



Sexually Speaking: Collected Sex Writings

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Gore Vidal: Sexually Speaking presents the author's often provocative and always engaging thoughts on sexuality. Here, fourteen essays and three rare, vintage interviews published over the past four decades tackle hot-button topics such as gay American founding fathers, sex and the Catholic church, gay bashing and the U.S. Congress, and bedding Jack Kerouac. "Vidal's erudition, candor, and exceptional sense of humor shine." — San Francisco Chronicle

Sexually Speaking: Collected Sex Writings Details

Date : Published April 23rd 2001 by Cleis Press (first published 1999)

ISBN : 9781573441209

Author : Gore Vidal , Donald Weise (Editor)

Format : Paperback 280 pages

Genre : Nonfiction, Writing, Essays, Lgbt, Glbt, Queer, Gay, Sexuality

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From Reader Review Sexually Speaking: Collected Sex Writings for online ebook

Amy Rutherford says

Individual pieces are 4 or 5 star worthy, but as a collection, some themes become repetitive. Recommend reading one piece at a time with a good break before the next one.

Marlon says

must-read for any homo

Martin says

Rarely can an author create something that tempers itself in contrast to the current times. Re-reading these observations from the greatest American essayist of the 20th century brings a fresh candor to the over-sexualization of the West, the over-feminization of the homosexuals, and the debates surrounding identity that rage today. With the current rush to identify and approve or scorn of absolutely every "type" according to the PC Pollyannas, discussions on the absurdity of labeling is refreshing.

Mike Moskos says

The sections of this book which were previously published book reviews/author summaries get a little tiresome, but the interviews at the end are classic Vidal.

Pascale says

This book of essays loosely arranged around the theme of sexuality regroups a series of texts dating roughly from the early 60s to about the early 90s.

The common thread throughout the volume is the question of identity within society, and whether the parameters chosen by some to define themselves in comparison to others are valid ones. Is one to be defined by one's sexual preference, or by one's personality and accomplishments, or one's common experience of life with the rest of humanity?

Vidal hates the use of the word "homosexual," which is an adjective, not a noun, and he makes the argument that people who gather under the banner of homosexuality are limiting their identity to their sexual preference. If the latter were removed, most of the people under this banner would have no reason to "congregate" together, since this is the only thing they may have in common. These ideas may seem outdated to some people, since the word "homosexual" has become a noun, and since "gay" has likewise been adopted into the common language of alternate lifestyles. [. . .] (p. 234)

As for what struck me in the book, it was the interviews because Vidal's wittiness and mischievousness

shine through, more so than in the essays.

Of note: although apparently referring at Nelson Rockefeller, the following quote fits the Bush Presidency well: [. . .] Whoever becomes our next dictator will be like Arthur Godfrey-folksy and very democratic in appearance, very warm and talkative and will say a lot about how much he loves the people. He will seem all right. He will also have the full support of the Pentagon and of the big industries intertwined with the Pentagon, members of congress who support the Pentagon."

I can't remember exactly how I became aware of Gore Vidal, but I know that it was from seeking out some of his political writings rather than from first reading one of his novels. His statements, spoken with sibylline authority have always struck me as quasi-prophetic, and by their nature frightening. Vidal is the one who, by calling one of his books "The Decline and Fall of the American Empire" pointed out that the U.S in empire, and that empires do not last forever. The Romans also thought that they would rule over the world ad infinitum.

Oliver Bateman says

those of you who know vidal know the drill:

1) the essays are composed as if they were 'elegant conversations' w/ a witty old uncle, and the interviews are actually so.

2) no matter the topic, vidal says the same shit over and over again, b/c he assumes correctly that most people are forgetful (he'd probably say ignorant, dull, vulgar, etc.) and need incessant reminding of the most basic ideas. they are:

a) there are no homosexual people, only homosexual acts (larry kramer debates this w/ him in the final interview in the book).

b) the quality of 'trade' has declined as men have rushed to place themselves in one or the other sexuality grouping. there's less boundary-crossing of the sort vidal apparently enjoyed while in prep school, the navy, w/ jack kerouac, etc.

c) vidal hates sissies, especially truman capote. he references capote in much the same way that trump mentions rosie o'donnell: as placeholder, as bête noire, as erstwhile (friendly) rival.

d) he loves telling tennessee williams stories.

e) he is aware that he is always in the process of being forgotten, even while alive.

3) vidal, despite his avowed embrace of hedonism, is quite puritanical and conservative.

4) vidal "loves the [HIS; since he is an Old American] republic."

5) vidal hates john barth, donald barthelme, thomas pynchon, et al.

6) vidal hates (or resents) most academics.

7) vidal loves breezy, elegant writing and nothing else.

8) vidal takes politics seriously, but refuses to accept the "personal is political" line of argument that emerged in the 70s. although i *do* believe this, there's something admirably old-timey about vidal's attitude on that matter.

9) vidal is a master of the insightful insult, as when he remarks of john updike that he writes superbly for someone whose work isn't the least bit interesting, or when he notes that bill burroughs & andy warhol are similarly fraudulent "artistes."

anyway, this is a quick read, and it's not even vidal's best stuff, because vidal's best stuff doesn't have much, if anything, to do with sex.

gLawrence Baumgartner says

I love Gore and almost everything he has written. The people he has known and his contention that gay and straight do not exist; that sex is descriptive not a lifestyle. I've got to agree with him in many ways. The interviews are dated but thoroughly enjoyable and his take on Eleanor Roosevelt, Tennessee Williams, Christopher Isherwood and others are just plain enjoyable. As I said, it's dated and maybe a bit out of step with the ways things have evolved, it's refreshing that Gore never embraced his sexuality as we do today, it supports his antagonist view of almost everything. Good historical snapshot and should be required reading of the new generation of fags.

Aaron Gallardo says

Mordaz, furioso, exagerado, cínico, inteligente. Un puñado de adjetivos con los que simpatizo. El tema principal es la homosexualidad. Gore dice que no existe: apenas es un adjetivo, que la media (y los misma comunidad 'gay', he de decir) se ha empeinado en volver un sustantivo. Y le doy la razón. Critica la doble moral y los sinsentidos judeocristianos. Y le doy la razón. Habla del sometimiento de la mujer como fruto - entre otras cosas- de la ideología capitalista y su exaltación de la familia. Y no podía darle más la razón. Gran crítico, este Vidal. Y gran paroxista. Se tuvo creído hasta el final que el fin del mundo es inminente y se debe a la sobrepoblación, cosa que se arreglaría con más homosexualidad y más anticonceptivos. Creía que la literatura estaba muerta, y este libro rayaba con el antisemitismo. Qué daría para que siguiera analizando la cultura moderna, sin embargo.

Clayton Greiman says

I didn't find the book engaging for a reason Mr. Vidal would appreciate. The tome's musings on sexuality, sex as politics, and moral policing have become antiquated. Gay marriage has been validated by The United States Supreme Court. Yes, there will always be intolerance, but a watershed victory has been achieved for the gay rights movement.

Many of Mr. Vidals' essays were written in the 1960s and 70s...so they are historical chronicles of a struggle but (to me) uninteresting ones. More than writing about sex, Mr. Vidal writes about authors...Tennessee Williams, Truman Capote, and Oscar Wilde...and even an essay concerning Eleanor Roosevelt.

Thus, I felt a bit underwhelmed by the salacious promises of the title. "Vidal's Reviews of Gay Authors and Other Historical Personalities" would be a more apt moniker for the tome.

Anastasia says

Gore Vidal's essays are some of my favorite examples of his writing, and *Sexually Speaking* is certainly among his most charged and powerful collections. Some of the writing will seem dated now, but many of the issues he takes on, particularly with regard to homosexuality, still haven't advanced much. My favorite of the lot is the essay "Sex is Politics," impressive for its rhetoric and for the tensions Vidal pulls to the surface of our cultural pool. I don't know what we'll do for intelligent cultural commentary when Vidal is no longer around to say it with sarcasm and a healthy dose of arrogance.

Chelsey Cosh says

Gore Vidal is easily one of the best essayists in the world. Here, he writes about human sexuality in its many forms, but he veers toward homosexuality as he himself expresses homosexual behaviour (but don't dare call him a gay man -- he would have to disagree with that on principle). This collection, *Sexually Speaking* features his many essays, some about sex and some not, in addition to three interviews, two of which were for homocentric magazines, like *The Fag Rag* and *The Gay Sunshine*. He writes about authors and literature and politics and leaders, some of his material fascinating, others more academic. He talks about Schlafly and Eleanor Roosevelt and Isherwood with the same candor as he talks about sex acts. His tone is always pitch perfect for whatever he's discussing. Whether or not you agree with his views is irrelevant. His writing is superb, and so, I would absolutely recommend this collection.

Christoper Johnsen says

Another great collection of Vidal's musings.

Luis Cardenas says

Muchos de los ensayos son una constante repetición de que el sexo es política, y de que no hay una etiqueta por los actos sexuales de las personas porque todos son actos fisiológicamente permitidos para el disfrute del placer siempre y cuando las personas estén dispuestas física y psicológicamente aptos para ellos. El sexo es política porque el estado no debe inmiscuirse en lo que hacen las personas en las puertas de su casa. Y mucho menos obligarlos a creer en convencionalismos sociales que solo son ganancia para algunos.
