many littérateurs, authors, journalists, administrators and other learned gentlemen made provincial journeys during the first half of the 19th century as part of a growing concern with France’s social make-up, origins, topography and resources

many just treat them as Romantics but they are actually symptomatic of a reaction to a persistant malaise in post-Revolutionary France

furthered ideology and shaped discourse

revolutionaries had a strong desire to eradicate particularism in favor of national identity

Revolution brought not only idea of national unity but also conflicting idea of diversity

“The littérateurs’ domestic journeys stem in large part from these concerns. Having travelled through France, or at least claiming to have done so, they wrote accounts in which la province (a term denoting France outside the capital) and Paris embody a series of dichotomies ranging from past/present and city/countryside to self/other and corruption/purity.” 143

understanding these travel logs can only be understood in terms of the ancien régime tradition of domestic voyages

voyage galant: mid 17th c. emphasized pleasure of the male traveller and of the male/female reader’ disregards the resources, inhabitants and regions; la province was a homogenous playground for Parisian elite

learned traveller: early 18th c inventory historical vestiges and resources undertaken by educated elite French territory was a depository of information, authority, and an avenue to the past

encyclopaedist and inspector: early 18th c works incorporated all elements of surroundings to roder landscape in a display of prosperity, progress and social unity sought to produce a smooth surface governed by a rational principle

voyage pittoresque: zenith between 1780-1830 seeking out of views and sites to excite curiousity and induce emotion the idea being that a connection between the self and the natural world was made which created a smooth and frictionless portrait la province the space of the natural (note not about the people or culture except as far as their primitive, closer to the natural state)

Parisian littérateur fused aspects of all 4; desire to travel also compelled by expanding of various road ways (rail, water) as well as desire for discovery and exoticism

157 titles related to “journey in France” published between 1789-1800

“Further evidence for such a phenomenon includes the flowering of provincial learned societies, whose number jumped from a few dozen following the Revolution to 612 by the early 1860s, and the steady stream of local topographies, statistiques and periodicals which, whether within or outside the capital, sought to describe, inventory and map out the national terrain.” 149

“The littérateur, as will become apparent, depicts himself as the agent who will save society, as the conduit of a greater design, an ethical necessity. Different travellers made different claims for their projects, yet most shared the conviction that their journey had to document the dire predicament of French society and awake their compatriots from their slumber.” 153

“...whereas the Grand Siècle had mocked the mediocrity of la province (its petty aristocrats in particular), the eighteenth century also denounced Paris, the great urban centre, as the site of moral dissolution.” 156

post Revolution France, in promoting national identity, sought to reconcile the contrasting picture of the province as pure vs. the capital as degenerate which had led to the Revolution and the distinction between Paris as a source of order, progress and ideas for otherwise backwards provinces that was necessary for governance following the revolution

“The ubiquitous appeal to a Golden Age of peace and spendour, be it the pax Romana, the Middle Ages, or sometimes the ancien régime, leads to two types of reflections. Some travellers ponder the inevitable decline of French civilization....Others detect a flaw in modern society rather than an abstract historical force....Both approaches resort to the past not only as an “escape”, but, most importantly, as an indictment of the present.” 157

“...the littérateur’s cries against "this spirit of destruction which blows like a hurricane across ancient France" reveal both his fear that all links to the past will vanish, and his transformation of the ruin and the monument into sites of mediation whose destruction would signal a much broader moral vacuum.” 159

“The littérateur's insistence that these monuments are on the verge of disappearing suggests, however, that all is not lost, that France may still be saved. from itself. As depicted in this discourse, the monument, architectural and peasant, offers French society a last opportunity to preserve its heritage and thereby alter its downward course.” 162

“The destroyed church, the forlorn peasant, the café in the medieval tower: these symptoms point to a wide moral vacuum, visible in urban as well as rural settings.” 165
“The littérateur, a Frenchman who is more than a Frenchman, thus travels through la province, a French territory that is distinct from France. He inspects ruins and monuments, which are part of present France and are not; he observes peasants, who likewise stand between past and present...” 166

“Description and inventories are in themselves acts of cultural creation” 167

explosion of tourism in the Second Empire and Third Republic