

ABOUT *ARTIFICIAL HEART* (1998):

In his visionary quest, his raw emotion, and his New York school spontaneity, Gizzi performs a clinamen that relates him to O'Hara, Ashbery, and, beyond these poets, to Rimbaud and Hart Crane. . . . Gizzi is a master of the *mot juste* and of sound structure.

—Marjorie Perloff, THE BOSTON BOOK REVIEW

Peter Gizzi is on the quixotic mission of recovering the lyric. What Gizzi is doing, and what many others could do fruitfully, is taking the current doubt-ridden, cross-referential ways of reading and writing to heart while holding on to the old dream of making sense.

—Andrew McCord, NEW YORK REVIEW OF BOOKS READER'S CATALOG

Artificial Heart clearly shows that the heart can live beyond the body, can and does exceed the body: that an artificial heart is nothing false, but is a portable site of feeling and visceral meaning. And that artifice has heart, exemplified in moments of the poetry's clear humanness—that suddenly collapse these constructed distances between the self and history, the self and the I, the life and the language. This is a valuable collection, both for the issues it raises and for the simple pleasure of beautifully crafted language that it offers.

—Cole Swensen, THE GERM

I count Peter Gizzi as one of the most exceptional poets of his generation and consider his work to constitute a primary ground for the definition of contemporary poetry. Few people I've known have managed such an intensity so usefully directed.

—Robert Creeley

There is a darkness at the heart of Peter Gizzi's new collection of poems, *Artificial Heart*, that is far from artificial. It is the all-too-natural darkness at the center of being-there: an originary absence that, as in the myth of Orpheus, cannot be rescued by representation. The title accurately locates the site of writing as the 'heart of artifice.' In 'realizing' emptiness, the poems start a flow of current, a darker circulation within the darkness—and in doing so, initiate a movement toward regeneration, if not redemption.

—Andrew Joron, HAMBONE

These poems prove that poetry can have a heart—an unsentimental organ, a marred and vulnerable object—and not collapse beneath its weight. Gizzi expresses no 'ordinary fictions'; rather, his poetry articulates a vastness secured by the details that compose it. Solos emerge but in perfect balance with ensemble play; an interdependence too often absent from linguistic narrative is here found in every poem.

—Beth Anderson, POETRY PROJECT NEWSLETTER

Peter Gizzi is one of the most prominent members of a new generation of American poets whose work reasserts the traditional poetic pleasures of form and beauty. These are the well-made poems of the poet as crafter, language deployed with subtlety and precision, an inventive use of figure and form plus an eclectic range of reference, sampling “high” and “low” cultures. Gizzi celebrates the beauty of the physical or “natural” world—and the beauty of the made, its constructions and connections.

—Geraldine McKenzie, BOXKITE [Australia]

[These are] poems that get themselves to be gorgeous without screaming ‘look at me!’ and carry perspectives sharp enough to know that one can be large without dominating and small without shutting out the world. . . . Gizzi has the profound ability to find in nearly every poem, no matter the range of concerns each poem embodies, the words to create a space where “vulnerability won’t reproduce cruelty.”

—Anselm Berrigan, TRIPWIRE

At their quietest, the poems are touching along (but never to) a fault: we hear the distant rumble of the world going on without us, see the uneven ground of our languages. When they’re louder, they’re like the best garage band possible on paper, a lasting noise in the face of the forces aligned against us.

—Graham Foust, THE WASHINGTON REVIEW

Gizzi’s poems create a multi-layered textuality where the personal and impersonal, subjects and objects, individuals and history, interact in a remarkably resonant way. There’s a sensual intelligence working in these poems in which ideas are generated out of the rich sound of language and its images. Despite their emphasis on form and structure, on artifice, the most striking quality to the poems in *Artificial Heart* is their conviction that subjects still matter.

—Alan Gilbert, CHICAGO REVIEW

In *Artificial Heart*, Peter Gizzi, one of the most exuberantly talented poets of his generation, a poet drunk with his love of words, combines a rigorous interrogation of the act of utterance with a determination to save and renew the tropes of chivalry, to rescue both the individual beloved and the world as object of devotion. “When goodbye is the operative word / forgiveness is either easy or impossible,” Gizzi writes, and it’s his goal to transform that easy impossibility into the impossibly easy. “Once upon a once there was a once / and that once evaporated into air”: in *Artificial Heart*, Peter Gizzi conjures up that never-to-return “once” and permits us to reside there (in air) for an impossible, beautiful moment.

—Reginald Shepherd, AMAZON.COM BOOK REVIEW

Let it be loudly proclaimed: Peter Gizzi's *Artificial Heart* is a carefully chiseled book of poetic wonders ... a masterpiece, a panoramic tracking shot of "that swell vista between the century and now." It is as likely to quote the Beach Boys as Eliot; it allows itself "to err, to wander/wonder, to drift"; it peals with music both metrical and tourettic; and its apocalyptic vision flowers before us in full fright. ... Gizzi's work is often concerned with "The Question of Scale," as one of the poems puts it, and it attacks the enormity of this task with fervor. ... Using such relentless yet grounded abstraction, Gizzi fully inhabits our strange era—"New Picnic Time"—and finds a way to address our reality with a "pure speed" that goes far beyond mere description. Yet, conscious of "the useless treasure of an ending," Gizzi never abandons his work to head games. When he does play—and it's no accident that "toy" is an important word in this book—he invokes the spirit of honest conversation rather than pastiche, and of emotion rather than exegesis. ... Gizzi's impeccable sense of line and stanza create a fine and delicate music throughout. ... In other words, "it is a song that carries this day." Gizzi's gorgeous musicality marries his abstractly conjured imagery in a wedding of nonlinear bliss, once again demonstrating that the heart of poetry, artificial though it may be, veers away from sense and always toward beauty.

—Ruth Andrews, RAIN TAXI

With a kind of cinematic shift technique of closing-in on workaday reality, Gizzi's is a metonymic poetry that delights not only in the notion of substitute shape, but in the hum of its absence—a speech fascinated by the surrogate reality of pronouns, and the story behind the story. Gizzi posits a dialectic of the 'beautiful lack' by which one wants to be repaired, and of the search for that "lost space this speech proposes."

—Roberto Tejada, SULFUR

Akin to Spicer's *Language*, Peter Gizzi's book, *Artificial Heart*, is a palimpsestic rendering of the real whose code, he suggests, is one of de- and reformations, a trickster's code.... Many of these poems have the quality of open air studies in which the aim is not to form objects, but rather to suggest a feeling for them, for "the space / where the lines are not." This impermanence is frequently achieved through a layered vocal fabric, one that eschews transparency and rationalized narrative for heteroclitic structures unafraid "to err, to wander / wonder, to drift"... The tonalities, persuasive innovations and sheer formal dexterity of this book are thoroughly delightful and enviable.

—Joshua Green, THE BOSTON REVIEW

Artificial Heart is as nimble and full of wit as it is knowing and 'versed' in poetic device and literary history. The work features a marvelous diversity of form and playful finesse. Gizzi employs humor and imagination—an overt and puckish artifice, in much the same manner as a Cheyenne Contrary or Sioux sacred clown.

—John Olson, THE AMERICAN BOOK REVIEW

Peter Gizzi, whose book *Artificial Heart* was one of the events of the decade, is a stunningly gifted poet whose output ranges from beautifully compressed lyrics on the one hand, to capacious, crowded, weirdly convoluted, quasi-philosophical meditations on the other. His formally very cogent poems absorb the languages of tradition in a way that seems constantly to be opening quotations without ever closing them, as if to demonstrate the extent to which a tradition is comprised of mutually anthologizing gestures.

—Rod Mengham, *STAND* [U.K.]