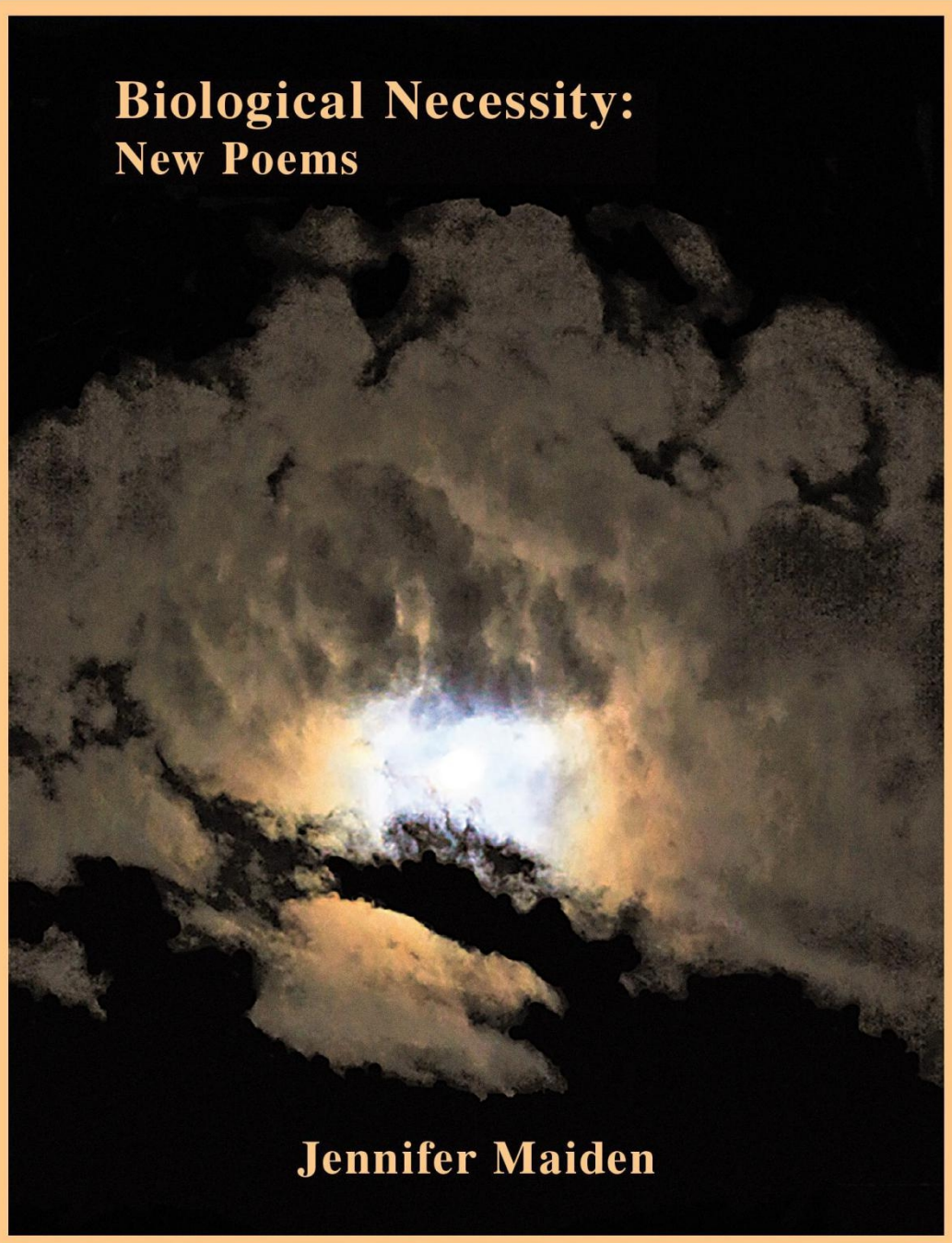


Quemar Press

**Biological Necessity:  
New Poems**



**Jennifer Maiden**



**10 poem Sampler of Jennifer Maiden's collection, *Biological Necessity: New Poems*, published by Quemar Press on 1st January, 2021.**

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## **Diary Poem: Uses of Biological Necessity**

I would tell you I am always a quiet sleeper, but after my last essay, it could have connotations of spying.

For some reason, I have been remembering Melinda saying she'd watched me until morning, and that I slumbered stilly without moving.

Was she surprised that someone so unresting, when awake, could shed agitation easily?

Nye Bevan once said that socialism would eventually be the system that succeeded because it was eventually a biological necessity. I sleep as moveless as the moon.

Last night I had three nightmares, interlocking.

When I told Katharine - although not droning out their narrative - she said it was surprising, as she'd looked in on me and I had slept so calm.

But in my head, the dying were re-dying.

If I would not impose my dreaming on the close-by, would I tell you of it, or are you of such intimacy



I would be too afraid to abuse your welcome?

Bevan also said, supposedly mysteriously that 'the religion of socialism' was really 'the language of priorities', but I think that currently we understand that more clearly. A priority is an act of denial, a spiritual tragedy, defining but redeeming, giving the self clear outlining which allows it to combine: click into safety.

Peace is not an abstract noun when it means not dying or losing biology, and safety remains concrete as a bunker against long suffocating or permanent timidities from delirium.

The essay being over, I have designed the cover of this next book of poetry: not dystopian, as I have no knack for apocalyptic fiction, but the rising moon rosegold in chunky vapour, sumptuous intersecting energy of atoms.

One reviewer, although sensitive and praising, suggested that I might now start to tire:



I'm not sure if meant my work or meant its writer  
would ultimately wilt in need of slumber,  
but I would tell you I am already a quiet sleeper,  
would seem to rest as moveless as the moon.



## **Paper dolls in paper clothes**

I am thinking of paper dolls in paper clothes.

There is now a court sketch of Ghislaine Maxwell in tears having been denied bail. Did she expect bail after years of experience with Intelligence Agencies? Did she trust them, think her father, Epstein, even Stephen Ward, must still be alive somewhere. In the sunlight, plastic surgery?

After the earlier press release confirming she

is being dressed in paper so that there is no possibility of her hanging herself on anything more heavy,

Twitter in particular saw the announcement as a sign she would be Epsteined in the course of time,

George Galloway earlier saying he would be surprised if she suicided, but 'not as surprised as she would be'.

I am thinking of paper dolls in paper clothes.

Celebrities. There are glossy paper booklets for most:

feminist heroes, actors, historical figures, the White House.

Each twitching adolescent she trained like a white mouse



would have been nurtured to desire such cloetry,  
as bright and fragile as paper, as heart-tearingly pretty:  
scarred chorus lines of them. A pedantic avuncular Israeli  
ex-agent makes the point that Ghislaine's father was probably  
not Mossad as such but just worked for Israeli Army  
Intelligence, introduced Ghislaine and Epstein to Ehud Barak,  
but he does not understand why they or the CIA made the mistake  
of re-arresting Epstein, arresting Ghislaine at all there  
since she wasn't living really in America. I wonder whatever  
did they tell her to reassure her, promise her?  
Or does she die of love, but not for Epstein?  
Did Epstein die for love? The New York apartment  
with its spying and recording devices provided by Wexner  
must have been a wonderland if you consider  
espionage as an antiseptic: cleansing the agent from  
sexual inhibitions, everything that comes  
from the impotence of being the youngest daughter  
of a charismatic embezzling press baron, your twin sisters  
making a fortune from cyber networking, a search engine,



but all that is given to you is Jeffrey Epstein.

I am thinking of paper dolls in paper clothes.

I am thinking of Wexner's firm, the underwear Secrets:  
rounded bras and panties like soft dawns or lacy sunsets,  
as if selected for a prince's vision,  
already at Covid distance on their runways, Ghislaine's  
promise to Florida children that even they could become  
such exquisite models if they learned their lesson.

We could digress a little to the Clintons.

Hillary of course hired Ghislaine's nephew Alexander  
to make policy decisions on the Middle East for her  
at the State Department, but Ghislaine's passion  
for Bill was probably genuine, I believe. Is there a gamethink  
where a Republican Intelligence faction, a Netanyahu rump,  
want to embarrass the Democrats, prevent Ehud Barak  
from running for Israeli office? Mossad against the Army?  
Indeed, the sinister CIA paper clothing story  
seemed to have a Democrat finesse. But whatever: Ghislaine  
crouches crying on the video in the courtroom,





the new transparency on the runway is sunset rose,  
and I think of paper dolls in paper clothes.



## **Gore Vidal Woke Again in Belmarsh Prison**

Gore Vidal woke again in Belmarsh prison. Briefly, he had slept re-reading his *History of the National Security State*, which in the barred dawn he'd found on Julian Assange's bed, as if Assange still gripped it sometimes as he once had when being dragged through the street from the Embassy at last. Assange was exhausted, having finally appeared in Court via a video link initially the Prison said that it forgot to organise at all until the Defence objected, so that there was more sickly waiting. Deadly waiting. White was not the colour to describe Assange. His face had a mottled prison chiaroscuro of pale blanket and grey cell floor colours, that cell window, lit as livid. At the same time in Spain, Vidal then recollected, Assange's partner Stella Moris had thoroughly testified about how the CIA-hired Spanish Security outfit had spied on the Embassy with any possible device and planned to kidnap and murder their subject.



At first Vidal had thought her out of her depth, but then aphorised that we only find our depth by being out of it, so sighed and shrugged: 'The English trial continues as a farce - the United States having declared a new Indictment, but not presented it, and its revisions only about you having helped Snowden and Manning, not much of a revelation and any bad bits based on the paid bias of a plea-bargaining Icelandic pedophile', said Vidal. Assange woke up and took the book from him gently. Vidal intended to sound tough, but heard himself whisper, spontaneous with kindness - odd how compassion always lowered his voice - 'I thought it once a biological necessity that your own country deserted you: Gillard wanting to take away your passport, Greste writing you weren't a journalist, re-establishing his credentials by defending a well-packaged eloquent Iranian producer, one easy to showcase for eager literary prizes and festivals. It all seemed



to me as if they were following physical logic:  
we Americans were as powerful as death,  
and there was no reward if they resist. But  
even though like me you are a ghost in a mask  
of imprisoned skin, the festival of spirits  
does a wayward dance, biology not as tragic  
or the State as secure as at first.' Assange's shrewd gaze  
acknowledged the thirst to give hope, but also hoped  
there was some truth in it, conceded, 'I am alive', as if  
somewhere he had children, friends, and Stella Moris  
was finding her depth in billowing Spanish justice.



## **Purgatory**

It is not in itself evil.

It is the shape of evil,

that we have come to associate with evil:

coronal,

as in the Crown of Thorns starfish that will

devour coral.

It is covered with little

flowerets to harpoon the living T cells

of mammals, swarming to the most vulnerable

body parts like blood vessels,

until their organs fail.

In the air, some metaphoric scientist did once call

it 'in purgatory', neither in heaven or hell,

life or death. It is in its own microcosmal

trance, its floating puffball freedom, aerosol

bondage to the currents but the purgatorial

prongs can penetrate the invisible holes



in a mask up to three layers. Biological  
necessity gives it a force like gravity, all  
designed to break down the cell wall  
and replicate itself like a miracle,  
a flock flying through the blood. Royal  
objects have that strange ambivalent thrall:  
the crown, the mace, the orb that I recall  
from a picture book in childhood: the jewels,  
and the shape I still find most tantalisingly whole:  
the round orb balanced in the hand like a world,  
a ball of flames, the sun, under the footfall  
of a fear lion, or in a queen's imperial  
display, as confident as a peacock's tail,  
and as glowing as a crown about to fall.  
As Silkin said about moss and its mossy details:  
'you cannot speak of misery to it'. 'Ubique' entails,  
as in the motto of the Foreign Relations Council,  
a billowing oblivion. It has buds: little, with necks like coral,  
floats unconscious of its own hunger, anchor-orbed, floral



with that innocence in all spores, all the viral:

still,

and in itself, not evil.



***George Jeffreys: 28:***

## **George Jeffreys Woke Up in Isolation**

George Jeffreys woke up in isolation in a hotel in Darling Harbour.

It was second week of their Covid quarantine, and Clare and the three-year-old Corbyn were splashing in the shower with a view over moon-cleansed Sydney, where the glitter seemed hysterical with, he thought, mild cabin-fever.

In a week, they'd stay again at the house of Clare's mother in Mt Druitt, but he wasn't unhappy here. Or anywhere, he realized, these days, as he felt internally quieter.

In the glass wall-window he could see a quarter of Sydney, with Clare and Corbyn superimposed over, like a Renoir mother and child in wispery at a river, the garments being stray fluorescent fog. *I am her lover:* part of his tranquility was to choose his diction sharper, and to be excited by it, and the designation 'partner' was not as sustaining as the intimate one. However, she had pointed out that a 'partner' could be a dancer,





and the reflection of her stretching up in the water  
made him touch the prised ice of the window picture  
as if holding her up lightly, she coming there. Syria -  
where they had just again been - was not turning vaguer  
in their memories: the Kurds bargaining again with America  
with oil neither owned, the various Jihadis in departure  
either home to ignite Western Cities, undermine China,  
or work for Turkey in denuded Libya, but one chessmaster,  
Russia, exasperating all with moderation, was the winner -  
at least as long as it cared, George reflected in the harbour  
mirror. Clare and Corbyn - both petite - were using one huge  
cloudy hotel towel to dry themselves. Clare was in anger  
at new U.S. sanctions against Syria, and so her fingers  
were consequently deliberately softer: she would never  
let herself confuse one arena with another. Would she be forever  
without spontaneity, sometimes she would ponder,  
if it hadn't been for George's provocations? He fixed supper.  
She knew he had been unsettled by a review of his last memoir,  
in which the critic stated Clare grew but not George. She'd reassure



him about that later, she promised the harbour, that had steamed over  
as if the world did not exist, children confused with hunger  
who still wondered if politeness would mean some sort of dinner  
not the wrench around of the screw in their Covid horror. Clare  
who had used soap that dissolved like Damascus jasmine, but sweeter,  
dried Corbyn's hair  
with the last dry bit of towel, and incarnated to savour  
olive oil and spice-rich smells from their double burner.



## **A somewhat consistent rule**

('One of my motivations for working on these cases was that the U.S. drone campaign appeared to be horribly mismanaged and was resulting in paid informants giving false information about innocent people who were then killed in strikes. For example, when I shared the podium with Imran Khan at a "jirga" with the victims of drone strikes, I said in my public remarks that the room probably contained one or two people in the pay of the CIA. What I never guessed was that not only was this true but that the informant would later make a false statement about a teenager who attended the jirga such that he and his cousin were killed in a drone strike three days later... There is a somewhat consistent rule that can be seen at work here: it is, of course, much safer for any informant to make a statement about someone who is a "nobody", than someone who is genuinely dangerous.' - *Lawyer Clive Stafford Smith, founder of Reprieve - originally established to oppose the death penalty - and then to oppose torture, illicit detention and extraordinary rendition - testifying to the life-saving value of the exposing Wikileaks cables, at Julian Assange's Old Bailey Hearing, 9th September, 2020*)

Gore Vidal woke up in the Old Bailey.

As often the world returned to him in bits,

as garish and symbolic as postage stamps,

but he was focused by the words of Stafford Smith:

about the boy at the meeting protesting drone strikes:

who was no doubt concerned, civic-souled and mild:

not dangerous enough to live, poor child.

Vidal remembered certain intelligence agents were said

to lament Assange becoming known on TV



before they could kill him first conveniently.

When someone says that one is not a threat,  
how much of a threat is that supposed to be?

Vidal saw another part of the postal display:

a magistrate showing her luxuries of scorn

at the defence, like something out of porn

he would still quite like to write. Somewhere on the net,

in a Wikispooks photo she held a champagne glass

poised at an exhibition, virginal with joy:

a living dual passport, with the innocence of a boy

trusting that power is too dangerous to die.

She had rescinded permission for every Human Rights

outfit to observe this Hearing by remote,

declaring they would be beyond her 'control'. But

as Stafford Smith said, 'somewhat consistent rule',

from nowhere the slowly-integrating Vidal

had arrived in the public gallery, unreal

as justice, and innocently, awkwardly, he

returned her gaze: a somewhat final mystery.



## Diary Poem: Uses of Indigo

It is a luscious concept, the cross between violet and blue,  
the depths and disparities, de-solutions, dissolutions of the hue,  
asserting its own secrecies and shadow. I am thinking about indigo,  
there is something in it about the subconscious compulsion to allow  
rhyme into sleep's hinterland. My cousin in an email reminded me  
that my nineteenth century great-grandfather created indigo dye  
from plants, in India, manufactured it and carpets, traded on the sea  
in his own ships. He once fought for the British in the Indian mutiny  
but there is an indigo-profound trajectory away from all that, too.  
Finally a monstrous typhoon from the indigo Bengal Bay  
sank all his ships, killed his English wife and children.  
In Australia, he had her fair fine hair as his watchchain.  
After the typhoon in the bay he staunchly married again:  
my great-grandmother, whose blood was Indian.  
He named his second family after the first ones,  
in various ways: my grandfather was James Scrimmes  
Borthwick Maiden. His father's first wife was Betsy Scrimmes, my



great-grandmother Emma Borthwick. Her family's Indian names  
on the early certificates are phoneticised strangely,

with one called 'Niger' - some form of Nagar - little town?

There is again the merging indigo all his own.

My family has a history of depressions, resurrections  
a merging indigo bay of them. It has taken me a time  
to return today to the topic of Assange.

Craig Murray's blog recounting the Old Bailey  
proceedings does not go into the details of his condition,  
but the Herald declares them shamelessly:

indigo suicide intentions, palpable hallucinations,  
by an aspiring journalist who really doesn't like him.

The prosecution suggests if they were genuine,  
he wouldn't have been able to survive with efficacy -  
expose things like Collateral Murder's audio -  
ignores that survival is a characteristic of depression,  
until the indigo overwhelms, blends true,  
the inner and the outer howling through,  
indistinguishable from the twilight in the bay.



## After the Volcano

Preparing to read Martin Johnston's  
*Central American Football* poem at a Zoom Memorial for him,  
I think of the reference to Malcolm Lowry: 'what a time  
to be reading Malcolm Lowry', and my brain  
flits back to workshops in which Latin American women  
had been traumatised by things like Pinochet but also eruption  
of real volcanoes, that combination of political persecution,  
torture and torture by fire's natural concatenation.  
in Lowry's *Under the Volcano*, the Consul's alcohol addiction  
is partly a metaphor for the igneous self-destruction  
of the Western Empire, the inhabitants discarding him  
when dead down a slope to contemptuous oblivion.  
In my recent essay on misuse of conservatism,  
I see Johnston as one of the left-wing artist victims  
of political subtle despair, internalised addiction  
as a form of controlling artists. In *Central American  
Football*, frighteningly, 'the patient chac-mool grins



in the next gallery', linking the ancient football games,  
they often lethal, sometimes sacrificial, to the form  
relaxed in stone with the pot on its stomach offering  
a sacrifice to the gods, sometimes just bakery or corn,  
sometimes the heart or blood of a sacrificed person.

Indeed, the football was gladiatorial sometimes,  
and so the poem does finish on the heart. Bolivian  
politics are post-volcanic, one hopes, not digressing,  
but their election is very soon and may overcome  
the recent Pinochet-style coup against them.

I am a sounding board for my daughter's translation  
of letters between Bolívar and Sáenz that burn.

Johnston may have been thinking of all Latin American  
blood sacrifices, like that of Allende, at his writing time.

Chac-mools were not revered at the back of the building.

They were placed between the priests and the congregation.

In Latin American spirit, of Lowry, or indeed Johnston,

I can store on them new maize for the god of rain.





## Clare Collins Woke Up in Mt Druitt

Clare Collins woke up in Mount Druitt in her mother's house, with George napping next to her too quietly for senility, unless he had died, and the sounds of her mother and baby Corbyn in the lounge room watching their favourite series, *Turn the Screw Softly*, a sitcom pirated by her mother and still set in a women's prison, which no one ever left, as Clare had remarked to George earlier, 'not even the screws'. Corbyn with his beautiful tact laughed a second after Coral. He enjoyed reinforcing any sort of happiness, especially that of his puzzling grandmother and was always well-intentioned, sensitive and moral, thought Clare. She thought that she could remember being like that, too, when three like him, but she didn't think Corbyn would ever suffer her own mute rigid explosion into murder, that strange mingling of empathies and jealousies, efficient acceptance of failure. It was now late October,



and she and George were resting, unable to travel overseas because of Covid restrictions and because they were unfathomably weary, angry, wanted home. She was neatly arranging Libyan and Syrian refugees in and out of their quarantines on the phone.

Their main terror wasn't ASIO but the many brands of ISIS western governments had sponsored and who had been evacuated to western cities, still slaughtering the occasional teacher or artist they considered infidel, and still a threat always to those genuinely in exile. The Jihadis had just sliced the head off a Paris history teacher, and Clare knew the refugees needed extra care,

knew that innate panic

crossed all oceans and borders with the suddenness of fire.

George was sleeping in a foetal position she considered sexy, since he still curled firmly around her dreamt body.

He had been awake in the watches of the night as Donald Trump had called him once again for advice, or maybe just practical gruff sympathy, as they



agreed on almost nothing, except that George was anti-global, and that troops should be withdrawn from everywhere.

Clare asked, 'Where is he this time?'

George scrutinised the laptop:

'It seems to be a golf course in Wisconsin. He's still sweaty after a campaign rally, but at least he's got a mask.' Trump seemed to hear and see that: 'I only take it off if I can't breathe, George.' Clare had wrapped herself up in the doona. Trump nodded politely in her direction. Again, she was surprised by the soft diffident boyish tenor of his voice. George asked, 'How did the rally go?' 'Great. They sang and I danced. I didn't feel that I was going to win, but I didn't feel that last time, either, as you know. Are you still angry about the way that I assassinated Soleimani? You know it wasn't really because he insulted me on Twitter. But I needed Adelson's campaign funding and this way we'll be chucked out of the Middle East at last.

It's chess.'

Clare muttered, 'as directed by Ingmar Bergman', but



George insisted tiredly, 'He was your best champion to fight the Jihadis that Obama funded.

You are playing chess too much against the truth.' In Clare's drowsing brain the truth on the other side of the chessboard blended into a skull in a monk's cowl, but George had woken up and laughed.

Trump liked that: male laughter. He had been happy at the military academy. There was something

sort of soldierly

about George, but more so about his partner, whom

Trump thought of as the silver-blond in the blanket.

She was quite a scary little thing. Trump asked: 'George on election night will you still be there and watching?

I'll skype you if I can sometimes as the states come in.'

Behind him, the nurtured turf of emerald Wisconsin

lay too groomed to quiver in a healthy autumn breeze.

George had grinned, 'Yes. Keep in touch.

I'm staying at the best

place to be skyped the world's future again.'



Now Clare this morning  
drifted her small fingers across his waking head. She said,  
'Put on your mask and we'll take Corbyn shopping - as the child  
will love the masks as much as the outing: and indeed,  
like all innocents, thinks masks are a great game.'



## **The Razorblade**

Gore Vidal woke up back in Belmarsh. All else there were subdued still because of the suicide of Manoel Santos, a gay from Brazil who had lived two decades British, and who was terrified of his family's violence: too frightened to go back, and of the sour prison.

He'd a strong singing voice, a tenor, helped Assange translate Portuguese correspondence but could not face deportation and could not bargain with death's bureaucrats one more time. Julian Assange was still missing him, and the presence of one suicide always coaxes another. Everyone was remembering the razorblade Assange once smuggled into the cell, and which the prosecution had tried to minimise in court so often. However, Vidal had returned with his particular laconic and arid anxiety because of his concern that the trajectory of Trump, whether second



term or interim, would give Julian too much hope of a quite unlikely pardon, that the disappointment would destroy him, since the only trade-off for pardon was still the identity of Seth Rich as the informer on the Democrats, not a Russian. Since the Democratic Washington gang that paid a democratic Washington gang to shoot the boyish Seth was also, speculated Vidal, a current threat to Trump, there was probably more of a balance for the President if Assange decay on ice. Fortunately what deported Assange back to breath was his interest in others' political intrigues, and so they sat in the soulless roomlet, discussing the nature of a U.S. Supreme Court, 'Which',

Vidal laughed

'is becoming increasingly Borgia', and whether 'by the time Trump's electoral appeal arrives there there will have already been enough hand counts,

hand-jobs again



and dutiful Republican governors to up-end it, when  
by then it could be President-Elect Harris,

sweet God help us,

and soon-to-be Secretary of State Susan Rice,

who has supported every imbecilic invasion

that your truth-telling exposed, my dear Montaigne.'

Vidal's mirth was as tempting as a razor.

Assange left hope, and argued back his life.

