

Gregory
Vincent
St. Thomasino

in memory of our mothers & brothers

3 Poems

In appreciation we acknowledge our poetic predecessors: "History" and "Sailcloth" first appeared in print in *The Germ* #2, 1998. "Anselm" appeared online at *Nthposition* for July 2004 and at *Tower Journal*, Spring 2008.

Introduced by Joseph F. Keppler

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Poets.Painters.Composers.
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Summer 2008
Seattle*

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Time, History and Gregory Vincent St. Thomasino's Poetry

Calendars, clocks and measured time seem exclusively human. It is as if one has to be human for time to be at all experienced, and for anyone to be actually timeless means to be not even conceived, or to be dead. Whether calculated from planetary motion or particle decay, time seems always and everywhere going on, and doing so continuously without apparent beginning or end. Time is thought to be running impartially, all by itself, with or without us, oblivious of us living and dying in its uncaused, immaterial pace.

For me as one person to think about my living in time is to consider this unique duration among everyone's: my physical conception commencing with my mother's and father's bodies and continuing until my own eventual death. My mother and father and sons and daughters share biographical propinquity with me in our temporal individuality. It is as if generations are formed in time like waves in oceans. Our waves appear and disappear while the countless water continues.

Next to time, which invisibly and relentlessly slides past into present, history is considered to pre-exist—us and its being covered for a public. History seems obviously past before ever being first written. History somehow is just there: first made and

then composed. There are acts or events—then thoughts about the acts or events. Herodotus and Darwin both are historians.

Considered as absolutes neither time nor history can come undone; yet both are thought to be manageable and measurable—time through physics and mathematical extrapolations (bringing up time travel) or through observable repetitions and created schedules; history through research, imagining and writing. To experience time as time without mistaking it for the measurement of it or likewise to experience history without the narrative management of it seems rare to me but possible with wisdom from art, for example. Time is a whole in and out of oneself, an experience as beautiful and different as others are from oneself. Science and what can be taught have little to do with our temporality. Time present is not digital, not analog and not history; it is not passing; it is free and complete and somehow continuing. Today we all are the same age: today. Tomorrow we are not: tomorrow.

History of course doesn't seem the same before and after being written by someone who thinks of it as a special story. History is sometimes compiled for people as a common delineation regardless of their individuality, or it is

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assembled as a sort of elite mandate in the face of common mortality. Historians produce histories as disparate as they themselves are. Author, subject and language work together for historian, history and text to exist at all and still seem true. As enlightening and provocative as many are, history books are more or less strategic fictions and however profound are real perhaps the way literary work and anthropology are real but real different from one's own actual life or another's.

Poetry is distinct from actual life too, but unlike time and history poetry seems to and does completely depend on particular people actually creating it. Were it not created, poetry would not exist. No matter what your belief about the creation of the universe, poetry and art have to be created in order to exist, and art values one, not for one's being the coincidental result of an age or a nation but for sharing the position of an original person. Poetry may vivify lives, events and communities as history tends to do; yet for me at least poetry exists in the world less like continuous time or learned chronicles and more like an infant's first breaths. To me poetry seems really like a pulmonary and nervous initiation into giving and receiving, the consequences of which are

crucial to esthetic experience. Like other animals it is our fate to breathe in and out, and poetry, differently from other instincts and arts and sciences, accepts us as fully, radically and linguistically human with our individual vital statistics and otherness.

Today the educated, poetically starved assemblies driving global politics with questionable solutions go to market with many artists, who mingle like ogled creatures at fairs, primed and productive and favored like prize chickens or racehorses. Away from these pervasive affairs I turn instead to the uncelebrated poet, Gregory Vincent St. Thomasino. He writes poetry not as so many heads do today but more as a close friend and charitable conscience. Not much being composed as poetry today seems to me as playfully provocative as his three poems in this small publication.

St. Thomasino intrigues me the way Edgar Allan Poe does. He lives in Brooklyn Heights and as a young man was home-schooled diligently enough to enter Fordham University where he chose to study the medieval grammarians. These grammarians once important are now forgotten. As theoretical and productive sciences became favored curricula, the ideas of grammarians were relegated to the

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periphery of knowledge, and there grammarians were sent (until Jacques Derrida et al) to teach underage students burdensome linguistic rules.

In "HistoryStrike," the first poem published here, I play a collaborative role, for St. Thomasino accepts my suggestion to line out portions of his poem, "History," and to leave the lined-out words visible. "HistoryStrike" turns "History" visibly into another poem implying a way history turns into us. We strike almost all of "History" through and leave it there lined-out or not and without normal grammatical subjects—with only particles, prepositions, verbs and modifiers. Mostly at the beginning and end of his poetic couplets the words are there without a line through them.

Reminding me how in education history begins with students as one kind of subject and ends with, say, art (history) as another, "HistoryStrike" shows how learning can be confused with history. It draws ambivalent history as knowledge into poetry. One is liberated and on one's own with an art form of what is not—not common, not taught, not history, as if actions and events were being crossed off for being done, written or nullified. The poem offers what could be called a functional conscience, a temporal awareness of

being, doing and thinking. St. Thomasino's words are not erased, just struck through repeatedly. History like everything is both here and there. It is not obliterated. In contrast to blandly remembering history the way it is taught, the poem distinctly presents the impossibility of knowing history and leaves us, as it were, momentarily unhistoried by poetry.

St. Thomasino's "HistoryStrike" exceeds Jean Baudrillard's 'Event Strike' (*La greve des evenements* from *L'illusion de la fin*. Editions Galilee: Paris, 1992). Baudrillard notably writes that we no longer make history; rather we're devoted to it, honoring it as if it were some masterpiece. St. Thomasino writes, "~~and of these, to see/ not only feeling but is an~~ episode." His poem disabuses us of believing in our having been or ever becoming a masterpiece.

In this premier b0g6s b%k publication St. Thomasino inaugurates what I want to call a poetics of infant newness. As if he were taking first steps his anaphora and epiphora scramble with their interposing lines to move inward and outward our poetic thinking. I like his work because always I struggle as a sculptor and writer, and sometimes I draw what interests me and sometimes write or type copies of phrases that interest me. By doing this I understand

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and remember perhaps more completely. Reading and copying "HistoryStrike" I feel like a child. Yet the sublimity is not sacrificed for the reflections delight me as if I were again learning to think for the first time, as if Descartes had said, *I am therefore I think*.

A beautiful, combinatory poetics amplifies St. Thomasino's second poem, "Sailcloth." His title suggests material and idea, and "once held, the palm" pairs touch and thought together. When one welcomes and is welcomed in a handshake like a ship entering a port, the palm is like one's own small sail and as much a self's facsimile as the mirror image of one's face. A "statement/a chronicle, a poet" the palm held forth lets itself be taken in and welcomed. Or not, the palm closed tightly into a fist is alone, protective and ready. Likewise sails can be unfurled and extended with the wind or wrapped and secured to a mast. St. Thomasino is a poet who knows through the deaths of his brother and mother how lives and sails "upon meeting/a wind, stay, and are gone." Like time for us, his short poem is in my opinion too sublime to be neglected.

His third poem, "Anselm" offers a name for a title, and I immediately think of the monastic saint so impressively portrayed in a biography by R.W. Southern. But St. Thomasino tells me

Anselm is just a name he especially likes. Indeed "Anselm" seems a poem about becoming a name; that is, becoming a particular person, becoming visible, and appearing when named. Yet St. Thomasino's thinking about why anyone would become a person, who "can smile, easily and well/and curious, and silent" echoes St. Anselm's Catholic theology so taken with why God would become a person.

There's much more to say about St. Thomasino's poetry of course. He offers some ideas in *Logoclasody*, accessible @ <http://www.eratiopostmodernpoetry.com>. I'm not sure I agree with or understand all he says in *Logoclasody*, but I do think his work, like Edgar Allan Poe's in his day, differs from academic traditions as "The Raven" differs from "The Song of Hiawatha." His poems are not pages to fulfill a chosen career. He's dedicated to newer poetics and generously serves destitute poetry in our time's clamor of human markets.

His is the first *b0g6s b%k* publication from PPCCSS. The pdf is distributed gratis electronically; the print edition is unconventionally formatted and limited to 20 copies, half for St. Thomasino and half for PPCCSS. If you want one of the print copies, let us know.

—Joseph F. Keppler,
Seattle, Summer 2008

HistoryStrike by Gregory Vincent St. Thomasino

to ~~wish to~~ pause
and ~~planning, planning~~ to return

are ~~of the page,~~ to reflect
is ~~to reflect, of our own~~ say

and ~~welcome, are key,~~ are enough
or,

are ~~unexpected,~~ are at hand
or sudden

and ~~is perhaps, again,~~ the very room
to ~~be in~~ company

in ~~company,~~ to see
the ~~page, or turn~~ to see

of any ~~sudden, or, guessing,~~ or play
are enough

be it ~~large or small or van or boon~~
or,

in turn
at ~~different rates of~~ tour

no ~~inherited fit or~~ repertoire
~~in mid-career~~

~~fit or altered, or pathe or~~ incidental
and ~~there is,~~ immersed

in ~~how, of, say, pretense, or~~ lectern
~~another note or bar or~~ margin

and ~~of the~~ eye
replaced, ~~by~~ sound

the ear ~~can see~~
a ~~margin or~~ purpose

and ~~of these, to~~ see
not ~~only feeling but is~~ an episode

the ~~chance arrival of~~ pacts
~~proper to, or, gives way to~~ new

office
is ~~apt, or, to be~~ permitted

done, ~~so~~
the ~~square of a~~ face

or,
~~serious and~~ hurry it

each counts, ~~is really~~ stands alone
~~or are comic, and~~ exact

and ~~curves, into furniture~~
~~in a turn, in a tumble~~

a ~~shrub or suburb~~
the sudden leads to fit in hand

in ~~no sense of the page~~
~~to capture, or ledger, or region~~

not to ~~say, so unlikely~~
~~from time to time, in any landscape~~

a series of ~~rushes~~
~~an arrow off a thread~~

fiery, and ~~even fidgety~~
~~before whom, to quite suddenly~~

a ~~madman,~~
~~which marks those who work when they need not~~

a ~~great house~~
~~but because, and, so unlike it, it fits~~

that these are ~~all, or, so~~
~~or,~~

so to reflect
reflecting is enough, and always, to surprises

Sailcloth by Gregory Vincent St. Thomasino

once held, the palm is a statement
a chronicle, a poet

staying not
a port or congregation, those

for whom, unfolding, and upon meeting
a wind, stay, and are gone

Anselm by Gregory Vincent St. Thomasino

seeming, as it does, in doing so, to
or,

are capable, and possessing
of invention

stringing fables, and pickets
diversion, and demonstration

a tailor, or teacher
often, taking person

or,
various purposes and means

and men and beginnings
various beginnings

A pose, or situation
in view, both of houses, and cars

cities, and scaffolding
the welcome, and valediction

and earn us, at last
of motive, or character, are certain

ordinary and visible attractions
are certain visible attractions

being named, and neighboring
himself, and someone else

can smile, easily and well
and curious, and silent