

ABOUT *THE OUTERNATIONALE* (2007):

Peter Gizzi's disturbing lyricism is like no other—the innermost whirl of the daily curtain rising on outer catastrophe. His phrasing can wrench the heart, his eye refracts ordinary light into acute images. In *The Outernationale* we are “listening to a life / un-lived any other way”—unmistakably, as poetry.

—Adrienne Rich

Catching sight of “gravity and fire” in these Gizzi poems singing Sun, I knew, in addition to so much else, there wd be music... I knew I wd find here something threshold, connXing us back to the “nation” and “language” and passim song and it’s there, deep into the pages... This new poetry, taking such care of temperature—the time & details of the world—meaning the space(s) in which we live—defining love in this way. Writing along the edge. What I call MR/everydayMagicalRealism. A way of writing about hope.

—Kamau Brathwaite

Peter Gizzi's achingly beautiful poems create tiny openings for being—the whole lonely, searching grandeur of a one—to find and examine its contours between the conditions of “what happened” and “what’s happening.” One might be sung down from a ledge by this book's insistence on “the warmth of the mind reflected in a dark time” and its acute rendering of the range of human feeling in all its complicated, ordinary marrow.

—Anselm Berrigan



Gizzi's poems reach persistently for what comes to seem like the ghost of the beauty of the world.

—Rae Armantrout, POETRY FOUNDATION (Best Books of 2007)

Some superb poetry titles out in the English language around the world in 2007. To my mind, the most lyrically investigative and dynamic was American poet Peter Gizzi's *The Outernationale*.

—John Kinsella, AUSTRALIAN BOOK REVIEW (Best Books of 2007)

Peter Gizzi's *The Outernationale* is magnificent. It gives me what I need from poetry—a reminder to *feel alive*... he remembers that a shiver of sensation is vital, it's the first thing, before mere message or artful phrasing.

—Ange Mlinko, POETRY FOUNDATION

Gizzi can telescope between the interpersonal and the global within the space of a single line to create a true sense of both individual and collective experience.... *The Outernationale* feels looser, riskier, and ultimately more charged than Gizzi's other collections, offering new challenges and unforeseen pleasures.

—Chris McCreary, RAIN TAXI

The everyday distances in Gizzi's new book are ones that have always been his terrain: those between word and world, self and word, self and world.... Gizzi's self-scrutiny doesn't derail his search for consolation in a world where everything crumbles and turns to dust. Instead, it makes the search, and the need to shape it into song and story, all the more vital.... *The Outernationale* is a remarkable book: in poem after poem, nerve flares into shimmering gauze.

—John Palattella, BOSTON REVIEW

Gizzi's *The Outernationale* resonates most in its antilyric lyrics, which resist closure and trick out language and rhetoric with the best of postmodern poetry while also welcoming readers through their emotional pitch. The poems do not shy from intimacy... they assert Gizzi as a poet every bit as socially necessary and aesthetically significant as Adrienne Rich and Jack Spicer.... One can only admire how Gizzi has created poems that are of "use, to the actual seen thing / to be in some way related by one's actions in the world."

—Emily Warn, BOOKFORUM

This book is itself luminous. I would call it a book of sharp documentary photography of Gizzi's mined stratum of reality if it wasn't for the constant movement. I would call it then a film if in a film, people could be darkness and light, and light the main character. One thing can be said for certain: *The Outernationale* is like a *chant de guerre*, an anthem, and full of challenges for our future work.

—Simona Schneider, THE MODERN REVIEW [Canada]

The new Peter Gizzi book has arrived at last. It's called *The Outernationale*. His last book *Some Values of Landscape and Weather* was so good, I thought this one may disappoint, but it hasn't. It's got the same mastery of lyric form, in a tradition running from Wallace Stevens through John Ashbery, but made distinctly his own.

—Alan Baker, LITTERBUG [UK]

Gizzi has always sought to allow his poetry to play off linguistic self-awareness against the more primary urge to confess and reveal... there is a certain defiance in his annexation of neo-expressionist modes of address.... It typifies Gizzi's willingness to approach poetry in the highest of terms, as central to understanding who and where we are.

—Mark Ford, PN REVIEW [UK]

Peter Gizzi is a wizard of language and a poet who reflects the serious, exploratory side of poetry in fresh and rewarding ways. The special effects in these poems quickly settle into breakthrough styles of expression that make readers shake and nod their heads. New beginnings and old pathways to undiscovered territory are announced, poem after poem. Upon further reading, it becomes clear that Gizzi's poetry is where the existence of words and ideas is merely the fertile soil for poetic achievement of the highest quality."

—Ray Gonzalez, THE BLOOMSBURY REVIEW

Deep water in spare lines. Poems of light and metaphysics, of time and color. Wallace Stevens hung as a conceptual canvas in which more is left out than shown—yet seems to be missing nothing. It's all elemental. The words are glass jewels twirled to reveal new facets to the eye and mind. This is not work one reads and immediately "gets." It is moving water: something all of us recognize but cannot chart. But do we need to know how it works? And there's the paradox: the smallness of all we call "knowing." Resulting in despair or freedom? An ungovernable joy is possible. To fly we must let go.

—Phil Wagner, ICONOCLAST

From its punning title, *The Outernationale*, and the subtle formal brilliance of the poems to the handling of wit and emotion this is another fine collection... in which a deft aphoristic style proffers its observations with an emotional commitment that avoids dogmatism or piety.

—Peter Middleton, SALT [UK]

Gizzi's *The Outernationale* is one of the least solipsistic books I've picked up in a long time. His preference for speaking from the position of "we" gives the poems an open, airy quality, and many of them come across like public songs sung at a pitch above thought. But Gizzi always goes back to the individual mind, the intimate inner world that frames his own life inside the "outer" world. In this way, the book's title predicts not only a set of concerns that link the political and the personal, but also the notion that an inner life quickly becomes an outer life.... Thought, in *The Outernationale*, is no mere melancholy solipsism, but propulsive, concept-making creativity.

—Katie Peterson, HARP & ALTER

The Outernationale looks at a fallen world with a curiously detached, curiously compassionate eye, but it is still recognizably a world of brightness and possibility, a world of vistas and views, of silver winkings and wonder, a world Gizzi insists is still capable of self transformation.... For Gizzi, beauty—the beauty of a reality transfigured by vision and the beauty of language wrought to an exquisite state of expressive power—embodies the principle of utopian impulse.... *The Outernationale* thus marks a noteworthy turn in American poetry.... one of its signal achievements is that it synthesizes the other-oriented tradition of the Objectivists with the I-oriented tradition of the late Romantics. As poetic modes, revelation and re-making achieve a compelling synthesis in an idiom that unites wonder and conclusion in rich and unexpected ways.

—Jon Thompson, FREE VERSE

Gizzi's excellence is to be found both in his expansion of our definition of the lyric, and in his flawless ear and sky rocket mind as he takes his particular version of the lyric onto the poetic highway to see what it can do. ...and the ride is well worth the ticket.

—Stephen Collis, THE POETIC FRONT [Canada]

Light crops up a great deal throughout *The Outernationale*... and it is absolutely, poetically right in these poems, embodying the strangeness & otherness & evanescence which lie at the heart of Peter Gizzi's genuinely visionary writing. And it *is* exceptionally competent & confident writing, there's no doubt about that. Nor should we be in any doubt about its simple lyric beauty.

—C.J. Allen, LITTER MAGAZINE [UK]

The Outernationale seems to be a modern symphony the movement of which is centrifugal, rejecting individuals away from the centre (of power, of civilization) to the margins.... The neologism "outernationale" turns the idea of nation inside out: what is questioned is the very possibility to relate (a story, a feeling) to someone. In a time when the public sphere is shrinking, what is at stake is "our" ability to be and speak together in a world which mass-produces isolation. In that case, the renegotiation of the lyric self is a way to adjust to this new situation and to find new bearings in the world.

—Olivier Brossard, ETUDES ANGLAISES [France]

Some Values of Landscape and Weather struck me as one of the best recent collections to have crossed my desk – although, when I say "recent", it's nearly 3 years since I received the book that I write this note. Peter Gizzi is proof of new life in American poetry, despite the shadow cast by an earlier generation and an old avant-garde that just won't get out of the way. Gizzi's poetry is not afraid of surface beauty, and doesn't lose out on complexity either. This is a very fine book indeed. Some of his earlier work can be found in an interesting Salt volume called *Periplum*, which is also worth investigating. His latest collection, *The Outernationale* was for me one of the finest books of poetry that I read in 2007, reinforcing the impression from the earlier book that the author had moved up a gear and now finds himself amongst the finest poets in the US.

—Tony Frazer, SHEARSMAN [UK]

I have heard Peter Gizzi read numerous times over the years. What most struck me about his reading on Thursday night was how fully he's honed a unique voice (which isn't a style) that at the same time is an emptying out of what in poetry is conventionally termed "voice." This isn't such a surprise given Gizzi's long-term commitment to the work of Jack Spicer, who similarly treated poetry as a form of dictation. For Gizzi it's an idea of self that's both a void and a social construction in much the same way that a nation is with its dreams, its failures, its mythologies, its real and its false binding agents. On a more formal level, there's a careful spatiality to his

work that involves a painterly balancing of light and shadow along with the ability to see his own body as just another object in space with a long historical trajectory. A concern with American-ness haunts his work.

—Alan Gilbert, POETRY FOUNDATION

American poetry's ability to "make free" in thought and expression has not yet run out of steam. Peter Gizzi's remarkable fourth collection, *The Outernationale* . . . is motivated by a constant effort to retrieve—or at least touch—the outer limits of an embattled democratic imagination.

—Jeremy Noel-Tod, THE TIMES LITERARY SUPPLEMENT [UK]

In Peter Gizzi's fourth book *The Outernationale*, the poet considers issues of sight. His central subject is nothing less than a new way to look at the world ...there is an unrelenting keenness of observation and an intensity of vision that is as much in the service of joy as it is of darkness. His work lives at the edge of lyric and experiment, which is the most vital place one can occupy in today's poetry. *The Outernationale* is a gorgeous homage to attention itself, and reminds us that "The eye is an instrument of emotion."

—Andrew Grace, MANTIS (Stanford University)

Among the many things that strike me about Gizzi's language, perhaps the first is how forthright and openhearted it is. Odd, perhaps, to say about writing that's also mysterious, but those two adjectives, along with 'brave' and 'sensuous' sum up my feelings for *The Outernationale*.

—Richard Silberg, SAN FRANCISCO POETRY FLASH

From the outer edges of the visible world to the outer edges of social organization to the outer edges of words... Gizzi's poems repeatedly perform the great magic of causing highly subjective memory or sensation to occupy the same frame as objective realities and events... This telescoping back and forth from the vast, timeless, and gigantic to the material, neglected, and finite, succeeds throughout the book precisely to the extent that it never sounds like method or message. It's possible Gizzi can take his poems such distances because their origins are rooted in sensory truths: a startling sharp-sightedness with elemental imagery. Who recently has done so much with colour, light, and sound? It's as if, in their project of healing schisms, the poems were pushed to return to first percepts.... I'd urge anyone to read *The Outernationale* by Peter Gizzi.

—Ken Babstock, BRICK [Canada]