

Napoleon

The Urth list — 3 messages, 3 voices, 15 Oct 2002

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/3486>

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Dan'I Danehy-Oakes — 15 Oct 2002, 20:09

You know, the whole business about "why Napoleon kept his hand in his vest," according to _any_ biography, is a huge red herring ... he did not (as far as I can tell) habitually go about with his hand in his vest. There's this one portrait where he's posed that way; it happens to be the most famous of all his portraits. But if you tour, say, the Louvre, you'll see a number of other contemporary paintings, such as David's painting of Napoleon Crowning the Empress Josephine, in which his hands are in plain view.

So ... what does this say about Den?

Michael Straight — 16 Oct 2002, 05:23 · follows Dan'I Danehy-Oakes

On Tue, 15 Oct 2002, Dan'I Danehy-Oakes wrote:

You know, the whole business about "why Napoleon kept his hand in his vest," according to _any_ biography, is a huge red herring ... he did not (as far as I can tell) habitually go about with his hand in his vest.

So ... what does this say about Den?

That he was the sort of youth who was a pedantic know-it-all and people would get offended because they thought he was smarting off?

"Why did Napoleon keep his hand in his vest?"

"Gee, I don't know."

"Well, actually he didn't..."

(eyes roll)

-Rostrum

Roy C. Lackey — 16 Oct 2002, 16:47 · follows Michael Straight

Dan'I wrote:

You know, the whole business about "why Napoleon kept his hand in his vest," according to _any_ biography, is a huge red herring ... he did not (as far as I can tell) habitually go about with his hand in his vest. There's this one portrait where he's posed that way; it happens to be the most famous of all his portraits. But if you tour, say, the Louvre, you'll see a number of other contemporary paintings, such as David's painting of Napoleon Crowning the Empress Josephine, in which his hands are in plain view.

That "most famous of all his portraits" is presumably the one he posed for in 1810, also painted by Jacques Louis David, court painter to the Emperor of the French. It shows him with his right hand in his white waistcoat at about the level of his stomach. The mickey mouse set of

encyclopedias I have to hand (_World Book_, 1977) shows that painting, and another by Jean Meissonier, of Napoleon on a white horse at the head of his army as it retreated from Moscow. In this second painting he also has his right hand situated the same way, only this time inside his greatcoat. It's been a long time now, but I'm pretty sure I had heard of Napoleon's penchant for posing that way, or at least of being portrayed that way, before I read PEACE, so the notion had to have come from somewhere, even if it wasn't true. What was the popular explanation? Weer's "innocent remark" to visitors' queries about the hand "invariably offended". Sex, religion, and politics are the subjects most likely to offend a wide variety of people.

So ... what does this say about Den?

That he is an unreliable narrator? Or that Wolfe suffered from the same popular misconception as a lot of other people.

Curiously, that same encyclopedia says: "Napoleon had an unimpressive appearance, but he carried himself well. He stood slightly below average height." Those are almost the same words Weer used to describe Smart: "Beyond that there was nothing remarkable in his appearance: he was of just under average height, . . .". (114)

-Roy