

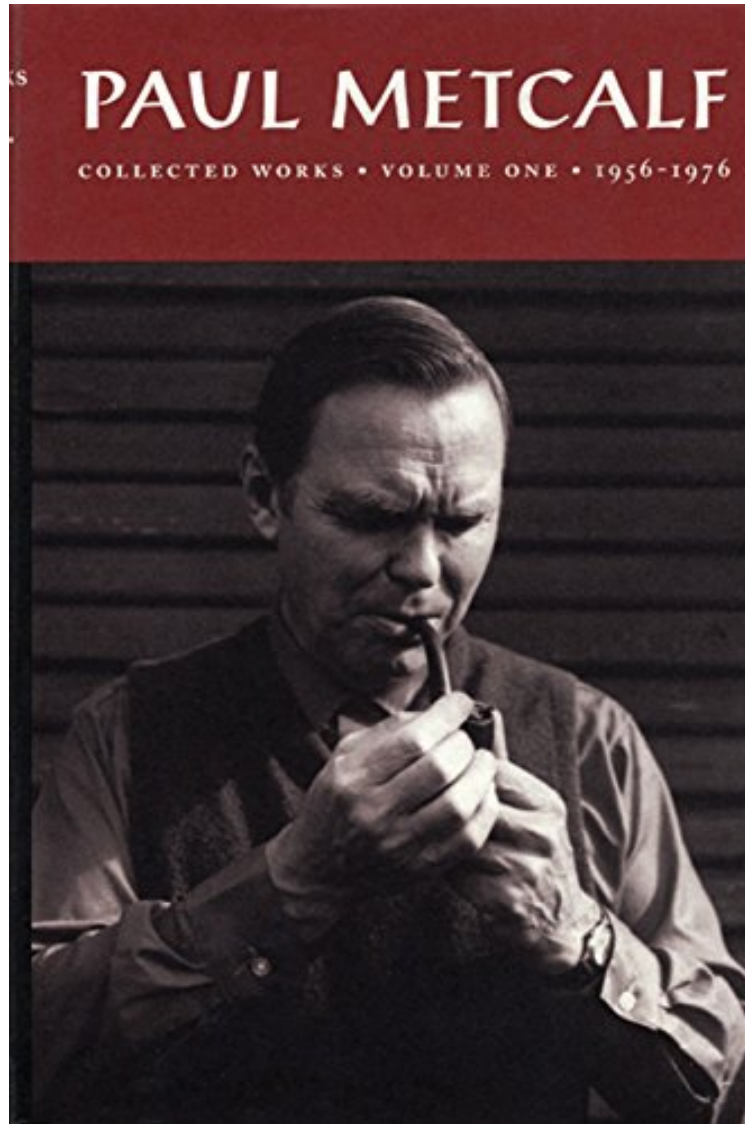
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*Paul Metcalf*

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## **Paul Metcalf: Collected Works, Volume I: 1956-1976**

**Paul Metcalf : Paul Metcalf: Collected Works, Volume I: 1956-1976** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Paul Metcalf: Collected Works, Volume I: 1956-1976:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Amazing PerspectivesBy AmazedbylifeAmong the many treasures in this collection, the novella "Middle Passage" and the novel "Genoa" are truly consciousness-expanding. Metcalf executes to perfection an extremely difficult creative methodology: analogizing where analogies seem impossible, doing so without the least hint of pedantry, and writing and assembling in a way that reaches deep into the reader's emotions. He was "sampling" the way rappers sample years before they did, and far more brilliantly. You don't have to

like "Moby Dick" (I don't) to appreciate Metcalf's obsession with that novel. "Moby Dick" isn't the point of his writing, just the fuel he burns to burn extremely brightly. Well worth buying and rereading. The physical book itself is also beautifully made and an old-fashioned joy to the touch. 4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Americana or How to Catch a Condor By Mary E. Sibley Paul Metcalf has been published by small presses. His work is now collected in three volumes in the Coffee House Press. This is volume one. The works are arranged in chronological order. The book is Whitmanesque in the sense that it is so American, so filled with American people and American geography. The first part is WILL WEST about a Cherokee ball player. Will West goes to his mother to tell her he has quit the ball team and that he has killed a woman. She gives him the money he has sent to her to escape punishment. This work and the others in the volume consists of both poetry and prose. The story moves from Will and his traveling with a truck driver named Ferd to the Civil War and De Soto the Spanish explorer. The work GENOA follows. We are in the city of Indianapolis, Crawford County. In the past Indiana was probably a rank lush swamp. Metcalf cites and quotes the works and biography of his ancestor, Herman Melville. The narrator's brother Carl died in the electric chair.

Michael Mills is a nonpracticing physician, a house husband. This work, as is the case with the previous one and others in this volume, has a mixed media feel to it, something virtually homespun. The work of Metcalf, as Melville's, is filled with medical lore, sea lore, scientific lore, and explorers' tales. Carl Mills went to Alaska, to Spain to fight with the Loyalists, to China to participate in World War II in the RAF where he was put into a Japanese POW camp and tortured. The history of Christopher Columbus is used in GENOA. Columbus and Melville were both men of vision. Carl ended up in St. Louis at the center of things. The narrator visited him and found him reading THE CONFIDENCE MAN. Carl said later in a mental hospital quoting that work that a sick philosopher is incurable. A portion on Theodore Dreiser reminds me of USA, John Dos Passos. The crime resulting in the execution is a combination of fiction and history. GENOA and the latter sections in the volume have bibliographies. GENOA, in the collage-like use of materials, resembles EXECUTIONER'S SONG and leaves the reader with the same sadness. PATAGONI is the third work of the collection. As indicated by the title it is a derivation of the place name Patagonia. We visit the world presented to explorers of the and the Andes. Henry Ford is a character in PATAGONI. The work owes a nod to William Carlos Williams, mentioned, and his poem PATERSON. Sialia is Indian for bluebird, the name of Ford's yacht. The next section is the MIDDLE PASSAGE, and the final one is called APALACHE. They concern for the most part and in great detail North America. An exception is a wonderful treatment of the Luddite Riots. In terms of time one moves from geological pre-human history through Eric the Red and Roger Williams and Blackstone, dissenters from the Massachusetts Bay Colony, to the Civil Rights Movement. Paul Metcalf is a master of his craft. Where have I been, I ask myself, to have not encountered his work earlier.

The first of three comprehensive volumes to present the lifetime work of Paul Metcalf, one of the Black Mountain Writers.

From Publishers Weekly Perhaps it is the fate of voices in advance of their time? think of Whitman, Poe, Dickinson, Dreiser, Melville? to be lost in their own. Such is the case with Metcalf? significantly enough, a great-grandson of the author of Moby-Dick? a man now in his 80s living quietly in Massachusetts. Although long admired by poets and by prose experimenters like Guy Davenport and William Gass, Metcalf has been published only in small editions and chapbooks by some very small presses. This first volume in a three-volume effort from Coffee House promises to give a lifetime's innovative work wider exposure and a shot at the posterity it deserves. Metcalf's range of experimentation is vast. "Will West" is a precocious piece documenting the loves and travails of a Cherokee southpaw pitcher who hits the American road. "Genoa" is a spectacular confrontation with Melville's work, the journals of Columbus and molecular biology? all folded into a hallucinatory narrative about two brothers and their different paths through the American century. "Patagoni," "Apalache" and "The Middle Passage" round out the volume, each in its own way breaking new ground. Metcalf has a style all his own, constantly and restlessly renewing itself, utilizing primary source material, poetry, musical notation and straight narrative. His seems a writing career that, perhaps, needed a certain obscurity in order to remain so boldly adventurous, very much in the manner of Melville. Both explorer and archivist, Metcalf maps an invaluable literary landscape, unrestrained by any form or geography. At last, it is open to the general public. Copyright 1996 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal Take obsessions with Melville, a physician on the outskirts of sanity, the struggle to comprehend a brother's crippling disease, Henry Ford, Coca-Cola, and the Incas in Peru, explorers' logs, historical geography, Edward Ludd, the slave trade, and any number of documentary sources that illustrate the same, and one begins to approach the method of Paul Metcalf. The work is, quite simply, impossible to paraphrase. Yes, it looks like poetry, and yes, it looks like prose. But neither category's convenience goes so far as to explain its force. Whatever history "was" is made available through a tapestry of narratives collected from multiple sources and arranged in such a way that they cohere in the present day. The publication of Metcalf's Collected Works? and this is at least one thing it is possible to say coherently? is nothing less than an event one hopes library selectors will not be the only ones to notice.? Steven R. Ellis, Pennsylvania State Univ. Libs., Univ. Park Copyright 1996 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Booklist Who is Paul Metcalf, and why are his

collected works being published in three hefty volumes? According to Guy Davenport, who wrote this installment's introduction, Metcalf is an "intensely imaginative" writer. He compares Metcalf's unique collaging of literary styles to the music of Charles Ives, and this comparison extends to Metcalf's subject matter as well as his use of different voices in complex, sometimes dissonant, but always powerfully effective combinations. The great-grandson of Herman Melville and the last of the Black Mountain writers, Metcalf possesses a passionate and dramatic sense of American history. This is particularly evident in *Will West*, the story of a Native American baseball player, and *Genoa*, an intriguing tale that embraces several time frames and involves the relationship between two brothers. Metcalf is mercurial, shifting from inner monologues to action and dialogue, from fiction to poetry, history, and extended quotes. He has worked within a deep zone of privacy and artistic integrity. It is now time to make his work available. Donna

Seaman