

Faculti Summary

<https://faculti.net/exiles-of-love/>

This video discusses the life and works of Czech author Melina Bow (real name Ludmila Ava), a prominent novelist in Czechoslovakia during the 1920s and 1930s. Born in 1906 and passing away in 1988, Bow is recognized for publishing the first Czech lesbian novel, "Exiles of Love," in 1929, which went largely unnoticed for many decades. The novel explores themes of lesbian self-knowledge through the story of two main characters, Tewa and Helena, who navigate their love for each other in a hostile environment, with the narrative culminating in tragedy and personal discovery.

This video also touches on Bow's other literary contributions, including writing novels for adult women and adolescent audiences, as well as her activism for lesbian rights during a period when homosexuality was criminalized in Czechoslovakia. The discussion highlights the challenges faced by lesbians in that era, emphasizing a societal backdrop of oppression while also noting Bow's efforts in campaigning against the criminalization of homosexuality.

Additionally, the text briefly contrasts Bow's work with that of another author, Jill, who published the second Czech lesbian novel, "The Third Sex," in 1937, which presented a grittier portrayal of lesbian life. Lastly, the speaker outlines a broader project focused on recovering lost LGBTQ+ voices and histories within the Czech context, emphasizing the importance of digging deeper into literary sources to uncover the experiences of queer individuals during significant historical periods, including under Nazi and communist rule in Czechoslovakia.