How odd that opening line is. It feels rigorous, demanding on syntax (which would feel more natural as "the statue doesn’t shift, but its shadow does") in a way that emphasizes the statue’s active choice in not doing something rather than its passive immobility.

Gander tells us in the introduction that he is interested in how D’Aquino’s syntax braids together the relationship between the human and inhuman to emphasize “the mutuality of perceptual experience—the intertwining of the seer and the seen.” Gander’s simple yet essential choice in verb placement animates the inhuman world, as does his frequent use of verbs that ascribe body parts to the inhuman, as in “fingering forward.” The effect creates a kind of restlessness to the poems, a hyper-sentient awareness of nature and the networks that connect us to our surroundings.

This is not easy poetry; it can be difficult to identify or locate the lyric utterance. Rather than narrative or situation, we get moments of looking, as in the poem ("green fluorite") that conveys several different experiences of observing a crystal with intense scrutiny. Like many of D’Aquino’s poems, the investigation centers on contact between the speaker’s body and the object:

The contact
between the feeble cobalt-colored radiation
of my fingerprints
and the intense
orange radiation
of this opaque piece
of green fluorite
I hold between fingers
gives rise
—at the simplest level
of the radiant glow
of these distant and splendid bodies
to the imminent encounter
of my skin and the crystal
and the deepest rapprochement
between inner planes
that fuse
—vibrations of light
carried between the mineral heat that transports me
and the crystalline images
locking into place
behind my eyes [. . .]

This kind of encounter often builds, as it does here, to a connection that is both erotic and spiritual:

[. . .] A naked blue
body in plain sight
—that endless longing
for touch incandescent at the centerless
center of every thought—
it stands maimed and lascivious
between coiled shadows that never stop moving
—violet stumps
of legs and arms—
and it’s only visible
under the oblique light which flickers across it
this form unfolding
between my fingers
while it declares me and contains me
and in its dazzle
encodes
the instant in which I see it
and the colorless clarity of this room
How fitting that crystal in particular becomes the object of D’Aquino’s inquiry. It allows the intertwining of the seer and the seen in its angular, opaque transparency that continues to unfold, to declare and contain what it mirrors as the crystal is turned. The poem also crystallizes an awareness of active attention in the process of reading. It’s as if the poem is only fully formed at the moment of the reader’s attention, building itself up to that moment, dissolving into opacity again after. By poem’s end, we’re left with the feeling of Wait, what just happened? and ready to read it all over again.

Gander points out that D’Aquino’s poetry shares affinities with Hart Crane’s, and I would agree. But instead of emphasizing a sense of private erotics, I would point to the way that both poets seem interested in how language at once builds and dissolves physical structures that stand for spiritual aspirations. This idea is a central motif in the book, captured by the play of variations on the words “transparent” and “translucent.” In Networks,” the speaker’s awareness of the resonances of natural forms is a matter of apperceiving each distinction, the “transparency of the particular/the dissolved landscape.” And the final poem, “[Knot],” which is aptly titled and bracketed given the Droste effect of its ending, leaves us with a sense of never-ending refraction: “And the image in the depths of the image/ [translucent] in another [image] translucing.”

fungus skull eye wing is a book to read in one sitting, with the dictionary. It requires a certain kind of flight, a letting go of firm footing in normal modes of sense making and word usage so that you can fully immerse yourself in D’Aquino’s perspective on a luminous natural landscape—and I’m not using “luminous” in that wishy-washy way that many books of poetry are called luminous, but because the world articulated by these poems has everything to do with light and how it “transparentizes,” “iridesces,” and allows things to be “interseen” (to use some of the book’s wonderful neologisms). Part of my enjoyment in reading this book has to do with Gander’s sensitivity to what he describes as the original’s nuanced and counterpointed “orchestration of sound,” which become another organizing principle of his translation. He is smart enough not to try to stay “faithful” to the music of Spanish but to discover a new kind of orchestration suitable to the medium of English. But capturing music alone does not lift writing to the level of poetry. This iteration of D’Aquino’s poetry displays all of Gander’s writerly faculties at play and challenges us to pay close attention. It’s as if the poem is only fully formed at the moment of the reader’s attention, building itself up to that moment, dissolving into opacity again after. By poem’s end, we’re left with the feeling of Wait, what just happened? and ready to read it all over again.

I read this opening section a number of times before proceeding, not because I didn’t understand it but because I recognized the feeling, ridiculous as it is, of not wanting to continue with a book that I know I will miss once I finish it. My premature nostalgia for the book and the speaker’s nostalgia aligned in the numb repetition. “It happened, without a doubt / it happened.” This kind of awareness of anticipation, that heightened moment of waiting, is precisely the project of Theme of Farewell (leaving After-Poems aside for the moment). It explores how one’s sense of time changes after receiving a terminal diagnosis. “Everything was / already on its way,” De Angelis writes early in the sequence, “from then on, everything was here, unique / and lost, ours and far from us, burning. Everything asked / us to wait for it, to return to its true name.” As he goes on to write elliptically of medical treatments and hospitals and visiting hours, the present grows immense with significance: “Inside the room, inside that exact way/of placing the objects, there was your anticipation / and everything was getting ready for the moment of entry, for the bare feet / crossing the border, every border [ . . . ]” This is an intimate grief, one, as Stewart points out in her introduction, that we are only allowed to follow mutely and only by accepting the poet’s terms. Stewart and Ceccagnoli took on one of the hardest translation tasks: to replicate repetitions and relationships between poems that build and change throughout a book-length sequence. Especially for a poet writing in the hermetic vein, the recurrence and mutation of a private lexicon is paramount. Yet translation often thwarts efforts at one-to-one recurrence and calls for real ingenuity in replicating word play. Each language functions differently when it comes to how it builds poetic linkages, and the Anglophone reader is accustomed to making connections not just through direct correspondence but also through synonym structures. For example, the passage quoted above from “Everything was already on its way” uses anaphora by repeating “tutto” in the original, for which the translators rightly employ synonyms at the beginning of the poem:

Everything was already on its way. From then to here. All of time, luminous, skimmed across the lips. All the sighs strung on the necklace. Lambrante’s shadows shut the door. The whole room, taken in, became the first heartbeat [ . . . ]

If they had tried for a more direct correlation to the original by hinging the anaphora on the word “every” where “tutto” occurs in the original, the meaning would shift drastically. “Every time” is utterly different from “all of time,” “every room” distinctly universal compared to “the whole room.” “[T]he sequence is of paramount importance to De Angelis,” Stewart writes in her introduction. With this as a guiding principle, the translators allow us to track the resonances that build throughout the second book, After-Poems. They have managed to preserve many of the direct repetitions that occur here, often carried by nouns: shower, hand, syllable, sentence, wine cellar, notebook, soccer ball. After-Poems feels less immediate than Theme of Farewell. Yet it provides an interesting revision of many of the same themes, which is its own kind of return from the vantage of time. “It will happen, / you used to say,” De Angelis recalls the beginning of Theme of Farewell in the first section of After-Poems, “everything that happened / will happen.” The speaker is caught between one’s sense of time changes with time. Everything that happened will happen again and again in memory.

Given this terrain, De Angelis’ poetry explores the implication that writing is a process of translating, in this case of translating the past through memory. His own experience as a translator of Virgil, Racine, Baudelaire, and others perhaps makes him more attuned to the idea, which he explores directly in several sections. In Theme of Farewell, it becomes a metaphor for love-making that culminates in “the sound / of the forgotten moment, the

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certainty of having made a mistake in the translation.” He returns to the idea with more distance in After-Poems:

That’s how it is. The memory of a man was only this handful of syllables. Only they come back from the wine cellars where they live rent-free and well-timed, they are thrown beyond the rocks, they whisper astonished words, they are a flapping of wings, reaching forward, faithful to a secret order. Now you must do the translation.

Reading De Angelis’ words, I am struck by the possibility that writing conceived as translation inevitably carries within it an element of elegy—for times past, for experience never fully rendered, for that famous remainder received as translation inevitably carries within it an element of elegy—for it’s appropriation. Some of the most moving moments occur when the narrator grows self-reflective and contemplates the very nature of his impulse toward lyricism:

At times when I’m really down I can’t help but sing certain key Phrases pimps invent behind Closed doors. That kind of slang Turns me inside out like a glove As I pan with my sluice box Amidst waste and gravel I can’t help but read these meta moments as descriptions of Tysh’s own poetic project, as her form of the Ars Poetica. Tysh pans with her sluice box in the river of Genet’s prose to discover lyric gold—those certain keys that strike the ear and keep the pen moving.

I will be returning to each of these books often to keep my own pen moving. They represent the kind of “great labor” that Eliot talked about in terms of a poet’s claiming of the past. The translator and the writer alike always have before them the poem that stands prior, and they proceed fully aware that “art never improves, but that the material of art is never quite exhausted; always have before them the poem that stands prior, and they proceed fully aware that “art never improves, but that the material of art is never quite exhausted;