

LA POLITIQUE POLITICS

Poli

Napoléon, “un homme doué de talents extraordinaires et d’une dangereuse ambition”

De Naples à Moscou, le jeune citoyen Henri Beyle parcourt l’Europe dans le sillage de Bonaparte, qui fascinera tant Julien Sorel dans *Le Rouge et le Noir*. Mais si Stendhal admire le jeune général révolutionnaire audacieux, le conquérant énergique et glorieux qui libère l’Europe, il modère par la suite son enthousiasme envers l’empereur despotique. Deux ébauches de biographie de Napoléon en témoignent.

Grâce aux cousins Daru, l’ascension d’Henri Beyle dans l’armée est continue et rapide. Les campagnes militaires sont pour lui l’occasion de découvertes dont il remplit les plus belles pages de son journal de voyage, tenu jusqu’aux pires heures de la retraite de Russie. La chute de Napoléon en 1814 met fin à ses rêves de carrière : l’écrivain Stendhal peut alors émerger.

Napoleon, “a man endowed with both extraordinary abilities and dangerous ambition”

From Naples to Moscow, the young citizen Henri Beyle travelled through Europe in the wake of Bonaparte, who would so fascinate Julien Sorel in *The Red and The Black*. Yet if Stendhal admired the brave young revolutionary General, the glorious and energetic conqueror who freed Europe, he would be less enthusiastic where the despotic Emperor was concerned – a position to which his two biographies of Napoleon bear witness.

Thanks to his cousins in the Daru family, Henri Beyle quickly rose up through the ranks in the army. He saw the military campaigns as an opportunity for discovery and they were reflected in the most beautiful pages of his travel journal, which he continued to write even during the worst hours of the Russian retreat. Napoleon’s fall in 1814 shattered his dreams of a career in the army: Stendhal the author was then able to emerge.

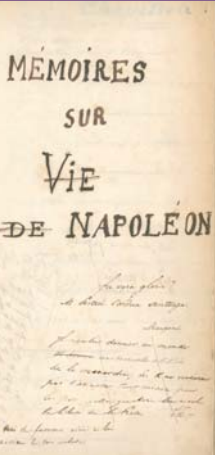


Napoléon, aquarelle de J.-P. Colin / watercolour by J.-P. Colin

Handwritten text in cursive script, likely a page from Stendhal's travel journal or a sketch related to the fort at Bard.

Le fort de Bard, croquis de Stendhal / Fortress at Bard, sketch by Stendhal

Manuscrit de *Mémoires sur Napoléon* / Manuscript of *Memoirs about Napoleon*



Stendhal en costume de consul, huile de S. Valeri (1835-1836) / Stendhal wearing the consular uniform, oil painting by S. Valeri (1835-1836)



Pierre Daru (1767-1829), huile de G. Remy / oil painting by G. Remy



Incendie de Moscou, aquarelle d’après W. Heath / Moscow Fire, aquatint adapted from W. Heath



Passage de la Bérézina, peinture de Langlois, gravure de G. Thevenon / Crossing the Berezina, painting by Langlois, engraving by G. Thevenon



Le fort de Bard, croquis de Stendhal / Fortress at Bard, sketch by Stendhal