Translation,
the bass accompaniment
Other works by Deborah Meadows include:

*Saccade Patterns* (BlazeVOX, 2011)
*How, the means* (Mindmade Books, 2010)
*Depleted Burden Down* (Factory School, 2009)
*Goodbye Tissues* (Shearsman Books, 2009)
*involutia* (Shearsman Books, 2007)
*The Draped Universe* (Belladonna* Books, 2007)
*Thin Gloves* (Green Integer, 2006)
*Growing Still* (Tinfish Press, 2005)
*Itinerant Men* (Krupskaya Press, 2004)
*Representing Absence* (Green Integer, 2004)
“*The 60’s and 70’s: from The Theory of Subjectivity in Moby-Dick*”
(Tinfish Press, 2003)
Deborah Meadows

Translation, the bass accompaniment

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Prefatory Note

The bass guitar creates patterns that make music into a visceral experience—they are what infect the body. The poems in Translation, the bass accompaniment: Selected Poems are in dialog with other authors, and here, experimental poetry engages logician Quine, encyclopedic novelist Melville, philosophers Irigaray and Deleuze, theologian and synthetic philosopher Aquinas, poets Dragomoshchenko, Hejinian, Raworth, Baudelaire, and Celan, Soviet cinematographer Vertov, video artist Bill Viola, and others.

Many have written of the mediated experience that language, private life, and civic life involve. In that spirit, the poetry engages the syntax of exploratory thought from ten earlier books brought together here for the first time and ends with a poem that hints at a version of tomorrow.

I arranged Translation, the bass accompaniment: Selected Poems chronologically with two exceptions. The long work entitled ‘The Theory of Subjectivity in Moby-Dick’ is comprised of 135 chapters that were published across these locations: Green Integer’s Representing Absence and Thin Gloves, Tinfish Press’s “The 60’s and 70’s: from The Theory of Subjectivity in Moby-Dick,” Krupskaya Press’s Itinerant Men, and Jacket magazine. I departed from the chronological arrangement with the placement of excerpts from the Tinfish chapbook entitled “The 60’s and 70’s: from The Theory of Subjectivity in Moby-Dick” that here intersect Krupskaya’s Itinerant Men because I thought the chapters are better read in sequence. The second exception is the placement of excerpts from ‘Growing Still’ written after the Moby-Dick sequence, yet through a fluke in publishing came out at an earlier date.

The books that follow that portion (involutia, Goodbye Tissues, Depleted Burden Down, and Saccade Patterns) are separate books yet mesh in other ways—political critique, philosophical exploration, interest in public and private speech, the durable mystery of translation, a look into the underlying assumptions of lived life, ethical thought, our troubled history, and the fragile nature of truth.

I am grateful to the many publishers who committed to and first produced my work, and for extending their permission. They include:
Douglas Messerli (Green Integer Press), Susan Schultz (Tinfish Press), Jocelyn Saidenberg (Krupskaya Press), Tony Frazer (Shearsman Books), Joel Kuszai (Factory School), Guy Bennett (Mindmade Books), and Geoffrey Gatza (BlazeVOX [books]). ‘Lamb Notes’ was published in Stone Canoe: A Journal of Arts, Literature and Social Commentary.

Deborah Meadows,
Los Angeles, 2012
Acknowledgments

These segments first appeared in the following books: *Representing Absence* (Green Integer, 2004) from *The Theory of Subjectivity in Moby-Dick* Invocation and Chapters 1, 2, 4, 13, 14,18, 20, and Faux translation of Charles Baudelaire's “To the Reader;” *Itinerant Men* (Krupskaya Press, 2004) from *The Theory of Subjectivity in Moby-Dick* Chapters 26, 27, 33, 37, 41,46,47, 48, 51, 80,89, 92, 102, 110, 114 ; “The 60’s and 70’s: from The Theory of Subjectivity in Moby-Dick” (Tinfish Press, 2003) from *The Theory of Subjectivity in Moby-Dick* Chapters 66, 68, 69; *Thin Gloves* (Green Integer, 2006) from *The Theory of Subjectivity in Moby-Dick* Chapters 124, 126, 127, 128, Gargant 1-6, 8, 23, 28-29, 36-37, 48-49, 50-51, Guest; *Growing Still* (Tinfish Press, 2005) excerpts from *Growing Still; involutia* (Shearsman Books, 2007) excerpts from Luce Studies the Blue Cliff Record, a little opera, Gilles Studies the Blue Cliff Record, a little opera, Animated States, Midnight in Our Motivated, Necessary Truths, Pets; *Goodbye Tissues* (Shearsman Books, 2009) excerpts from American Possessions, Goodbye Tissues, Aquinas: division textus, after Hölderlin, Further Articles, On Goodness in General, Four, Coda; *Depleted Burden Down* (Factory School, 2009) excerpts from Procuratio, Early Soviet Cinema, Translation, the bass accompaniment, Arrival, Another Interview, Apotropaic Shuffle; excerpts from *How, the means* first appeared as a chapbook (Mindmade Books, 2010) and then was included in *Saccade Patterns* (BlazeVOX, 2011) along with Threadwaste, Opercula, fall off as they open, School for Perisarcous Considerations, where, a site index, With hand on joystick, Weak as a directive, no. Lamb Notes first appeared in *Stone Canoe: A Journal of Arts, Literature and Social Commentary*. Sources for *Saccade Patterns* include: Wikipedia entries on Head-up display and Synthetic Vision system, the *Compact O.E.D., Threadwaste* by Robert Morris, *Engines of Logic: Mathematicians and the Origin of the Computer* by Martin Davis, Frank Zappa, Captain Beefheart and the Secret History of Maximalism by Michel Delville, *Pi in the Sky: Counting, Thinking, and Being* by John D. Barrow, and *Primates and Philosophers: How Morality Evolved* by Frans De Waal.

In addition to the book-length works acknowledged above, many of the poems, some in a slightly different form first appeared in the following books, anthologies, and various poetry publications:

from

Representing Absence
Faux translation of Charles Baudelaire’s ‘To the Reader’

The sot, his error or fishing lens
lives in our spirits, works in our bodies,
so we eliminate our friendly notes
like mendicants nourishing our vermin.

Our fish are heady, our repentance milky.
We do ourselves gross injustice by what we have
and lease happiness in a scarlet shirt.
Known for its dye that runs when washed, we touch it.

On the topic of bad birds, there’s thirteen
who longs for our impress, our service,
whose baton will vaporize all our freedom
like a suave atomic scientist.

It’s the bull who has our reconstructed son!
About the repulsive objects we work on, we joke
about the day the flames of our descendants are not about here
we joke without bleakness in order to cross the sills that leak.

The poor debauched sot who lowers his mouth and eats
the martyred river from an antique cupboard
we go together along a passage of pleasure and secrecy
that is hard pressed like our agent’s orange.

Zig-zag yet still being formed by millions of hemoglobin donors
is the cut womb of the townspeople
and when we breathe death itself into our lungs,
we breathe the invisible flowers very deeply of our sad songs.

If Viola, poison, flowery painters, and revolutionaries
are not brooding again and again over their demented pleasures,
then the everyday canvas of our pitiful destiny
is our friend like a hell that can’t be hardy.
But the old images in the canyons, the mountain lions and bugs, the chanter, scorpions, and biting snakes are all monstrous exaggerations of those that are merchandized at ramparts of our notorious zoo of cruelty and vice.

It is more laid, more sold, more unworldly than anything else that can be a large gesture or big cry. It volunteers the garbage of the land and lowers all our attempts in this world.

The eye of the bored person involuntarily blinks because it dreams of the sot high from smoking. You know it’s true, that monstrous delicacy, that drug of hypocrisy, like me, like you.
The Theory of Subjectivity in *Moby-Dick*

 Invocation

... ous author

the truth, let us do
    let us correct the way
it miscarried the primitive

for a deviant, at first delay

    come home
    things are due

The ... ous author

Clear the whole
Clear where you wrote “that and what”

No blood is good blood
purchased with a Franklin.

all confess to whole adventures.

*
Chapter 1

Having little or no subjectivity
brought into the world carrying cargo
or amor or moral precept to the street.

Mount it high, this substitute for piracy
sought and Lenten, mid-town is the Bath
pooled and previous
Were lovers there
some afternoons?

Avenues, when awkward, peep, but the
haunches and plaster tied to what is gone:
   How are the needles?
Once marketed for drakes, take whims
or experiments: metaphysical procedures
wedded to You (subjectivity, again)

The dreary sleep in the governor’s cottage
amazing us with handfuls of silence,
refusals of purpose:
   Why did the pillar go to brother’s?
   Must hearsay against others define Us?

Will Narcissus result in carnage, we should
shout that something is said about Image.
    A purse is passé, don’t general things
or something of everykind whatsoever say “myself.”

   Call me.

*
Of you. The topic in miniatures & shards. Their huge night behind them when “I,” so to speak, “go to sea,” I go by the royal dumb-down in the foyer to make rosy shadows. Of you.

The tallest assume “you” with concoctions of identity, but ever-alert, what about -roon blood, old sea captains, cup & punch, other kinds of servants of metaphysical trouble?

Whereas, “you” are never heard of.

* 

Constant.
Constant stands alone, free in pure air of stern axioms far more private for their atmosphere, Pythagorean violations. Their stink of Fate that dogs me.

What better Whole is bloody as those stagnant parts of circumstances which being curated means the state, the ship of state, Constant.

*
Chapter 2

Reaching
inhaled reaching, followed by or tucked
in as most stop at this place.

A place of departure where headrests, sleep,
originals are required: cement
banisters merge public and private lives,
how can order disguise the bows, bowsprits, etc.

Frost lay. I said to myself, as towards
identity and self-naming, lower your bag
and cover the darkness toward
expensive pavements and pumice the
secret inwardness. It’s all self, all
society, dreary streets and buses on from
here and hereafter. Moving
absorbs many of the works in public, so
encased in ashes, in poor boxes.

A common place. I muttered bathetic
entertainment by the weeping negro church.
I suppose I might look enough, seem
sufficient that tenting indoors, that judgment
more than ever divides. Matchless
is the miracle on the outside where the
window frosts only one-way. Northern
lights raise the dead man within, silken his
pillow lengthwise.
Now fiery, more of this scrape and plenty.

*
Chapter 4

Made of patchwork, this self interminable squares and palimpsest scrivened language.

As a procedure to fill or to empty: my mother of circumstances, this sea of scholarly conditions and strange questions contribute to the misfortune of selfhood, punning at the window with blankets and the sound of a house going from bad to worse—at last I got circular in the garden, steeped in trouble.

It’s a Norm, was a norm straining through horrid days. Fear of possession, “mine” were, I’m very sure. As if what he did, on the “savage’s side” of patchwork is a baby; unruly, thought I. Debased in the offing of my mind, he came to nothing about conclusions or quandary quietly. Upon narratives, he understood, but the truth essentially went nameless, a man always well worn with probability. It’s cultural: was a creature in the butterfly in the strangest possible location or was he just another pinch in the morning? Seeing this plainly as arms and washed as a wooden stock, we are restricted by the stride, its length, its series we come to know. How exceeding the edge defines it as a proud monkey of counting.

*
Chapter 6

Daylight. Daylight lends an exoticizing vision, this quotidian street with wealth hauled up from capitalized seas to widow walks, flowers festooned upon Nature’s bare rock with great Art. In Bedford the frequent foreigner stands athirst for gain. Experience mocks Innocence descended from sweet farm land, even overly precious ideas of self will be tested, and, no doubt, found wanting, stripped down by Tempest-force winds.

Fame. A famous town where bumpkins mow their notoriety short, where a court makes great fear of forged blades in this land whose condition is more than ever opulent for grand givers of dowries that even horse chestnut trees show “candles” just for those few powerful men for whom all creation must be cut down, boiled, rendered to a distillate of consolidated selfness. Small towns, sweet by appearance, destroy what fugitive kind they don’t understand, and knowledge by formula cannot complete its desire to comprehend all. The young, the green, the swallowing machine.

*
Chapter 13

The boarders wheel a device to become adventurers across cultural theories about every person adjusted having “seen me,” particular affects, stuff that is well-tried in the heart. For example, one of yours came to our wedding to the place he has never seen; it was a calabash, lent him from the boarding house, both ornamental and punctilious, used in certain grand, solemn occasions: the commandeer, the King, the Grace. Self placed next to or into the bowl makes quick foam.

And so. Huge hills, world-waves while friends and slender acquaintances lay silent and safely glide beyond her wharves, and somehow “I” spurn or factor dented records on slavery. Understood as indelible, these seas, their greenness must endure. Jeering our past, tasks aboard this gaunt rib of the sea ask: what do you mean by that? Is hatred, conflict and prejudice the low flying part of the main-sail, roughly washed, sent toward the lower jaw, being done, the boom whipped all the safety into an example of totality while the hands connect by feel, bulwarks sensed as solid, weighty, a few minutes more with the other, the mutual human joined in aid through form restored as difference.

*
Chapter 14

Our map. As packet or subset, this
dune is a scale of knowing, a collection
of exaggerated observations, puns on toothpicks
to lumberjacks. Extravaganzas of place,
origin in bird flight, in sea hunt:
at it a long time, years as a bell
you see more than hear, three blades
of conquest, a shade of colonial hours
made of grass, made mistaken,
perennial intention.

They were malicious: where some take rags
in tow, they barrel their moss. Fond, at last,
of watery trade, they first caught
plankton, then graduated to eohippus
as they waded out, then pushed off in
boats arranged to capture oceanic
wealth, power, and multiple meanings
attributed to whales.

Despite sea hernias,
they conquered sub-surface plantations,
divided among pirate powers, even poetry
the bogeymen of the Rose. Land like
lines, armed on the left-hand side following
the dictates of business which had
overwhelmed all courtships, fellowships,
and other ships such as Earth that feckless
gull our sunset buckets west between
billows so at sea it is.

*
Chapter 18

Fear takes the shark to Judgment who ain’t a pretty shark. Tell me, who on board in the fierce cognate of the killer paradigm sent the sea breaking Death and his house?

Mending a top sail offered the counterpart: how those who make their mark are subordinated by those who sign their names. Thus it has been “our Duty” eyeing the inferior systems of hicks and hogs. A trade bead. The great church doesn’t know anything about the way you were born. Creation and destruction of a small drop of tar, kinship stepped on women—each bead most simple in its relation so the state can cry out in some such way, pamphlet over, declare terms: Name is Event.

Previous. The cannibal author on the wharf delineates sequence as a postulate leaning forward, taking out spectacles to rub clean like a member.

*
Chapter 20

Employed with housekeeping of the world: beds, saucepans, chests, the usual as well as specialty equipment. Necessary material culture, hurrying bankers, an old lady, pension, and loss of the very truths on which society most depends. Her impenetrable space, the success of runes and radio telemetry, no spare captain, the heaviest gauge harpoons. Indefatigable crew members dissolved beneath the sudden drop of a promise to contact others on board. It all runs backward; falling lanceward could compare over and over.

Out upon the green during these days of Ahab, the draft not getting between the two as often as the suspects alone or solitary. When he was going through the motions, I held suspicions but said nothing inventive.

*