John Seed
Also by John Seed:

*Spaces In* (Pig Press, Newcastle-upon-Tyne 1977)
*Transit Depots* (Ship of Fools, London 1993)
*Interior in the Open Air* (Reality Street, London 1993)
*Divided into One* (Poetical Histories, Cambridge 2003)
New and Collected Poems

John Seed

Shearsman Books
Exeter
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Transit Depots (1993)
Three Wednesdays in July (1998)
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‘even in the most sublimated work of art there is a hidden “it should be different”…’

Theodor Adorno
Cloud formations shift in the evening air
Clear almost to infinity over the
Crowded rooftops

Stars starlight brilliant random

as the pattern of streets in
Achromatic light
Actual pavements almost invisible ‘I wake

From daydreams to this

Real night’

. . . meaning is difficult
detours
Across darkness

Between language and silence struggling

For breath seeking roots in stone the shabby
Corridors of the underground echoing

Footsteps a distant shout
ALONG THE THAMES, LOOKING FROM THE ROOF OF THE CUSTOM HOUSE: October 1849

Light filtered through the tangled rigging and the masts – sails looped in festoons to the yards.


Busy trade and boundless capital: all corners of the earth ransacked, each for its peculiar produce.

A sort of trade.

Axis mundi.
BRICK LANE MARKET

Denturescrackedjugsbrokenshoespanlids. Collar studs for shirts long since rags.


Human figures bent over the gutters sifting garbage.

September 1984
Roofscape outlined black against the changing sky as the streets grow blue with dawn. Early workers gather round the breakfast stall, blowing saucers of steaming coffee. Little slattern girl, basket slung before her, screams watercresses through the sleeping avenues.

London, October 1849
Fifty thousand nights and
Chill dawns . . . structures
Fade upward into grey
Morning into afternoon  history
In alien familiar streets
Gone haywire written
Before under the same blank
Sky all
Lifelines converge the crystal mists the track
Vears into obscurity peters out
Into bramble fern barbed wire

Alien territory

our minds are blank
Or less than blank . . .

in the drab light the
Embarkation for Cytherea
Image then black

Like a candle blown out

... image  images

Of capital in drifting smoke
    Brief shadows moving
Across darkness and the flickering
Light of blazing cars

Lost in tangles of discourse

... another rainy night in Raynes Park
    among the surfaces of
        things blurred
            a kind of path

Down into the crater’s core
There is no form for this leaden structure. Metropolitan grey, the great cold slabs of power, all that excludes and does not change, becoming more itself. It is the water moves, beside the bare embankment, the chill dream . . . Contingency. Or there is only form. Repetition on repetition, impenetrable, the ungraspable figure of what we should have known.

What had to be believed to be seen. More absorbed within itself, fading into complexity it ends abruptly, or continues outside all experience its relentless trajectory. Or shifts for an instant sideways, into the brightness that lifts from the water the shining stones
Trudging the verb
Into streets where else
SW19 SW20
Victorian property after
Dark surfaces all
Changed in five years

Indifference the local
Currency meaningless
Succession of signs
Shopfronts stretch
Limos merchants
Of space

What can be said here
Has to be imagined or

Imagine

Pale smudge the moon
or the female skeleton in a sweat
at the back of the Junction selling
meat to strangers

Different distances to convert
into the currency of meaning

Along the Rio Grande Russia
is going home
so couldn’t you make this ‘Art’ too?
And so easy. The drab contingencies of a Saturday afternoon, April 1988, in Stockwell. As it happens. Almost in spirals the blown dust, cigarette smoke, theories of M3 on the bookies’ doorsteps. Sharp, clear-edged, against the shabby urban skyline the usual world

beauty protected by almost, in its cheap transcendence, its shoddy marketing strategies
What used to be the sky again

Out of the azimuth west different
Clouds stream smoking colour Morden
Chaos small
Disturbances local detail
Slightest fluctuations

Changed everything

After

of all places
The river glitters and seems to flow all ways. But the path is human, punctuated by orange pools that barely mirror a still sky. Half the morning I’ve walked here in my head whispering to you stories without narrative. Seeking clarity, daylight.

We left our happiness unwillingly.

It was more perfect than we knew
out of the warm continuous rain

White willow catkins
Opening over the water
And all that is not
Here fugitive
Sounds to make a synthesis to

Choose silence