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Departure from Prague Main Station: Repositioning Queerness in Central Europe

At Prague Main Station, democracy and free market economy did not arrive together with LGBT emancipation in a social and cultural sense. Among the queer cities, 1990s Prague is often remembered as an abyss of teenage prostitution, bareback porn, heroin use and an imminent AIDS epidemic – an image propagated especially by the films of Polish director Wiktor Grodecki. Less than 20 years later, the Czech Republic stands out within central Europe, having legalized same-sex civil unions in 2006 and paved the road toward adoption by same-sex couples in June 2016.

This paper traces the long departure from the Czech metropolis of the 1990s and analyses the strategies of renegotiating queer identities in contemporary Czech literature and film as a response to the familiar representation of a generation lost at Prague Main Station. On the one hand, I will analyze how the village is developed as an alternative space of emancipation of the queer individual in the 2008 feature “The Country Teacher” (“Venkovský učitel”). On the other hand, I will trace the rethinking of a specifically Czech queerness through participation in a network of European cities, as presented in the writing of the author Adam Georgiev. Both of these approaches, I argue, ultimately allow for a positive recoding of queerness by repositioning the queer city within central European topography.