

Presenter: Zuzana Rihova, University of Oxford

Title: Apollinaire and Czech Modernism in the 1930s. Milada Součková's *Talking Zone*

Abstract:

*What would Czech poetry be like were it not for the completely fortuitous fact that Čapek translated Zone?*

(Milan Kundera)

Karel Čapek's outstanding translation of Apollinaire's *Zone* (1919) served as a new poetic model for the young Czech avant-garde. In the Czech context, the translation of Apollinaire's *Zone* entered Czech poetry as an inherent part of its development. Inspired by Apollinaire, members of the Czech avant-garde group Devětsil, established in 1920 under the leadership of Karel Teige, such as Jiří Wolker, Konstatnin Biebl and Vítězslav Nezval, sought to dismantle thematic composition/structure of their extended poems. In the 1930s, zone as literary genre had, however, a different character. As a reaction to political and cultural events, extended poems depicted the alienation of the individual and feelings of anxiety stemming from the conflict between the individual and the world. Rather analytical poems, published in Czechoslovakia during the 1930s, conveyed the end of an epoch with a direct reference to Apollinaire's writing which underwent massive change. This changed approach to the modern world is embodied by *Mluvící pásmo* [Talking Zone], published in 1939 by Czech Modernist poet Milada Součková (1899-1983). According to Hans-Robert Jauss, Apollinaire's *Zone* marked the threshold to a new wave of modernism. It can be claimed, that Součková's *Talking Zone* stays at the end of modernism as its closure as she refers to the poetic tradition of zone to describe the sense of crisis brought on by WWII. This presentation will focus on the concept of zone poem as a genre and how it was utilized by authors enthusiastic about modernity in the different historical context of the 1920s and the late 1930s. Bringing to light a writer who has been overlooked would contribute to an ongoing discussion of the global scope of modernism.