



Sympathy for the Devil: Four Decades of Friendship with Gore Vidal

Michael Mewshaw

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A generous, entertaining, intimate look at Gore Vidal, a man who prided himself on being difficult to know

Detached and ironic; a master of the pointed put-down, of the cutting quip; enigmatic, impossible to truly know: This is the calcified, public image of Gore Vidal—one the man himself was fond of reinforcing. "I'm exactly as I appear," he once said of himself. "There is no warm, lovable person inside. Beneath my cold exterior, once you break the ice, you find cold water."

Michael Mewshaw's *Sympathy for the Devil*, a memoir of his friendship with the stubbornly iconoclastic public intellectual, is a welcome corrective to this tired received wisdom. A complex, nuanced portrait emerges in these pages—and while "Gore" can indeed be brusque, standoffish, even cruel, Mewshaw also catches him in more vulnerable moments. The Gore Vidal the reader comes to know here is generous and supportive to younger, less successful writers; he is also, especially toward the end of his life, disappointed, even lonely.

Sparkling, often hilarious, and filled with spicy anecdotes about expat life in Italy, *Sympathy for the Devil* is an irresistible inside account of a man who was himself—faults and all—impossible to resist. As enlightening as it is entertaining, it offers a unique look at a figure many only think they know.



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