

# Motive and Opportunity

SAMPLER

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Paul Vangelisti

MOTIVE AND  
OPPORTUNITY

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Shearsman Books

First published in the United Kingdom in 2020 by  
Shearsman Books Ltd  
PO Box 4239  
Swindon  
SN3 9FN

Shearsman Books Ltd Registered Office  
30–31 St. James Place, Mangotsfield, Bristol BS16 9JB  
(*this address not for correspondence*)

[www.shearsman.com](http://www.shearsman.com)

ISBN 978-1-84861-715-5

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# DRIVING PLATITUDES

“A rather open scrawl while one’s eyes are fixed on the road  
is the only trick to be mastered.”

—Ed Dorn, *Hello, La Jolla*

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1.

A sliver of a moon given way to gibbous.  
The blue hour leaves dusk with a tinge of ending.

And, of course, a labyrinth with a bad boy  
at its center and the ungodly habit

of consuming uninvited and invited guests.  
What in the puzzle relishing a traveler's flesh,

what half – queen or anointed bull – enforces  
this contorted way to offending knowledge?

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2.

And not *labrum* but *librum*, 'from the bark  
of a tree,' a melody certainly other.

Poetry now an eccentricity to what  
accompanies the maintenance of empire.

And the *mot juste*, the clarity that  
people were censored, exiled, imprisoned,

flayed alive even and dismembered for.  
And the cosmos, Dennis, streaming west

on Beverly behind the windshield.

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3.

And in this world a furled shadow  
sublime, beckoning in obscurity.

There's no message. The message is that  
love too would eat the red wheelbarrow.

A membrane of text between us, scant,  
irreparable maybe, with your name on it.

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4.

Potentiality: that bald soprano of our immigrant  
upbringing. *Our* – in the sense of continuity,

sisters and brothers of willing catastrophe.  
Strictly from hunger, in those raw collages

of the streets. Unrelenting we've become  
for the right word, or just plain lost

in the anagrams of such desiring?

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5.

A difficult harmony to build a song on  
sung in a decidedly minor key.

Does a minotaur rise like an ill-translated miner  
from the dankest earth? Does he too dream

of wealth buried deep within a body?

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6.

Our lesser half rises early enough  
with morning light to dispel the nightly dread.

A kind of fussiness – *spell, dispel* –  
bracketing the story of how  
that Depression-era Mouse  
perched on Disney's shoulder  
in the margin of a dictionary.

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7.

We were expecting rain and instead –  
O small wind, O tepid light –

a mostly pleasurable afternoon,  
cloud and lingering smog on the horizon.

The 'will to change' (Olson's words)  
less willful, more mechanical daily.

Depending on the lives of those who risk  
living in that quiet way. Curious,

my beauties, the angels we're becoming

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8.

Now after the rain our city shines  
like no other with the hope of beginning.  
Here spring has sprung no matter what time of year  
and breezy overture to an always

unfinished melodrama. May we too shine  
as March in this illustrious wind.

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9.

Even with everything east on Beverly, west  
on Beverly, despite a drought at the heart

of singing. The air heavy with harmonies  
of sex, spring tides on heavy sand,

woodpecker's rat-tat-tat, hawk's wheeling plaint  
above the arroyo. Here we are *home again*,

*home again, jiggedy-jig*, as Bob liked to say,  
every time we crested the hill and rolled down

the other side of Cerro Gordo.

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10.

Come, traveler, lay back in your armchair  
with the faintest of melodies and

missing words. Cradle the book  
on your left, puzzling the rise and fall

and who may hear simple phrases  
and sometimes facts lingering in the tweak

of a dusky breeze on the hillside.  
The moon returns underwater

rising to you in greeny choruses,  
bubbly labyrinth, a boy at its core.

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