TO KEEP TIME
FULL-LENGTH BOOKS:

Areas of Fog (Shearsman Books, 2009)
At the Point (Shearsman Books, 2011)

CHAPBOOKS:

Minima St. (Range, 2002)
Eureka Slough (Effing Press, 2005)
Bramble (Hot Whiskey, 2005)
Property Line (Fewer & Further Press, 2006)
November Graph (Longhouse, 2007)
Within Hours (The Fault Line Press, 2008)
Out of Light (Kitchen Press, 2008)
The Lack Of (Nasturtium Press, 2009)
Mock Orange (Longhouse, 2010)
Exit North (Book Thug, 2010)
Another Rehearsal for Morning (Longhouse, 2012)
Thaw Compass (PressBoardPress, 2013)
An Interim (Tungsten Press, 2014)
The names get us through
the days
which is not enough and too much.
—John Taggart

repetition, change:
a continuity, the what
of which you are a part.
—James Schuyler
Beyond a hand
held beyond itself
the mist is too thick to see.
A dream fragment (a phrase
I wanted to remember)
goes mute in this—
extinguished. Call it
consciousness. What
we lose to recover.
Acacia branches bend
the hill’s edge
off-orange. A blur,
a deeper blur.
A clarity I can’t carry.
Over a gorge flanked by black oak ravens relay calls that double back in echo. Thick morning thinned to a pitch of sun and no hangover. Here you're either lost or lost. A wordlessness written into the dirt writes itself around you.
As long as blood runs the body, there is no silence. Silence hums. A sound. The sound of next to nothing—nothing—under our skin.

Wire-mesh fence—from this angle—quarters the day-lit quarter moon.
Parenthetical
pampas grass
shrouds a used condom
in useless shadow.

Information plaque
words worn to
glyphs. Jagged weather—
gouged-out cliff ledge clutched
by bramble-fused shrubs. Vertigo
holds my body here.
A fog bank fastens horizon to horizon. Names unfold the field. My mind is lapped and lost in it. Lapped and lost in this slow flowering of form flowering out of form.

World no more a world than thinking allows, and the light bound here in its place.
First sun all month throws the room off-center. A nausea-inducing blue
subsumes the window. Power lines
suspend a crow—
sliver of cellophane cinched in its beak
reflects sun after a month of
low ceilings, rain
and sirens sealing the hours shut.

Space heater hum displaces rain
as tonight’s accompaniment
to silence. What counts for it
when even breathing’s a
sound, skunks scuffle under
the floorboards and a car alarm’s
echo comes apart in a parking lot.
To keep time—
to keep time by—
interstices splint the dark.
No change beyond air
smelling faintly of old piss.
A neon liquor store sign
strains to break the overcast.
How November moves.
Stunted palm tree’s
stunted shadow sutures
curb to street, street to
curb—to lawn glazed
white with television. I
walk, watch day dissolve
on waking’s edge—
those impossible lines
consciousness repels.

+ 

On scintillated
pavement

shadows

segment.

Inward
a world

accumulates.

THE BLOCK
receipt

Wall streaked
of soot of

moths crushed
months ago

as dawn closes
in, opening
the room.

To wait

for what
the weather’s
saying

to lay
the day
unnameable.

first thing

Day collects
object by object
under puzzled over-
cast. What wakes
when waking. Patterns
animate walls, blind
corners, curbs.

Obstructions clear
a path to think
while the real flares
in and out of focus.

Vacillation voices
a world. We stand,
somehow, in place.
There's room in the room for you to not think in.

All autumn—the rot of it.
Clouds—no,
*cloud*—
a seamless dome
stilted
by a telephone pole.

Things remain—won’t
budge—no matter
what we say
(day, night)
to get
through.
Sideways rain
and a lamp on
in the middle of the afternoon.

Listen to the walls.

Listen to the room
turn
inside out.
Leaves and litter lashed wet against roots knuckled at the sidewalk’s edge.

Aural underbrush of insects an ambulance bores a slit through.
Three weeks of rain.
The wreckage glitters.

A cold front culls other colors: look long enough and the brush becomes another hill or mountain, cloud crowding skyline.
The mind brought past its racket swallows each gradation.

A private speech, a season.
Cold, yet
the page radiates
with what night can’t condense.
Call it
winter, this
wracked interior
no light lifts.
Hail,
a sudden
gust, throttles
the roof
as if to describe it.

Along lines of dust
suspended in
dust, sun divides

the room, while
wind trades
texture with talk

radio static; and the
occasional crow’s
throat-thrown

consonant, how it
slips through.
The noise,

the sleight
of day—
company.
Winter’s arrhythmic timbre
dislocates landscape, conjures robins where frost
and mud would be.
This supposed January.
No rain to fail to say
the hours through: the din,
the dumb show, the light
off-kilter and hollowing.

How everyday ready-mades
anchor the real. Acacia
blooms—migraine yellow—
approach the window.
Turn. Find tide’s out:
black plane beneath water’s
holographic gray.
Cloud rifts rove.
Three bees drone
around the sill
as if to carve their form
from warped wood.

Listening to wind
dislodge objects
in the dark around
my room, I want
to think thinking
is enough to locate
a world, but it isn’t.
It isn’t this one.
It isn’t this world,
weather.
No knowing whether
night or day, day
or dusk.

Black in-
grown white—light
leaching light.

There’s a sky: a surface
warbling: heat
or water.

And there:
an impression
pressed shallow
in muddled
scrub.

The imagination
craves a ghost.
Ecstasy evolves slowly within a closed horizon

—Pam Rehm

Place, placed apart.

Sun scrapes hills—an outline wedged in white, off-white.

(The limits delineate particulars.)

Tide gone out, shore pocked, mud balked with debris.

Weeds saturated black tangle between barnacle-crusted pylons.
The near silence
rattles me
to attention.
Nest of stone
foam slaps.
Something
lifts, settles
on the water:
a name,
a nonsense syllable.

The air itself dismantled
thread by braided
thread.
Shadows fall farther
from what they fail to copy.

I squint
to hear the ocean
pierce an aperture
in sky
not wide enough
for words—
even a word—
to escape.
No time to think
or speak when sky
cleaves rain and sun
filtered through stacked
clouds, a kind of kaleidoscope
you can't imagine as California
imagines it: the scale
disrupts the ordinary borders:
edges the eye holds to
flake off in shade
wavering as an eddy.

A vividness
leaves you beside yourself.

Rain stops, things
shattered
mend.

A split minute
of blindness
before objects
take shape.
Field's
furrowed
gradations

no palette
or pixel
could conjure.
And now wind

picks up,
snagging
the glare—

the glare
snagging
wind.
Bewilderment persists in this persistent pressure gradient. What I want to say I can’t see to say I can’t see to say it.

Hills twine power lines now that the sky cracks to let something other than its own involution through.

Season signaled by webs clasped or partially clasped to shadowed gaps visible when a thread’s glint grips an eye and captures how round the sun cuts between houses.
Ripped thin stratus
—a false horizon.

No room for music
when weather walls thought.

To find a way to live
with the gray—
is the thing. To walk
without rut or ledge; to track

through static. To stop looking
as if looking
were a way out.

Thorns hitch
half-spun web to half-spun web
where brush
twisted into itself
twists outward, filters
shadow through vines:

patterns on
shed metal
track time.
Dryer-vent steam veils hydrangeas
in the driveway.
A rat runs under
the house.

All white,
white, green
and a lamp
at the center
suspends amber
where hills
slip
dusk.
Animal noise
boils over
and sky spools up

sloughed off
marine layer

to pronounce a world
at once

found as it is
given.
The invisible world
is the visible world.

Eucalyptus limbs’ leaves
fill and empty wind.
Metal shed
roof reflects treetop
graphs—blinds me.

Faster than thought
a hummingbird flashes
out of frame,
frantic
in the cold.
Encaustic cumulus roves
over the momentary
world's
momentary parts.

Sun glosses
frost on the lawn.

Weather's
rhythms hinge
to each color
cloud-cut
open.
Mosquitoes
entwine,
synchronized,
above a sidewalk
blistered
with bird shit.

+ 

In the time it takes
for a thought
to think itself
wordless haze
wraps halfway
around a mountain.

THE BEND
Not quite a false spring.

A glow

gnaws the boundaries—

Low clouds shear the hills in half.
Distant shit
and wet moss
laced through
what winter’s
left: radiated
rain, warped
windowsill,
wind-seething
eucalyptus.

+ light
bleeding
various
invasives.
As if to pin a thought to the back of my skull—a hummingbird pivots, peers through me—its red-metallic throat afloat in fog.

Ocean-shoved cumulus cloud incises horizon held by hills and radio towers’ red, volleyed lights.
+ Bracken-thick
+ shade
+ lichen
+ alights.

From all corners
stars confuse the dark.
Compound the dark.

Frogs chant in tandem
over a seasonal creek’s
flat, static whisk.
Some evidence
of a world
raw to my waking, word-
less at first, re-
coils into noise—

Name it summer,
an after-
thought,
a hangover.

A monkey flower
flung
over its own shadow.
Caught up
in a susurrant
fluctuation of

water,
water wringing out
air—the Pacific

as it
pares down a presumed
soundlessness: a breath

at the
center of the room
dislodged by a word

distinct
from traffic: sustained
and refracted through

dunes and
dolosse—to notice
there is nothing to

notice
beyond the weight of
what there is to hear.

It's the ocean
sounding out

a panic
I otherwise
couldn't
pronounce.

Ouroboric
vowel fixed
to a low sky's
loop of
variable white.

+ 

Decayed
rope of
bull-head
kelp
distends
from tide-
Impossible to read, the glare at once bright and faint.

Haze incandescent, compressed by heat colliding with the marine layer. July has no memory. No-
thing's retained, the landscape shape-shifts continually and there is no ground for the mind to stand on, to sense itself here. This un-
remittent elsewhere, at once too bright, too faint to read.

tamped sand.

Mind mirrors that surface, shape, the moment I imagine if I thought far enough I'd leave my face.
FENCED

The day is
contrapuntal:
dogs bark,
vehicles
plunk past.

In air gritty
with ocean
horseflies
and gnats
etch
colliding
hieroglyphs

while the
humming-
bird feeder
sways in time
to a thought
interrupted,
moment-
arily empty.

TRANSIENT

At the end of a path
in a westernmost city
some sprawling pastel plant
I still don't know the name of
wilts over an oval stone.
Fog from the coast
blue as a vein.
Tree-frog jabber
thins thicket-dense shade.

Just enough—

enough static
to confuse things into place.
Confusion under eaves
unknown calls
before dusk
on the cusp the clangor
vivifies dulled
dulling sun what
doesn’t the mind mangle
weather revolves
above the peninsula
consumes it
and my vision there
is no other world.
and what remains of them. Night, here, coheres; and the mind unsettles in.
The first section of “Microlimate(s)” is a response to—and takes a few words from—Thomas A. Clark’s *Creag Liath*.

“Another Rehearsal for Morning” is dedicated to Lorine Niedecker ("I carry / my clarity / with me").

“Last Measure” is a response to Sally Mann’s series of Civil War battlefield photographs by the same title.

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