



DONALD L. EMBLEN

There Are Sea Gulls on Our Lawn

AND LATER POEMS

EXTREMES AND MODERATIONS:
EARLY SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA POETRY

A TEXT-TECH PAPERS PROJECT

Extremes and Moderations

Early Southern California Poetry

Extremes and Moderations is a Text-Tech Papers project devoted to recovering poetry written, published, and circulated in Los Angeles and Southern California. Each volume brings neglected books and poems back into view through carefully prepared texts, archival images, biographical context, and a clear record of the surviving sources.

Edited by Brian Kim Stefans

The Text-Tech Papers | Los Angeles, 2026

DONALD L. EMBLEN

*There Are Sea Gulls on
Our Lawn and Later
Poems*

A CRITICAL READING EDITION

Edited by Brian Kim Stefans

The Text-Tech Papers

Extremes and Moderations: Early Southern California Poetry

CONTENTS

Poems and editorial matter

Archival Images	5
Introduction	9
Biography	10
Editorial Note and Sources	18
Poems	19
There Are Sea Gulls on Our Lawn (1947)	20
<i>Scene</i>	21
<i>Between Times</i>	22
<i>Beachcomber</i>	23
<i>Prophecy?</i>	24
<i>A Song for Peaceful Folk</i>	25
<i>Dragon Cave</i>	26
<i>Early April, Mission Beach</i>	27
<i>Geographer's Home, Ocean Beach</i>	28
<i>Supper on the Beach</i>	29
<i>Souvenir</i>	30
<i>Swimming at False Point</i>	31
<i>Any Saturday Night</i>	32
<i>Trespassers</i>	33
<i>Livestock</i>	34
<i>The Bathers</i>	35
<i>The Girl with Fountains in Her Shoes</i>	36
<i>Low Tide from Crystal Pier</i>	37
<i>Gold Is Where You Find It</i>	38
<i>Resident</i>	39

<i>Medanos Point</i>	40
<i>Lovers' Leap</i>	41
<i>Night Sounds on Mission Bay</i>	42
<i>Death on the Pier</i>	43
<i>Mt. Soledad the Younger</i>	44
<i>Hour for Decision</i>	45
<i>Relic</i>	46
<i>The Lost Fleet of Carmel Point</i>	47
<i>Residue</i>	48
<i>First of August, Mission Bay</i>	49
<i>The Lady Rose</i>	50
<i>Change of Tide at Mission Beach Bridge</i>	51
<i>Place with a View</i>	52
<i>Turning of a Season</i>	53
<i>My Mother-in-Law Talks to Seagulls</i>	54
<i>Art School on La Jolla Boulevard</i>	55
<i>Train Time</i>	56
<i>Speciman</i>	57
<i>Old Man Peterbaugh</i>	58
<i>Marinorama</i>	59
<i>Fascination After Death Symbols</i>	60
<i>The Foot of Chalcedony Street and the End of the World</i>	61
<i>Playboy</i>	62
<i>Bill's Pier</i>	63
<i>Morning at the Bait Barge</i>	64
<i>Mitchell's Landing</i>	65
<i>Foot of Grand Avenue</i>	66
Later Poems Recovered Online	67
<i>Boundaries</i>	68
<i>Back Country</i>	69
<i>The People's Temple</i>	70
<i>American Poet, William Stafford, 1914–1993</i>	71
Santa Rosa Junior College, 1971	72
<i>By Day, By Night</i>	73
<i>[The Pigeons Try to Perch on Telephone Wires]</i>	74

Bibliography	75
Works About the Author	77
Additional Resources	78
Rights and Textual Note	79
Colophon	80

ARCHIVAL IMAGES

Portrait and selected newspaper records



—Press Democrat Photo
DONALD EMBLEN, left, and Arnold Solkov act out a scene in John Mortimer's comedy, *The Dock Brief*, to be presented by members of the Santa

Donald L. Emblen, left, performing in a 1963 Santa Rosa Community Theatre production.

JUAN LEARNS ABOUT NATURE

THE PALOMINO BOY. By Don
and Betty Emblen. Viking: \$2.

Juan was an orphan boy who lived in the Palomino Valley near San Diego. After his parents died the old ladies at the little country store gave him a home. But there were many things Juan had to discover about life.

The story tells how this little Mexican boy grew and came to know about plants and dogs, horses and people. Handsomely illustrated by Lynd Ward this is a book of

A 1948 Los Angeles Times notice for Donald and Betty Emblen's The Palomino Boy.

Emblen Library Speaker

Donald Emblen, a member of the English faculty at Santa Rosa Junior College, will be speaker at the annual meeting of The Friends of the Santa Rosa-Sonoma County Public Library at 8 p.m. Wednesday in the Forum Room of the library.

Mr. Emblen's topic will be: With Peter Mark Roget in 19th Century London.

For the last three years Mr. Emblen has been working on a biography of Thesaurus editor Peter Mark Roget. The biography will be published in 1969, the centennial of Roget's death.

Mr. Emblen's research into the subject of Roget's life and work entailed much correspondence and a summer of study in

A 1968 notice describing Emblen's three years of work on his biography of Peter Mark Roget.

INTRODUCTION

Poetry as daily observation, craft, and community

Donald L. Emblen made poetry part of daily life. He carried notebooks, wrote almost every day, handed poems to friends when an occasion called for one, printed chapbooks and broadsides on a press in his garage, and taught generations of Santa Rosa Junior College students to treat writing as patient craft. His first collection, *There Are Sea Gulls on Our Lawn*, follows the beaches, piers, coves, streets, birds, fish, bathers, and small houses of postwar San Diego with a reporter's eye and a naturalist's curiosity. The complete 1947 book—forty-six poems, including the three texts isolated in the earlier project PDF—is restored here from the original edition rather than copied from that derivative selection. Six later witnesses extend the record from a 1971 campus paper through *Notes from Travels*, *Under the Oaks II*, and a 2011 William Stafford memorial. Together they show the continuity between the young shore poet and the teacher, traveler, translator, printer, and Sonoma County poet laureate he became.

BIOGRAPHY

Poet, teacher, sailor, journalist, translator, printer, and mentor

Origins, family, and education

Donald Lewis Emblen was born in Los Angeles on October 5, 1918, the son of Herbert Vern Emblen and Edna Ferner Emblen. The full *Contemporary Authors* entry, recovered after an earlier damaged snippet had been used, supplies his mother's name and confirms Los Angeles as the birthplace. A 1959 notice says Herbert had married in San Diego on January 1, 1909; a daughter, Phyllis, later appears in family records and survived Donald as Phyllis Kampf. The old project biography called his birthplace "Imperial, Los Angeles County," but Imperial is not in Los Angeles County and no primary birth record supports that wording.

Emblen grew up in Southern California and developed the close knowledge of plants, shore life, geology, and animal behavior that would mark his poems. He attended Los Angeles City College and the University of California, earned a B.S. from San Diego State College in 1953, an M.A. from San Francisco State College in 1962, and undertook language study at the University of Lund in 1971. Colleagues later described him as a botanist as well as a teacher and writer; the *Press Democrat* said his botanical training left visible tracings in his poetry.

A family connection to New Mexico entered his life through Betty Jane Mitchell, an artist from Alamogordo. A 1935 school annual identifies Betty as a talented golfer and language student; a 1930 newspaper item had already printed a story she wrote about Theodore Roosevelt as a boy. Donald and Betty married in 1941. In December 1944 Betty visited her mother, Stella Mitchell, in Alamogordo while Donald had been overseas for two years; the local paper reported that he returned on a month's furlough. These small notices preserve the domestic history behind their later collaboration more exactly than retrospective summaries do.

Journalism, war, and the first books

Before establishing himself as a teacher, Emblen worked at City News Service in Los Angeles, remembered in his obituary as work on the rewrite desk. A 1964 contributor note called him “a former newsman,” and Joan Frank likewise placed him at the Los Angeles City News Service. The work trained the concision, close observation, and appetite for exact names that remained central to his poetry and his later editorial life.

Emblen served in the United States Navy from 1941 to 1945 as a sonar operator on a submarine chaser, or, in Joan Frank’s compressed phrase, “chased submarines.” Former student Lester H. Hunt remembered that Emblen carried Robinson Jeffers’s *Tamar, Roan Stallion, and Other Poems* through his wartime service. That detail, preserved by someone who knew him well, makes the continuity between sailor and poet unusually tangible. His ship assignment and campaign record have not yet been retrieved.

After the war he returned to college under the GI Bill. In September 1946 the Alamogordo paper reported that Donald and Betty had bought a house in San Diego or Pacific Beach. The couple’s first poetry book, *There Are Sea Gulls on Our Lawn*, appeared from North Shores Publishing Company in San Diego in 1947. It combined his poems with Betty’s linoleum-block prints and was dedicated to her mother, Stella Mitchell. A contemporary family notice described the book as arising from their shared Pacific Coast life; bibliographic records call it unpaginated, while modern reprints sometimes assign seventy-two pages. The original edition, not a reprint, remains the necessary witness.

The collaboration continued in *The Palomino Boy*, published by Viking in 1948 with illustrations by Lynd Ward. The juvenile novel follows a Mexican American child; contemporary notices called the Emblens native Californians and the book sold well enough for a 1964 contributor note to describe it as a best seller. Joan Frank later told how a copy signed by Betty and marked up by a child named David returned uncannily to Donald’s memorial table. Her essay is not simply reception history: it is the most vivid account by a friend of the way books, family memories, and chance circulated through Emblen’s life.

Emblen won *Experiment Magazine*’s annual poetry prize in 1946. A newspaper note also reported a projected book based on a San Diego-to-San

Francisco bicycle trip. No copy or title has been found. In 1949 he published *The Crow Tree*, also cataloged as *The Crow Tree, and Other Oregon Poems*; sources disagree between Grundtvig Press and Projection Press. The conflict probably reflects publisher, printer, or imprint roles, but should be settled from a title and copyright page. The same year a Los Angeles newspaper notice documented the book's reception.

Family, schools, and Santa Rosa Junior College

Donald and Betty had two daughters, Cirre and Clovis. A family notice records the second daughter's birth in San Diego on August 21, 1952. By 1954 Emblen had taken a position teaching English at Lower Lake High School and was studying at San Diego State during the summer. He reached Santa Rosa Junior College in 1959, the institution that became the center of his public life for nearly thirty years. *Contemporary Authors* records that he had held many jobs, from journeyman laborer and reporter to teaching, before the college appointment.

At SRJC he taught English literature and creative writing, became chair of the English department in 1969, and grew into what former student Richard Speakes called the hub of an intellectual dynamo. He joined the college in 1959, taught for almost three decades, and retired in 1988. The *Contemporary Authors* entry also records his memberships in the American Federation of Teachers, National Council of Teachers of English, American Civil Liberties Union, and California Teachers Association. In 1963 he acted in John Mortimer's *The Dock Brief* with the Santa Rosa Community Theater, evidence that his literary work extended into local performance.

Accounts by students and colleagues consistently describe a demanding but generous mentor. Ed Buckley remembered that Emblen approached poetry as craft rather than intermittent inspiration. Speakes said he could suggest what was wrong with a draft without imposing a replacement. Hunt called him his first creative-writing teacher and traced his own intellectual life back to Emblen's example. Ruth Culham, Emblen's niece and later a writing educator, remembered an uncle who sent poems to relatives at exactly the moments they were needed. She quotes from "A Philosophy Major Comes Back To Wish Me a Happy New Year," written for a returning student: "Yet, returneth he / to find out whence he comes." These are accounts by friends, relatives, students, and colleagues—the evidence the thin earlier biography lacked.

Three volumes associated with SRJC, *Under the Oaks*, *Under the Oaks II*, and *Day Under the Oaks III*, document the college and its people in poems of place and occasion. “The People’s Temple,” written for English colleague Richard Tropp, confronts the 1978 Jonestown deaths without dismissing the victims’ desire for vision. The volumes show how Emblen turned a campus into a long social archive: teachers, students, deaths, reunions, trees, and institutional change became a collective biography in verse.

Roget, textbooks, translation, and travel

Emblen’s curiosity ranged beyond poetry. In the mid-1960s he spent roughly three years researching Peter Mark Roget, traveled to London and Scotland, and received support reported as a Chapelbrook Foundation grant. *Peter Mark Roget: The Word and the Man* appeared from Thomas Y. Crowell in 1970. It was the first book-length biography of the physician, scientist, reformer, and compiler of the thesaurus. A 1968 newspaper profile followed the work in progress, while a 1970 feature presented the finished book. Emblen’s fascination with Roget joined biography to his own lifelong preoccupation with exact words, lists, categories, and the moral uses of language.

With Donald Hall he wrote *A Writer’s Reader*, first published by Little, Brown in 1976 and revised through many editions; Emblen’s obituary called it a college textbook then in its ninth edition. Bibliographic references also associate him with *Before and After: The Shape and Shaping of Prose*, though edition and authorship details require catalog verification. The textbook work placed the habits of his classroom into durable form and connected a locally rooted teacher to one of the most prominent American poets of his generation.

In 1977–78 Emblen taught at Doshisha University in Kyoto. He learned Japanese with enough seriousness to translate poems, although the titles and publication venues have not yet been reconstructed. His language work also reached Swedish poetry. He translated Werner Aspenström, published a book of translations in 1987, and placed two Aspenström poems in *Scandinavian Review* in 1989. Friends recalled that he taught himself Swedish and Japanese because his curiosity demanded access rather than prestige.

Travel fed directly into the poems. *Notes from Travels* (Engdahl Typography, 1986) includes “Boundaries,” where a telephone stand tied upside

down to a car bumper frames the family's westward view of Iowa, and "Back Country," where lions, insects, owls, stone, and silence form an ecological sequence. Joan Frank remembered journeys from Nova Scotia to Prague; a 1992 broadside, "The American Chorus Arrives in Prague," gives one such trip a surviving bibliographic trace.

Clamshell Press and a handmade literary community

Emblen founded Clamshell Press in 1970 and operated it from his Santa Rosa garage. He set type, printed, and bound chapbooks and broadsides on a 1920 Chandler & Price press. The work was simultaneously literary, mechanical, pedagogical, and social. When students produced writing he believed in, colleagues remembered, he printed it. The Iota Press history places Clamshell within a Northern California network of hand-press printers, while surviving broadsides in the University of Arizona Poetry Center preserve individual Emblen productions.

The Arizona catalog identifies *Admiral Arnold Solkov*; *At Home on the Clackamas* (1990); *Sources of Wonder: On Hearing the Sonoma County Chorus Sing Bruckner* (1991); *The American Chorus Arrives in Prague* (1992); and *William Stafford American Poet 1914–1993* (1993). A newer catalog corrects a tempting false attribution: *Murder of Crows* is by Lee Engdahl, not Emblen. That correction is retained here because small-press bibliography is especially vulnerable to errors that migrate from a printer's name to an author field.

His monthly *Reader's Rejoinder* was a literary almanac produced on a large manual typewriter and circulated among friends. Hunt reports that Emblen completed 250 issues and that the last appeared after his death. He also co-founded and edited *Loon: A Journal of Poetry* beginning in 1973, a periodical role recorded in *Contemporary Authors* but absent from the earlier edition. The newsletter and journal joined recommendations, poems, observations, and correspondence into serial forms of companionship. Emblen also held salons where writers read new work and chamber musicians performed, delivered Meals on Wheels, gardened, and left bags of produce on friends' porches. His literary community depended as much on repeated acts of care as on public readings or books.

Poetry, friendships, and late recognition

A 1964 *Western Review* contributor note lists *Experiment*, *Gale*, *Glass Hill*, *The Bridge*, *Western Bookman*, *Destinies*, *Cycle Projection*, and *The Condor* among the periodicals that printed Emblen. It also names *Twenty Poems* and *The Crow Tree*. Other bibliographic leads include *Twenty-five Best Poems* (Gordon Dixon, 1964), *Notes from Travels* (1986), the *Under the Oaks* sequence, *Want List and Other Poems About Aging* (Running Wolf Press, 2000), and *By the Dozen: Sixty Short Poems*, printed at Clamshell Press. A 2005 profile says the first two hundred copies of *By the Dozen* sold and a second printing followed.

Emblen's friends included Donald Hall, Robert Bly, William Stafford, Gaye LeBaron, Terry Ehret, Ed Buckley, Richard Speakes, Joan Frank, and many former students. An archival folder in the Richard Rhodes papers holds "Don Emblen (Santa Rosa Junior College), 1975." The Edouard Roditi Papers contain Emblen correspondence from 1984 and undated Clamshell material. A later scholarly account of Ed Ricketts reports that Emblen had known Ricketts during the war and supplied memories to the biographer. Each record points toward a larger correspondence archive that has not yet been gathered.

Sonoma County named Emblen its first poet laureate. Sources give the honor as 1999 and describe the service either as 1999–2001 or 2000–02; the public roster's 2000–02 term is used for formal chronology, with the 1999 selection noted. The office recognized decades of work already embedded in the county. He read widely, encouraged younger poets, and helped establish the expectation that the laureateship should be an active community role rather than a ceremonial label.

The poems recovered here show a writer attentive to physical process and ethical pressure. "Livestock" refuses the scale at which insects disappear, presenting soil as the work of "innumerable unnamed beings." "Low Tide from Crystal Pier" asks whether a human cry can be separated from the crowded noise of leisure and the voice of a gull. "Lovers' Leap" replaces romantic legend with unstable geology. "Boundaries" turns furniture into a frame for migration and memory. "Back Country" listens until animal sound becomes stone. "The People's Temple" risks sympathy for people destroyed by a false vision. Even the two qualified 1971 transcriptions—pigeons failing

comically on wires and a penstemon trembling beside refuse—show the characteristic movement from exact observation toward an unsentimental idea.

Final years, death, and archive

Emblen married three times. His first marriage to Betty Jane Mitchell ended in divorce in 1971. Later accounts name his surviving wife as Linda Schafer Emblen; the identity and chronology of the intervening marriage have not been established. At his death he was survived by Linda; daughters Cirre Emblen and Clovis Emblen Scarpaci; grandsons Matt and Sam Scarpaci; sister Phyllis Kampf; nephew Jim Pennington; and niece Ruth Culham. Family papers may clarify the marriages, education, naval service, and the dispersal of manuscripts and Clamshell Press records.

Donald Emblen died at his Santa Rosa home on April 24, 2009, of heart failure. He was ninety. Hunt says he died while rereading *The Brothers Karamazov*, while Linda was reading another translation so they could compare versions. SRJC held a public memorial in Newman Auditorium that August. Terry Ehret, Gaye LeBaron, friends, former colleagues, singers, and readers participated, many bringing a favorite Emblen poem. The college now awards the Don L. Emblen Literary Scholarship, extending his mentoring work into an institutional legacy.

The scale of loss is also clear. Emblen estimated in 2000 that he had written more than four thousand poems and published about thirteen poetry books, but only a small fraction is readily discoverable online. This edition can reset eight poems, and only six of those have secure, readable witnesses. The task ahead is therefore archival: locate the Clamshell Press files and press bibliography; identify the current holders of family papers; find the three *Under the Oaks* volumes, *Want List*, *By the Dozen*, *Twenty Poems*, *Twenty-five Best Poems*, and the Aspenström translations; search SRJC student publications and *The Reader's Rejoinder*; and request the Arizona broadsides, Rhodes and Roditi correspondence, naval file, and Doshisha records.

Emblen's authority control provides useful anchors: VIAF 84475204, ISNI 0000 0000 7902 2034, and Wikidata Q112384269. The full *Contemporary Authors* entry resolves a formerly illegible 1957 citation: under the pseudonym Bart Reynolds, Emblen published *Paisano* in Los Angeles. The same source dates *Twenty Poems* to 1965, identifies him as co-editor with Arnold Solkov of

Before and After: The Shape and Shaping of Prose (Random House, 1986), and records his role in *Loon*. Those corrections demonstrate why uncertainty should be retained only until a fuller witness becomes available.

EDITORIAL NOTE AND SOURCES

A complete first book with independently recovered later witnesses

This edition resets the complete forty-six-poem text of *There Are Sea Gulls on Our Lawn* from the scanned 1947 first edition. The earlier five-page project PDF is retained as provenance but is not used as the textual base. Narrow-page continuation wraps are opened into the authorial line while titles, sequence, stanza divisions, punctuation, spelling, and meaningful lineation are preserved.

Six later poems are taken from independently located witnesses: complete postings identifying *Notes from Travels* and *Under the Oaks II*; downloaded page images of the 1971 SRJC paper *Kooka-Rot-Cha*; and the downloaded Fall 2011 *Friends of William Stafford* newsletter.

The 1971 untitled poem is printed under a supplied first-line title. Its surviving page is cropped at the left edge, so each restored initial letter appears in brackets. The source's spelling "penstamen" is retained. These decisions are disclosed rather than hidden.

Titles, subtitles, lineation, stanza divisions, and distinctive wording are otherwise preserved. The available transcription of "The People's Temple" prints "thought they say," probably for "thought they saw." It remains unchanged because a probable correction is not the same as an inspected authorial witness.

POEMS

The complete 1947 book and six later recoveries

THERE ARE SEA GULLS ON OUR LAWN (1947)

Complete first-edition text

Scene

In the first of the morning,
after the night-long sighs of the sea's sweeping
the beach is a virgin place
where you walk slowly,
knowing that your's is the only trail of footmarks down that shallow, shining slope.
North and south the unmarked sand turns slowly with the curve of the continent,
dazzling the eyes with whiteness,
confounding the eyes with a miracle of cleanliness,
baffling the little man on the beach
who has carried with him all his life
the incredible litter of cities, roads, rooms and unwashed places.

Publication. Reset from the first edition of *There Are Sea Gulls on Our Lawn* (North Shores Publishing Company, 1947), scan pages 11–11.

Between Times

As the beach towns sleep,
lulled by the surf roar—
somehow more distinct at night, yet strangely subdued by dawn—
long after the mound of ruby and emerald and diamond lights of Ocean Beach
darkens like a pile of cooling coals,
a million vari-colored clams stir in the shallow bay,
and hold themselves open on taut muscles
a million other creatures move about
or hide
or silently die or give birth.
Complex mouths—snail mouths and anemone mouths—
open and close in the fluid atmosphere of their underwater places.
Crabs crawl from shell to shell;
minnows dart through tide pools like silver slivers, frightened by the glint of moonlight on the rocks.
A lonely heron rises from the flats,
scrapes his wings on tall marsh grass
and points his long ungainly form eastward, toward the mountains.

The people of the beach towns sleep,
night is only a time between dinner and breakfast.
But clams tighten their muscular vigil; crabs run faster; minnows seek even the moonlit patches for camouflage.
For the new tide flowing in upon them
brings a freight of food and fear
of creatures with multiple jaws, spears, claws, darts and needle teeth,
of creatures with mouths and eyes
seeking food and watching for enemies in the new place where they are being taken.
In every cove, on every long flat shelf of beach
in every weird rockpile of the littoral,
and out in the marshes, where the roots of grasses reach clear down to salt water,
where shadows of lamp posts lie like solid logs against the moon-white sand of yesterday's dredging;
under bridges, on the sides and bottoms of channels, on pilings, on the transoms of old rowboats,
the nameless ones huddle and scuffle, open and close, chew, ingest, thresh the water with short feelers, retreat and attack,
dig holes in the bottom mud, drill holes in shells, feel heat and lack of heat, and fearfully enter mystic columns of cold
water rising from the bay floor...

While people of the beach towns sleep
or lie there listening to the surf roar,
smiling to themselves, like children,
somehow secure in the myth of peaceful night-ness.

Publication. Reset from the first edition of *There Are Sea Gulls on Our Lawn* (North Shores Publishing Company, 1947), scan pages 12–13.

Beachcomber

I keep finding blue-green bottle buoys, bits of cork
and slats bearing oriental characters —

remnants of refuse dumped into the Kuro Siwo. And some days there are many chunks of redwood limbs, the shaggy bark worn away, the fibrous wood so steeped in sea water that it can hardly float.

Whole logs come ashore

and broken spars,

and once a tumbleweed, fallen from the cliffs at Pt. Conception. I never pick up shells anymore, or old shoes or splintered tuna poles or sections of hawsers, mop handles, denim shirts or dead seals.

I keep looking for a thick-bottomed, hand-blown flask, one that has bobbed about for eighty-five hundred miles or so, with a note in it from a distressed maiden, or maybe a little wine.

Publication. Reset from the first edition of *There Are Sea Gulls on Our Lawn* (North Shores Publishing Company, 1947), scan pages 14–14.

Prophecy?

From the end of the pier
beachfires flare in a ragged line,
as though an army of barbarians had encamped
and was arming for a dawn attack.
The yellow cliffs behind mirror the flames
and dance with giant shadows,
distorted, leaping images,
bristling and heavy with weapons,
cavemen waiting on some bitter Spanish coast
for a tribe of fish-men to leap with hideous cries from the surf.
And on the water,
flame reflections smear the sliding surface,
spreading orange stains,
like blood from carnage pits buried at the foot of the waves.

Publication. Reset from the first edition of *There Are Sea Gulls on Our Lawn* (North Shores Publishing Company, 1947), scan pages 15–15.

A Song for Peaceful Folk

Let us sing a song for peaceful folk,
for the unmurdering few.
They live on a flat piece down by the bay,
with a view of water,
their place grown around with berry vines and gangling tomato plants.
They spend their days on the sand
or hoeing the grainy California soil,
and their nights staring at flat white moons
that linger in their region.

The sea is at their ear,
the dust from the field sifts gently over the threshold of their open door,
they are kind to wandering dogs
and to small boys
who come in at noon, seeking oranges.

Publication. Reset from the first edition of *There Are Sea Gulls on Our Lawn* (North Shores Publishing Company, 1947), scan pages 16–16.

Dragon Cave

There is a steep place down below the end of Jenner Street
where centuries of waves have cut a sandstone cave.
Each night when lovers walk on the cliff-top,
when old people rest there,
when stray dogs pause and point their noses to the sunset sky,
the sea rolls in across the narrow beach
and fills the cave with thunder.

Children call it Dragon Cave,
they say the hollow booming sound
and the rapid crashing sound of waves doubling back upon themselves inside
are the alternate laughing and cursing of an unseen creature.
They say that one long evening,
with all the lovers and old people and stray dogs standing there,
a shower of starfish and broken abalone shells will fly from the cavern;
and that will be the creature preparing to come out.

Publication. Reset from the first edition of *There Are Sea Gulls on Our Lawn* (North Shores Publishing Company, 1947), scan pages 17–17.

Early April, Mission Beach

Alone on the beach
the curlews follow in each receding wave,
rattling down the smooth incline of glistening sand,
spooning the soft slope with long, tube-like bills,
grey and brown and white, as the sand is grey and brown and white.
The gulls, sleepy and fat,
yet watching the curlews fish with a certain belligerence,
huddle together, colony-wise,
higher up where the dry sand is white as salt.
Their heads turn,
and the wind tufts their feathers,
and they hug the sun-warmed, wind-smoothed sand.
Seaweed tumbles in with the surf,
the whole brown writhing mass of it turning over
with each oncoming and retreating wave.
And settling again,
slick tentacles lashing a scruff of foam into the mesh of bulbs and leaves.
Single foliate strands stream fluidly in a hole of clear water,
where tiny shells, perfect as gems in a store window, roll slowly down the sides of slanting submarine slopes.
There are separate masses of kelp bobbing bulbs up, between waves,
like octopus,
like segments of men,
brown flesh, tatters of skin.
An old lady,
living in her small, wind-bound house through the off-season.
stares seaward across the beach,
shading her eyes with a wrinkled hand.
Is that a body out there?"

Publication. Reset from the first edition of *There Are Sea Gulls on Our Lawn* (North Shores Publishing Company, 1947), scan pages 18–19.

Geographer's Home, Ocean Beach

My house is where Point Loma's spreading root is joined to the continent
high on the cliff-side,
where you walk up thirty steps carved in sedimentary rock
to reach my door.
I have three windows...
one that overlooks Tahiti,
one whose curtains billow with rare fragrance straight from old Shanghai,
and the north-turned one,
that funnels in the winds and spices of all Mission Beach and Newport Avenue.

Publication. Reset from the first edition of *There Are Sea Gulls on Our Lawn* (North Shores Publishing Company, 1947), scan pages 20–20.

Supper on the Beach

The flickering shadows of many myths
still dance, like candle flames, along the inner walls of sea caves.
For there, by the light of dying beachfires,
where men and women of this country have come in the evening since the discoverers,
the darkness booms
from the crash of unseen waves against the ends of subterranean passageways.
Babies cry
and lovers draw together, half in fun, half in unexplainable fear.
And old people poke the fire and look about,
as though they were looking for lost children.
The darkness booms,
the darkness whistles suddenly
when small tatters of wind are drawn between eroded fissures of the rock.
They tell of long lost treasure hidden there,
of guardian ghosts,
of bodies still floating about below, bumping softly from side to side in the light-less caverns.
Even a seal barking from the outer rocks might be a monster.
And when the moon is gone,
when the only light is the ghostly trace of foam from breakers on the beach,
when the wind-and-sea-carved cliffs reach down with grotesque knobs and leaning limbs and eye holes,
when lower ledges glisten
and blobs of seaweed underfoot turn and yield,
the men and women who have come there since the discoverers
have long since picked their way between the tide pools
and up the steep cliff-paths.

Publication. Reset from the first edition of *There Are Sea Gulls on Our Lawn* (North Shores Publishing Company, 1947), scan pages 22–22.

Souvenir

In an abalone shell
I see opalescent sounds and shapes,
sunsets, heron plumes, beach fires.
I see smoke compacted into panels of pearl,
gems from a hidden beach
and the swelling breast-line of that beach.
And when you dip it full in the surf
And hold it quietly in close-cupped hands until the sand settles,
I see your oval face,
solemn and sweet with the mystic meeting of woman and sea.

Publication. Reset from the first edition of *There Are Sea Gulls on Our Lawn* (North Shores Publishing Company, 1947), scan pages 23–23.

Swimming at False Point

They tell me the cove behind False Point is no good for swimming,
but I have dived into the surf there,
and my body swept through the richest of sea water.

An unaccountable fluid there, in waves rolling in, and in thin silver sheets hissing up through the gravel beach;
more like broth than water,
strongly flavored and well mingled with golden broken kelp leaves.
There is no sand on the shore,
it is a crescent mound of rounded stones the size of a dollar.

But from the soft dirt cliffs,
the stones of the cove, wet with high tide spray,
gleam and sparkle like piles of jewels.

Publication. Reset from the first edition of *There Are Sea Gulls on Our Lawn* (North Shores Publishing Company, 1947), scan pages 24–24.

Any Saturday Night

Sailors, four abreast, stride down the sea walk,
laughing and swaggering in their liberty blues,
striding their strange, exaggerated stride that is at once belligerent and friendly,
whistling at the girls,
shouting at everyone...
girls, old ladies, suspicious men, small boys, dogs...

Keeping in step,
gathering a jubilant momentum,
keeping close together and taking up the whole path
so that every brief or complicated adventure
coming their way on the sea walk
must meet them face to face.

Publication. Reset from the first edition of *There Are Sea Gulls on Our Lawn* (North Shores Publishing Company, 1947), scan pages 25–25.

Trespassers

There is a lawn on Feldspar Street
where at least a dozen seagulls come to rest each day.
An ordinary lawn,
no greener and no larger than those in front of other homes on Feldspar Street.
But here, in this one place, shortly after 2 p.m.
the sleek white birds convene,
to stand and stare at passersby,
to preen the smoother feathers at their breast,
to sleep,
to cry complainingly at grinning dogs
who come from several streets at 2:15.

Publication. Reset from the first edition of *There Are Sea Gulls on Our Lawn* (North Shores Publishing Company, 1947), scan pages 26–26.

Livestock

All manner of creeping, crawling, scuttling things
celebrate the morning in their own fashion.
Sow-bugs, antlered worms, moths and ants and sand-crickets and pincher-armed termites
pause in the first fall of sunlight on their patch of ground,
and suck the clods for one last taste of moisture.
The dew-cooled surface dirt crumbles dry,
scorpions grope with rigid claws
and jade green centipedes tumble down the shiny shovel-blade.
The brown earth moves with multitudes,
unknown hordes of barbarians and sophists,
that leave broad, silvered trails, narrow trenches, like wheel-ruts; funnels and delta-fans of masticated soil.
This is the way the beach land grows,
changing hourly,
in every vacant lot, between the rows of every garden patch, under the sod, in dust piles by the roadsides,
innumerable unnamed beings
turning soil in million mouthful lots,
inheriting the earth.

Publication. Reset from the first edition of *There Are Sea Gulls on Our Lawn* (North Shores Publishing Company, 1947), scan pages 27–27.

The Bathers

Landsmen crowd the shore like children at a carnival,
exclaiming,
pointing seaward,
shading their eyes with hands and books.
They bring their various lives along,
as dangling and cumbersome as folding deck chairs in their
arms,
as intimately varied as their costumes
and as basically the same.

Old ladies peer nearsightedly
and poke the softer sand with canes.
Brown and agile as seals, the younger folk run together
quickly;
smaller children disappear and reappear,
crying with sandy mouths.

Fathers shyly step across to the moving edge of surf,
and stand there, staring;
they look naked and cold in their white skins.
They turn and awkwardly advance upon the waves,
drawing back and hopping forward,
laughing excitedly,
as dogs meeting the sea for the first time.

Publication. Reset from the first edition of *There Are Sea Gulls on Our Lawn* (North Shores Publishing Company, 1947), scan pages 28–28.

The Girl with Fountains in Her Shoes

I was walking down Emerald Street on a Sunday morning,

an early autumn day that fairly rang with the singing of
meadowlarks in the weed fields.

She was standing in the center of a patch of fresh-plowed
ground,

soaking it with a hose,

and trodding up and down in a pair of torn tennis shoes to
mash the clods.

She was smiling like a child

and staring down at the rich brown mud

and humming to herself.

As I watched, she turned the hose full force upon her feet

and sang out in rare delight;

for streams gushed merrily from holes in the ends of her shoes.

"I've got spouts in my shoes!" she laughed.

Publication. Reset from the first edition of *There Are Sea Gulls on Our Lawn* (North Shores
Publishing Company, 1947), scan pages 30–30.

Low Tide from Crystal Pier

Flat as a dish, the sand hard-packed and shining
extends from shore to surf-edge,
further and wider with each half-hour of retreating tide,
until the bathers look like dolls bobbing about in the mounds and sheets of moving water.
The lifeguard stares and squints into the sun,
it is hard to tell a lump of kelp from a swimmer's head,

and there in the black-tarred piling of the pier,
many a small life might scream for help.
How would it sound, here in this warm, concave afternoon,
with the sea-air filled with the barking of dogs, shouting of
children, squealing of girls, blare of a radio, and the long,
continuous thunder of the sea?
Would a single frightened cry pierce this complex haze of sun
and running bodies, splashes and flapping towels,
or would the lifeguard listen once
and put it down for the querulous voice of a seagull passing by?

Publication. Reset from the first edition of *There Are Sea Gulls on Our Lawn* (North Shores Publishing Company, 1947), scan pages 31–31.

Gold Is Where You Find It

It's a poor man on the cliff
who cannot harvest gold and silver dreams by nightfall.
The joyous, many-cornered sounds of families
walking home from long warm days along the beach,
carrying inner-tubes and limp towels and remnants of Sunday
papers,
shiny with sunburn,
smiling with the coolness of evening,
speak of laughter loosely gathered from the lips of many idle
waves,
shells and bulbs of kelp,
wave-worn sticks and thick green gems of bottles
smoothed by countless tidal trips across the beach slope.

Publication. Reset from the first edition of *There Are Sea Gulls on Our Lawn* (North Shores Publishing Company, 1947), scan pages 32–32.

Resident

An old man's cottage on the sand, down off Bacon Street,
has a yard of lawn and a pink geranium hedge.
They grow and bloom in a three-inch layer of reddish dirt that he has hauled there
and spread out on his hands and knees.

He lives alone,
watching the years' high-water marks advance across the beach,
chasing the seagulls out of his garden,
befriending the swimmers.

After each summer day,
after ten hours of sun-glare from the hot, white sand,
he sits in an old rocker on the porch and sips lemonade
and inhales the coolness of his green backyard
and watches the sun dissolve into amber fire and pearl grey smoke along the horizon.

Publication. Reset from the first edition of *There Are Sea Gulls on Our Lawn* (North Shores Publishing Company, 1947), scan pages 33–33.

Medanos Point

Between this tongue of sand
and sagging piers across the channel.
all things pass that enter Mission Bay.
all boats and rafts, dredges, driftwood, clots of shining seaweed,
all fishes, shells and crabs,
every cube and mound of sea that rushes in
and spreads out shallowly between the points of land.
Twice each day the new tide carries still another unclaimed freight of creatures,
the food of creatures and the seed of them
across the clean-swept bottom sand.
Every night the tide and wind work,
flooding in and scouring out,
and this has been going on for centuries.

If Medanos Point had eyes,
its low sand dunes would quiver constantly
with memories of strange and lovely forms of life,
of violent deaths and serene beginning made in mid-channel.
And wherever you might thump the sand,
it would squirt a stream of moist sea images,
like a saturated bog.

Publication. Reset from the first edition of *There Are Sea Gulls on Our Lawn* (North Shores Publishing Company, 1947), scan pages 34–34.

Lovers' Leap

The crumbling lip of cliff —
sandy loam, white-flecked with bits of shells
held together loosely by a threadbare mat of wild grasses-
tips seaward brokenly,
sagging on a limestone hinge.
Nettles grow like lost and ragged flowers
on a sifting ledge
that trickles crumbs of earth deep into a concave vault of sea-mist.
Here is a resting place for gulls
who stand on wide-webbed feet
and listen solemnly to wind and trickling sand and hissing spray.
Here is a place for lovers' last long argument,
a narrow place for pacing,
a half-round stone for resting on,
a dark and grinning crevice, widening to draw the hot dry eyes,
and a yielding sod
that frightens tragic youths
who trod too near the edge.

Publication. Reset from the first edition of *There Are Sea Gulls on Our Lawn* (North Shores Publishing Company, 1947), scan pages 36–36.

Night Sounds on Mission Bay

Night sounds from a place near water,
from a place where you can see many lights
and the brooding, silhouette of a eucalyptus tree,
turn one outward,
to the streets and fields and hillsides,
the marsh and cove and beach
that form a spreading pool.
With noisy breath stilled for but a moment in the throat,
you float into this shadow pond,
as gently and as wondrously as a new rowboat.
And there, without oars, drifting without effort or ambition,
you rise with the tide of a fluid night.

A seagull cry, the bark of a dog, the laughter of a girl across the bay
slip through the mirrored surface without splashing;
a cigarette flipped curving from your side
is a meteor,
and a night plane, flashing red and green high overhead,
makes the roar of two planets
chasing eternity.

Publication. Reset from the first edition of *There Are Sea Gulls on Our Lawn* (North Shores Publishing Company, 1947), scan pages 37–37.

Death on the Pier

Flounders and sting-rays, spotted bass and crabs and lobsters,
all hauled struggling to the worn plank floor of the pier,
all stared at on the way up,
all dripping their last touch of sea-water,
as another creature might lose his life blood.
Glistening and pliant
of a strange, wet, dark-rubber flesh,
bristling about the mouth with vestiges of tusks and spears,
helpless and voice-less at the feet of the fishermen.
A cold steel knife drawn across their jaws,
or a sudden, crushing blow,
swung by their tails and thumped against the railing,
or strong man-fingers tearing away the hook.
Then laid away with other fish bodies in a gunny sack,
or left to flop reproachfully upon the splintery boards,
to gasp,
to lie silently at last
with the round, impotent mouth open and the eyes glazed.
unheralded.

Publication. Reset from the first edition of *There Are Sea Gulls on Our Lawn* (North Shores Publishing Company, 1947), scan pages 38–38.

Mt. Soledad the Younger

Lonely mountain, blunt and brown,
steeped in the seeds of cactus and sage and wild sumac,
charred in the summer by a dozen grass fires,
green in the fall and creased by a hundred rain rivers.
Alone in a place of beaches and marsh-flats,
a frightened look about his crown of thorny brush,
a wild, uncertain look,
a mountain that grows no trees,
a mountain that all but starts at the noise of its own gophers.

Soledad was frightened in its youth
by the diastrophic surge that broke its infant centuries of river -silt growth
and hoisted it five hundred feet above the coast of La Jolla.
Now, in these times, in the age when other mountains are becomingly gnarled,
Soledad is blunt and brown as an adolescent Californian.
Soledad tries to hold its sandy sides together with burrs and thickets of milkweed
and makes much of a few stringy eucalyptus trees.
While the beaches down below,
and the wide, pellucid bay
smile in the sun,
hug their own low borders
and watch the young mountain swell and shrivel with the seasons.

Publication. Reset from the first edition of *There Are Sea Gulls on Our Lawn* (North Shores Publishing Company, 1947), scan pages 39–39.

Hour for Decision

In his own half-hour on the pier
each man looks upon the sea's green back with his own eyes,
seeing knotted seaweed snarls
or, leaning harder on the rail,
streaming strands of mermaid hair;
foam spittle,
or trains of old white lace
flowing back from the heads of breakers;
glints of light, like glass splinters whirling in a drain,
or wriggling sea-sperm
writhing toward the loose and fecund sand of many beaches.

Each man quiets his own loneliness,
and shades his own eyes,
smiling or snarling,
while tons of hissing spray feed mussels on the pilings,
colonies of tiny fish race wildly through the waves
and dying suns glow briefly,
like old dreams, in the spreading ocean well.

Publication. Reset from the first edition of *There Are Sea Gulls on Our Lawn* (North Shores Publishing Company, 1947), scan pages 40–40.

Relic

A broken concrete piling
leaning like a whitened spar in the surf,
pitted and worn,
throttled in snarls of kelp,
tilted further and further with each suck of undertow.

From the tide mark, from flat on the sand as a resting gull would see it,
the piling points like a blunt, monumental finger
to that place in the western sky where the first red star appears.
From the window of the aging red-board house on the walk
it is as thick as a pencil stub.

From the churning wash of sand and water at its base,
judging by the cautious touch of small creatures,
the piling looms as a strange old continent on a strange axis.

Publication. Reset from the first edition of *There Are Sea Gulls on Our Lawn* (North Shores Publishing Company, 1947), scan pages 42–42.

The Lost Fleet of Carmel Point

Into the red-brown sunset sea
a host of eucalyptus leaves set sail,
all curled like sultans' shoes
and bearing thick gold loads of pollen dust.
Beneath their brittle stems
a horde of minnows swam,
like schools of porpoise past a crowd of green sampans.
Beyond the point, beyond the old pavilion,
ripples raced in grinning circles from the other shore,
shaking the fleet,
dumping untallied cargoes into unmarked deeps,
scattering the empty hulls into a dozen criss-cross courses.

Publication. Reset from the first edition of *There Are Sea Gulls on Our Lawn* (North Shores Publishing Company, 1947), scan pages 43–43.

Residue

All forms of life
surge in upon the cavern of the cliff,
fish and spawn of fish,
bodies of birds and seals and fishermen,
twigs and pieces of broken ships, leaves, fibers, fabrics
propelled by tides and moons and strange quick jets of fear and hunger.
Seaweed gathers at the cave's round lip,
sifting the tide as a whale's mouth sifts the tide,
clutching with a thousand shiny tentacles,
winnowing with a mass of yellow leaves.
And yet the most translucent shells
are found inside, washed up high and delicately placed upon the gravel bench,
the bluest, smoothest stones are there,
and the whitest bones.

Publication. Reset from the first edition of *There Are Sea Gulls on Our Lawn* (North Shores Publishing Company, 1947), scan pages 44–44.

First of August, Mission Bay

From a window on the bay
I watch the sullen afternoon drag dust and drowsy hours down
the street.
Liveliness is dead in me,
stilled and sun-streaked like a moth caught between screen and window.
The clock ticks on, without decision.

Then a sailboat turns in the sun,
like a tail-less kite in a jade sky,
and the sudden whiteness of that wind-filled canvas
strikes me with a splash,
a rousing shout,
like the clean cold shock of plunging headlong into foaming surf.

Publication. Reset from the first edition of *There Are Sea Gulls on Our Lawn* (North Shores Publishing Company, 1947), scan pages 45–45.

The Lady Rose

The Lady Rose, built for a millionaire's wife who couldn't sleep ashore,
drifted sleepily about the bay
and gleamed in the sun
and turned deliberately on her hawsers,
like a sun-dial's shadow swinging slowly with the sun.
Many coats of paint
and many years of wavelets lapping at her blunted bow
mellowed the Lady Rose
and her owners.

This might have been eternity for the gently rocking Lady Rose.

But cast ashore in the midnight of an autumn storm
that tore down lines and stove in sections of the seawall
and undermined the further pilings of the pier,
the Lady Rose dug deep into the beach, smashing her endtimbers.
A crew of men came out
and stood around her in the white exhausted morning,
poking her thick plank sides
and feeling places where steel cables sawed deep trenches in her deck.
They beached her for all time
and hauled her to a vacant lot across the boulevard,
mooring the faded Lady Rose at a genial angle in the weeds.

And so her final cruise began,
with a housewife at the helm
and a gang of children screaming on her after deck,
with a level lawn that spread about her like the water in a ccdm anchorage,
with rooms and roofs added topside
and an unaccustomed clutter of plumbing down below.

So she plows through years and fogs
and unmoving areas of sun that peel her paint,
the smoothest riding craft along the coast
in the wildest storms.

On quiet nights, the neighbors say,
they hear a wistful whistle from the Lady Rose,
blowing for the right-of-way
at traffic running by in Mission Boulevard.

Publication. Reset from the first edition of *There Are Sea Gulls on Our Lawn* (North Shores Publishing Company, 1947), scan pages 46–47.

Change of Tide at Mission Beach Bridge

The last small wave is hurried through,
drawn splashing and struggling in between the walls of the channel,
snatched from the whole blue sea
and tossed without ceremony upon the shallow, widening bay.
And then the one in charge of tides, of storms, of lonely sand spits and lost seagulls
blows a soothing breath
or smiles commandingly
or takes the palms of his hands and presses the water out flat
and holds it there, with both arms around,
as one might hold a platter of cream
until there is no fear of spilling any of it.
The green bay water is so still
that a feather from a mud hen's wing makes circles,
as a stone makes circles in a mountain lake.

Publication. Reset from the first edition of *There Are Sea Gulls on Our Lawn* (North Shores Publishing Company, 1947), scan pages 48–48.

Place with a View

From a house on upper Saratoga Street
you can see coastwise all the way from Spaulding Park to Navy sheds along False Point,
all of the bays and inlets and estuaries—
guitar shapes and kidney shapes
all of the stucco beach towns,
spreading out like the house of a growing family,
littering the shore and half the slope of Soledad.

At night the highways run along at their own diagonals,
curving like bracelets,
coming together, gleaming with moving lights,
like capsules thronging in luminous arteries.
At noon the sun flares upon the curving surfaces of bay
like floodlights on a plate glass window pane.

At dawn you hear the singing of vitamins tumbling in the new air
and the noise of mockingbirds in a pepper tree.

Publication. Reset from the first edition of *There Are Sea Gulls on Our Lawn* (North Shores Publishing Company, 1947), scan pages 49–49.

Turning of a Season

The first rain comes in September,
sifting down in miniature drops,
a mist-like rain
that is not quite seen.
It is known by colors deepening along the street-
dust into brown soil,
weeds into plants with pea-green leaves,
faded boards into orange squares and cubes and rectangles,
darkening patches on the roofs.
By noon the thread-bare summer haze
that has hung like a dusty cobweb across the sun for many weeks
is gone,
torn and shredded away by a ton of water falling in a million weightless particles,
dissolved in a slow spray
that washes seeds and seed-husks, and pieces of sand,
slivers, burrs, shattered pods and rotted leaves
into the open ground.
And all about the place, from every yard and vacant lot,
the rising perfume of wet earth brings the folks to their windows.
The smell of fall is a quiet and wonderful surprise,
like the smell of night-blooming jasmine floating through the house.

Publication. Reset from the first edition of *There Are Sea Gulls on Our Lawn* (North Shores Publishing Company, 1947), scan pages 50–50.

My Mother-in-Law Talks to Seagulls

Mother says there are ledges full of gold just off shore,
that there are rafts of teak wood, loaded with jade,
floating around between sea lanes.
She says that when two ocean currents meet no ship can sail there,
that death and birth are hard to tell apart in the sea off-shore

Each noon she shares a sandwich with seagulls on the lawn;
she tells them of New Mexico,
of saline flats where ancient arrowheads litter the cracking earth like shells on a beach,
of Indian dances and cotton crops and moonlight through tall ash trees arched across the irrigation ditches.
The seagulls nod and walk about
and recall the albatross who couldn't fly,
or the whale who smiled
or some of the milder mysteries of the depths and shallows of mid-sea.

Mother says that stranger things than phosphorescence happen in the wake of ships,
that greater treasures than small schools of silver smelt are found in the eddies around the pilings of a pier,
that in the scruff of foam about each breaking wave
pearls are born.

Publication. Reset from the first edition of *There Are Sea Gulls on Our Lawn* (North Shores Publishing Company, 1947), scan pages 51–51.

Art School on La Jolla Boulevard

Each young hand turns upon the pivot of a brush,
moves nervously,
hangs back
or slashes deep into the oblong space of landscape,
grouping as each eye and understanding gropes
for truth and splendor,
for truth and squalor in the bluish haze of morning.
Each one seeking something in a scene that asks nothing from anyone.
... faded red tile roofs, a scattered run of cars below,

one by one,
a row of ragged palms, like turkey-necks against a dull green mass of sea,
the cliff edge and the sea itself,
clouds,
and blurred horizons,
and telephone wires paralleling horizons.

Publication. Reset from the first edition of *There Are Sea Gulls on Our Lawn* (North Shores Publishing Company, 1947), scan pages 52–52.

Train Time

When wind veers off the sandstone cliffs
and rattles the dry brown leaves of ancient palms above the cove,
a ragged crowd of sparrows
shrills complaint for every summer guest,
who sees the sun lost,
the spray-filled fog as his new host
and the long cool evening walks along the cliff-tops
replaced by hasty drives behind a spattered windshield.

Publication. Reset from the first edition of *There Are Sea Gulls on Our Lawn* (North Shores Publishing Company, 1947), scan pages 53–53.

Speciman

There are many wondrous fish
that flash their green and yellow sides below Seal Rock,
fish with luminescent eyes,
with fern-like fins and fins with spines,
fish with nostrils close together, bulbous eyes and cordate teeth,
fish that are seen only by lantern
and others that are never seen, only the soft circle splashes of their air-gulping,
creatures with footless legs,
streamer legs,
bundles of arms and feelers,
shovel forms in shining sheaths,
sword forms and living things that drift like water-swollen leaves.

And when the tide draws back,

leaving cluttered rock alive with moving pods and shells and hulks, anemones and armored chitons grouping in the cracks, snails and pink transparent bubbles of creatures,

it shows a lower shelf of clams and pectins and mussels,

limpet cones and giant abalone shells, isopods and lobster claws.

But all across this seething sea-jungle of kelp and rock, flushing and receding wave, cracks and caves and tide-pools, shreds of fog and germinating sunlight,

there is no stranger thing than one old man

who floats his long brown body on a paddle board

and face down sculls diagonally across the waves

with hands enclosed in bright green wide-webbed gloves.

Publication. Reset from the first edition of *There Are Sea Gulls on Our Lawn* (North Shores Publishing Company, 1947), scan pages 54–54.

Old Man Peterbaugh

In all the coves, from Bird Rock to the old Scripps pier,
there is no bather or surf rider or diver for abalone
who laughs as much
or who greets the sea with half the joy of old man Peterbaugh.
He teaches boys and girls to swim,
flailing long thin arms about like pelican wings;
he floats spread-eagled on his back;
he swims between the waves, using a shallow side-stroke;
he doubles up to rest,
his head and feet above the surface,
and his bony hands paddling rapidly,
turning him around and around, as on a spindle.
And when he's done, he slowly swims ashore,
rising from the clear green water of the cove—
the sea running in torrents from his wrinkled hide,
wavelets foaming at his knees,
seagulls crying from the rocks—
as an old man of the sea might suddenly emerge.

Publication. Reset from the first edition of *There Are Sea Gulls on Our Lawn* (North Shores Publishing Company, 1947), scan pages 56–56.

Marinorama

Fishboats troll from Sunset Cliffs to reefs beyond La Jolla Bay,
leaning with the northwest wind,
lurching in the shallow troughs,
slewing on the southward run, with heavy seas abeam.
People on the cliffs squint and shade their eyes
to watch the twelve-foot jig boats take the swells.
They exclaim and stare and lean forward in the wind of their
own hillsides,
loving the clean white bow-stroke deep across the humping backs of the waves,
waving their heads in time with brown stick masts waving back and forth,
wishing they themselves might be fishermen
and feel the touch of sea.

The fishermen wipe salt spray from their eyes,
and scream profanely to the wind,
cursing wind and tangled lines, plunging hull, crosswise waves, broken hooks, diesel smell, the everlasting stink of fish,
the bloody deck, the slipping boots and slimy handholds,
and wish to God they were ashore,
standing with the landmen on the cliff,
wishing they were fishermen.

Publication. Reset from the first edition of *There Are Sea Gulls on Our Lawn* (North Shores Publishing Company, 1947), scan pages 57–57.

Fascination After Death Symbols

Why do I return each time to this sand coast
where figures of manta rays are hand-carved deep into the rocks
and brittle lobster claws form necklaces along the beach?

What is there to be sought in waves and coves and slipping cliffs,
and miles of hard-packed sand as smooth as any highway?

Each night upon the point I see the sun disintegrate,
a slowly spreading pain of yellow sky and inflamed sea;
each day, when foreheads of the rocks cast shadows full across the beach,
I stare upon white boulders buried in the cliff,
like skulls imbedded in a catacomb.

And when I walk from shore to surf,
beneath the eyes of hooded cormorants,
with every step I crush the skeletal remains of whole colonies of sea creatures.

Publication. Reset from the first edition of *There Are Sea Gulls on Our Lawn* (North Shores Publishing Company, 1947), scan pages 58–58.

The Foot of Chalcedony Street and the End of the World

In the Latter Year,
when long thin spirals of smoky time
trail upward from a desert of remnant artifacts,
our beach will be a grinning, lip-less mouth
for the skull of a continent.

The waves will whisper in and out,
hollowly,
as Mojave winds flow in and out the sockets of a rabbit skull.

The birds will have their beach again,
will form along the lacy lines of tiny skeletons and crusted bits of seaweed that mark the circumference of each new
effort of the sea,
and bloated carcasses of seals
may lie there stinking
as long as they want.

Publication. Reset from the first edition of *There Are Sea Gulls on Our Lawn* (North Shores Publishing Company, 1947), scan pages 59–59.

Playboy

A small dog on the beach,
the long, deserted beach of Neptune Place,
where thick flat rocks lie buried in the sand,
tossed ashore, abandoned sculpture from an unknown island.
The wind has driven bathers from the surf, from the sand bank, from the porches of homes along the street,
and the small dog runs in perfect freedom down the hard-packed sand.
He chases seagulls and curlews and sandpipers,
barking and grinning,
showing off his vibrant, frantic body to the waves,
wheeling from one shrill-voiced bird to another,
like a man with many loves.

Publication. Reset from the first edition of *There Are Sea Gulls on Our Lawn* (North Shores Publishing Company, 1947), scan pages 60–60.

Bill's Pier

Bill's pier stands on wormy cedar pilings,
bluntly out from the slight smooth curve of beach,
a shifting web of planks, a lonely place
as a raft would be lonely floating in the space between the crescent horns of a moon.
Looking back at night,
the cubic patterns of lighted streets
spread out across the soft black mounds of the continent.
It is a place where you stand open-coated and open-faced,
savoring and nodding to the mystic monologue of sea.

A few dim lights spray saffron splashes on old railings...

the surf seethes violently about each worn piling.
And at night like this,
from the end of Bill's pier
you feel the weight and towering size of that coming cloud bank,
looming high and black,
light-edged,
thick as a slanting mountain.
The waves hump high beneath the old plank floor,
following each other in like porpoises,
the wind's at hand?
you look up to the soft, smoke-like wall of cloud,
knowing it is as long as the beach,
as long as the whole West Coast, perhaps,
A single star shines for an instant,
caught trembling and lucent in the furled mesh of fog
like a silver minnow.

Publication. Reset from the first edition of *There Are Sea Gulls on Our Lawn* (North Shores Publishing Company, 1947), scan pages 61–61.

Morning at the Bait Barge

The sea comes in by devious paths,
as an old river wandering through a marsh and delta country;
reaches in with rounded tongues and narrow, level-seeking arms,
fondling the shaggy pilings,
gently lifting floats and the fleet of rowboats,
slowly feeling the feet of hills,
exploring the soft silt bay bottom foot by foot
as each new tide covers the tracks of seabirds.

The morning air flows down, pouring in a softly scented breath from the mouth of Mission Valley,
widening to a thinner tide upon a thick green marsh-grass meadow,
carrying the sounds of bird calls and dog voices and muffled city noise, like a distant humming.

Here the sea and valley breath
converge within an inlet full of razor clams,
and are greeted by a whistle from the dredge,
a rush of godwit wings,
a flurry of small flounders
and a stirring of seaweed streamers hanging from the bridge highwater mark.

Publication. Reset from the first edition of *There Are Sea Gulls on Our Lawn* (North Shores Publishing Company, 1947), scan pages 62–62.

Mitchell's Landing

This is one of many places in the marsh
where man has been
and gone,
leaving a leaning post, a splintered bamboo pole, a broken bucket,
a sagging plank that crossed the slough.
Here is where he sat and watched the minnows dart from one reed jungle to the next,
where lumbering blue herons flapped a yard above his head,
where he paused within the limp-rag flopping sound of wavelets lapping on the shore
to listen to the tick-tick-tick of his own consciousness.

Publication. Reset from the first edition of *There Are Sea Gulls on Our Lawn* (North Shores Publishing Company, 1947), scan pages 64–64.

Foot of Grand Avenue

Our street emerges from the vast expanse of continent,
somewhere east of Quincy Street
from mountain pass or flat plateau or narrow dried-up riverbed that leads to Texas and the Dakotas and Philadelphia,
from rain-bright highways of the middle States, rutted Georgia roads, from shining, twin-streaked railroad tracks,
from a never-never land of politics
and visions,
from a people too far apart to know each other, and living too close together for tolerance.

Our street has to be as wide as three normal streets
with the traffic it bears,
of slow-moving memories,
of racing, honking ambitions that rely upon their horns rather than their brakes for safety,
of huge pedestrian throngs of daily and nocturnal images,
of strange, disrupting beasts of fantasy and heritage that keep trotting diagonally across the way.

The dust of all these carriages and six-ply tires,
those hooves and horns and timber-ends dragging in the dirt,
this animated history,
descends upon our house in soft protective layers,
like the fragile moss that sheathes grey boulders from the surf-wash.

On warmer afternoons,
when the burden of Grand Avenue stirs the fundamental dust to clouds of intangible commotion,
we walk bare-footed to the beach,
and we walk straight down the middle of the road,
regardless of the houses and half-houses passing by on wheels,
or the loud vehicular roar of contemporary fear.

At the foot of Grand,
where the sun has warmed the sand all morning
and the summer wind blows freshly from the surf,
we lie with our heads together on one towel,
turned seaward.
This feeling of warmth above and below,
of moving air, filled with pastel sounds,
of the sea in front and the great absorbent blanket of sand about us,
is a feeling of infinity,
where space and time are a pair of sand-fleas
hopping in the miniature dunes we sweep aside or build with our fingers.

Publication. Reset from the first edition of *There Are Sea Gulls on Our Lawn* (North Shores Publishing Company, 1947), scan pages 65–66.

LATER POEMS RECOVERED ONLINE

Independently recovered reading texts

Boundaries

The old telephone stand in the corner
takes me away, behind the wheel again:
all the way across the continent
when we came West,
the car loaded to the gunnels
and the spindly little stand
tied upsidedown on the front bumper,
its turned legs sticking up like antlers.
Day after day, I saw the new lands
through the opening between those legs.
Even now, I know that Iowa is very square,
bounded on the north and south by mahogany
and open to the sky.

Publication. From *Notes from Travels* (Engdahl Typography, 1986); transcribed from the complete poem posted at Dare I Read? on 22 April 2008.

Back Country

Farther out, there still are caves in the rock
where mountain lions pace
and clean their claws on the granite
before or after the kill.
Later, comes the purity
after leather scuff of pads,
whine of insects at the opening,
owls like velvet gongs haunting the old oaks.
Finally, the canyon night resorbs
the song of gnats;
the night-hunters drown in their own feathers;
the purring seeps surely into stone
and makes a silence
white as bone.

Publication. From *Notes from Travels* (1986); transcribed from Lester H. Hunt's memorial posting of the complete poem in May 2009.

The People's Temple

For Richard Tropp (English Department, 1972–1978), dead in Guyana 1978

They worked and sought and stared
and thought they say, at last, the Sun.
It was the spy-hole of a furnace
they looked through.
Better that fiery glimpse
than no vision at all,
than dull eyes fastened
on the square end of a tube
and a long safe life in a cold blue haze.

Publication. Dated 1978 and collected in *Under the Oaks II* (Santa Rosa Junior College, 1995). The online transcription prints “thought they say”; this likely represents “thought they saw,” but the present edition preserves the available witness and records the probable error rather than silently emending it.

American Poet, William Stafford, 1914–1993

If he were a landscape, we'd call him ordinary:
plain and dusty, flat, except for a few low hills,
a few surviving pines, a scatter of yellow rabbitbush,
in several shades of brown—
the sort of place we'd hardly call a place
in our hurry down the highway,
never to wonder how it was
the trees got placed just so.

If we got out and walked around,
we'd find, in season, marvelous belly flowers
echoing the stars, but in Technicolor
and full of seeds, and there,
behind that slope of tawny grass,
a spring up-welling, clear and cold!
So cold it stings our hands and lips to life.
When the light sinks low, we'd see
sharp shadows of the Cascade Range
perfect their peaks across his back.

If there were miners wandering by,
those who knew how to dig and where,
they'd discover for us
what we might have found for ourselves:
imperishable rivers of gold below.

Publication. Reset from *Friends of William Stafford: A Newsletter for Poets & Poetry* 16.2 (Fall 2011), page 3; previously published in the *Petaluma Poetry Walk Anthology* (2007).

SANTA ROSA JUNIOR COLLEGE, 1971

Independently recovered reading texts

By Day, By Night

More than once, by day, by night,
from across the unharboring bay,
from an aircraft, from the mirror of a green Buick,
I have seen the city in ruins,
San Francisco spilling down its hills,
a jumble of white squares,
rectangular holes, black,
a tumble of concrete walls, bruised streets,
the people fled into unpromising blue
surrounding always, staring and unseen.
And I was some kind of death in perma-press pants.

Yet down by the road, in the dust of retreating traffic,
the upright quail hurries her young
from bush to bush;
the leaf unfolds a marvelous shape—
delicately dented as the knuckles of her hand,
the last one thing of this earth I touch
before I fall asleep each night,
saving and being saved in the midst of my falling.

The sparrows teeter on the fence,
dropping their three-noted plaintive call—
“love you too” “love you too”—
descending and minor and marking my heart each time,
like fitting my foot into a shoe-mark in the dust.

The moon makes billows in the weedy fields,
lustrous and slow from the window late at night—
seas a-making without and within.

Publication. Reset from page 3 of *Kooka-Rot-Cha*, preserved in the Santa Rosa Junior College student-government records for spring 1971; checked against the downloaded page image.

[The Pigeons Try to Perch on Telephone Wires]

[T]he pigeons try to perch on telephone wires
[a]s the blackbirds do without even thinking,
[b]ut they flounder and flail,
[t]oo heavy by half, too full in the breast,
[t]oo flat in the foot,
[t]hey cannot find the secret of balance.
[T]hey clatter stiff wings, glossy and mottled,
[b]ang them against wires and drop away
[t]o soar around in great laughing, fan-shaped circles,
[f]lutteringly approach to play again.

[T]he penstamen's red trumpet trembles with joy
[w]here it grows on the edge of the canyon
[a]t the city dump
[w]here all the graceless remnants of the town,
[a]fter all their wandering through processes and persons' lives,
[r]eturn home:
[a]s limp as wet Kleenex sinking at last into soil,
[a]s stubborn as chipped concrete,
[a]s busy as the innards of a juke-box, still spinning,
[a]s lively as an old tire
[b]ounding into freedom down the slope.

Publication. Untitled two-stanza poem on page 4 of *Kooka-Rot-Cha* (SRJC, spring 1971). The surviving scan cuts off every initial letter at the left edge; restorations are supplied in brackets. The source prints "penstamen," which is retained rather than silently normalized.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Works by Donald L. Emblen and collaborations

- Emblen, Donald L. *There Are Sea Gulls on Our Lawn*. Linoleum-block illustrations by Betty Jane Emblen. San Diego: North Shores Publishing Company, 1947. Original edition unpaginated; title sometimes modernized as *There Are Seagulls on Our Lawn*.
- Emblen, Donald L., and Betty J. Emblen. *The Palomino Boy*. Illustrated by Lynd Ward. New York: Viking Press, 1948. 189 pp.
- Emblen, Donald L. *The Crow Tree* [also cataloged as *The Crow Tree, and Other Oregon Poems*]. Grundtvig Press / Projection Press, 1949. Imprint relationship unresolved.
- . *Twenty-five Best Poems*. Santa Rosa: Gordon Dixon, 1964. Bibliographic lead from *Books and Authors of San Diego*; copy not examined.
- Emblen, Donald L., as Bart Reynolds. *Paisano*. Los Angeles, 1957. Genre and publisher require catalog verification; title and pseudonym confirmed by *Contemporary Authors*.
- . *Twenty Poems*. Gordon Dixon Press, 1965. Copy not examined.
- . *Peter Mark Roget: The Word and the Man*. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1970.
- Emblen, Donald L., and Donald Hall. *A Writer's Reader*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1976; repeatedly revised through at least a ninth edition.
- Emblen, Donald L., and Arnold Solkov, eds. *Before and After: The Shape and Shaping of Prose*. New York: Random House, 1986.
- Emblen, Donald L. *Notes from Travels*. Engdahl Typography, 1986.
- , translator. *Werner Aspenström*. 1987. Full publication details require verification.
- , translator. Two poems by Werner Aspenström. *Scandinavian Review* 77 (1989): 90.
- . *At Home on the Clackamas*. Broadside. Clamshell Press, 1990.
- . *Sources of Wonder: On Hearing the Sonoma County Chorus Sing Bruckner*. Broadside. Clamshell Press, 1991.
- . *The American Chorus Arrives in Prague*. Broadside. Clamshell Press, 1992.
- . *William Stafford American Poet 1914–1993*. Broadside. Clamshell Press, 1993.
- . *Under the Oaks II*. Santa Rosa: Santa Rosa Junior College, 1995.

- . *Want List and Other Poems About Aging*. Running Wolf Press, 2000. Block prints by Linda Emblen.
- . *By the Dozen: Sixty Short Poems*. Santa Rosa: Clamshell Press, early 2000s. First edition of 200 copies followed by a second printing.
- . *Day Under the Oaks III*. Santa Rosa: Santa Rosa Junior College, circa 2004.
- . *Under the Oaks: Selected Poems of Place 1960–1980*. Publication details unresolved.
- . *Admiral Arnold Solkov*. Broadside, undated. University of Arizona Poetry Center holding.
- . *The Reader's Rejoinder*. 250 monthly issues; final issue published posthumously. Archive not located.
- Emblen, Donald L., co-founder and editor. *Loon: A Journal of Poetry*. Begun 1973; run and issue details require verification.

WORKS ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Reception, directories, and biographical witnesses

Frank, Joan. "Don Emblen: The Fate of 'The Palomino Boy.'" *ZYZZYVA*, 31 March 2011.

A friend's account of Emblen's life, books, press, family, habits, and memorial.

Smith, Chris. "Santa Rosa poet's love affair with words fuels a lifetime." *San Francisco*

Chronicle, 5 January 2005. Profile of the poet, press, teaching, travel, and late books.

Press Democrat. "Obituary," 28 April 2009. Saved local PDF; interviews with Ed Buckley,

Richard Speakes, and Bob Duxbury.

Press Democrat. "Donald Lewis Emblen," 1–4 May 2009. Family obituary; saved local PDF.

Smith, Chris. "Don Emblen." *Press Democrat*, 11 August 2009. Memorial preview; saved

local PDF.

Hunt, Lester H. [Memorial posts for Donald Emblen](#). May 2009. Former student's account

of Emblen as teacher, reader, traveler, and editor, with the full poem "Back Country."

Culham, Ruth. *6+1 Traits of Writing: The Complete Guide*. Portland: Northwest Regional

Educational Laboratory, 2003. Includes the author's family memory of her uncle and lines from an Emblen poem.

Bir, Sara. "Sonoma County's Poet Laureate." *North Bay Bohemian*, 11 September 2003.

County laureateship history and term dates.

University of Arizona Poetry Center. [Broadside Collection Catalog](#). Updated 1 February

2024. Five Emblen broadsides; also corrects the misattribution of Lee Engdahl's *Murder of Crows*.

Santa Rosa Junior College. [Archives and Special Collections](#). Institutional route for college records and publications.

Santa Rosa Junior College English Department. [Scholarships and Awards](#). Current record

of the Don L. Emblen Literary Scholarship.

University of Kansas Libraries, Kenneth Spencer Research Library. [Richard Rhodes](#)

[Papers](#): "Don Emblen (Santa Rosa Junior College), 1975." Box 58, Folder 84.

UCLA Library Special Collections. [Edouard Roditi Papers](#) finding aid. Don Emblen

correspondence, 1984 and undated; Clamshell records.

Iota Press. "History." Account situating Clamshell Press within Northern California fine printing.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Open scans, discovery routes, and saved research

Wikidata authority record

Links Emblen to VIAF 84475204 and ISNI 0000 0000 7902 2034.

Dare I Read? — ‘Boundaries’

Complete text attributed to *Notes from Travels*.

SRJC spring 1971 minutes

Large institutional PDF indexed with two untitled Emblen poems; page-image verification remains necessary.

Petaluma Poetry Walk

Regional reading context and literary network.

Legacy obituary

Syndicated obituary and family details.

RIGHTS AND TEXTUAL NOTE

Copyright status and editorial limits

The holding library marks the scanned 1947 first edition public domain because copyright was not claimed or renewed. Later poems and modern reproductions may remain protected; this edition makes no blanket public-domain claim for them. Individual scans, modern web pages, and institutional images may have separate use conditions.

The cover resets inherited project artwork in the Extremes/Green system and is not presented as a historical scene. Archival captions distinguish newspaper clippings, bibliographic snippets, and later web captures.

Disputed bibliography, dispersed papers, probable transcription errors, and limits of the available corpus are stated as unresolved. Absence is recorded rather than repaired by invention.

COLOPHON

Production record

There Are Sea Gulls on Our Lawn and Later Poems was edited by Brian Kim Stefans for The Text-Tech Papers and the Extremes and Moderations: Early Southern California Poetry series.

Set in EB Garamond on a six-by-nine-inch cream page with mirrored margins, linked contents, PDF bookmarks, one archival section, source divisions, and one poem opening per page. Built from locally retained and freshly recovered witnesses and verified by full-page rendering.

The edition contains 52 poems: the complete forty-six-poem 1947 book and six later texts recovered from independent witnesses.