

Italy, fertile land for the poet and place of initiation to politics

The first encounter with Italy took place in August 1811. At the initiative of his family, Alphonse de Lamartine stayed in Naples with a relative, Mr Daresté de la Chavanne, manager of the Tobacco Manufacture. He fell in love with a young worker, Antoniella, who became the source of inspiration for the poem *Elvire* and the novel *Graziella*. To the landscapes he contemplated, the gulf of Baia or the island of Ischia, he devoted poems that nourished the *Poetic Meditations* : " I wrote about the shores, the monuments, the impressions of the banks and the waves, in verse while my friend Aymon de Virieu noted them down with a pencil and a brush in his albums".

His return to Naples took place in 1820, an important year for Lamartine who had just been nominated assistant attaché of Embassy. This position ensured him a financial stability and convinced his family-in-law to accept his wedding with Mary Ann Birch. As he had asked for a leave, he stayed in Rome where his wife gave birth to their daughter Julia and then went back to Saint-Point.

In July 1825, he was given new diplomatic responsibilities in Florence as an embassy secretary. In the town that he called the "Athens of the Middle-Ages", he led a well-orchestrated life : "a legation in the morning, horses at 3 pm, grand dinner and parties in the evening", thus giving him free time to conceive the *Poetic and religious Harmonies*. The position he held, the friendship he developed with the Grand Duke of Tuscany Leopold II, with whom he got initiated to the stakes of power, facilitated his training and the emergence of a political awareness. The abdication of Charles X in 1830 and the creation of a new government in France led him to leave his political career.



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