

Gore Vidal:

An Inventory of His Collection at the Harry Ransom Center

Descriptive Summary

Creator:	Vidal, Gore, 1925-
Title:	Gore Vidal Collection
Dates:	1946-1970
Extent:	3 boxes, 4 galley folders (gf), (1.26 linear feet)
Abstract:	The Gore Vidal Collection contains manuscript works and correspondence written by Vidal, as well as manuscripts for "Conversations with Gore Vidal" by Eugene Walter.
Language:	English
Access:	Open for research

Administrative Information

Acquisition:	Gift and purchases, 1966-1975 (R3069, R3347, R4498, R6198, R6331, R6832)
Processed by:	Michael Ramsey, 2010
Repository:	The University of Texas at Austin, Harry Ransom Center

Biographical Sketch

Gore Vidal was born Eugene Luther Gore Vidal in West Point, New York, on October 3, 1925, to Eugene Luther and Nina Vidal. Vidal shortened his name during his teen years to honor his maternal grandfather. After his parents divorced, Vidal lived with his mother and her new husband in northern Virginia and attended a series of boarding schools.

After graduating from Phillips Exeter Academy in 1943, Vidal joined the U.S. Army Reserve at age 17. Vidal wrote his first novel, *Williwaw* (1946), while in the hospital recovering from hypothermia. After being discharged from the army, Vidal went to work as an editor for E. P. Dutton and published his second novel, *In a Yellow Wood* (1947).

Vidal moved to a small house in Antigua, Guatemala, where he finished his next novel, *The City and the Pillar* (1948), whose homosexual theme was controversial. Many fellow authors praised Vidal's book while several critics and reviewers lambasted the work; the *New York Times* refused to review the work for almost 10 years.

Vidal traveled between Europe and New York for a period, publishing many works that were well received abroad, including *A Search for the King* (1950), *Dark Green, Bright Red* (1950), *The Judgment of Paris* (1952), and *Messiah* (1954). Despite his success abroad, Vidal's work was continuously ignored by the American press.

Vidal started writing mystery novels under the pseudonym of Edgar Box, and the Box novels were generally well received by American readers. Vidal then turned to television as a new medium and would go on to write 20 teledramas. Vidal accepted an offer from MGM to see how movies were made in the old studio system, and whilst in Hollywood wrote screenplays for several films.

Vidal's mother divorced his stepfather, Hugh D. Auchincloss, in the 1940s. Auchincloss remarried to Janet Lee Bouvier, whose daughter Jacqueline moved into Vidal's old room. When Jacqueline married John F. Kennedy later in life, Kennedy was excited to meet his wife's famous literary connection. Vidal's experiences with the backstage workings of the 1960 Democratic National Convention later inspired him to write the screenplay *The Best Man* (1964). After a brief stint in the political world, Vidal moved to Italy to escape the constricting Washington D.C. atmosphere and to work on his latest novel, *Julian* (1964).

Vidal experimented with many types of literary genres, writing works as varied as *Washington D.C.* (1967), the controversial *Myra Breckinridge* (1968), many novels concerning American history, and several satires including *Duluth* (1983).

Vidal has written two volumes of memoirs, *Palimpsest* (1995) and *Point to Point Navigation* (2006). While Vidal has mostly given up writing large novels, he continues to write essays, political speeches, and still makes public speeches.

Sources:

"Gore Vidal." Academy of Achievement, <http://www.achievement.org/autodoc/page/vid0bio-1> (accessed 10 November 2010).

"Gore Vidal." Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gore_vidal (accessed 10 November 2010).

Scope and Contents

The Gore Vidal Collection contains manuscript works and correspondence written by Vidal, as well as manuscripts for "Conversations with Gore Vidal" by Eugene Walter. The collection is arranged in two series: I. Works, 1953-1970, undated; and II. Outgoing Correspondence, 1946-1963. This collection was previously accessible through a card catalog, but has been recataloged as part of a retrospective conversion project.

The Works series is subdivided into two subseries and includes works by Vidal in Subseries A. The works are arranged alphabetically by title and encompass manuscripts and/or proofs for ten works by Vidal, including seven novels, two plays, and one screenplay. Titles represented are *The Best Man*, *The City and the Pillar*, *Death Likes It Hot*, *An Evening with Richard Nixon*, *Julian*, *Messiah*, *Myra Breckinridge*, *Two Sisters*, *Washington D.C.*, and *Weekend*. Subseries B. contains manuscripts and proofs for a single work regarding Vidal, "Conversations with Gore Vidal" by Eugene Walter.

Series II. consists almost entirely of outgoing letters written by Vidal and is arranged alphabetically by recipient name. The major correspondents include Oliver Evans, David Loomis, and Eugene Walter. A single letter from Anaïs Nin to an unidentified recipient praises Vidal's *Williwaw*. All correspondent names are included in the Index of Correspondents in this finding aid.

Related Material

Manuscripts by or about Gore Vidal are included in numerous other collections at the Ransom Center: Joseph Abeles, James Donald Adams, Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., Paul Bowles, Millicent Dillon, Noel Riley Fitch, Peter Glenville, Charles Haldeman, Elizabeth Hardwick, James Jones, Hugh Kenner, John Lehmann, Norman Mailer, Carson McCullers, Michael Mewshaw, James Roose-Evans, Nancy Wilson Ross, Dame Edith Sitwell, C. P. Snow, Gloria Swanson, Parker Tyler, and Tennessee Williams.

The majority of Vidal's manuscripts are held by the Houghton Library at Harvard University.

Series I. Works 1953-1970, undated

Subseries A. By Gore Vidal

The Best Man , signed mimeo screenplay with handwritten corrections, bound, 204 pages, 21 March 1968 **Container**
1.1

The City and the Pillar

Carbon typescript with handwritten corrections, 315 pages, 1965 **Container**
1.2-4

Galley proofs, revised, 80 pages, 1965 **Container** gf 1

Death Likes It Hot , typescript with handwritten corrections, written under pseudonym Edgar Box, 169 pages, undated **Container**
1.5

An Evening with Richard Nixon , mimeo script, 111 pages, undated **Container**
1.6

Julian , galley proofs, 244 pages, 1964 **Container** gf 2

Messiah

Signed handwritten manuscript / fragment, 1 page, 1953 **Container** 2.1

Typed and carbon manuscript with handwritten corrections, 287 pages, 1953 **Container**
2.2-3

Galley proofs, 66 pages, 1965 **Container** gf 3

Myra Breckinridge , typescript with handwritten corrections, 316 pages, 1968; includes note from Helen M. Goldstein **Container**
2.4-6

Two Sisters , page proofs with handwritten corrections, 174 pages, 1970 **Container**
2.7

Washington D.C. , page proofs, 320 pages, 1967 **Container**
2.8-3.1

Weekend : Act One, Scene Two, signed typescript with handwritten revisions, 3 pages, undated **Container**
3.2

Subseries B. Re Gore Vidal

Walter, Eugene. "Conversations with Gore Vidal" (published in the *Transatlantic Review* , 1960)

Vidal, Gore, 1925-

Handwritten manuscript, 54 pages, undated

Container 3.8

Four typescript drafts, three with handwritten corrections (one corrected by Vidal), each 17 or 18 pages, all undated

Galley proofs with handwritten corrections, 5 pages, undated; includes letter from Eyre & Spottiswoode to Eugene Walter, 1960

Container
gf 4

Series II. Outgoing Correspondence, 1946-1963

A-Z	Container 3.3
Evans, Oliver, 15 items, 1951-1963	Container 3.4
Loomis, David, 8 items (including one from Irwin Edman), 1953-1954	Container 3.5
Nin, Anaïs, 1 item (to unidentified recipient re <i>Williwaw</i> by Gore Vidal), May 1946	Container 3.6
Walter, Eugene, 6 items, 1958-1960	Container 3.7

Index of Correspondents

- Evans, Oliver (Oliver Wendell), 1915-1981 --3.4 (15 from Gore Vidal)
- Eyre & Spottiswoode --gf 4 (1 to Eugene Walter)
- Gottlieb, _____ --3.3 (1 from Gore Vidal)
- Loomis, David --3.5 (8 from Gore Vidal)
- Nin, Anaïs, 1903-1977 --3.6 (1 to unidentified recipient)
- Walter, Eugene, 1921-1998 --3.7 (6 from Gore Vidal)
- Wolin, Ron --3.3 (1 from Gore Vidal)