



The Three Emperors

William Dietrich

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Venice: Ethan Gage has escaped after surviving the naval battle of Trafalgar. His plan: to circumvent the French Empire and rescue his wife, Astiza, and son, Harry, from imprisonment by a ruthless mystic who seeks revenge for disfigurement, and from an evil dwarf alchemist who experiments with the occult on Prague's Golden Lane.

Using death as his ruse, Gage seeks an unlikely ally in the Jewish Napoleonic soldier Gideon Mandel, who saves Ethan's life at Austerlitz, and Gideon's father, Aaron, a rabbi whose knowledge of the legends of the Golem adds another layer to the hunt for the Brazen Head. The three must decipher clues from Durendal, the sword of Roland. Meanwhile, Astiza uses her own research to concoct an explosive escape and find a lost tomb, with their tormentors in relentless pursuit.

William Dietrich skillfully weaves intrigue, magic, romance, and danger in a historical thriller that sprints from the fury of the Napoleonic wars to the mystical puzzles of Central Europe—where a medieval machine promises power over the future.

The Three Emperors Details

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From Reader Review The Three Emperors for online ebook

Claude Dancourt says

A great adventure, really Ethan should be ashamed to be so lucky. However, the timeline was a little hard to follow.

Joel Thimell says

If you like the Harry Flashman books or Clive Cussler's Dirk Pitt novels, you'll probably enjoy William Dietrich's "Ethan Gage" series. Like Flashman, Ethan Gage is constantly getting shanghaied by famous personages who coerce him into undertaking dangerous missions which directly influence the course of 19th century history. (Unlike Flashman, Gage has no bullying tendencies and is much less randy.)

Like Dirk Pitt in the Cussler novels, Gage is frequently searching for some long-lost treasure with legendary (or even magical) powers (and dangers) for the possessor. (Unlike Pitt, Gage is not what you would call heroic or selfless.)

The Three Emperors is the seventh book in the series and is fairly typical. I marked it down a little because I feel the major role played by Ethan's four-year old son was unbelievable. I also found the half of the story narrated by his wife, Astiza, to be less interesting than the half told by Ethan.

Nevertheless, I did enjoy another visit to Napoleonic times and participating in some of the lesser known parts of his story while meandering through a less traveled part of Europe (Bohemia).

3.25 stars.

Kathy says

Definitely keeps me laughing and trying to figure out what Ethan will get himself into next.

Aparna says

Have you ever picked a book just because you like the lead character's name? Well, I did just that when I picked this book titled Three Emperors by William Dietrich. Knowing that it is 7th book in the series, I still wanted to read it just because the lead character is called as Ethan. I love Ethan Hunt character from Mission Impossible series because of his adventures and also because it's played by Tom Cruise. Ergo I picked Ethan Gage's historical adventure in The Three Emperors. Call it karma or coincidence, if Ethan Hunt was born in the Napoleon era he probably would have been Ethan Gage. If the fictional world was real, then perhaps Ethan Gage would be an ancestor for Ethan Hunt. I am not kidding, these two characters remind me of each other so much. Similar kind of adventures, similar kind of rogue missions, similar way of being in the middle of a crisis every time – its so surreal that I forgot for a second there that I was comparing a fictional book

character with a fictional film character. No need to mention that I thoroughly enjoyed the book.

The story starts after the naval battle of Trafalgar from which Ethan Gage – an American adventurer, his Egyptian wife Astiza and son Harry escape. However, they get separated. Astiza along with her son Harry, travels one path to Prague in search of legendary Brazen Head as well as her husband Ethan. In the process she comes across Primus Fulcanelli, a Latin scholar, who turns out to be more than a bishop. Her journey with Primus lands her into Golden Lane and into hands of a dangerous alchemist Auric. Betrayed by Primus, she trades alchemy for the safety of herself and her child waiting for her husband to reach her and in the process escape the clutches of the cruel Auric and vengeful Primus.

In the meanwhile Ethan is traveling another path, trying to steer clear of the Three Emperors – Austrians, Russians and French so he doesn't get used as bait or ally, playing ping pong with him as needed. He also needs to escape the spiteful Catherine Marceau and her general Pasques, spies who are bent upon finding him and killing him. Faking his death he lands into a Jewish Napoleonic soldier Gideon Dray and his father Aaron, who help him reach Astiza. The rest of the story unfolds in the searching for clues in Durendal – Sword of Roland, reunion with Astiza and Harry, escape all the emperors and spies and finally find the Brazen Head – a truth machine.

A true adventure that takes you through the pages of history simultaneously making you wonder if you are really there. The entire book kept me on edge, not wanting to put down the book. An enjoyable read and a must for anyone who is interested in historical fictions.

Dan says

Would have given it 4.5 stars if possible. The blending of history with a fanciful tale has much to offer. Could not believe the plethora of historical facts blended throughout

Shannon says

The Three Emperors is the 7th installment of the Ethan Gage series, and while this was my first encounter with Ethan, it didn't take me long to fall under his spell. After surviving the Battle of Trafalgar, Ethan is making his way across the continent to Prague to reunite with his wife, Astiza, and their son, Harry. Astiza, an Egyptian priestess, is on a mission of her own. She seeks the fabled Brazen Head, a medieval automaton that purportedly can tell the future.

The Three Emperors offers two adventurers with two voices within one novel. The reader follows the wily Gage as he dodges, weaves, and slides his way across a field of war as he is continually plagued by his reputation as a scoundrel. Astiza also relates her own story as she searches for the Brazen Head, and I found her character especially intriguing. She is an intelligent and beautiful woman, and as Astiza narrates, the reader is treated to her mental assessment of given situations and how she would play each moment to her best advantage.

The novel is filled with a myriad of personalities, each with his or her own agenda. The physical landscape is another important dimension as the fictional characters make their way across the European landscape. One can almost imagine catching a glimpse of Gage as he disappears into the Cesky Krumlov Theater.

I thoroughly enjoyed following the adventures of Ethan Gage and Astiza and found Dietrich's novel historically accurate with an especially interesting underlying tension of mysticism and science. A fast-paced and engaging read.

Ray Palen says

Ethan Gage is a cad. Ethan Gage is a scoundrel. Ethan Gage is also the hero/anti-hero of this terrific historical thriller series by William Dietrich set in the Napoleonic age.

When I think of Ethan Gage I visualize a man with the adventurous spirit of Indiana Jones along with the cantankerous rascality of Captain Jack Sparrow. He is married to an Egyptian beauty named Astiza who bore him a son named Horus. He is American but has claimed allegiance to Great Britain as well as Napoleon's France --- depending on the situation or simply to save his own skin.

As THE THREE EMPERORS opens, Ethan Gage is thought to be dead after the battle at the end of the previous adventure. He is traveling in Venice under the guise of Hieronymus Franklin --- an alleged descendent of the deceased American inventor and politician, Benjamin Franklin. But, since this is an Ethan Gage adventure, his anonymity is most assuredly going to be short-lived!

Astiza and Harry are imprisoned by a ruthless man named Richter who fancies himself a mystic. He works in conjunction with an evil dwarf named Auric and the two of them have spearheaded a small army in pursuit of the Brazen Head. Medieval legend has it that the Brazen Head built by Albertus Magnus could foretell the future. It is also alleged that this object was destroyed by Saint Thomas Aquinas. Should it still exist it could purportedly give the owner a huge advantage over all adversaries.

Once Ethan's cover is blown he drops the Franklin moniker and finds himself back in front of his old nemesis (and sometime employer) --- Napoleon Bonaparte. Bonaparte has no problem supporting Ethan's mission to recover his wife and child as long as he pursues the Brazen Head at the same time. Gage --- being an American neutral --- agrees to this but secretly remains a man who just wants his family back.

Ethan finds an unlikely ally in the person of Jewish Napoleonic soldier, Gideon Mandel. He owes his life to Gideon who saved him from demise at the battle of Austerlitz. It turns out Gideon's father is a Rabbi who has knowledge of both the legendary Golem as well as the Brazen Head. Armed with this newfound understanding of what he is after, Ethan journeys on to face off with a colorful cast of villains who stand in the way of his family reunion as well as obtaining the mythical Brazen Head.

As with all of William Dietrich's Ethan Gage novels, THE THREE EMPERORS is steeped in history and most of the people and events depicted within are real. Never has European and World History been so much fun! You need not to have read the prior Ethan Gage adventures to enjoy this one -- - however, those who have will delight in the characters from prior stories who regularly appear. Readers who jump on board for this seventh Ethan Gage adventure will be pleasantly rewarded with an engaging, fun and stimulating adventure that will make you long to be in our hero's company again. This adventure ends on the doorstep of the Russian Empire --- could this be the setting for Ethan's next adventure? Stay tuned!

Reviewed by Ray Palen for New Mystery Reader

Lee Thames says

Ethan Gage, an American rogue in the Napoleonic era.

Part Indiana Jones, part McGyver all fun and you learn a little history too.

Timothy Baril says

Ethan Gage is an adventurer and a bit of a comic scoundrel, though with a good heart. Separated from his family in a previous adventure, and fleeing Napoleonic defeat at Trafalgar, he makes his way to Vienna and then Prague in search of his lost wife and young son. Along the way he gambles, gets embroiled in war at Napoleon's side, and is enmeshed in a scheme to find a lost automaton which can tell the future. He desperately tries to avoid war, French spies and secret societies, yet falls victim to all.

When I read the first few pages with Ethan Gage's voice, I was delighted. He was rascally, glib and fun, full of witty charm. I enjoyed the character and hoped that the book would turn out to be a pleasant surprise.

However, while Gage continues to be a charming character throughout, and I loved his witty nature and some of the insightful comments made, for some reason the book itself did not grab me and hold me throughout. I had no interest in his wife's chapters, with her vague spiritualism. I suppose it was meant to instil a sense of mysticism in the story, but I didn't find it terribly interesting. I thought that her character had potential, but that the book lacked depth in failing to explore and deliver that potential.

There were some comical discrepancies. Gage is shot while in war, and that part seems quite realistically done. But then, only a few days later he's already swinging a sword around for exercise and his left shoulder and arm aren't just recovered, they're the strongest they've ever been in his life, even eclipsing his right. Wow! Superhuman.

Then, at the end of the novel, they've got a single horse and sleigh and, in a period of less than two weeks in early February, which is the coldest part of the winter, somehow manage to travel from Trosky Castle just outside Prague in northern Czech Republic, all the way through Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, past Estonia and all the way up to St Petersburg. Even on modern roads, it's a journey of 1800km. Rather remarkable for a single horse and sled. Even more so, despite the Russians being at war with Napoleon, they don't encounter a single soldier until they are within an hour's horse ride of the capital city. Um...really? lol

I haven't read the rest of the series, but I did like what I saw of the spy, Catherine. I'm a big fan of reformed characters, and while I understand the role she plays in the end, I would have found it more interesting to see her and the policeman change their tune.

Overall, the book moves along at a clipped pace. The Napoleonic war was interesting and the story had a good, 19th century feel. Still, it might have benefited from a little more depth and change of pace. It's an easy, light read, nothing too serious. Good if you haven't got anything better on your reading list.

Scott says

William Dietrich's Ethan Gage series ("Napoleon's Pyramids," "The Dakota Cipher," "The Barbary Pirates") continues its merry jaunt through the bloody years of Napoleon's campaigns. Gage, fresh from the battle of Trafalgar, is back in Europe but separated from his lovely wife, the Egyptian seer/sorceress Astiza, and his young son Harry/Horus. Desperate and destitute, Gage races across Europe to reunite his family and also find the legendary Brazen Head, an automaton that can tell the future.

Just imagine what Napoleon would do with such a creation? The fate of Europe - at least - would hinge on whether Boney gets his hands on such a trump card.

This being a Dietrich novel, Gage must also contend with another super-secret fanatical organization in the race for the Brazen Head. In this episode, the cult also has eyes on the gorgeous Astiza, which allows Dietrich to take the series in a new direction. The Gage novels are uniformly written from Gage's perspective, but in "The Three Emperors," several chapters are written from Astiza's perspective, and these are a treat. While both Gage and Astiza are brilliant, she is logical where he is impetuous. Astiza is also a mother and an attractive woman who has been separated from her husband for long months, which allows Dietrich to explore more complex ideas of motherhood and womanhood than we normally get in Gage's narratives, where Astiza stands almost above the action as an Athena-esque warrior-goddess.

"The Three Emperors" uses as its fulcrum the titanic battle of Austerlitz where Napoleon squared off against the Russians and Austrians, and these passages are the high water mark of the book. Dietrich is no Bernard Cornwell, but he writes a good battle scene and even the selfish Gage gets caught up in the majesty of marching in an infantry line as three armies pound away at each other.

Perhaps thanks to Austerlitz, the Brazen Head gets relatively short shrift in "The Three Emperors" and is not the most compelling mystery that Dietrich has yet written about. But the closing chapters, with Gage and his family entering imperial St. Petersburg, offer lots of evidence that the Gage series is going to continue - and thank goodness for that.

Rachel Parham says

Ethan Gage, at it yet again in another frisky and fun adventure in Dietrich's series of books about the turn-of-the-19th-century adventurer and treasure-seeker.

In *The Three Emperors*, our noble hero has survived the historic Battle of Trafalgar – and escaped both British and French control by sailing away to Venice, where he now picks up the search for his wife, Astiza, and his son, Harry. The family had become separated during Napoleon's coronation some months before when their plot to have Napoleon crowned with the Crown of Thorns went horribly awry. First, however, Ethan needs some traveling money and he tries to gain it the only way he knows how: gambling. Luck in gambling doesn't necessarily mean luck in selecting gambling partners, because of course, Ethan runs afoul of an opponent, a horribly scarred and disfigured baron who, before Gage manages to piss him off, drops cryptic hints that indicate he knows the whereabouts of Ethan's family.

And another adventure begins! Ethan, on the run from said baron, is caught yet again by Napoleon and this time, he finds himself on the front lines of the new emperor's army as it goes up against the Austrians and the Russians in the devastating Battle of Austerlitz. Meanwhile, Astiza and Harry, still searching for the Brazen Head of Albert Magnus, have found themselves in Prague, and when a new friend betrays them, they are taken prisoner by a malicious and sadistic dwarf who also seeks the historic relic. Locked in a dungeon, Astiza's only hope of finding the Head, keeping it out of the hands of the enemy, and reuniting her family, is to develop the Philosopher's Stone – the alchemical compound that can turn lead into gold and grant those who drink it eternal life.

Can Astiza make the compound? Will she? And will Ethan survive life as an infantryman in Napoleon's army long enough to find his wife and son?

Yes, another great romp through history, with enjoyable characters along for the ride. In fact, this particular iteration held some surprises. The first was watching Ethan start to grow up. His wayward life of gambling, aimless wandering, and playing with electricity has been replaced with purpose: a family. In *The Three Emperors*, Gage starts to feel the effects of his previous life, and how his decisions are impacting his family. He starts to see how his choices to gamble, hunt for treasure, and try to get rich keep putting his family in danger. And his outlook starts to change.

Secondly, *The Three Emperors* differs from previous installments in that we, as readers, finally get to read from Astiza's POV. Switching back and forth between Ethan and Astiza, Dietrich crafts a compelling story that bridges the adventurers while they are separated and seeking each other, and provides more insight into Astiza herself. A good thing. She is a great character.

The Three Emperors is also darker than previous Ethan Gage novels. While Ethan and Astiza have always been caught up in devastating and tragic adventures, they often handle them in the same stride as say Indiana Jones or Ben Gates (of the National Treasure franchise). In *The Three Emperors*, the two face rape, cannibalism, and deep-rooted betrayal, and while there is still some stride handling, these are some more difficult challenges to stride handle than your typical action fare: blow 'em up and kill 'em all. In other words, it is harder to brush off a sadistic dwarf that wants to eat children than it is to brush off running through a storm of bullets where everyone around you is falling... in an action and adventure novel that is.

But Dietrich doesn't disappoint! Dark as it may seem, *The Three Emperors* is still a great escapism ride. How long until #8??

Benjamin Thomas says

The 7th and (so far) final novel in the Ethan Gage series continues the fine tradition of swashbuckling adventure as in all of the previous volumes. Ethan Gage describes himself as "Advisor, historian, seer, electrician, diplomat, and military consultant; a confidant of President Jefferson, and scholar of civilization." His adversaries would use different words such as rogue, scoundrel, gambler, thief, deserter, and the like. What's interesting about these books is that both perspectives are correct.

This novel continues the grand adventure that began in the previous book, *The Barbed Crown*, with the central emphasis on recovering the lost and perhaps not even real medieval treasure known as the "Brazen head", an automaton that is rumored to be able to predict the future. The quest actually started in the previous book but was sidetracked by all sorts of interesting historical events and the separation of Ethan from his

wife and son. Now as he tries to reunite with them once again his adventures take him back once more to Napoleon's side (and, in fact, is the one who must tell Napoleon of the great naval loss at Trafalgar). As always, despite his best laid plans, chance and circumstance dictate Ethan's path and he finds himself fighting as a foot soldier on the French side during the pivotal battle at Austerlitz against the Russians and the Austrians. As always, the author waves actual historical events, people and places into the narrative, providing a wonderful sense of crazy reality.

For the first time in the series, some of the chapters are told from the point of view of Astiza, Ethan's wife. One chapter is even told from his very young son's viewpoint. All are in first person but this offers an interesting perspective, given that up until now we really didn't know Astiza's thoughts on various events or even, indeed, about Ethan. This really made her come alive in my mind instead of being just another character as in previous books in the series.

According the author's website, he is working on another Ethan Gage novel. If for some reason that does not ever bear fruit, then this is a nice place to end the series. Even though there is much left in the Napoleonic basket of history from which to pluck adventures, the end of this book does find Ethan and his little family in a good place and with a plan for their future.

I, for one, will be hoping for more of Ethan Gage.

Lindsey says

As with all the other Ethan Gage adventures, this one included Ethan on a search for an obscure, mystical object (the Brazen Head this time) while he manages to escape grave peril several times through sheer luck. I still found Ethan highly reminiscent of Indiana Jones, making this more of a lighter, entertaining read. This book does reference earlier events heavily so I feel I would have enjoyed it more if I had actually read book #6 first. Oops.

Zeb Kantrowitz says

This is the seventh book in the Ethan Gage series, but my first. Though I haven't read any of the Gage books, I have read some of Dietrich's other works. This one has the feel of "Flashman" or "Sharp", an adventurer during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Gage describes himself as a follower of the philosophy of Benjamin Franklin, but this is probably just a ruse and he is a promoter of Gage and no one else.

This book picks up after the Battle of Trafalgar, where Gage was on the losing French side. He turns up in Venice looking for news of his family, his wife Astiza and his five year old son Horus (called Harry). He hears that she is somewhere in Bohemia, on the trail of the "brazen head". The Head was built by the great alchemist Albertus Magnus. It was rumored that the Head could foretell the future. Being thought demonic Saint Thomas Aquinas destroyed the Head in the twelfth century. Or did he?

The Head was said to have last been in the hands of Christian Rosenkreuz the founder of the Rosicrucian Order (Rose Cross) in the seventeenth century. Rosenkreuz had hidden the Head somewhere in Bohemia,

and that's where Gage's wife and son were. To raise money, Gage goes to a mid-level gambling house where he comes upon a man calling himself Baron Richter. They gamble for high stakes with Richter winning. But Gage and others suspect the Baron of cheating and Gage robs him and takes off for Bohemia.

Now Gage ends up in Napoleon's army on its way to battle the Emperors of Austria and Russia at Austerlitz. Gage has worked for Napoleon before and ends up escaping him but not the battle. Gage dresses up as a private and ends up in the middle of the battle first against the Austrians and then the Russians. During the commotion after the battle the wounded Gage escapes with the help of an impressed Jew, to the Ghetto of Prague.

The rest of the story follows Gage as he searches and finds his wife and son. His wife has fallen into the clutches of the evil Baron Richter (how coincidental) and his minion, a manic dwarf (aren't they all) named Auric. Astiza promises the Baron that she can turn lead into gold. While she is killing time with her false alchemical pursuits, Gage catches up to them. Blah Blah Blah Blah, they are imprisoned, blah blah blah, they get away. Bad men all dead.

Not bad and a real release from the mundane books about Zombies and archers.

Zeb Kantrowitz zworstblog.blogspot.com

Bernie Charbonneau says

Another great adventure written by Mr. Dietrich! I have been following the exploits of Mr. Ethan Gage from the beginning of this series and I have yet to be disappointed. With historic characters centering around the French Napoleonic war, we find our American Franklin trying to keep ahead of the war while chasing booty which can lead to sticky situations. A good light read while at the same time enlightening the mind with historical facts.
