

Title: Balto-Slavic Timescapes: Tomas Venclova, Josef Brodsky, Vladimír Holan and Jaroslav Seifert

Author: Clarice Cloutier, Charles University in Prague

The perception of time finds a voice within the Slavic and Baltic literary canon and is particularly marked in the oeuvre of Czech poets Jaroslav Seifert and Vladimír Holan, Russian Josef Brodsky and Lithuanian Tomas Venclova. Whereas these writers share the commonly-held Western belief of time on earth as a linear phenomenon bounded by death, they diverge in their individual lyrical strategies, perceiving time as a foe, a forecaster and often as a forger of new associations among words and images. Special attention will be given to one of the world's most-recognized commentators on time, St. Augustine of Hippo, who believed that God had created time, yet despite this, that the interpretation of time's idiosyncrasies is left to the human mind. In essence, the philosopher identified time's peculiar capacity of transformation, which similar to energy, is never gained nor lost, only altered. Indeed, the four above-mentioned poets can be graphically linked together using Augustine's theory of temporal transformation by correlating time with other concepts which are significant within their lyrics, thus formulaically creating literary timescapes. By clearly demonstrating the transformative nature of time, its conversion into meaning becomes self-evident.

References

- Brodsky, J. *Watermark*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1992.
- Cullhed, A. "Nobel Prize Authors on Time." 2001, courtesy of The Nobel Foundation: <http://www.nobel.se/literature/articles/cullhed/> Accessed July 2006.
- Jiraskova, M. and H. KLÍNKOVÁ. *S Jaroslavem Seifertem časem i nečasem. (Time and Timelessness: Jaroslav Seifert.)* Praha: PNP, 2001.
- Quinn, J. "The Concept of Time in St. Augustine." *Augustinianum*. (Vol. V) Roma: College Internationalis Augustiniani de Urbe, 1965.
- Venclova, T. *Statii o Brodskom. (Essays on Brodsky.)* Moskva: Baltrus, 2005.
- Wellek, R. *Essays on Czech Literature*. The Hague: Mouton, 1963.