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The Effect of Trains on European Travel and Distance

The 19th century was a period of growth for railroad systems and trains. A new invention at the time, trains helped encourage people in Europe to reach destinations that weren’t available before. The railroad system also allowed for fast and reliable travel, compared to the stagecoaches that were used for transportation previously. Although trains enabled people to travel at one-thirds of the original time, trains did more than cut down time of travel. Trains were also used to cut down space.

Schivelbush has many controversial examples in *The Railroad Journey* regarding how trains affected Europe. “They would also sit nearer to one another by two-thirds of the time which now respectively alienates them” (pg 34). One of the many contradictions that Schivelbush used, what can be taken from this is that although the time to arrive at a destination was cut down, the distance was still there to alienate them. This can also go hand in hand with “on the one hand, the railroad opened up new spaces that were not as easily accessible before; on the hand, it did so by destroying the space between two points.” (pg 37). With these examples, the audience is able to deduct that the author is trying to explain that it was more convenient for others to travel because of the train system, but also allowed for people of a region to interact easier.

Space was not only decreased, but also increased. “The dialectic of this process states that this diminution of space caused an expansion of transport space by incorporating new areas into the transport network.” (35) More areas were reachable, leading to the intercommunication of a nation. The transformation that this led to was the improved rate of development for small areas of the region. These places that were hidden gems, were revealed once transportation to these place.

Work Cited

Schivelbush, W. (n.d.). *The Railroad Journey*.