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Youth on the road: Reflections on the history of tramping

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Abstract

Tourism is conventionally traced to the eighteenth century Grand Tour of aristocratic youth which, it is then suggested, was gradually democratized and adopted in modified form by the middle classes. In such a perspective, the road culture of contemporary youth travelers would simply represent one form of this democratized elite tradition. This paper argues instead that contemporary road culture is better seen as an upwardly rather than downwardly mobile cultural form. Tramping originated as a well-institutionalized travel pattern of working class youth. Despite its instrumental functions, it always had touristic components, serving as the young workingman's Grand Tour. When, in the course of the nineteenth century, it declined as a labor institution, it was romanticized and adopted by middle class youth for exclusively tourist purposes.

Résumé

La jeunesse en route: réflexions sur l'histoire du vagabondage. Par convention, le

tourisme est retracé la jeunesse aristocratique du dix-huitième siècle, qui participait au grand tour, un phénomène qui, selon cette interprétation, fut démocratisé graduellement et adopté, en forme modifiée, par la classe moyenne. Dans une telle perspective, la culture routière de jeunes voyageurs contemporains ne représenterait, tout simplement, qu'une forme de cette démocratisation de cette tradition de l'élite. Ici, la situation se voit dans une optique différente, qui veut que la culture routière contemporaine s'interprète plus précisément comme une expression d'une forme culturelle ascendante plutôt que descendante dans la hiérarchie sociale. En regardant le vagabondage, on s'aperçoit qu'à ses débuts il instituait une façon de voyager pour les jeunes de la classe ouvrière. En dépit du fait que le vagabondage avait une utilité pour ces jeunes ouvriers, il avait toujours aussi des composantes touristiques qui leur permettaient d'avoir, en sorte, leur propre version du grand tour. Au dix-neuvième siècle le vagabondage passa d'une institution de la classe ouvrière à une activité romantique de la classe moyenne, dédiée exclusivement au tourisme.



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Keywords

youth travel; tramping; road culture; working class tourism

Mots-clés

voyages des jeunes; vagabondage; culture routière; tourisme de la classe ouvrière

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