you

1:36:48

were born you know into that culture you're born into so you don't have that safety net and at some sometimes i have

1:36:56

felt that way because i'm an expatriate to this country so it just makes so much

1:37:01

sense and i really love the book but i also love children's book and the bfg is my favorite book of all time by roald

1:37:08

dahl so i love that book too um history books

1:37:14

um history of venice by norwich on his

1:37:19

there's a hitler history book by lucas and my favorite is all the president's men

1:37:25

by woodwork and bernstein why do you like that book because the movie was based on it and i liked the

1:37:30

movie which did you like better the book or the movie um the book was 10 times better

1:37:38

told a lot of stuff they left out in the movie it was really good um gosh it just that was my favorite

1:37:48

throughout the fall book fairs and festivals will be bringing together authors publishers and readers and

1:37:53

here's a look at some of the events coming up the 25th annual deep south writing conference gets underway october 10th it

1:38:00

takes place on the university of louisiana's campus at lafayette nashville tennessee hosts the 12th

1:38:06

annual southern festival of books the three-day event includes readings panel discussions and signings by authors from

1:38:12

around the world in november the buckeye book fair happens on the 4th in worcester ohio

1:38:19

it'll highlight new releases written by ohioans and books on topics relating to the state

1:38:25

the military history book fair takes place in pigeon forge tennessee from november 10th to the 12th it's part of

1:38:31

the town's 15-day event honoring america's veterans also in november the kentucky book fair

1:38:38

on the 18th in frankfurt on the campus of kentucky state university and on the first weekend of december the

1:38:44

san bernardino latino book and family festival gets underway with educational workshops book signings and poetry

1:38:51

readings if you'd like more information about these fairs and festivals go to our
1:38:57

website booktv.org there you'll find an expanded festival list and hot links to festival
1:39:03

websites and please let us know about book fairs and festivals in your area and we'll
add them to our website list write to us at
1:39:10

book tv on c-span 2 400 north capitol street northwest
1:39:16

suite 650 washington dc 2001.

1:39:27

gore vidal joins us for this month's in-depth program a three-hour conversation which
we are halfway through and right now has a brand new

1:39:34

book out which is called the golden age it is the seventh and final in a

1:39:40

series of american history told in a historical novel and also a play that

1:39:46

has been uh revived on broadway a few writers looking at your life right

1:39:51

now are suggesting that you're in something of a golden age yourself does it feel like it
no

1:39:57

75 is not a golden age it has certain elements of lead

1:40:03

particularly the knees are you beginning to think about legacy

1:40:10

are you uh you want to be in my will

1:40:15

i i just brought a cod assault with me about preserving what's important to you

1:40:21

beyond the works that have been published do you think about that sort of thing no as
groucho marx once so wisely said

1:40:30

how he would be remembered he said what has posterity ever done for me

1:40:35

that's my view of the future future doesn't exist because it's not there yet

1:40:41

when it's there i won't exist so we go our separate ways you've i would

1:40:47

suspect describing your writing place surrounded by your books collected quite a
number of them over

1:40:52

the years is it of interest to you to have them preserved as a collection so that others may see your work well if others are

1:40:59

interested i mean universities and so on my papers are transferring from one

1:41:04

university to harvard to the houghton library

1:41:09

and i think that's yes i do i do think that for instance correspondence i have

1:41:15

letters from everybody in that i've kept everything for 70 years

1:41:21

so um it will all be in one place and yeah i like that idea even though i won't be

1:41:26

around but uh for historians and i think more of them

1:41:31

than anybody else yes part of this program that's very important are your telephone calls and

1:41:38

next is one from massapequa new york and uh you are welcome to this conversation with gorvidal yes hi um

1:41:47

i'm reading these questions so be a little more accurate the first one is what caused or prompted you to write

1:41:55

life from golgotha and just as a comment uh it the book

1:42:01

doesn't leave the christian faithful with much awe about the centerpiece object i.e the synchronous of their

1:42:08

faith okay did you understand the question it didn't hear a word you didn't hear a

1:42:13

word you know you are not plugged in i'm going to ask our technician to plug you in while i repeat the question thanks

1:42:19

very much the the question is about the book live from golgotha and wanted to know what prompted you and her

1:42:26

observation was that it doesn't leave those of the christian faith with much about the centerpiece event

1:42:33

well i it is after all a satiric work on

1:42:40

the founder of christianity who's of course not jesus but saint paul

1:42:45

and it has very theology in it is not bad and it's basically anti-paul line that

1:42:52

he reinvented jesus who intended himself only for the

1:42:58

jews as a possible jewish messiah and paul wanted to make him

1:43:03

international for everybody and that was uh

1:43:10

a distortion of the christian original christian message to the extent that we understand it at all

1:43:18

so i've wrote a comedy about it which i thought is the subject deserved

1:43:23

i myself have uh become seriously uh

1:43:30

well i i wouldn't say agnostic i think i'm i'm closer to atheist but

1:43:36

i love christian quarreling and i've wrote a book called julian about julian the apostate the fourth century emperor

1:43:43

who tried to stop christianity in its tracks

1:43:48

and that was favorable to the emperor julian and not so favorable to the bishops that he went to war against

1:43:55

i think what we're going to do and your technology is not quite uh we're not able to connect it so we've

1:44:01

got a speaker in here you're not you're just not plugged in we didn't do that after our break so we'll have to listen to the next call on speaker make sure

1:44:07

you can hear las vegas you are on the air welcome

1:44:12

we don't hear the speaker out here las vegas go ahead please las vegas go ahead

1:44:18

hi susan and uh hi mr vidal i'm a great admirer of yours uh

1:44:24

especially because of your frankness with which you express yourself and i enjoyed your monographs you did for

1:44:30

ordonian press about the american presidency so i had a couple of questions uh first uh

1:44:38

what american presidents if any do you admire or did you admire and would you say a few words about noam

1:44:45

chomsky uh most of whose books i have and whom i also admire very much thank you
thank

1:44:52

you well of admirable presidents um

1:44:58

it's very hard to separate them from the times in which they lived uh some very
marvelous men have been

1:45:04

forgotten because they were not in in interesting times

1:45:10

i would say that well

1:45:15

john quincy adams i suppose he he has served only one term which is not successful

1:45:21

but i quoted from him earlier as an anti-imperialist

1:45:26

he also when he was secretary of state he wrote the monroe doctrine which has
president monroe's name but it was his

1:45:33

work he was the first person perhaps the last american president to understand foreign
affairs and what

1:45:39

america's role should be which was do business with everybody have no special friends
no special

1:45:45

enemies no prejudices and certainly not be the world's policeman so i suppose jq
adams noam

1:45:50

chomsky and i are allies we do the same sort of thing but

1:45:56

often with the same sort of audiences we did a an anti-gulf war a half-hour

1:46:03

discussion for some independent at the time television people

1:46:09

no one the two of us with an interlocutor no one would put it on the air not even at four

1:46:16

o'clock on a sunday morning in san francisco would they put it on air i've never seen
such fear across the

1:46:23

land i wish you'd called us we would have aired it were you around at the time of uh the

1:46:29

gulf war but i think i think we must have because the the the guy who produced it

1:46:35

certainly was very busy with it and we had a good team from abc who did it for nothing you know just pro bono

1:46:41

public hope chomsky and i of course we have the same enemies

1:46:46

by your enemies one one is celebrated largely the new york times

1:46:53

and this funny story of chomsky uh he went to the dentist

1:46:58

and uh dennis said you know your teeth are all right but you've got to stop grinding them he said i don't grind my teeth he said

1:47:04

well you do the enamel is worn off well i don't so mrs chomsky was there and he

1:47:10

asked this well when he sleeps does he grind his teeth he said oh no he doesn't grasp

1:47:15

well they both got terribly interested when did it happen well they finally found out that in the

1:47:21

morning while having coffee and she might be out of the room he would start to read the new york

1:47:27

times and his teeth would mind grind too when i read that paper

1:47:34

particularly the things they do to that scientist at los alamos or their invention of the white water plot

1:47:42

it's a bad paper new orleans next for gorbadol yes uh i love your books i keep

1:47:49

re-reading the matter of fact and one of the things that keeps that strikes me is

1:47:55

um that your uh your work

1:48:01

changes over the years i mean i mean not my my interpretation of your work

1:48:07

changes over the years for example messiah was that kind of book for me it meant different things to me

1:48:13

as different events took place in the country but one the thing i'm interested

1:48:18

now is is lincoln i'm rereading lincoln and uh

1:48:24

one of the things i i wanted to know now that dutch dutch came out is there any difference other than that

1:48:30

ideology between your method and morris's edmond morris's okay thanks

1:48:35

for the call actually would you speak a bit about messiah before we return to yeah messiah came out

1:48:42

i had a period after the city and the pillar when the new york times book

1:48:47

reviewer orville prescott and he was very powerful he did about five daily reviews a week

1:48:53

told my publisher that not only would he never review a book by me but he'd never read

1:48:59

one so i published seven books that were never reviewed in the daily

1:49:04

new york times or by time or by newsweek this was a blackout all because i had said in the city in

1:49:11

the pillar about the normality of a relation between two all-american boys and i was the war

1:49:18

novelist etc who was pronouncing the upon this uh heresy

1:49:26

the seventh of the books that uh were not reviewed by the new york times was messiah

1:49:33

and it came out invisibly because you get no press

1:49:38

particularly uh if the times will not look at it or the news magazines

1:49:44

but something odd happened it's about a man who sort of

1:49:49

says says he's a messiah or people say he is and his message is that death is no

1:49:57

thing therefore nothing can not be a bad thing

1:50:03

and in selling that it becomes a sort of cult which finally ends a lot of it's been

1:50:10

lifted from movies so lean green stole a wonderful piece of it where

1:50:15

people go to commit suicide to these comforting places and you lie and you look at a screen and you see movies

1:50:22

or whatever uh well the book became a cult book in no

1:50:28

time at all it just more and more people started to read it and hand it around and i was fascinated by the diversity of

1:50:36

those who were drawn to this thing on another level it showed uh how easily

1:50:42

through television that you could create a religion how quickly it took christianity centuries to take over

1:50:49

europa and he does it in two or three years then at the end of course they want him to

1:50:55

commit suicide as he's encouraged others to do and he doesn't want to so they have to

1:51:01

kill him and pretend that he killed himself as death is no thing

1:51:06

and how why it's because it's to this day is selling and or at least it has not not a great

1:51:13

seller but it has it has its devotees if television can so quickly create

1:51:20

messiahs why have we not seen them in the television age

1:51:25

well we do we see their spokespersons

1:51:31

the jerry falwell aurel roberts billy graham

1:51:37

they're doing they're making a lot of money out of being professional prophets

1:51:43

it is now that you've asked that question that's an interesting one it hasn't occurred to me why somebody hasn't used

1:51:49

it to start a new religion well scientology i don't know if they've used television but they've certainly

1:51:55

made themselves into a religion from a book by a science fiction writer

1:52:02

of the fifties we had the same publisher for messiah that l ron hubbard had for

1:52:08

dianetics i guess that's the case but not tv

1:52:14

you'd have to have some a charismatic type so far they wrapped themselves in jesus

1:52:20

or sing my way on television flanders new jersey are next

1:52:27

yes mr vadalon in honor sir two questions first what do you see the trajectory of

1:52:32

the novel being in the next century and second can any amount of pleading on my behalf convince you to write an april in

1:52:38

the series well plead some more i might go back to 1846

1:52:45

but i i don't see myself doing the kennedy years or anything closer

1:52:51

because if i did it having been involved i would probably have to do another memoir to cover it which might be the

1:52:57

way of doing it and i might yet yet do that the novel is uh in a going through a

1:53:04

strange patch it's become academicized most of the writers and certainly

1:53:10

practically all of the reviewers seem to be english teachers

1:53:16

i don't think this is necessarily a good thing you can make books out of books

1:53:21

writers have always done it or been inclined to do it but anterior to literature is something

1:53:28

called life and if you haven't had a life uh it is a but a really involved one even

1:53:35

if it's just simply an inner life sitting by a pond in new england

1:53:42

you're not going to be very interesting and that to me is a problem that the writers

1:53:48

now working particularly the ones who are school teachers and universities they've had so little experience of the

1:53:54

world and there's so much they've shut out mary mccarthy was wonderful on this

1:54:00

she made a list of all the things that a novelist may not do a novelist who's considered serious

1:54:06

you can't have a sunset you can't have an election uh you can't have a really good dinner

1:54:12

party you can't have and she just says this list of all the things which had made classic fiction great had been carefully

1:54:20

put away oh no that would be corny or we don't know enough about election have a president in the book how could

1:54:26

you write about what are you some sort of fantasist you don't know any presidents

1:54:31

they pride themselves on the fact that they go to school they stay in school they get tenure

1:54:36

and some may have a real talent for writing but there isn't see there must be a

1:54:42

little spark which is known as life to set you going i had a fairly interesting life and

1:54:49

certainly three years of the army gave me an awful lot to write about so the trajectory i don't think is very

1:54:56

promising people who want narratives who want to be amused by stories are now video

1:55:02

cassettes i find something very odd going wrong with people who use computers

1:55:10

now maybe it's the people or maybe it's just my inability to understand but i think the

1:55:15

pros is flattening out i can tell computer pros very often now

1:55:20

particularly when the same paragraph occurs three times the two pages and i know it's a computer on a blink

1:55:28

uh it'll be interesting to see what happens but i think that the only form of prose that

1:55:35

is going to last is the essay people need that that is

1:55:41

it's short it's one man's voice making connection with

1:55:46

another man's person's eyes it is you're suddenly you've got

1:55:52

montaigne from a 500 years ago and he's talking to you as though you're in the room

1:55:58

and you can respond to them it's really the kinetic energy is so great between the greatest and the readers

1:56:04

well speaking of essays we should tell our audience that a new collection of your essays is scheduled for the spring for the spring yes they're reissuing

1:56:11

united states which random house my last publisher the second i left them to go to doubleday

1:56:18

uh pulped it they just got rid of it and the first my collected essays were

1:56:33

do you think that should do it oh i i go on writing of course but that's this is a pretty big book of

1:56:39

essays it would be sometime before i have another volume will you talk just a minute about

1:56:44

editors over the years and how you use editors i don't have much to do with them i've

got a very nice one at double day who's actually interested in books most of them are interested in marketing now

1:56:56

and their eyes glaze over at the thought of literature he he likes it

1:57:02

it's dedicated to it i had one very fatherly one nicholas raiden at

1:57:09

ep dutton when i was 19 20 and dutton published

1:57:15

about seven novels about ten novels ending with messiah

1:57:21

and he was a very nice white russian and he was a very good editor

1:57:26

no problem i don't i'm not edited you know i'm copy edited to go over to make sure that

1:57:33

that i have no dangling participles but i don't get help

1:57:39

for anything i've completed the work by the time i give it to the publisher

1:57:44

and a wonderful man at little brown where i was probably happiest

1:57:50

and left them like a fool they did julian and they did washington dc and they did myra breckenridge

1:57:56

and we had a successful time random house was not so pleasant and

1:58:02

double day is well we're on the subject of of how we write in the mechanics when you

1:58:08

described grant's writing as west pointian what about your own how would you describe your writing

1:58:14

well i have different different voices i'm a mimic and i can mimic or used to

1:58:22

when younger and more alert i could almost do anyone's voice and also being a dramatist

1:58:30

i can make scenes and people actually talk in different voices which conform with whatever their characters are

1:58:38

if i'm impersonating a roman emperor i will have one style for julian

1:58:44

myra breckenridge has a style never before heard or seen on this earth

1:58:50

she is furious terrible clamour

1:58:55

in my head as i was putting her down so there are different styles in fact let me show the cover for the

1:59:01

paperback of myra breckenridge as we take our next telephone call and it is from seattle

1:59:07

uh hello mr vidal i really appreciate your books and i was wondering if you comment on the

1:59:13

use of covert activity from the time of burr through lincoln and now that we're spending 30 billion dollars on covert

1:59:19

activity actually controls our foreign affairs how do you i i mean

1:59:25

all the people are interested in spies but most people don't believe that are not interested in really knowing what's

1:59:30

going on with our cia in this country well i deplore

1:59:38

our secret government which the cia is i deplore the los angeles police

1:59:43

department which used to have a foreign policy and uh they were against uh enemies of the vietnam war which i was

1:59:51

the whole country is becoming a police state

1:59:57

here's a statistic that i saw on the front page of usa today

2:00:03

about a week ago there are six million people

2:00:08

in prison or in what they call incorrection i suppose that's parole or reform

2:00:15

schools or something six million people that's three percent of the adult population

2:00:21

no other country has ever imprisoned so many of its own people proportionately

2:00:27

as we have done what is this about the harassment of americans have you

2:00:34

taken a trip by plane lately i have to travel with a passport in my pocket in

2:00:39

my own country now we have to have an id with a picture well why do you have to have an id with

2:00:46

a picture don't if i'm a terrorist i'm going to have a fake one you fool

2:00:51

this harassment never let stuff we now have in new york there's a uh every taxi cab michael up

2:00:58

this is uh edith horton well you know a government that does not

2:01:04

care enough about us to give us a national health service which other countries have is terribly worried that we may go

2:01:10

through the windshield this constant harassment of the people and one day i think they're going to

2:01:16

rise up and tear this damn thing to pieces wood that i were young and it was spring

2:01:23

and very heaven to be there hometown next washington dc

2:01:29

mr vidal what a pleasure and a privilege my favorite of yours was lincoln and i

2:01:36

picked it up for the first time ten years ago having never paid too much attention to historical fiction

2:01:42

i then embarked on a reading campaign over the course of five years sandberg

2:01:47

bruce catton i it just brought history alive for me in a way that no one else had

2:01:52

and indeed you will live on these books that i'm standing in my apartment looking at now my son will inherit and

2:01:59

of course his children will and hopefully from it will come as a historian that you so at buyer

2:02:06

so um i have a question i've noticed an attitude of disrespect that's being

2:02:12

embraced by scholars by teachers by schools toward

2:02:17

the accomplishments of our forefathers not just our politicians our leaders but

2:02:23

our business leaders in general in this country many people feel this ties in with the

2:02:29

changing demographics of this country how do you feel i don't

2:02:35

i wouldn't use the word disrespect i think analysis and it's not brilliant analysis because

2:02:43

the people in our universities are are rather timid and conform for a lot

2:02:49

of reasons but i think that many people are asking questions

2:02:55

why uh have we come to the point that i have to carry a passport in the united states so that i have

2:03:02

id with a picture over the years attempts have been made for us to have it cards of identity

2:03:09

which fascist states require and bonaparte style democracies also require like

2:03:17

italy and france this is alien to the american tradition and yet now they've got it

2:03:24

i don't know how a diners club with a picture on it is identification of any kind but in a way that's what they want

2:03:32

the constant intrusion the getting hold of your social security number what they're doing now on the internet and

2:03:37

buying things and they have a records they keep thorough records on just about everybody

2:03:44

i think if there is disrespect for that i think that's good and if there is curiosity about how we

2:03:50

got into this state most people think the cia was always there it wasn't it was founded in

2:03:56

[Music] 48 4748 it's totally illegal

2:04:02

unconstitutional i should say it does not submit its

2:04:08

its uh accounts to congress as the constitutional choir lately they have seemed to be conforming

2:04:15

to the law but i rather doubt it it's totally a rogue out there

2:04:21

we have so many secret services that we don't know anything about them and we have so many activities going on

2:04:27

abroad that we will never know anything about because they are kept obscure from us

2:04:33

remember you know david hume said in 1745 and he said how are the many who

2:04:39

are many and so powerful and thus powerful controlled by the few who are few and

2:04:46

less powerful he says it is done through opinion and opinion is formed by the schools and

2:04:53

the churches and the broad sheets which is what they call newspapers then he who controls religion who controls

2:04:59

education and the press the class that does will create any

2:05:05

opinion that it wants to do anything that it wants if it's in england they want a war with france opinion will go

2:05:11

against the french i have been reading american opinion all my life i have been reading i have never

2:05:16

read a story in the american press that was favorable to any other society we

2:05:21

are constantly bad-mouthing every other country on earth and we're the greatest we're the greatest we're the everybody

2:05:26

envies us we're so good sweden yes they have better education better health service better day care

2:05:32

centers for working mothers but they're all alcoholics and they kill themselves as though because you have good health

2:05:38

and good education you'll be so bored with your life that you will want to commit suicide and get drunk

2:05:43

this constant drip torture of misinformation has really skewed the entire country no

2:05:50

one knows what to think about anything i think a great many people have just pulled out they just ignore the constant propaganda

2:05:58

yes we do get a lot of fairly true information but who can wade through it it comes at us in such avalanches

2:06:06

changing times palm springs california for gore vidal thank you for c-span and thank you for

2:06:12

this interview with mr vidal my name is joanna and i met you cor

2:06:20

i had the great fortune of meeting you in rome and also to have lunch with you in

2:06:26

ravello together with my friend joan we would use mind and dynamics for an encounter

2:06:33

with you in the piazza del pantion i even wrote anonymous notes saying

2:06:38

garvidal you are so beautiful that was 15 years ago now i would like to say to you mr vidal

2:06:46

you are too beautiful thank you mr vidal well thank you i haven't

2:06:53

received a compliment like that in at least 15 years milwaukee

2:06:59

mr vidal i work for a radio station and i'm i'm very protective of people's trust of

2:07:07

daily journalism whether it's from broadcasting or newspapers and i remember seeing a movie twenty five

2:07:12

years ago called network in which he warned patty chesky warned us of

2:07:18

messengers who would come and say don't trust the mass media trust me and and he would lead them in a direction plus

2:07:25

inform them at the same time and are we getting closer to an age of that where we have people who call themselves the

2:07:32

messengers the mass media is not reporting this but i'm the one that's telling you this inside information and

2:07:38

here's the direction that our government and society should be headed is this something new or has this always

2:07:43

happened in various forms in american history well governments generally mislead us

2:07:51

and then again messengers generally have the wrong message so that there is no generality that we

2:07:57

can make out of this situation i think the opinion in the sense that david hume used it

2:08:04

is constant and is generally self-serving in this case for the government of the united states

2:08:11

there are messengers there are voices that are telling the truth that are useful however

2:08:18

everything that a government can do to silence

2:08:23

noam chomsky or me that's an example they will do

2:08:28

i talked to chomsky i was up at harvard giving a lecture and they had flyers all around the harvard yard

2:08:34

saying where i would be speaking what time about several hundred of them within 30 minutes they'd all been torn

2:08:40

down there was no mention that i was there in the harvard crimson no message in the boston papers

2:08:47

i drew two or three thousand people that was the day i saw chomsky

2:08:54

and he said i just explained he said well they do that to me too i said okay

2:08:59

and it's all across the country this happens because opinion does not want us to be

2:09:04

heard i said okay how is it that we we draw one two three thousand people how

2:09:10

do they know we're there and chomsky said i think it's mystical i don't know how there is some sort of

2:09:16

underground out there that knows when something interesting is going to happen

2:09:22

so that's how we messengers get around color we are drawn by the underground the

2:09:28

underground has pulled us into their orbit who is tearing down the flyers

2:09:34

at that time i should think what is called neoconservatives or the most motivated

2:09:41

next call idaho falls that's in idaho go ahead please uh well i

2:09:48

was interested by your comment where you uh mentioned that the american history has been dealt from a very small deck

2:09:57

the adams family seems to be part of this deck which is uh distinct from

2:10:03

your connections i and you talked about brooks adams i guess i was interested if you could

2:10:08

elaborate a little more on this person he's the one adams member of the adams clan that i have a lot of trouble

2:10:15

finding out anything about it's a very good biography of brooks adams i have a copy of it don't ask me

2:10:22

the author's name i'm at that stage of my in the springtime of my senility i'm

2:10:27

beginning to lose names right and left but brooks adams uh there is a good biography i mean

2:10:33

there's a great deal written about him and he of course wrote a great deal

2:10:39

and he was sort of he figures in a novel of mine called empire if you want to see what i have

2:10:45

done with him uh i have a very funny scene when he he announces that mckinley has been shot

2:10:52

and he comes rushing down and henry adams the adams's are staying up in new england for the summer

2:10:57

and mckinley's been shot and their friend theodore roosevelt is now president and brooks adams and i whenever i have a

2:11:05

scene with a real person like brooks adams i take it from letters i take it from life and he came rushing down the

2:11:10

lawn and he said he will be greater than trajan he will be greater than all the great roman

2:11:16

emperors and so on sort of him to empire but brooks had all sorts of uh

2:11:23

curious notions i talked earlier in the program about shaanxi province in

2:11:30

china which was very rich in minerals and so on he who controlled it would control the world and

2:11:36

that was a brooks adams proposition uh he also figured out at the time of the

2:11:42

first world war he said uh germany is too small a country

2:11:49

to he had a funny funny image simile to swing the hammer some some phrase like that they're far

2:11:55

too small they'll find at the end of this war there are only two great powers standing united states and russia

2:12:02

which is right on uh he is to be read and then the deterioration of the

2:12:09

democratic process i can't remember that was he or henry adams or did he edit henry adams

2:12:15

but i associate that with him but get him he's uh

2:12:21

well worth reading well speaking of characters in your book i think we might have sidestepped an earlier caller's

2:12:27

question about dutch and the technique of inserting fictional characters into biography

2:12:32

also edmund morris the author is in that book as you are in your most recent book the golden age

2:12:39

what do you think about this whole technique and does it belong in biography as opposed to historical fiction

2:12:46

well historical fiction is a is a curious phrase if it's fiction it's not

2:12:52

history it's history it's not fiction i have worked out a blend over the years

2:12:59

in which my history is history the historical figures do what they did and say what they did

2:13:06

pretty much then i have made up characters to mix with them i know edmond mars slightly and it may

2:13:12

well be that he uh he might have picked up something from me along the way about

2:13:18

the mixture i haven't read dutch but [Music]

2:13:23

i gather from what i've heard about is that he makes himself a very major character i'm

2:13:28

a very small character in the golden age i'm this just there at

2:13:33

the end to bring down the curtain and give my prosperous speech and

2:13:41

our revels now are ended and to contemplate what is history

2:13:47

what is real what is fact i've dealt with it all through the series with william randolph first inventing wars

2:13:52

inventing it news and then historians working from his inventions and then what is real

2:13:59

and and then i come back to henry adams uh image which is

2:14:05

all his energy and he had this image of the dynamo which would be the great 20th

2:14:10

century uh god it is energy it is force that

2:14:18

matters and matter that matters is force well may i get you to read just one

2:14:25

other paragraph while you're speaking about the closing of this book this is your view of the

2:14:30

human race the last paragraph right there as for the human

2:14:35

case the generation of men come and go and are in eternity

2:14:41

no more than bacteria upon a luminous slide and the fall of a republic or the rise

2:14:48

of an empire so significant to those involved is not detectable upon the slide even

2:14:55

were there an interested eye to behold that steadily proliferating

2:15:00

species which would either end in time or with luck

2:15:05

becomes something else since change is the nature of life

2:15:11

and it's hope and what do you mean with those observations metamorphosis

2:15:18

change transformation uh

2:15:25

before i get to that point i've already got aaron burr coming back and some of the characters are coming

2:15:31

back it's now the year 2000 and we are in ravello doing a tv program

2:15:38

and the young director who is aaron burr come back it's a descendant of burp

2:15:46

and i asked him what are you going to do this time since i'm not the writer anymore

2:15:51

oh he said it will he said i'm not going to bother with politics but it'll be it'll be something different more vast i

2:15:58

said oh you mean the internet no no he said larger than that i think the next thing is a

2:16:05

restructuring of the human race physically that this is now a possibility

2:16:12

that we with genetic experiments we can evolve a new kind of human being

2:16:17

now of course we can evolve a monster or an angel or cross between the two

2:16:24

but i think if there's a human race in a thousand years we won't look anything like we do now i'm not saying that in the book because

2:16:30

i'm not going to end with anything technical or pseudo-technical

2:16:36

but if we are to survive otherwise we will we will die i mean the planet is clearly dying

2:16:42

we're running out of water the air is polluted there are too many of us and we've used up too much of the planet

2:16:50

so either we escape to another planet which we will that's why i use the image of bacteria we're like bacteria

2:16:56

the planet is our host and we're eating it up because there are too many of us

2:17:01

so either we die out or we transform ourselves that's my message to the troops

2:17:07

next for gorbadiel's albuquerque new mexico mr vidal first

2:17:12

first i want to say that throughout my life i've learned more i've learned history and social critique through the

2:17:19

works that you have done and i think i have read more books by you than any other person on the planet

2:17:26

ever at any time second i want to say something about an experience i had 25

2:17:31

years ago when i tried to meet you psychically and i and i ended up in the beverly hills

2:17:37

hotel and maybe you'll recall that moment and my friends were there and you
2:17:42
i told you this experience and you were most gracious to me and i for that i'm
2:17:48
very appreciative i think the confidence that i took in mind and thinking about
2:17:54
that i could do something to affect the life of myself others the planet and
2:17:59
being an activist actually derived from that moment of meeting you and i was i'm 50
today
2:18:06
now my question 25 years later or from that time is that
2:18:11
in your books it seems to me that you actually transcend time and space do you feel
that there's another energy
2:18:18
that motivates you as well as the research thank you for contributing so much to my
2:18:24
life in the life of the people on this planet thank you that's the second caller who has
attempted to make psychic
2:18:30
connections with you does this happen to you a lot you're making one now
2:18:38
don't know about this other force um we're certainly all interconnected
2:18:44
we all go back to the big bang we're all units of energy that
2:18:52
when we go cold and dead entropy as they call it uh we then the elements that make us
up
2:19:00
will be rearranged in new kinds of energy new kinds of force so in that sense we are
agreeably
2:19:07
immortal though the consciousness that is jane and the consciousness that is jack is
2:19:13
not going to continue but the material the matter that makes us up
2:19:20
does go into new arrangements and at the end of the golden age i'm
2:19:25
through the return of aaron burr trying to show that
2:19:31
something is can be in the works and it's probably going on we can say psychic we can
say it's
2:19:37

part of our common heritage of that in initial bang that started creation

2:19:46

what it is where it is we have still don't know it's a pity it's like being handed a

2:19:52

mystery story and yeah you get interested in halfway through so they take it away from you oh you don't need to know the end

2:19:59

next call is from vicksburg mississippi welcome hello susan

2:20:05

hello mr vidal how are you i have a two-part question uh and your

2:20:10

wonderful uh play i guess from 1960 the best man uh it was senator

2:20:17

joe cantwell was he based upon senator mccarthy and secondly did you have any

2:20:22

say in in the casting of the uh film in the leads uh played by henry fonda and cliff

2:20:30

robertson um yes i

2:20:36

worked with the producers on the casting and fonda was marvelous and cliff robertson

2:20:41

was the best he's ever been as cantwell cantwell was not based on joe mccarthy

2:20:48

but i mean none of them are based on anybody they're suggested by certain political

2:20:54

types and there's a nixonian ruthless type which is much closer i suppose to

2:21:00

senator cantwell but the interesting thing about the play and

2:21:05

how it works when it works is

2:21:10

the supposedly good guy has a lot of things wrong with him and the supposedly bad guy has a lot of good things going

2:21:16

chris noth is wonderful as senator cantwell and half the audience thinks that he probably should be president

2:21:23

despite his ruthless amoral ways and spaulding grey who plays the

2:21:29

elegant stevensonian style candidate um

2:21:36

there's a lot of things wrong with him that you might not want in a president so the audience is i i don't i don't

2:21:42

tell anybody what to think about characters i obviously have opinions but i i give

2:21:48

the evidence i give the characters autonomy they say they take over they say and do

2:21:53

what what they must do unless they're historical in which case i stay with the agreed upon facts

2:22:01

so i think it's a first of all it'd be boring if you knew what you thought about your characters

2:22:06

before you wrote them and it would be very dull if you had a message to deliver

2:22:13

you just let it evolve and then as you go over it you begin to see what what it is you've done

2:22:19

generally i find one writes to find out what one thinks and i find if i don't write i don't

2:22:24

think i just i i i sense that's about all

2:22:30

portland oregon you're next good afternoon uh yes it is indeed an honor to ask you

2:22:36

a question mr vidal actually i have two questions first you talked about the deck of cards being

2:22:42

very small and i'd like to know more about the relationships or the

2:22:47

among the presidents i know franklin roosevelt was supposedly related to 11 presidents number two had ben franklin

2:22:53

and the others in paris failed to get french help what would have been the result and how

2:22:59

long would it have taken us to throw off british rule thank you so much

2:23:04

well that's a good question without the french i don't think we

2:23:09

could have done it you know washington for all of his uh really great great character and and

2:23:17

staying power was not a very skillful general thank god neither was cornwallis so we

2:23:22

we didn't have two bonaparte's fighting each other here but had the french fleet not come in at

2:23:28

the end and decided the whole thing we might have lost the revolution and we
2:23:34
might have gone on for a time as a possession of england
2:23:40
but as as even the the stupidest british government realized you cannot have a
2:23:47
colony 3 000 miles away whose population soon will be larger than yours i mean
2:23:52
that just it would have fallen apart in other words we we would have had a
2:23:58
republic later on rather than immediately we might have had a monarchy there were
2:24:03
a lot of monarchists and there was serious discussion should george washington had
george washington
2:24:10
did not name but not george he might have had he been william he might have become
king he i i think he
2:24:16
was tempted but we were getting rid of george the third for george the first i mean that
2:24:22
would send shivers down proto-populist spines
2:24:28
but it was all important french aid and we got it and
2:24:34
that was that small deck of cards particularly at the beginning
2:24:39
particularly people who've been here a long time whether english from the british isles
2:24:45
or dutch like roosevelt yes through intermarrying whether marriages
2:24:52
you do get related to everybody my relationships
2:24:58
are more on the redneck side and franklin roosevelt were more on the eastern
aristocracy
2:25:05
uh which intermarried all along so all the great dutch families
2:25:11
beekman and so on roosevelt was far more proud of being related to the beekman
family which were last distinguished in
2:25:18
the 17th century in the state of new york than he was of being fifth cousin to theodore
roosevelt
2:25:26
the humbine's work earlier you mentioned the number of years that you were shut

2:25:31

out from the new york times today as you and i are talking in this town pick up the papers read by many both the

2:25:39

new york times and washington post have reviewed your new book do you tend to read reviews well i read this one because i'm going

2:25:44

to take some action against the times i don't quite know what but they're in for a bit of punishment they

2:25:52

gave the book the golden age to a british journalist

2:25:59

who was catholic has no subjects that i can tell other than the glories of being and

2:26:07

sufferings of being gay and marty parrots of the new republic

2:26:12

brought him over to everyone's surprise tourette is the new republic i guess

2:26:18

that didn't pan out now he's a freelance journalist the times wanted an all-out attack on

2:26:24

the golden age so they give it to somebody who knows no american history

2:26:30

and he makes so many mistakes i forget what he says about me the mistakes that he makes no editor who

2:26:36

knows anything would allow in their paper he writes it is silly

2:26:42

when gore vidal says the japanese wanted to surrender before the atomic bomb at

2:26:47

hiroshima everybody knows they wanted in may of 45

2:26:53

the bomb was august of 45. every everyone who knows anything about

2:26:58

that war he knows nothing knows the japanese were trying to surrender they were defeated

2:27:05

and the only sticking point was that roosevelt had said unconditional surrender as lincoln had said in the

2:27:11

civil war and they had a condition which was they could retain the emperor

2:27:18

and they were still arguing about that roosevelt is now dead harry truman goes

2:27:24

to potsdam he goes back he wants to go back on all the agreements made at yalta by roosevelt

2:27:30

in the middle of his meetings with stalin stalin has promised to come into the war against japan

2:27:37

suddenly in the middle of the meetings he gets a message that a bomb has gone off near los alamos

2:27:43

in the desert and the atom bomb works he now knows that the war in japan will

2:27:49

be over any time he drops it meanwhile the japanese are trying to

2:27:54

surrender and they're dragging that we're dragging our feet

2:28:00

and he wants to drop the bomb to frighten stalin that was that was the whole point to the

2:28:05

bomb japan was there was no tokyo the b-29s eliminated the

2:28:10

city so this was a very brutal act of of diplomacy i guess there's a polite

2:28:16

word for it to scare stalin and to say look we're the masters of the world now we have

2:28:22

this extraordinary weapon and you don't it'll take you years because you're too primitive

2:28:28

anyway this joker who should not be allowed to write about

2:28:34

these things or if he is he certainly should be heavily edited and corrected

2:28:39

uh doesn't know this he knows nothing indeed about the subject of the book which is

2:28:45

roosevelt administration and harry truman and dean atchison i have a marvelous aria

2:28:53

by herbert hoover well i don't make up her herbert hoover aria or roosevelt aria i take it from what

2:29:00

they've actually written or said and it's a it's a quite a passage

2:29:05

if you've got a he he's got it in his review and i've come to quite admire hoover in

2:29:12

some ways but hoover was a very perceptive man and

2:29:20

now he acts as though this reviewer as though i have made up the speech for hoover when hoover himself wrote it

2:29:27

i am certain that the next war will absolutely transform us absolutely

2:29:32

and he means world war ii i see more power to the great corporations more power to the

2:29:38

government less power to the people that's what i fear because once this starts it is irreversible you can't

2:29:46

extend the mastery of the government over the daily life of a people without making government the master of those

2:29:52

people's souls and thoughts the way the fascists and the bolsheviks have done in a serpentine way franklin is going in

2:29:59

the very same direction that they have gone in and i think he knows exactly what he's doing

2:30:05

now minder herbert hoover was a bitter man who had just been had been defeated badly by uh roosevelt

2:30:11

in the 1932 election he was also very very conservative which i thought it was nice to give the conservative point of

2:30:16

view since i'm thought to be liberal and so uh now you have a quotation from herbert

2:30:23

hoover and he thinks that i make up everything and he's trying to tell use the authority of the new york times

2:30:29

to say oh don't believe anything he says hoover never said that that's vidal talking

2:30:35

well this is saying that what i do is totally a fraud and that's actionable

2:30:41

what would make you happy from the new york it fold

2:30:47

well with regard to this review when you say it's actionable uh well we'll see what what action might

2:30:52

be taken i'll tell you one thing if i wrote a letter to the new york times correcting

2:31:00

all of the distortions and just lies that he has written they wouldn't publish it

2:31:05

they never published letters that criticized them they just get lost renata adler

2:31:12

did a book about the new yorker in which she mentions rather unpleasantly the editor of this

2:31:17

book section and um the times took revenge on renata adler on her

2:31:24

little book on the new yorker and wrote she says seven or eight pieces

2:31:30

different parts of the paper attacking her in the book over and over and over again she wrote two letters to the times

2:31:36

trying to correct them they wouldn't publish them so she went to harper's magazine and did her entire attack on

2:31:42

the new york times and what it tried to do to silence her this is a bad newspaper

2:31:48

virgin islands thanks for waiting you're on the air now mr vidal can you um comment on the

2:31:55

influence of freemasonry on the american government and the possibilities of american poli

2:32:02

imperialism might very well be an extension of british imperialism

2:32:09

i don't know much about freemasonry my grandfather beadahl was a 33rd degree

2:32:15

mason and i never knew what that meant i don't well i don't know it's a secret

2:32:20

society allegedly uh it certainly had great power in england

2:32:26

the prince of wales was almost always automatically uh the nominal head of uh the freemasons

2:32:33

and we've had many important americans have been freemasons but i would think if there was a

2:32:40

smoking gun somebody would have noticed it by now i haven't corvadel is spending three hours with us

2:32:47

on our in-depth program this afternoon we have about 25 minutes left in that conversation next calls from sacramento

2:32:54

from sacramento caller you obviously have your tv set turned up too loudly why don't you turn it down and then go ahead

2:33:01

well i don't think we're going to work with that call let's move on if we can please to our next call from st louis hello mr vadal

2:33:09

i want to thank you so much for your book on lincoln i the first

2:33:14

biography i ever read was in first grade was about him and i then read everything i could about him and when i read your

2:33:20

book it made him into flesh for me and it was just an absolute wonderful experience

2:33:27

my question for you you very much disappointed me when you said well i'd like to write about the mexican war but

2:33:34

i don't have that time to research any longer who can you recommend these days

2:33:40

as let's say someone who's going to take on your mantle

2:33:45

to to write these historical novels that do indeed put put flesh and breath

2:33:52

in into a magnificent history that's that's so much better than any

2:33:58

any story could ever be can you recommend anybody that i can be looking forward to reading their books

2:34:05

since you are disappointing me so much by saying that you're not going to write another

2:34:11

well i i don't read much historical fiction because i have to read so much history

2:34:16

but i think for your purposes you know let's let us hope that in the near future

2:34:23

we're getting some very good young historians are coming along and i think that they will fill in what

2:34:29

you want filled in in your view of the past they're much smarter and sharper than

2:34:36

let's say 20 30 years ago you don't have the dumas malones you

2:34:42

know he wrote that huge life of jefferson which he had nothing interesting to say about the most interesting of the

2:34:48

president look to history looked a biography i think that's of rich field

2:34:55

what are you reading right now i'm reading uh

2:35:00

trevellian's life of john bright and john bright was quaker he was

2:35:07

in parliament in england he was liberal in the 1807

2:35:13

and a superb writer and superb speaker and a great influence on my grandfather

2:35:19

can you think of this boy from mississippi who goes out to indian territory and

2:35:25

invents a state called oklahoma and spends his time reading through a surrogate

2:35:31

john bright and all of these english radicals

2:35:36

that's what i'm reading san jose yes mr mr vidal um i'm i'm one of

2:35:42

these late readers i always read books about six years after they've been published and i'm uh

2:35:49

enjoying empire i'm particularly enjoying your description of theodore roosevelt with his clicking teeth

2:35:57

i guess my question has to do with the american aristocracy every time i mention it i'm told that i'm engaging in

2:36:04

class warfare my daughter is applying for college

2:36:10

and she has a 3.8 gpa very high s.a.t

2:36:15

and she was basically advised that her chances of getting into yale were nil

2:36:21

yet george bush with a c average in high school gets him to yale with

2:36:27

mediocre grades at yale by his own admission gets him to

2:36:32

harvard business school for the rest of his career he's basically protected by corporate

2:36:38

interests who continue to fund his campaign and i guess my question is one that never seems to

2:36:44

be discussed is what is the state of the american aristocracy and if there's time

2:36:51

how does it differ with the british aristocracy having having lived in britain do you

2:36:58

do you agree with me my having lived in britain do you agree with me that at least the british aristocracy has a

2:37:05

redeeming quality that everybody admits it's there and that by right they get accepted to

2:37:11

eaton and not by supposed merit thank you

2:37:16

well we certainly have a very durable aristocracy

2:37:23

there's enough meritocracy that people join the aristocracy both here and in england england is

2:37:30

always taking in new people to have new blood but

2:37:36

the the heart of an aristocracy are the schools

2:37:42

and uh this is interesting you use the example of your daughter and you use the example

2:37:48

of bush who went to andover and yale and i went to exeter and would have gone

2:37:53

to harvard had i not chosen the army instead

2:37:58

uh it's the schools are what control the opinion of the children

2:38:05

of the rich and or powerful uh i had a stepbrother

2:38:11

who was going to inherit a lot of money and he was sent to groton

2:38:17

that's when i've gotten saint marks and so on those schools uh are invented for those who will be

2:38:24

rich to make them into not only into gentlemen and scholars but to inculcate

2:38:30

certain values opinion i come back to david hume this is how opinion is formed in the ruling

2:38:37

class they know if you've sent to groton what they're going to get in the way of moral

2:38:42

and political training what their view of the world will be i belong to the ruling class i'm his

2:38:49

step brother but i'm not going to inherit any money so i'm sent to exeter which is for the

2:38:55

bright boys of the ruling class who will eventually work for the rich boys

2:39:00

and we will become judges senators editors the new york times

2:39:07

many fields are open to us bankers but we we are the sort of apparatchiks

2:39:14

and not properly speaking except by birth a member of the ultimate class

2:39:19

well that's how it's done and that's how they continue it uh there's always been a move in england

2:39:26

where as you point out they know about the upper classes and we're not told

2:39:31

we have the most intelligent upper class i've ever seen or at least overall they are nobody knows they're there

2:39:40

they own the newspapers the newspapers aren't going to give the game away who really owns what who really controls

2:39:45

what who controls opinion and to be there and never be named i mean

2:39:52

people like spengler and so have have done marvelous works but nothing really gets through to the people at large

2:39:59

and so uh they go on and on occasionally a maverick appears among

2:40:05

them i was one and there are others but by and large it's a closed

2:40:11

corporation there's a very good guy if you want to read more about this called g william

2:40:17

domhoff d-o-m-h-o-f-f he teaches at santa cruz or used to

2:40:23

university of california who rules america he's written three or four of those books what he does

2:40:28

he goes through corporations and he gets lists of directors then he goes through the social

2:40:34

registers and finds their names and then he starts to find what clubs

2:40:40

they belong to where they went on to college and he begins to construct begin to know

2:40:46

all their names they become sort of friends that you don't have and would we likely find them on the

2:40:52

lists of invitees to this and previous white houses of course

2:40:58

some more than others you know i mean now with the cost of television so high

2:41:03

a somewhat cruder sort of millionaires coming to the white house i don't think you'll see many melons

2:41:09

going there or rockefellers but you will see movie moguls

2:41:15

next is ogunquit maine are you there an operator of the line interruption hello yes go ahead please

2:41:21

peter lucas will you plan a line hello caller go ahead please um yes uh um a

2:41:27

very interesting program thank you very much for taking my call my question for mr vidal uh i have never read a gore

2:41:33

vidal novel and wonder in your opinion sir where should i start well i don't know

2:41:41

if what we've been talking about largely about which is the american empire

2:41:46

and the republic for which it does not stand i'd start with empire

2:41:52

which is theodore roosevelt and hearst and uh it's sort of a duel between two

2:41:58

titans will roosevelt through his strenuousness

2:42:04

and empire building and the seizure of the philippine islands and cuba

2:42:09

is he going to really be the augustus of a new great new world empire

2:42:15

or is william randolph hearst who controls opinion and who can make him or break him or so he thinks

2:42:20

uh be the titular deity of the empire and it's it's a duel between these two

2:42:27

great figures throughout the book and it's kind of funny too have you a favorite among all of these

2:42:34

no i don't big favorites choosing among your children yes next call is from costa mesa california

2:42:41

all right good afternoon to the both of you thank you uh question for mr of it all i tuned in a few minutes ago and

2:42:47

heard you almost lively toss off a comment about the japanese trying to surrender

2:42:52

before the atomic bomb was passed and although i'm not a learned man or a scholar i've read dozens of memoirs and

2:42:57

books about the subject and although there might have been some behind the scenes negotiations with the swiss it seems that there was uh

2:43:03

uh not much not much thinking that the surrender terms were were really uh taken

2:43:09

seriously by the americans and so i just wonder how you tossed that comment off and uh i just didn't think that they were

2:43:14

really trying to surrender at that time well you're not supposed to think they were trying to surrender

2:43:20

uh it is the will of the american government and the school teachers who follow the

2:43:26

lead of the government largely because they have to

2:43:32

because of the huge allocations for research and development that

2:43:37

universities get which affects the humanities that is the history departments as well

2:43:43

anticipating such a question is yours i will give you a little reading list

2:43:48

first of all in may of 1945 alan dulles you made a reference to the

2:43:54

swiss meetings uh he was i think head of the oss part of the os set

2:44:00

was having conversations with the japanese about the conditions of surrender

2:44:05

we had said unconditional surrender but basically we were probably willing to adjust it

2:44:11

they had a condition they wanted to keep the emperor so i would propose that you read

2:44:18

let me see here the decision to use the a-bomb by edwin

2:44:25

fogelman f-o-g-e-l-m-a-n it's very thorough

2:44:30

and also unconditional surrender by john d chappelle c-h-a-p-p-e-l-l

2:44:38

this is one of the most thorough uh studies of what preceded the dropping

2:44:44

of the bomb by the 28th of may

2:44:51

the president had been assured that the japanese were defeated

2:44:57

admiral nimitz said we don't need to invade and we certainly don't need to

2:45:03

use nuclear weapons they will surrender in the course of the summer now that's nimitz

who was the admiral of

2:45:10

the fleet in the pacific at the time

2:45:15

stimson the secretary of war under roosevelt had been secretary of state under her

rehover

2:45:22

and stimson asked by committee was he surprised on the japanese attacked pearl

2:45:28

harbor this was earlier but leading up to it the way the japanese mind allegedly

2:45:35

worked he said i was not surprised

2:45:40

letting on that it's because i knew the situation best having been secretary of state that indeed uh

2:45:47

if put in a box i'm now shifting from the atomic bomb to pearl harbor

2:45:54

that roosevelt provoked japan into attacking us

2:46:00

in 1940 he got reelected by saying that no sons of yours will ever fight in a foreign war

2:46:08

unless we are attacked and that was his campaign pledge to the american people

2:46:13

he got elected president he wants to go into the war on the side of england which is being battered by the german

2:46:19

air force france has fallen 80 percent of the american people do not want to go to war any more than they

2:46:26

wanted to go to war in 1917. he does his best to try and convince them and virtuously since i'm on the

2:46:32

side of england against germany i too was all for the idea that we give them destroyers
material help russia too

2:46:39

but the american people aren't going to buy a war the only way he can get in japan has

2:46:45

made a tripartite agreement with germany and with italy each will help the other in case
of war

2:46:53

roosevelt is now deliberately moving japan into attacking us finally in august i think it
was of

2:47:02

1941. he um

2:47:08

gave them an ultimatum through cordell hull his secretary of state they had two
japanese ambassadors

2:47:14

that come to washington and he said you must withdraw from the

2:47:20

mainland of asia since 37 they've been trying to conquer china and they'd already
conquered

2:47:25

manchuria if not we will put an embargo on you and they

2:47:31

were getting most of their oil came from us and scrap metal they didn't have metal

2:47:36

of their own they imported if you don't

2:47:42

obey this ultimatum they immediately prepared for an attack on pearl harbor

2:47:51

apologist for roosevelt in this instance by the way i am pro roosevelt and pro new deal
i'm

2:47:57

anti-american empire apologist for roosevelt say that

2:48:03

he expected the attack to come at manila or some other place

2:48:08

he didn't expect this massive all-out attack on pearl harbor which cost us three
thousand lives

2:48:15

it it came to pass on the 7th of december 1941

2:48:23

a week before the attack he wrote a letter this is all a matter of history

2:48:29

to wendell wilkie the republican opponent of his republican opponent in the previous election

2:48:36

and he said we will be attacked probably before next monday

2:48:43

and we were attacked on sunday now if he could write that a week before to wendell wilkie

2:48:49

why didn't he write it to the commanders at pearl harbor the only warning that they were given by

2:48:54

the war department was to watch out for saboteurs that they were around

2:49:00

and a funny order came to move some of the newer ships out of pearl harbor and send off

2:49:06

in a westerly direction i hope that answers you bloomington

2:49:12

indiana with about 10 minutes left to go you're on the air thank you uh i really appreciate the

2:49:18

opportunity to speak to gore vidal and i appreciate what c-span is doing and exposing different points of view

2:49:23

i have a question about three specific individuals first of all howard zinn i'd like to

2:49:29

know if you're a friend of his and if you approve of his work second of all alan ginsberg

2:49:37

i'd like to know what your opinion is on his role as a spokesman not just for radical causes but particularly for the cause of

2:49:44

tolerance for sexual diversity and finally i'd like to revisit the subject of ralph nader where i really

2:49:50

don't understand your opinions because the opinions you've expressed about the duopoly are virtually

2:49:56

identical to nader's and uh when you say gore is thicker than nader are we to take this to mean that you're

2:50:02

supporting him because of familiar connections because he supports nafta gat

2:50:08

corporate managed trade he's totally inadequate on the environment and health and he depends he

2:50:14

has a dependence on corporate money so i'd like to hear your your view on that

2:50:19

well i certainly sympathize with your position

2:50:24

and you haven't said anything that i regard as untrue about gore

2:50:31

there's a bit more to nader that i well remember when i was with dr

2:50:36

spock i was co-chairman of the people's party 1968 to about i don't know 70 72

2:50:44

and nader made no statement about the vietnam war he avoided it and that was

2:50:50

the the great issue about of that period of time i'm not pointing a finger at him i'm

2:50:56

just saying that i i would find him a more attractive figure politically

2:51:02

if indeed he had taken a stand you know i i see i i well i've been

2:51:09

through this already i yes there's a good point in making a

2:51:14

not a duopoly but a third party but there isn't a duopoly there's a monopoly

2:51:20

the democratic party the republican party are the same party they're the corporate party of america they're paid for by the same people

2:51:27

yes gore is part of that but between an intelligent duopolis

2:51:33

or monopolist i should say and an unintelligent one like bush i'm afraid i would vote for

2:51:39

despite or because perhaps of the family connection for the more intelligent one

2:51:45

one of those two is going to be elected and it better be gore of the two that he's totally unsatisfactory on many

2:51:52

issues that i care about and you care about is something else and i don't even know it's if it's

2:51:59

personal i don't know him i can't speak for him but i would certainly say he's part of

2:52:04

the most corrupt political culture that the united states has ever seen we've had some bad patches before but this is

2:52:10

like nothing else he is part of a system can he transcend it i doubt it

2:52:17

but i hope you can that's the best i can do howard zinn or alan ginsberg i don't

2:52:23

know who howard zinn is historian alan ginsberg was an old old friend of mine

2:52:29

and uh he's wonderful he uh on sexual diversity he was

2:52:35

wonderful and uh he was just he was a charming man and and i miss

2:52:41

is not being alive next call springfield missouri

2:52:46

yes sir um you talk about uh there being a police state and that sort

2:52:51

of thing uh having developed after world war ii two major futuristic police states if you will

2:52:58

have been uh written about and uh celebrated quite a lot this century in terms of uh or what

2:53:05

i'm speaking of as uh of course orwell and and aldous huxley's brave new world

2:53:10

of the two which do you feel that we're more approaching well i must say eldest huxley sounded a

2:53:17

lot more fun than ours with that soma everybody was taking of course i suppose we can say the drugs

2:53:24

are the equivalent today but i don't i don't see us going in either

2:53:29

of those directions everything changed after 89

2:53:36

we lost our enemy it takes a lot of money to create opinion as powerful as the opinion our ownership

2:53:43

created for us in the russians are coming and communism is everywhere

2:53:48

when it isn't anywhere at least not in the united states it wasn't

2:53:53

i see it more as too few people have too much money

2:53:59

too many people have too little and the graspingness

2:54:04

and the total power of corporate america if you own the new york times if you own

2:54:10

the president and if you own the congress uh there's no way for the people to express themselves

2:54:17

there's no there's no means of redress you can't say we've got a great out of the west out of the monongahela valley

2:54:24

came a man a titan you can't do that anymore times won't report the great new leader

2:54:32

his speeches will not be recorded they have silenced just about every dissenting voice in the country

2:54:38

and done it very very successfully we have c-span here for which we should all

2:54:44

be very thankful that at least they are able to fall as

2:54:49

it were between the cracks of a pretty monolithic structure but there isn't much else

2:54:55

see does the internet give you hope that uh i don't understand the internet i mean i don't know what it's all about

2:55:02

i don't use it i look at it i've seen several sites with my name on it and

2:55:08

one is run by a guy who seems to be making money out of it somebody told me i don't know

2:55:15

uh yes it anything that one person or one

2:55:20

corporation cannot control is obviously going to be free or

2:55:26

potentially free so maybe that is an answer i don't but not my subject

2:55:32

miami uh mr vidal let me say it's an honor to speak to you i i came to you at 25 years

2:55:38

old late in life but fortunately before the establishment and the propaganda the

2:55:45

admittedly impressive job i was able to turn a once idealistic 14 year old into a bitter and carmadron

2:55:51

at age 27. but a question and a comment first off i'd like to ask if you think

2:55:57

it's possible in my lifetime for someone to campaign and have a successful shot

2:56:02

of being president without abiding to the agenda of the jesus christ there's as if to say

2:56:08

someone who is an agnostic who sees religion and what it's done and

2:56:13

campaign on that trend and the second point is that i think you're much too harsh on your old friend

2:56:20

john kennedy uh he his his idealism still rings true for today and i think in

2:56:26

in light of the revisionist the last 20 years he comes across as a better president and certainly a more realistic

2:56:32

figure than the crop that is today thank you very much well on jack kennedy

2:56:39

i knew him pretty well and he was one of the most charming men i've ever known one of the funniest

2:56:47

but he um first of all he didn't have a liberal bone in his body it was ambition

2:56:53

ambition and he really believed in the cold war

2:56:58

you know truman and eisenhower were two old pros they knew the cold war had been cooked

2:57:04

up by truman the russians are coming so that we could establish nato the cia

2:57:10

militarize the economy control our own people not to mention everybody else who falls under our sway

2:57:18

they're very cynical and in fact eisenhower and his farewell to the nation in january 61 when jack

2:57:25

came to office he warned of the military-industrial complex he also something that people forget he warned

2:57:32

of the influence on the universities of the of the military-industrial complex

2:57:38

he said once a university accepts a large federal allocation of funds

2:57:45

that university ceases to be free where you should have free inquiry etc

2:57:50

and you will not have it because of the necessity they will feel

2:57:55

i'm interpreting now not quoting that they will feel uh the government wants and this has affected the history

2:58:02

departments they are serving up history even near history like uh kennedy

2:58:08

uh they're serving it up in order to create a kind of false picture

2:58:14

of a country that anybody can be president and land of opportunity of the

2:58:20

people by the people for the people all that has been erased in the last 50 years there is nothing left of it

2:58:27

except false histories and hagiographies

2:58:33

and what was this other question it was about winning the white house

2:58:38

as an agnostic i i think you better keep quiet about it because

2:58:44

jefferson got caught on that and lincoln almost got caught uh both were agnostics

2:58:51

lincoln came to use god a lot in speeches in his last uh

2:58:57

year or two all the almighty and god he never mentioned jesus

2:59:02

uh in all of the federalist papers the founding fathers god is mentioned only twice jesus is not

2:59:10

mentioned at all you might tell some of your jesus christ or friends the founders of the country were men of the

2:59:15

enlightenment and by and large they were either agnostic atheist or not interested

2:59:22

uh they they they nearly got jefferson who finally said he was a deist which means

2:59:28

nothing at all he just thought there was probably a god and slithered out of that one

2:59:34

lincoln wrote a book called in pamphlet called infidelity

2:59:40

meaning not believing in god and he showed it to herndon his law

2:59:45

partner and everyone says this is an all-out attack on christianity i said this is

2:59:51

great stuff said earned and now burn it because you're going to be president

2:59:56

so don't publish infidelity our three hours is finished

3:00:02

you're about to say hallelujah as uh we close let me show you once again gore vidal's latest

3:00:07

novel it is called the golden age it is the seventh and final in this series of books chronicling american history

3:00:14

published by doubleday and available across the country in bookstores mr biddall thank you for spending so much time with us we appreciate it

3:00:26

you can see book tv's three hour in-depth interview with author playwright and essayist gore vidal again

3:00:31

tonight at midnight