

SAMPLER

melancholy occurrence

Also by John Seed

Spaces In (Pig Press, Newcastle-upon Tyne 1977)

History Labour Night (Pig Press, Durham 1984)

Interior in the Open Air (Reality Studios, London 1993)

Divided into One (Poetical Histories, Cambridge 2003)

New and Collected Poems (Shearsman Books, Exeter 2005)

Pictures from Mayhew (Shearsman Books, Exeter 2005)

That Barrikins (Shearsman Books, Exeter 2007)

Manchester: August 16th & 17th 1819 (Intercapillary Editions, London 2013)

Some Poems, 2006-12 (Gratton Street Irregulars, Cheltenham, 2014)

Smoke Rising (Shearsman Books, Bristol, 2015)

Brandon Pithouse. Recollections of the Durham Coalfield (Smokestack Books,
Ripon, 2016)

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These pieces are appropriated from mostly nineteenth-century
English newspapers or inquest reports and rewritten. Without
changing significant details. They are not fiction therefore any
relation to persons living or dead is not entirely coincidental.

A handful have already appeared in
Tears in the Fence, *Poetry Salzburg Review*, *Card Alpha*,
First Offense, *Ink Sweat and Tears*, and *nonsite.org*.

SAMPLER

Weight, pressure, and accidental movement together with resistance are the four accidental powers in which all the visible works of mortals have their existence and their end.

—Leonardo da Vinci
quoted by Edward Robert Zurko,
Origins of Functionalist Theory, (New York, 1957), p.53.

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'One always fails to speak of what one loves'
on blank paper Barthes left
in his typewriter the Monday morning he

stepped off the curb at 44 Rue des Écoles
ronron the drone of traffic
art of the contingent there's always something else

something about the sky the cold the winter light
and was hit by a laundry van one afternoon
25 February 1980

SAMPLER

Sunday 26th December

1820 London

in French-alley Goswell-street
the watchman going his rounds
calling the hour of one
discovered a new-born infant
lying in a corner entirely naked
a few old rags around his head

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About six o'clock Saturday evening

18th May 1850

a man staggered down High Street Glasgow

reached North Gray's Close

and fell down

and died in the infirmary a few hours later his

name is unknown

his dress that of a labourer

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A stonemason died a short time since at Woolwich

employed three years making his own brick grave
and erecting his own tombstone

he carried the work on to the finishing
of the inscription leaving only

a blank for the date

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About three o'clock

Monday October 31st 1814

south-west corner of the Bank

one of the figures

dropped onto the head of a passer-by

who had just received a dividend

killing him and leaving a fracture

almost an inch wide

visible in the west wall

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Edward Charles Luard
of Jesus College Cambridge
wishing to see some friends
at Southampton
leaving for Jersey from the end of the pier
midnight Wednesday 28th June 1854
making haste in the darkness
being short-sighted he
fell over the quay
wall into the water
and disappeared

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Henry Farley a very quiet man having little to say
got out of bed about half past five

in the open door of an outhouse at the back of his cottage got up
on a four-inch set-off in the brickwork then slipped off

a widower aged 67 suffering from rheumatism a shepherd out of
work and given notice to leave his cottage at Upper Woodford
by Michaelmas

hanging from a beam his feet scarcely an inch from the ground

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Sunday morning going over his farm
Mr Way noticed the tools and coat of a labourer named Tremlett
employed the previous day
10th of November 1877
to level a cob-wall
his body buried beneath the ruins
pocket watch stopped at two minutes to four o'clock

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Jennings an illusionist
and conjuror at the Royal Aquarium
entered a butcher's shop on the Fulham Road
and fell through an open trap-door

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During the rejoicings Thursday evening
5 November 1807
somebody discharged a musket behind the watch-house

the ball passed through window shutters
on each side of the watch-house

and through the head of Sarah Osborne
fourteen years of age
standing in a shop in Bristol's Horse Fair

then through the windows of the house opposite
shattering a picture on the wall

Mrs Mary Rothes a pew-opener
performing her duties during morning service at Cripplegate
Sunday 8th of February 1835
fell suddenly to the ground saying
O god have mercy on me

and before anybody could reach her
ceased to exist

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private of the 14th Regiment
Charles Sturges
aged twenty-four
shot himself through the heart
at four in the morning
Tuesday 10 May 1876
on sentry at the barracks
Plymouth

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in the dressing room at the Victoria Skating Rink

Friday December 2nd 1910

William Lewis of Druid's Lodge

dressed as an arctic explorer

head to foot in cotton wool

lit a cigarette

next minute a flash

a sheet of flame

rushed out of the room

SAMPLER

Agnes Harriet Gilman aged three years
a winter night Friday about five
stepped into Ashborne-road Derby
and onto the tramway
and turned and ran
straight towards the car the horse
knocked her down across the rail

it was dark
the red lights of the car threw no light on the track
and the child was very little
and dressed in dark clothes
and the wheels went over her