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Earth to Gore

On Gore Vidal's ranting in The LA Weekly.

The novelist and fantasist Gore Vidal has always been a political extremist. With him, it is business as usual to describe respectable conservative journalists as fascists or worse. The hysterical access of anti-Americanism and anti-Bush sentiment that has swept through the chattering classes of Europe and America in the last few years seems to have finally pushed the poor fellow over the edge. In "Uncensored Gore," an interview in the November 14/20 issue of *LA Weekly*, an "alternative" (that is, rabidly left-wing) California paper, Vidal lets loose with a torrent of paranoid animadversion that should make his friends concerned for his sanity.

The ostensible occasion for the interview was the publication of a new book by Vidal about George Washington, John Adams, and Thomas Jefferson. The real subject of the interview, however, was Gore Vidal's feelings of bitterness about America and its leaders. Vidal begins with a little throat-clearing in order to inform us that "Ours is a totally corrupt society. The presidency is for sale." Really? Is Bill Gates or Warren Buffet going to snap up that prize? But Vidal doesn't really get going until he utters the name "Bush." It seems to act like a drug on him, obliterating his ability to make distinctions. Reflecting on the Enron affair and other recent business scandals, Vidal concludes that what we have in our society is "despotism."

It is the sort of authoritarian rule that the Bush people have given us. The USA PATRIOT Act is as despotic as anything Hitler came up with—even using much of the same language .

I think of [Bush and John Ashcroft] as an alien army.
They have managed to take over everything, and quite
in the open. We have a deranged president. We have
despotism. We have no due process.

"Authoritarian rule"? "As despotic as anything Hitler came up with"? "An alien army"? Why does any self-respecting publication pay the slightest attention to someone capable of such rantings? *LA Weekly* described Gore Vidal as "one of our most controversial social critics." Alas, he is only one of our most deranged.

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