

Background Information

About the author

Bruno Lowagie lives and works in Ghent, Belgium. In a previous life, he was an open-source software developer and entrepreneur. After selling his company, he turned his attention to writing. He first published works for Dutch and Flemish readers before beginning to translate his fiction into English in 2024.

In 2026, he shifted his focus from short fiction to screenwriting. *Emperor of America* was his first screenplay. Since getting noticed by production companies can be notoriously difficult, he began adapting his screenplays into narrative form, resulting in a series of novelettes.

This is the third book in that series. *Operation Downfall* was the first, followed by *The Sisters Lovecraft*. A fourth installment, *Mirror Point*, a collection of science-fiction stories, is currently in development.⁴²

About the genre

Emperor of America stands at the crossroads of alternate history, historical fantasy, and gothic horror.

At its foundation lies an alternate-history premise. The novel begins with real historical figures, places, and political tensions, then asks a simple question: *What if Napoleon Bonaparte had not truly died on Saint Helena in 1821?*

From that point onward, history diverges. The fragile balance between North and South in the young United States is altered by the reappearance of one of history's most famous military leaders, creating a chain of events that never occurred, but might almost seem plausible.

Unlike traditional alternate history, however, the mechanism of divergence is not scientific but supernatural. Vampires, voodoo rituals, and unseen forces coexist with documented historical events. This places the story firmly within the tradition of historical fantasy, a genre that blends verifiable history with legends, myths, and folklore. The Caribbean setting is particularly suited to such a mixture, as the region has long been a meeting place of European colonial traditions, African spiritual practices, and local beliefs.

The novel also embraces the conventions of gothic horror. Its vampires are not merely predators; they embody corruption, obsession, and the temptation of power. Baron Lunédi manipulates those around him through fear, loyalty, and desire, while Napoleon's transformation forces him to confront questions of guilt, identity, and free will.

Like many gothic works, the story is haunted by the past. Napoleon cannot escape his memories of Joséphine. Ambition, love, loyalty, and regret linger long after death itself.

By combining alternate history, fantasy, and horror, *Emperor of America* examines the seductive nature of power and the stories societies tell about their heroes. It asks whether great leaders shape the world—or whether they are transformed into myths long before they are gone.

The idea for this story came to the author after a visit to New Orleans in November 2024. Invited as a speaker at the *New Orleans Arts & Ideas conference* (N.O.A.I.), he and his wife spent the weekend exploring the city. During one of their walks, they passed Napoleon House and wondered how the restaurant had acquired its name. That curiosity led him to the legend of Nicholas Girod's plan to rescue Napoleon Bonaparte from Saint Helena, a perfect premise for an alternate history novel.

At the conclusion of the conference, the author attended a reception at a house owned by Francis Ford Coppola. Hanging in the kitchen was a poster for Coppola's film *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (1992).



On the director's desk lay a book about vampires.



If I bring back Napoleon in a story, I should make him a vampire, the author thought. That's how he began writing the screenplay *Emperor of America*.

About the images

All images in this section are sourced from Wikimedia Commons, except for the portrait of Nicholas Girod (note 9), which was obtained from the following URL:

<https://www.napoleonhouse.com/history/>

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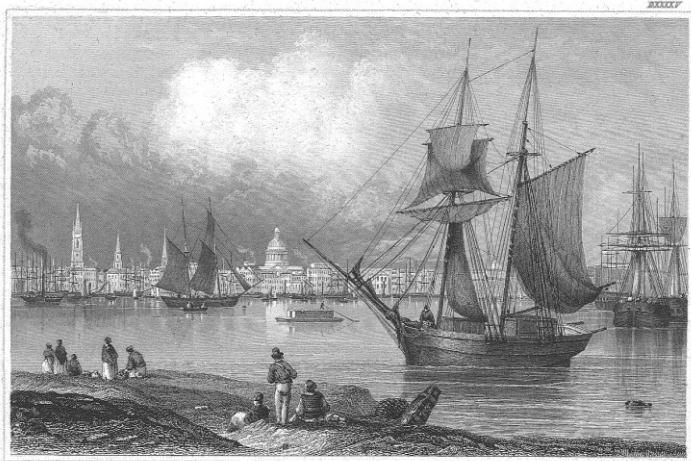
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End notes

The following endnotes provide additional context for the characters, events, and settings.

¹ **New Orleans.** Today, Baton Rouge is the capital of Louisiana, but this story takes place in 1821, when New Orleans still held that role.



NEW ORLEANS

Just 4. Houtman & B. H. 1847 in 1847.

Fig. 1000. 4. 1847

New Orleans, 1847; from Meyer's Universum (1833-1860)