



# Napoleon the Novelist

*Andy Martin*

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## **Napoleon the Novelist** Andy Martin

This brilliantly original study uncovers a side to Napoleon Bonaparte which has hitherto been ignored by biographers - that of the aspiring novelist and man of letters. In this illuminating, witty and elegantly written book, Andy Martin reveals how this neglected aspect of Napoleon's remarkable life actually provides the key to understanding it.

The French Revolution, Austerlitz and Waterloo all came second in Napoleon's life to a Discourse on Happiness, a Dialogue on Love and repeated attempts at a novel. Napoleon began as a would-be Rousseau and ended up on Saint Helena dictating his own confessions. The colossal rise and catastrophic fall of his empire are, Martin argues, anticipated in the obsessive and tragicomic pages of his voluminous writings.

Napoleon emerges as an idealist, romantic, visionary, critic, a thinker with an epic imagination and an underdeveloped sense of reality, pushing his 'portable library' across Europe, Asia and the Orient, and always wrestling with the intricacies of language and literature. And, although Napoleon was denounced as a failure in an essay competition, Martin shows that he did indeed succeed in imposing himself as the archetype and inspiration of modern European culture.

This provocative book will appeal to a wide general readership. It will also be of interest to students of literature, modern languages and European history.



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