

The background of the entire page is a painting of a rural landscape. It features rolling hills in shades of yellow and brown. In the foreground, there are several bare, dark trees. In the distance, a small house with a dark roof is visible on a hill. The sky is a pale blue with some white clouds. The overall style is soft and painterly.

called  
home

paul m.



fog on the bridge  
this small truck  
for all our belongings



# called home

paul m.



A Soffietto Book

## called home

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Some of these poems have previously appeared, occasionally in a slightly altered form, in *Acorn*, *ant ant ant ant ant*, *Frogpond*, *Hermitage*, *The Heron's Nest*, *Mariposa*, *Modern Haiku*, and *tinywords.com*.

All my love to my wife Mary Catharine for her continued support, and gratitude to the fellow poets with whom I have had the exceptional fortune to associate.

Cover Painting: *Campbell Country Hill Farm*, 1933.  
Harlan Hubbard, Oil on canvas, 22" x 27.125"  
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## Introduction

In selecting poems for this collection, I was reminded of my nomadic existence these past few years as I shuttled back and forth between California and New England while changing residences and employment. Because of their focus on the moment, and a spatial requirement for only the most relevant information, haiku are a telling record of our daily participation with the world. Yet these little poems are more than mere calendar entries, because it is their emphasis on daily details—details that have no inherent meaning except that which we give them—that tell of our truest interior emotions.

The playwright Arthur Miller once wrote, commenting on a cornstalk's shadow, that it represented more than just itself, but also “the time of day, the position of the earth and sun, the size of our planet and its shape, and perhaps even the length of its life and ours among the stars.”

If this is true, it lays a tremendous burden upon language, for it implies a complete world order from the merest of words. Haiku appear to offer the most meager of objects doing the meanest of things; yet it is in those merest of words that we find what Robert Spiess described as, “creation taking place at every moment.” But accessing a haiku is not an easy task. The Japanese master Ogiwara Seisensui called them unfinished poems because they require a reader to complete them. To be a reader of haiku is to be a willing participant. It requires the faith to step into the cornfield; to pause on a slope with a plant called footsteps-of-spring; and to be willing to look for oneself in a daffodil shoot. Haiku are poems of immersion.

Despite haiku’s Japanese origins, the poems in this collection are strictly American. These are poems of my first forty years in California and of New England where I hope to make my home for another forty. The concept of home is nearly indefinable I have discovered. It



is not so simple as four walls and a mortgage since I have also found it in a Narragansett seashell, the petals of a oft-seen but unnamed flower, and the breeze that climbs the cliffs of Land's End in San Francisco. Perhaps our truest home is the emotional state that connects us to these vital details, an emotional state that cannot be defined intellectually but only felt in the moment, the now of its happening . . . a moment in which lichen on a stone wall has the same emotional weight as a loved one's hand . . . something only poetry can capture.

*paul m.*  
*Bristol, RI*



called home



## CALIFORNIA

*There comes a breath of wind, cooled by the  
snow on higher swells of the Sierras, which can  
be seen from the western edge of the grove;—  
why will not the old patriarch take advantage  
of that ripple through his leaves and whisper  
to me his age?*

—Thomas Starr King

gathering clouds—  
the creek's source  
further up this valley

summer sky  
one log then another  
to cross the river

no one to tell  
the alpine sky heavy  
with thunderclouds

a wedge of river silt  
pushed into the lake . . .  
at peace with it



glacier climb  
the last nectarines  
from a summit pack

saw-tooth peaks—  
leave my body  
to wild dogs

as if  
it had split the boulder  
pine seedling

what my words can't explain—  
the autumn sun  
on your back

rushing creek  
this flat rock  
grows uncomfortable

after washing  
off the dust  
the lake again

tug of her hand  
a spring so small  
you could miss it

murmuring creek  
why the dragonfly  
goes where it goes

chance of showers  
a frayed rope  
linking the mules

this thick coat  
the gravestone  
of a heartless man

drifting seed fluff . . .  
the rented horse  
knows an hour's worth

alone on the trail  
the dry gorge  
that was Budd Creek



lizard sunning itself  
this side  
of the waterfall

spring moon  
a squirrel changes trees  
without touching the ground

tracking a dragonfly . . .  
river stones  
deeper than they look

tall summer reeds  
not a word said  
about the river

afternoon sun  
on sweet blackberries  
artillery ruins

sacred mountain  
flowers along the trail  
named footsteps-of-spring

first blossoms  
my cell phone  
set to vibrate

piercing cold—  
the old dog  
lets me carry her

among the graves  
of strangers  
forsythia

a wasp nest  
out of reach of the hose  
autumn begins

cherry blossoms  
today the courage  
to speak to her

deep winter  
stars between the stars  
I know



winter parting . . .  
the man in the moon  
still eludes me

talk of rain—  
I find myself  
in the old neighborhood

autumn heat  
my mother's  
side of town

dwindling light  
my childhood home  
a parking lot

explaining it,  
my life sounds frivolous—  
holly berries

all its leaves fallen  
a tree we were  
forbidden to climb

coffee berries  
the conversation turns  
to another ill friend

last warm days  
the discarded skin  
of a praying mantis

warring countries  
separated  
in the botanical garden

neither apologizing—  
the rock garden  
in rain

winter light  
a cactus wren stays  
one bush ahead

earthquake weather  
the pliant body  
of a sea cucumber



spring sky  
only the whale's breach  
is seen

grunion run  
the distant lights  
of crowded bars

migrating whales  
all our footprints  
wash away

winter dusk  
no pattern  
to the whitecaps

spring foghorn . . .  
cormorants spilling  
from an over-crowded ledge

the car packed  
one last pebble  
cast into the sea

high-desert frost  
a dog in the next car  
eyes ours

California behind us . . .  
my feet hang off the edge  
of the motel bed

winter hills—  
what the truck's insurance  
doesn't cover

laundromat  
selling unclaimed clothes  
prairie fog

migrating geese . . .  
the moon's features  
to the unaided eye

canyon sunrise  
stopping just long enough  
to fill the tank



orderly fields  
of an Amish farm  
the things I can't tell her

migratory ducks  
I have never  
kept a diary



## NEW ENGLAND

*In the woods . . . a man casts off his years, as a  
snake his slough, and at what period soever of  
life is always a child*

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

unpacking a new home—  
do whales strand themselves  
in this bay?

meeting the neighbors  
the shapes of things  
hidden by snow

winter sky  
sketching the trees  
with a thin lead

waiting for the heron  
to turn my way—  
winter rain

last night's snow  
not quite enough  
she says again

spring snow  
the pictures straightened  
once more

new home  
our footsteps find the grass  
beneath the snow



the house blessed . . .  
not expecting to find  
wood anemones

spring breeze  
my father-in-law finds fault  
with the house

daffodil shoots—  
all these years  
as an accountant

spring tide  
recognizing a seal  
by its scar

under an ancient elm,  
the abandoned eggs  
of a swan pair

spring thaw  
a stone wall luminous  
with map lichen

expanding universe  
a vine as thick as my arm  
cut at the root

late spring walk  
flattened grass  
where the ewe was sheared

spring rain  
a detention pond  
built by the WPA

home for the weekend  
a water lily's root  
trailing out of sight

a yearling  
inching into the field  
woodland shadow

old stone wall  
a single spider strand  
closes the gap



rustling cattails  
seminarians waiting  
for a grebe to surface

gone now  
the peonies that seeded these  
Independence Day

rustling leaves  
all the arrowheads  
found years ago

letter from overseas  
the call of southbound geese  
penetrates the thicket

evening shadows  
not all spiders  
get carried outside

farm gate  
locked for another hour  
robins overturning leaves

corn maze  
a cricket escapes  
from between my hands

hay rolled into bales  
the spacing of my steps  
returning home

early to the mountain  
bores in pine bark  
from a sapsucker

burn-area saplings . . .  
convincing myself  
this climb means something

a woodpecker  
keeps the tree between us—  
missing you

late summer shower  
blueberries poached  
from the mountaintop



summit-poem written  
a web I missed  
hiking up

flurries . . .  
the maple tree's scar  
from last year's sugaring

long afternoon  
a loon chick  
on its mother's back

tomorrow I leave  
cones high  
in the old pine

three day blow  
loons shake out their wings  
before a dive

gone to bed angry  
the din  
of summer insects

parting from my wife . . .  
I will not see  
the first leaves fall

on the road again  
the trees full  
of caterpillar tents

miles from home . . .  
the shared roots  
of redwood trees

staying with friends . . .  
a silverfish  
where the walls meet

a sick friend  
the ocean's other bank  
beyond my sight

unemployed  
the uneven edge  
of a quahog shell



almost dusk  
an open door  
to the lighthouse

winter nears  
a beach full of shells  
no two the same

winter whitecaps  
a piece of sea glass  
not quite finished

snow outside  
everyone else rises  
to receive the host

we rush through space  
a blackbird's call  
from across the marsh

schoolyard snow  
all the bullies  
I have known

separated again . . .  
the green flash  
at sunset

a low place flooded  
all my letters  
begin the same

weights reset  
in the grandfather clock  
morning snow

bundled up  
with my beliefs  
I cross the pond

moving the cow  
closer to baby Jesus  
yesterday's snow

the tree still draws water  
a calendar  
declaring a new year



mid-morning  
and the snow is melting . . .  
her thinness

winter light  
flour, sugar, and the canister  
that held dog biscuits

scattered leaves  
what I will  
leave behind

*Footprints break snow crust into icy puddles. A line of fox tracks crosses the path; a single chickadee. Rivulets form at the edges of the snow patches, joining to branch and twist in slow moving streams around the bare maple trees. These tiny streams are everywhere. At the log bridge I regard the rush of icy water that has gathered beneath. Just beyond the thicket's edge I can hear the crash of the sea as it breaks upon the pebbly shore. That such lightness could have such potential! If I belonged to a school of poetry I would wish it to celebrate the attributes of snowmelt.*



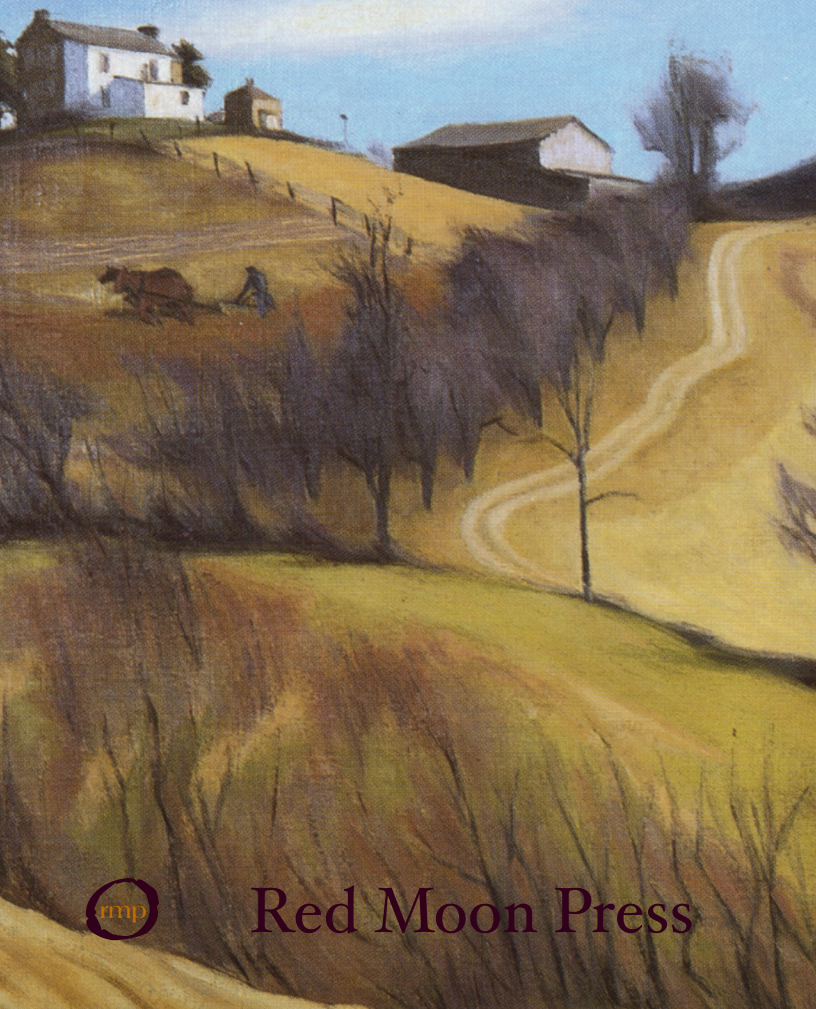
paul m. is the pseudonym for Paul Miller, an award-winning poet whose poetry and essays have been published internationally, anthologized, and translated.

veiled moon  
after eight generations  
I return to these woods



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