

1: Experiments in exile | Books | The Guardian

Pronek took out his hanky and wiped his nose, his chin and Apocalypse Now, respectively. Reg looked determinedly to the right, then to the left, clearly mulling over a profound thought. Reg looked determinedly to the right, then to the left, clearly mulling over a profound thought.

He contemplated going back to fetch it, but the relentless piston of his fellow pilgrims pushed him through the mazy tunnel, until he saw a line of booths echoing one another, with uniformed officers lodged in them reading little passport-books, as sundry passengers waited obediently behind a thick yellow line on the floor. Pronek walked up to him and said: The man took him up to the booth filled to the glass-pane brim with a gigantic man. Had someone abruptly opened the door of his booth, his flesh would have oozed out slowly, Pronek thought, like runny dough. He was mustached, and suddenly Pronek realized that he resembled the fat detective with a loose tie and an unbuttoned shirt from an American TV show. I think they have program for me. Then he grabbed a stamp and violently slammed it against a passport page and said: Thank you very much. It was January 26, Virgil began explaining to Pronek how to get on the plane to Washington, D. He saw the valley of baldness between the two tufts of hair, stretching away from the emerging globe. Hair was peering out of his nose, swaying almost imperceptibly, as if a couple of centipedes were stuck in his nostrils, hopelessly moving their little legs. This is not Russia, hun, we got all kindsa beer. The square heads of two toupeed men talking were winding upward like smoke, then they would straighten up, and Pronek could see them grinning at their microphones, as if they were delectable lollipops, then they would twist again. He thought, for a moment, that his eyes were not adjusted to the ways in which images were transmitted in this country. He remembered that dogs saw everything differently from people and that everything looked dim to them. This is the kind of profitless thought that Pronek frequently had. Pronek saw an elderly couple sitting down under one of the TVs. The man had wrinkles emerging, like rays, from the corners of his eyes, and a Redskins hat. The woman had puffed up hair, and she looked a lot like the Washington on the one-dollar bill. Instead, the man took a black book out of his worn-out canvas handbag and spread it between the two sweating bottles. This was, for Pronek, the first in the series of what we normally call culture shocks. Finally, he joined the line of people trickling into the tunnel to the Washington D. Pronek had a window seat, and a man who looked as if he had just been attached to an air-compressor, like a balloon, sat next to him – the man was so fat that he occupied two seats and had to buckle his left thigh. Are you a Redskins fan? Pronek looked out at the aluminum sternness of the wing, his body twisted, his cheek against the seat texture, whose chafing reminded him of his red scarf, and then he fell asleep, until the ascendance of his guts to his throat, as the plane was taking off, woke him up. Marbles Pronek hated his neck, because it always got stiff and became a knot of thick sinews. He would keep pressing them, which would just produce more and more pain, while the sinews would wiggle under his fingers, as hard as steel cables. They would have to soak his neck in acid for a week or so, in order to soften the steely sinews, and then cut off his head. The attendant seemed to be paid per smile and had the tan of an impeccably baked chicken. Pronek was pushed into the airport building by the piston of his fellow-pilgrims, as described before. First the gigantic tip of a nipple on a stick started flashing and hooting, then the empty carousel started revolving. Bulky bags and square suitcases began dropping out from behind the black curtain, then went – woo! He stared at the empty carousel, which revolved meaninglessly until it stopped and shone in conspicuous silence. Pronek had only a handbag packed with books and duty-free shop catalogs, plus a piece of three-day-old bourek, designed by his mother to sustain him on the trip, which was now – we can be sure of that – breeding all kinds of belligerent Balkan micro-organisms. The man held it out just above his pelvis, with the lower edge cutting gently into the palms of his hands, so Pronek thought that his name had been taken away from him and given to this man, who was obviously an honest, hard-working, disciplined individual. The man welcomed Pronek and asked about the trip with fake – but clearly polite – interest. The man had dark, short hair, retreating in disarray from his forehead, with ashen smudges behind his ears. He kindly helped Pronek inquire about the luggage, but to no avail. Outside, it was snowing relentlessly, as if an ireful God was tearing up down pillows in the heavens.

The man drove through the blindingly white maze of the blizzard. He pointed at objects and buildings, which kept popping out of the tumultuous snow like jacks-in-the-box: Do you have to be white to live there? They drove in silence, as the storm was subsiding. Pronek readily accepted the invitation, although he knew very well that he would never see Simon again. The hotel was a Quality Inn. Pronek would remember "to this day" the room at the Quality Inn with eerie clarity: There was a large double bed in a green cape staring at the ceiling with its pillow-eyes; a dark TV facing the bed patiently, like a dog waiting for a treat; an ascetic chair, opening its wooden arms in invitation to a bland desk; an umbrellaed lamp, casting its light shyly on the writing surface; a heavy, matronly peach-colored curtain, behind which there was a large window with a generous vista of an endless wall. The bathroom was immaculately clean, with towels layered upon each other, resembling a snow cube. Pronek kept flushing the scintillating toilet, watching with amazement he had an entirely different concept of the toilet bowl than we do how the water at the bottom was enthusiastically slurped in, only to rise, with liquid cocksureness, back to the original level. There were two rubber footprints stuck to the bottom of the bathtub and a handlebar sticking out of the wall. So Pronek cautiously let the water run, stepped onto the rubber footprints, which matched his feet exactly, and grasped the handlebar, but nothing happened. We cannot be entirely sure what it was that he expected to happen. He washed his pale-blue underwear and the exhausted collar of his rather unseemly flannel shirt, and then stretched them across the chair. He thrust himself upon the bed, which creaked, and lay naked, trying unsuccessfully to calculate the time difference between Washington and Sarajevo six hours, until he fell asleep. He was delighted with the whole poetic-morning set-up, until he found out that his underwear was still moist. He did not hear the maid because he was drying his pants with a hair-dryer, which he discovered in a holster, like a concealed revolver, by the mirror. We should point out that he was butt-naked and was brandishing a regular morning erection. Pronek and the maid "a slim young woman with a paper tiara on her head" were locked together in a moment of helpless embarrassment, and then Pronek slowly closed the door. He sat on the toilet seat, thinking about the loss of his suitcases, which must have been freezing somewhere up in the heavens, stacked up, with all the other completely foreign and unfamiliar suitcases, in a cavernous underbelly of a plane, heading away, away from him. When he finally put on his broken-down shorts and mustered up enough audacity to face the maid, she was gone. His bed was all straightened up, and there was a piece of red heart-shaped candy on the pillow. Pronek imagined having a passionate affair with the maid, who really was a daughter of a New York billionaire, trying to lead an independent, dignified life and get on with her painting career. He could see himself moving back to New York with her; he would live in a shabby but homey apartment in Greenwich Village and support her, making love to her in saxophone slow-motion, kissing her graceful hands and dainty cheeks stained with vivid colors. Simon waited for him at the reception desk, except that he was not Simon, but someone else who looked like Simon, save for the thick glasses and a torus of fat resting on his hips and pelvis. They drove past the same monuments and buildings, in front of which there were insectile machines, plowing away lumps of snow. They Pronek and Simon No. On the lawn, covered with whipped-creamy snow, there was a sign with an eagle spreading its awesome wings, frowning away from the house, as if angry with the inhabitants. They walked into a large hall and there was a uniformed guard under a colorful picture of the uncomfortably smirking George Bush. The sign propped on a scrawny wooden stand said: Pronek played with marbles, which still lay in transoceanic hiatus at the bottom of his coat pockets, revolving them around each other. As Pronek was pulling his hand out, he said: He could still hear the echoes of the runaway marbles from distant corners, when the man asked Pronek: As the man walked away, biting into his elaborate hot dog, mustard spurting out of the corners of his mouth, the excited vendor kept looking after him: Do you know who that is? Who is Garth Brooks!? They all looked longingly after Garth Brooks, who, in trying to wipe mustard off his black suede boots, was spreading it all over them instead. Garth Brooks, of course, is one of our finest country musicians. The poet and his wife, both well into their healthy sixties, were kind enough to invite a group of their valued, intellectually distinguished, friends. There was a professor of history, bow-tied, his face frosted with a sagely beard, in a tweed jacket with suede elbow patches, who was an expert on early American history, he said, in particular the Founding Fathers. And let us not forget Pronek, the uncomfortable tourist. They asked Pronek, who alternately picked at a piece of soy-steak and two limpid asparagus corpses,

intermittently gulping red Chilean wine, the following questions: Do they have asparagus there? Yes, but no one in their right mind eats it. Chortle on the right, chuckle on the left. What language do people speak there? Is the powder-keg going to explode? Is he going to settle in the United States? Has he ever heard of Stanley Kramer? Finally, Pronek toppled over his high wine glass, and then watched in panic, yet catatonic, as the red tide spread westward toward the woman who had just come out of a painful, bitter divorce. She yelped and said: I had a vision of blood last night! She kept pressing her temples, as if trying to squeeze her eyes out. Pronek saw her long black nails bending backwards and was afraid that they might break. She began sobbing, and everyone looked at one another, except Pronek, who looked at his supine wine glass. They sat in confounded silence; she wept, her crystal earrings rattling as her head quaked. The John Wesley Gluppson Prize winner then poured a little wine in her glass and said: His office was in the building that Selznick constructed to stand in for Tara in *Gone With the Wind* — just the front part, in fact, because the building was only one room deep. Besides John Milius, who sat at his vast desk suckling a cigar as long as a walking stick, there was a man who introduced himself as Reg Buttler.

2: READ The Question of Bruno () Online Free. www.enganchecubano.com - Free Reading Epub, Pdf.

Blind Josef Pronek and Dead Souls has 3 ratings and 0 reviews. Un giovane jugoslavo in viaggio studio negli Stati Uniti scopre un giorno di essere divent.

While this method certainly has drawbacks, I prefer it to what we usually face with anthologies from Europe: If the author of the eerie and moving novella *Blind Josef Pronek and Dead Souls* wanted to take me to meet his sometimes obscure discoveries among modern European authors, I was happy to join him. As an American living in Helsinki, I also liked that Hemon singled out for praise the piece that received the most positive critical attention in the volume: Seven of the pieces that Hemon chose came from longer works, and it was hard to tell much about them based on the brief samples that were presented. Hemon excels at grim, disorienting effects in his own fiction, and he is drawn to similar effects in other writers, but I think he miscalculated when he included so much work along these lines. *Best European Fiction* asked us to enter too many fragmented, self-consciously riddling situations, one after another, and they all started to blur together. The anthology was a tour de force, but it was also too much of a good thing, and it was less compelling as a whole than most of its stories were as individual achievements. Now, with *Best European Fiction*, Hemon gives us a much more varied collection. Series Editor Aleksandar Hemon The high quality of the writing reminds us that part of why we still turn to the great European novelists of the past is because they used their formal and stylistic boldness to give us figures like Don Quixote and Emma Bovary and the Baron de Charlus. The story starts off with an engaging literary conceit: Eventually, though, he comes up against a writer whose books challenge his sense of superiority. His confusion over what has happened to her is both affecting and chilling. Many of the tales introduce us to a family or a circle of people, with each individual bringing out the full flavor of the others. These group stories tend to read like compressed novels, dense with observation. What will I myself be? Scars, welts, wens, and linesâ€”a single careless pass would suffice to start a bloodbath. And meanwhile, their entire childhood, the time when they had been inseparable, was mapped right there in front of him, was there for him to touch; and in the space between two wounds he saw that day when they had rubbed each other with shoe polish, under their noses and on their cheeks, so as to look like men a little sooner. The story closes on a note that could serve as an epigraph for the whole collection: One sister grows thinner and more self-destructive while another sister watches, and gradually we see how the family members infect each other with their different shortcomings and obsessions. A father abandons his family, and his daughter comes to believe that he left because of her. Years later, as an adult, she finds his corpse in a cargo container. Then she and her brother read the manuscript that the father has left behind: The novel was titled *Freedom* [! Amid these escapades were accounts of sexual conquests. Stories of Congolese black girls with big asses, submissive Asian beauties, promiscuous Inuit girls, and teenage Ukrainian prostitutes. The Georgian writer Zurab Lezhava provides a raunchy, well-executed story about a man who bargains for the sexual favors of a married woman in return for a discount on the refrigerator he wants to sell her. The gigolosâ€”in a parody of the Polish plumbers the French have been worrying aboutâ€”are imported from Bulgaria and offer the wives a sexual vigor that the women neither want nor expect from their husbands anymore. It also dives into questions of sexuality and male insecurity that most writers are afraid to address. Anita Konkka writes the imaginary memoirs of a famous clown who has grown discouraged with life: The husband is repulsed by both the mother and the child, and is shameless in exploiting and abusing them. Yet he is also devoted to them in some ways, and remains under their thrall. In time, his fixation on their appearance starts to change his vision of the world: It was as though he had discovered a secretâ€”that everyone is in disguise, that human faces are just masks, the whole of life one big Venetian ball. Sometimes he drunkenly fantasizedâ€”that he was removing the masks, and with a gentle crackle of glued-on paper they were revealingâ€”what? His fingers would rummage in her hair, seeking out the hidden edges, the straps and strips of glueâ€”. Following a now-familiar literary tradition, several of the stories from Eastern and Southeastern Europe are concerned either with government oppression or with the stifling elements of everyday life in the recent past. Without ever letting the narrative feel cramped or rushed, he draws us into a set of lavishly

developed situations: Most anthologies offer up their fair share of duds. Even the few stories that I disliked on a first reading turned out to be quite a bit better on a second, slipping past my prejudices as I tried to dismiss them. Yet on their own terms both stories are excellent, distinguished by subtle characterizations and skillful storytelling. In his introduction, Hemon asks us to read the stories slowly. That originally struck me as an oddly self-serving requestâ€”a bit like urging reviewers to be fairâ€”and I flagged it as something to criticize. By the time I was done with the anthology, however, I realized that Hemon was right. The work in *Best European Fiction* is not only worth reading, but worth reading with the same care that went into its writing. This is a great book.

3: The question of Bruno - Boston University Libraries

Blind Josef Pronek & Dead Souls by Aleksandar Hemon in CHM, DOC, EPUB download e-book. Welcome to our site, dear reader! All content included on our site, such as text, images, digital downloads and other, is the property of its content suppliers and protected by US and international copyright laws.

In this decade, Pamuk has written the three most fully realized novels of ambition, an astonishing productivity -- he also published *Istanbul*: Many of the writers of the coming decades will be measured against this legacy. The aestheticization of politics is really another name for fascism; the aestheticization of personal life is -- what? Is it just short of the accomplishment of art itself? What is authentic emotional life? How independent can it be of class and origin? A more important question, handled by a more astute writer, cannot be imagined. Orhan Pamuk, *Snow* Knopf, This is the most important political novel of our times; no other book takes us to the heart of the dispute between fundamentalists and secularists as does *Snow*, with anything remotely approaching its philosophical sophistication. And to the extent that this dispute is central to world politics, so is this book. The false divides between "us" and "them" are quite erased in this book, so that the mirror is presented as a conundrum of existence; as soon as we start looking closely, as Pamuk does in *Snow*, we find that identity is a matter of great contingency and flux. Today, the process of assumption and shedding of identities has acquired greater speed than ever before; *Snow* captures this blinding-speed momentum perfectly. In the eastern Anatolian town of Kars, religious girls start committing suicide for not being allowed to wear the headscarf. What happens if, for a short snowbound period of time, the convoluted manifestations of these two tendencies are allowed to collide? Which camp does one belong to? What if such allegiance has immediate life-and-death consequences? Why did Islam never modernize? Is it something about the religion? Did Islam already have its reformation -- or is it going to have one? Journalists keep themselves occupied asking such hollow questions, while Pamuk offers us, in *My Name Is Red*, a look at how a great culture is always in transition, always constitutes the sum of its parts, so that to ask such questions, as though cultures were laboratory experiments, is the height of silliness. The writer, at his most successful, writes from inside a culture, as though he were an outsider; Pamuk does this one better, by fully enfolding his outsidership, his observer status, into the rhythm of the narrative. In the sixteenth-century Ottoman empire, a group of miniaturist painters borrowing their art from Persian masters find themselves caught in a cauldron of envy and suspicion, to the extent that two of them get murdered. Who among the painters is the murderer? The range of philosophical investigation -- including disquisitions on the art of painting, according to varied ideologies -- is unparalleled for a novel published in this decade; whereas Sterne attempted digression in the service of a lighthearted escape from the burdens of banality, Pamuk makes us believe that digression itself is a misnomer. We start pondering a different set of questions about tradition versus modernity -- if that is even the matrix we should be operating along -- and that is a very great accomplishment. Pamuk has enormously expanded the range of elasticity attributable to the novel; at this late stage in time, to be able to do so, beggars belief. Smith finished writing this book at the preternatural age of twenty-two, while still a student at Cambridge. Not surprisingly, her follow-up books have not measured up to the exuberant crescendo of *White Teeth*, but then, we never expected that. *White Teeth* was the summation of the spirit of openness, trial and error, experimentation, and hybridity that marked the multicultural age of Western civilization in the last decades of the twentieth century. Two outcomes were possible at the turn of the millennium. Archie Jones and Samad Iqbal are the two parents -- and best friends -- in working-class London; they have a shared history fighting for the empire in World War II. When Archie remarries, it is with a young Jamaican girl, whose offspring is Irie; while the Bengali Samad has twin sons with his wife Alsana, Millat and Magid. The offspring are also involved with the scientific Chalfens family, who design the genetically engineered FutureMouse. Scientific fundamentalism, then, is in clash with cultural fundamentalism, while the earlier generation of Archie and Samad stands by in bemusement. It is a little painful to read the novel now; its comic endearments generated faint unease even a decade ago. Everything ends happily; the threats are not real threats, people will in the end come to their senses. *White Teeth* now feels archival, documentary, illusory -- it is the necessary progenitor of

a great deal of multicultural fiction, especially by writers of South Asian extraction in the U. This is the best book of the twenty-first century to take full measure of the dearly departed twentieth century, an unparalleled effort of elegiac imagination. Before the "Great War" of , belief in progress and enlightenment reigned strong, given great impetus by Darwin in the late nineteenth century. The disillusionment of the interwar years was followed by some false exuberance, in turn succeeded by a weary exhaustion that began half a century ago and shows no signs of abating. As the century unravels into war, then weak passions, then finally enervation and meaninglessness, so does the life of its protagonist, an Everyman who finds himself inserted, Zelig-like, in some of the key situations of the century. Power having shifted to America, it is natural that he should find his way after the war to New York, to run an art gallery, which he does quite successfully, until he has to escape for fear of facing charges of statutory rape. Throughout his life Mountstuart writes minor books, unable to get around to creating a literary masterpiece. This is the saddest story ever told. One has the feeling that other books that follow in its wake will not be able to supersede its utter penetration of the new psychology of the master race. Hans finds consolation in a friendship with West Indian immigrant Chuck Ramkissoon, an entrepreneur who has risen far enough to dream of building the New York Cricket Club, reminding America that the game was played on these shores long before baseball ever originated. Ramkissoon dares to dream that cricket, even in these fraught times, can bring Americans together, impose a different rhythm of time and space. Ramkissoon may be engaged in questionable activities, but compared to the massive ongoing crimes against humanity, his transgressions are besides the point. Margaret Atwood, *Oryx and Crake* Doubleday, Upon rereading this book at the end of the decade, it feels even more powerful than it did at the beginning: What is shocking now is the degree to which some of the near-future predictions of *Oryx and Crake* have already come true. Jimmy Snowman , the student at the decrepit Martha Graham Academy, and his friend, the mad genius scientist Crake at the Watson-Crick Institute, watch live beheadings at hedsoff. In the current decade the American liberal arts college has traveled a long distance to making itself a quaint relic, like Martha Graham Academy. Snowman presumes himself to be the last man alive on earth, after Crake lets loose a plague -- embodied in the pill BlyssPluss -- to replace the human race, overbreeding its way to extinction anyway, with a placid, green-eyed, grass-eating, ultraviolet ray-immune race of humans called the Crakers, whom he has produced in his Paradise Labs. As in the genre-establishing twentieth-century dystopian novels, the classes are sharply separated: This is the most problematic book on this list, displacing a more deserving book like *V.* Roth posits counterfactual history, an alternative America where Charles Lindbergh won the election on an America First policy against Franklin Roosevelt, and for a couple of years allowed Hitler to get stronger in Europe and anti-Semitism to rage in America. A second reading suggests that we must read the book this way; Roth meant no more. The "isolationism" of the period had a very intellectually respectable pacifist element, which Roth completely ignores; this is further reinforced by the happy outcome, as all is set straight at the end, and America defeats Hitler after all, to assume leadership on the world stage. But what magnificent blindness! Herman Roth is the patriarch of the family, whose child Philip Roth watches his secure New Jersey bourgeois world collapse around him. Aleksander Hemon, *Nowhere Man*: It is the most difficult thing he is asked to do. His friend Mirza, a Muslim, writes him letters from Sarajevo about the mutual annihilation in progress there. Various do-gooding liberal Americans take to Pronek -- as they always do -- enchanted by his Bosnian accent and his lack of guile. George Bush says, "This place is holy ground. May God bless your country, son. It is as yours as you make it. If there is misunderstanding, you oughtta work it out. Hemon takes the dreamlife behind the dream apart to reveal the person the immigrant never likes to talk about; yet it is all out there in the open. Hemon writes the most energized prose of any American author today; reading him is a constant rebuke to the energies we have frittered away. It is after the onset of the new American wars of empire. Changez, a Pakistani from a shabby genteel Lahore family, who once found success at Princeton and on Wall Street, has returned to Pakistan, believing that for its own good the American empire must be stopped cold. How he plans to do this, as he conducts a novel-length monologue with his unnamed American interlocutor at an Anarkali restaurant in Lahore, is not clear; it is not even clear if Changez is about to be assassinated, or if perhaps the American is about to meet this fate. In any event, they are locked in mortal conflict, a zero-sum game with no winners. Changez comes to see himself like the Ottoman Janissaries,

recruited to do the dirty work -- but with what benefit to himself? It is not necessary for Hamid to elaborate what sort of fundamentalism Changez has fallen into; that is besides the point. What is important is that from a position of false harmony, the two sides have irrevocably locked horns -- and these two sides are not necessarily geographical or religious entities, but the sides of reason and madness. Changez is a fundamentalist of reason, which, at the present moment in history, appears to some among the overlords as madness. Ha Jin, *The Bridegroom: Stories Back Bay*, J. The Authorized Biography of V. Marilyn Hacker, *Squares and Courtyards*:

4: Blind Josef Pronek and Dead Souls by Aleksandar Hemon

Pronek learns that his parents are on the list for a convoy out of the city. Suddenly he realizes that death is the cessation of life.

One published review from that time, by Peter Ho Davies, describes Hemon as having proved himself "a gymnastically versatile stylist". Nothing in fact captured me until the sixth and seventh of eight stories, "The Coin", a searing vignette about the terrorized atmosphere of wartime Sarajevo best of the collection, in my mind ; and, "Blind Jozef Pronek.. ThoughtPolice Sep 18, What a fine collection of fictions. Within eight years, Hemon had written his first book in English, *The Question of Bruno*, a collection of short stories. This collection shows a fluency that my own writing lacks. Yet, I missed that in this collection. The thing is, however, I believe Hemon has the ability to do it. Still, these are all over the place. Complete with old pictures, it comes off half historical and half sheer rumination. I found "The Accordion" much more appealing and effective. Based on a story told to him by his great grandfather of an accordion and embellished with imagination, Aleksander creates a wholly memorable scene where the Archduke Ferdinand sees the accordion player close to the time of his death. Hemon also looks into his lineage a bit in certain stories, like "Exchange of Pleasant Words" but perhaps what I liked hearing best was just the accounts of Jozef Pronek I am sure this must be autobiographical to some extent trying to make it as an immigrant in Chicago. Hemon taught himself English after becoming a refugee of the conflict in Sarajevo, and writes with a clarity and ease that makes the reader want more. His stories span from the experiences of a refugee in America, a displaced Sarajevan, and even a former Nazi supporter. A must read for lovers of short stories, foreign writers, and dark wit. While these comparisons are, certainly, flattering, it is obvious that they are made simply because these are the cultural references the reviewers or the blurbers associate with the part of the world Hemon comes from. The more insane its history, the more permeated with dark humor it is. It also uses footnotes as a sort of parallel story or as a corollary. A literal representation of day-life versus nightlife or the underground, one might say. Then old Uncle Julius, who smells of pine cologne with a whiff of rot and decay, starts telling stories about his time in Soviet gulags. Then they get home to find the plants have all died because the neighbour who was supposed to water them died of a heart attack. And the near-starved family cat now looks at them with irreversible hatred. So the tone is set. The stories are all separate but interlinked: So despite the apparent randomness of the stories and wide variation of writing style, the book is coherent. Hemon, however, plays with fact and fiction, leaving you unsure what, if anything, is true. The overall effect reminds me of Jorge Luis Borges, a writer I admire a lot. His prose skips quickly on, letting the images speak for themselves. But overall I loved the book, and definitely want to read his latest, *The Lazarus Project*, as soon as I can. Hit or miss overall, but certain sentences here are as good as they come.

5: Blind Jozef Pronek and Dead Souls

Within "The Question of Bruno," Aleksandar Hemon's "Blind Jozef Pronek & Dead Souls" is a narrative of discord. While the physical conflict of war swells in the background, Hemon relentlessly pairs clashing ideas and words, forging oxymorons.

Introduction When Aleksandar Hemon traveled to Chicago from his native Bosnia in on a brief cultural visa, he did not expect to become a prominent and successful writer in English within six years. This is what he did, however, immigrating to the United States as a refugee when war broke out in Bosnia-Herzegovina one of the former Yugoslavian states and mastering the English language. Hemon began to write semi-autobiographical short stories characterized by a frank and immediate voice, often dealing with political themes, including the war in the former Yugoslavia and with Yugoslavian history. Sophisticated and striking, his stories brought him nearly immediate recognition as an important and gifted writer. One of these stories, entitled "Islands," is steeped in the rich history of s Yugoslavia, before the dictator Marshal Tito died and the region fell into instability and civil war. He was interested in soccer and spying as a child, among other things, and later he worked as a journalist. He had only a basic command of English and intended to stay for only a short time, but when war erupted in his country he applied to stay in the United States as a refugee. His application was successful, and Hemon held a series of part-time jobs while improving his English, including a kitchen worker, a bicycle messenger, and a fund-raiser for Greenpeace. His short stories have also been published in magazines, including the New Yorker, Esquire, and Triquarterly, and "Islands" was included in Best American Short Stories In , Hemon published his first novel Nowhere Man, which follows Josef Pronek, the protagonist of a story in The Question of Bruno, through his adolescence and his move to Chicago as war is breaking out in Bosnia. Hemon has received numerous awards for his writings, and in he was awarded a MacArthur Fellowship. Plot Summary Scenes "Islands" begins with the young unnamed narrator driving with his family from Sarajevo to the coast, where they take a ship to the island of Mljet, which is part of the neighboring state of Croatia. On the ship, the narrator loses his hat in the wind and, realizing he will never see it again, sobs himself to sleep. The family is greeted on Mljet by Uncle Julius, whose lack of teeth disturbs the narrator. While they walk back to the house, Uncle Julius explains that Mljet used to be overrun by snakes until someone brought a group of young mongooses to the island. Now the mongooses have killed all the snakes and overrun the island themselves. Scenes At the house, Aunt Lyudmila gives the narrator a slobbery kiss. He walks upstairs to a room with a picture of the Yugoslav dictator Josip Tito and an image of the island. Later that night, the narrator wakes up and finds the adults talking and drinking wine outside. He overhears Uncle Julius saying that his grandfather was a beekeeper, and the narrator tells them he is thirsty. Aunt Lyudmila offers him a cup of water, but he refuses because he sees a slug in the water tank. Scenes Uncle Julius tells a story about the time he spent at the Arkhangelsk labor camp in northern Russia, where Stalin began to send young children as punishment for missing school. They were abused and died frequently, but Uncle Julius met one named Vanyka who managed to survive. When Uncle Julius was sent to Siberia to be a gravedigger, he saw Vanyka again, begging to die, and he gave him a piece of bread. Vanyka told him what happened after he got drunk and shouted, "Thank you, Stalin, for my happy childhood! He began to kill as well and was sent to an island for the worst criminals, from which he fled with two other criminals. Vanyka killed and ate the two other men, but guards eventually caught him and put him in solitary confinement. He had been trying to kill himself, but the guards would not let him die. The narrator asks what happened to Vanyka, but Uncle Julius simply says, dismissively, he "was killed. His parents allow him to swim, and he sees jellyfish and once a school of what look like "miniature swordfish. Sometimes Uncle Julius takes the narrator to his apiary, which is a place where bees are raised for their honey. The narrator holds a flaming rag on a stick to repel the bees but runs away out of fear. The narrator almost falls out of the boat, but Uncle Julius catches him. Uncle Julius says the island used to be a haven for pirates who took hostages for ransom, then was a German prison, and now houses a hotel that rarely has any tourists. They walk to the restaurant and Uncle Julius tells a story about his student days in Moscow, when he saw the "oldest man in the world. They find their plants withered and the

cat starving because their neighbor who was supposed to feed them has died of a heart attack , and the cat looks at the narrator with "irreversible hatred. He describes them as "sprightly," or lively and animated, although it is difficult to tell whether they are truly enjoying the trip. German Tourists The narrator encounters a number of older German tourists on his trip to Mljet, who tend to be somewhat oblivious. They are foreign sightseers who see this Slavic island region as outsiders, with apparently no real comprehension. They are sunburned, take numerous pictures, and one of them vomits over the side of the ship. Uncle Julius A Mljet native who deeply affects the narrator, Uncle Julius is a mysterious and somewhat disturbing old man. The story of his life is never spelled out, but the reader is able to piece together some key details of his years in Russia based on the stories he tells. He is from the Ukraine, which was a part of the former U. After this, Uncle Julius was transferred to different camps for how long or how many he is unsure , but he ended up as a gravedigger in Siberia. Somehow he made his way to Mljet, where he is married to Aunt Lyudmila and keeps bees in the tradition of his Ukrainian family. With his soft lips "like slugs," his stink of "rot and decay," his bulging eyes, his "peculiar, tranquil smile," and his stained gums missing their teeth, Uncle Julius cuts a rather fearsome figure to a young boy. The most frightening aspects of his character, however, are his horrific stories, which he says the narrator "should know. In fact, Hemon seems to emphasize that the main subject of "Islands" is the impression that Uncle Julius makes on the young narrator, implying that it affected him for many years afterwards. The narrator says her face is like "a loaf of bread with a small tubby potato in the middle" and that her calves, ankles, and bare feet are bruised, swollen, and warped. This must be because she has been subject to very hard work throughout her life, with the implication that she is a tough and stolid woman. It is unclear how or when she met Uncle Julius. The narrator does not seem to like her because of the slobbery kiss she gives him and her failure to notice or object to the slug in the water tank. She is the one who tends to speak to the narrator and take care of him, and he suggests that he is close to her early in the story when he hides his face in her skirt. Nevertheless, she is grouped with her husband as a rather abstract authority figure to whom the narrator generally pays little attention. As he begins his island voyage, he wears a round straw hat painted with the seven dwarves from Snow White, but it blows away in the wind. He enjoys swimming and playing in the sand, but he is unenthusiastic about the trip to Mljet. A generally obedient boy, he is impressionable and curious. Uncle Julius is not necessarily trying to scare or traumatize the narrator, but he does seem to be imparting some type of lesson. However, the narrative perspective is that of an observant child who is still forming his opinion about the world. He seems unsure quite how all of the pieces of the story fit together, but he seems to recognize that they are significant to his youth and development. This is perhaps why he speaks about waking up without knowing "where I was or who I was" and feeling "present in my own body" when he dives into the sea; he is forming an understanding of his place in his family and society. Stalin attempted to industrialize the Soviet Union by destroying millions whom he thought stood in his way: Under his command, more than 10 million people perished in labor camps that dotted Siberia. Comrade Tito Marshal Josip Broz Tito " was the communist president of the former Yugoslavia a country consisting of six republics that was created in from until his death in He is only twelve when he is sent to Arkhangelsk camp either because he was "repeatedly late for school or missed several days with no excuse. He begins to kill and do "bad, bad things. Vanyka attempts to escape, killing and eating three people in the process, but guards catch him and put him in solitary confinement, torturing him. He tries to kill himself and, when Uncle Julius meets him for the second time, all he wants is to die, but the guards keep him alive so he suffers more. Themes Memory Partly because it is the first story in an autobiographical collection of fiction from the perspective of a Bosnian immigrant to the United States, there is the sense that "Islands" is a journey into childhood memory from the standpoint of an adult. They contain specific observations and piece together the overall impression or significance of the trip. He implies that the memory selects certain details to retain vividly, and these chosen parts act as beacons or signposts to what was significant or moving about an experience. Hemon implies that the memory categorizes and stores what is important to it in this sort of coded manner, particularly childhood memories when revisited or re-envisioned in adulthood. Although he experiences a number of potentially traumatizing events, such as when he loses his hat or sees a German shepherd kill a mongoose, the narrator is most significantly troubled by the stories and general persona of his Uncle Julius.

Uncle Julius is not necessarily a malicious man, but he does seem to think it is a good idea for the narrator to hear some bone-chilling stories, as evidenced when he says "he should know" in reference to the story about Vanyka. Because they are filled with such a threatening vision of the world, however, they are emotionally disturbing and appear to become longstanding childhood trauma. In this way, the story takes on the theme of power and influence over others. Interestingly, the narrator seems to have little tension or confrontation with his own parents although they do have strict rules about swimming, for example, so Uncle Julius seems to inspire him to think about authority in a new way. Hemon is careful to bring up the theme of authority at the final moment of the story, in which the narrator views what he considers the "irreversible hatred" of a cat that has been neglected and though accidentally tortured by those who hold power over it.

Style Short Scenes The fact that "Islands" is made up of thirty-three short scenes is crucial to its storytelling format. The format of the story, therefore, may be intended to imitate the way that the mind accesses its childhood memories. It is also significant in drawing attention to the idea of islands and isolation, ideas that frequently recur in the narrative and underscore the setting of the story as well as some of its content.

What were its key causes? What parties and factions were involved? Describe the ethnically motivated violence and discuss why it could be considered genocide. What has happened to those accused of war crimes? Discuss the United Nations response, the nature of the peace settlement, and the outcome of the war. Think of a family vacation you took when you were in elementary school, or a period of time spent with a relative that made an impression on you. What are your most vivid memories of it? Write down a series of memories and then form them into a series of short storytelling scenes. What was important about the episodes you chose? What are your lasting impressions? What do they say about your relationship with your family or your relative? Describe their key differences. Who was sent to the camps, and why? What was life like inside them? How did the camps affect Soviet life and the perception, domestically and internationally, of communist governments?

First-Person Childhood Perspective Hemon is adept at developing a believable first-person narrative voice that speaks and thinks like a nine-year-old boy. Hemon is thereby able to allow his readers to enter the world of a child and bring to life the true significance of the trip to Mljet. Hemon wrote the story in the s, having recently emigrated from Bosnia to the United States.

6: The Question of Bruno by Aleksandar Hemon

The centerpiece of Aleksandar Hemon's stunning first book, "The Question of Bruno" (), was "Blind Jozef Pronek & Dead Souls," a nearly perfect novella that introduced us to one of.

Share via Email Aleksandar Hemon sold his first book, a dazzling story collection called *The Question of Bruno* - written in his second language, English - in the closing minutes of the Champions League final. Manchester United were playing Bayern Munich. And then Man United scored two goals. He is, in fact, an obsessive footballer who has been unable to play since spring, when he injured his knee. Perhaps because of this, his demeanour communicates a strange mixture of gentleness and an intense desire to kick something. Since his first book, Hemon has produced two further pieces of fiction in English. The second, *Nowhere Man*, published in , picked up the story of Josef Pronek, a Hemon-like figure a Sarajevan stranded in Chicago by the war who first appeared in *The Question of Bruno*. Hemon feels there is too much categorisation in talk about writing. His heavy glasses spend most of the time on top of his stubble, where they make a black accent above the round edge of his skull, like a caron over the curved top of a letter O. Other faces seem suddenly skimpy by comparison. Pronek has "a rotund nose, which seemed swollen"; elsewhere he observes himself to have "a tubernose". When Hemon slides his glasses down over his eyes, a different man, a superimposed humorist, appears: Nothing is fixed, identity is fluid - a point his fiction makes repeatedly and that he reluctantly concedes in discussion, politely suppressing a wince at the simplistic nature of this observation. His new book, *The Lazarus Project*, published to adoring reviews, continues to play with real and fictional identities its protagonist, Vladimir Brik, is a Bosnian writer living in Chicago. He was born in and grew up in Sarajevo, in a flat that his family still owns in a "five-storey socialist-ugly apartment building". He stays there on trips back to the city his parents now live in Canada. His parents worked at a state-owned company 10 minutes from their home: The family - Hemon, his parents, and his younger sister Kristina - would eat lunch together every day at four, and listen to the radio news, with a special hush at 4. His fiction understands the nature of such losses. Hemon remembers feeling close to the ground, "in the literal sense, in that I would see what was on the ground; things that were on the ground attracted my attention". Things on the ground attract his attention still, often as signifiers of losses too awful to confront directly. In *The Lazarus Project*, a black leather glove floats in a puddle of porridge after a pogrom. In "A Coin", Sarajevans running from snipers litter the street with their belongings: A purse, agape like a mouth. A white plastic water-vessel, with a bullet-hole at its centre. A green-red-brown shawl ornamented with snowflakes, dirty. A wet loaf of bread, with excited ants crawling all over it, as if building a pyramid. In the Hemon household, a principled stand tended to impede individual progress. I was at the border with Bulgaria. Hemon himself maintains that he cannot lie he looks me very seriously in the eye when he says this , due to a family affliction: In the winter of , an organisation called the American Cultural Centre brought him to the US on a programme for young journalists. He was 28; the trip was to last a month or so, with a visit to a friend tagged on afterwards. The war began in April. He was supposed to fly back from Chicago on May 1; the siege of Sarajevo started on May 2. From June to September , having acquired a social security number, Hemon wrote nothing at all, but worked as a canvasser. He dictated several columns by phone to his old magazine in Sarajevo. What was I going to tell them - you should go and see this movie? I felt entirely helpless, and stupid. As he describes it, it sounds an entirely sensible approach to the challenge, a kind of highbrow Berlitz course. Lolita is the bomb. The book helped Hemon to transform himself from a man speaking what he describes as "tourist English" though it is a stretch to imagine the brooding presence in front of me ever having engaged in the formulaic purchase of a double room with a bath or two return tickets , to a writer of prose that the critic James Wood recently described as being "remarkable for its polish, lustre, and sardonic control of register". Both fizz with similes; animating the inanimate, reimagining the commonplace. Here is a slug in Hemon: With his new language in place, Hemon enrolled on a graduate degree in English at Northwestern University. While he was there, chewing up Shakespeare and Marlowe, a professor remarked on the quality of one of his essays and suggested he submit his fiction to the literary magazine *Triquarterly*. A story in another magazine, *Ploughshares*, followed, which

got him his American agent. Academia had been "plan B"; he was now able to focus on plan A, and write full-time. The Lazarus Project is a product of this time. His previous books were written "in pieces"; the new book was of a piece from the outset. The novel was inspired by a non-fiction account, by Walter Roth and Joe Kraus, of the case of Lazarus Averbuch, a year-old Russian Jewish immigrant who was murdered by the Chicago police in It shows Averbuch dark hair, dark jacket, jug ears sitting upright in a chair. A man standing behind him supports his chin. Averbuch is already dead. Hemon made the same journey himself with his photographer friend Velibor Bozovic, who supplied some of the photographs that appear, uncaptioned, at the start of each chapter, further complicating the relationship between reporting and invention. Like all his books, The Lazarus Project has Hemon in it, but like all his books it resists any transformation into straightforward autobiography. Hemon is uninspired by what he calls "the memoir craze". Despite his writhing, his tone is patient: The electricity of violence and fear in the room. The down from torn pillows floating, like souls, through the fog of what had just happened. The air reeking of sweat and blood, of smashed furniture and shards of glass, of spilled food and fear A horse whinnied outside. The wind came in through the windows, but nothing inside moved. He is dead; they are all dead, I thought. The horrible fear rushed from my stomach to my head. They killed them all. Here it is, then. Some people sit and weep; I rage about the injustice of it all. For me, history, memory and the imagination are part of the same continuum.

7: From the Archives: A Map of Faces | Open Letters Monthly - an Arts and Literature Review

The keystone of the collection is the novella "Blind Josef Pronek and Dead Souls," which opens autobiographically with a Bosnian exchange visitor stranded in America by the outbreak of war at home. There's a broad vein of sturdy satire at work in Pronek's observations of the U.S. ("Small bowl --large gumbo.

Everybody loves this book, and this astounds me. I absolutely hate it. The writing is jumbled, full of nasty depictions and often indecipherable. It is a mixture of history, biography and fiction. But my opinion changes by the time I reach the end of the book, so please read on! Here is a chapter that plays with the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand: The horses are trotting stolidly and the coach is bobbing steadily, and Archduke Franz Fe I think this book is incredible –" incredibly bad. One such description I can take, but repeatedly, over and over, this I find disgusting. I am sure you recognize that the author is playing with the facts, since the Archduke was assassinated traveling in a car. I can do without such experiments. I went down the stairs and announced my thirst. Aunt Lyudmila walked over to the dark corner on my right-hand side - suddenly the light was ablaze –" and there was a concrete box with a large wooden lid. She took off the lid and grabbed a tin cup and shoved her arm into the square. I saw a white slug on the opposite wall. I could not tell whether it was moving upward or it was just frozen by our sudden presence. The dew on its back twinkled, and it looked like a severed tongue. She offered me the cup, but I shook my head and refused to drink the water which, besides, seemed turbid. So they brought me a slice of cold watermelon and I drowsily masticated it. Every paragraph, if not every sentence is gruesome. And for what purpose? As I mentioned above the writing is jumpy and confusing. What is the point with all this depiction of horrid situations? I see no important message being imparted. Well, everyone else seems to understand, but I do not. I do not enjoy, do not see the point or the important message that is being imparted. So why am I splashing around in this muck? This is longer than the others. It could be classified as a novella. He has gone to the States and he remains there while the war rages in his home country. He reads of the Siege of Sarajevo of what is happening there to his kin and childhood friends. It is about his emotions, how it feels being separated from home, how it feels in a strange culture, where nothing makes sense, how it is to be a foreigner in a strange land. It is also about how he sees life in the US. It is about where he belongs. Of course his views on life in America are absurdly true and comical at the same time. This is wonderful writing. It shows how it feels to be a refugee. It is amusing and poignant and sad all at the same time. You are still aware that this is the same author of the shorter stories. I am glad I read the book to the end. I would have to conclude that the author has a distinctive style and in at least one of the stories I empathized, laughed and learned how life as a refugee might feel. I am going to give the book three stars, because I liked that one longer story. Just a word of warning: I prefer to be grabbed, aroused, upset, moved by the books I read. Such books in fact comfort me by their ability to distract me!

8: Interview: Aleksandar Hemon | Books | The Guardian

Much like his protagonist in the novella Blind Jozef Pronek & Dead Souls, the cornerstone of this collection of eight stories, Hemon came to the U.S. as a tourist, but had to stay as a refugee.

I think this book is incredible – incredibly bad. Everybody loves this book, and this astounds me. I absolutely hate it. The writing is jumbled, full of nasty depictions and often indecipherable. It is a mixture of history, biography and fiction. But my opinion changes by the time I reach the end of the book, so please read on! Here is a chapter that plays with the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand: One such description I can take, but repeatedly, over and over, this I find disgusting. I am sure you recognize that the author is playing with the facts, since the Archduke was assassinated traveling in a car. I can do without such experiments. I went down the stairs and announced my thirst. Aunt Lyudmila walked over to the dark corner on my right-hand side - suddenly the light was ablaze – and there was a concrete box with a large wooden lid. She took off the lid and grabbed a tin cup and shoved her arm into the square. I saw a white slug on the opposite wall. I could not tell whether it was moving upward or it was just frozen by our sudden presence. The dew on its back twinkled, and it looked like a severed tongue. She offered me the cup, but I shook my head and refused to drink the water which, besides, seemed turbid. So they brought me a slice of cold watermelon and I drowsily masticated it. Every paragraph, if not every sentence is gruesome. And for what purpose? As I mentioned above the writing is jumpy and confusing. What is the point with all this depiction of horrid situations? I see no important message being imparted. Well, everyone else seems to understand, but I do not. I do not enjoy, do not see the point or the important message that is being imparted. So why am I splashing around in this muck? This is longer than the others. It could be classified as a novella. He has gone to the States and he remains there while the war rages in his home country. He reads of the Siege of Sarajevo of what is happening there to his kin and childhood friends. It is about his emotions, how it feels being separated from home, how it feels in a strange culture, where nothing makes sense, how it is to be a foreigner in a strange land. It is also about how he sees life in the US. It is about where he belongs. Of course his views on life in America are absurdly true and comical at the same time. This is wonderful writing. It shows how it feels to be a refugee. It is amusing and poignant and sad all at the same time. You are still aware that this is the same author of the shorter stories. I am glad I read the book to the end. I would have to conclude that the author has a distinctive style and in at least one of the stories I empathized, laughed and learned how life as a refugee might feel. I am going to give the book three stars, because I liked that one longer story. Just a word of warning: I prefer to be grabbed, aroused, upset, moved by the books I read. Such books in fact comfort me by their ability to distract me! While these comparisons are, certainly, flattering, it is obvious that they are made simply because these are the cultural references the reviewers or the blurbers associate with the part of the world Hemon comes from. The more insane its history, the more permeated with dark humor it is. It also uses footnotes as a sort of parallel story or as a corollary. A literal representation of day-life versus nightlife or the underground, one might say. An exploration of the life an accidental immigrant, like Hemon, stranded in the U. Maybe it was just too soon for Hemon to turn this material into fiction. The immaturity of the voice sours many of the stories in the book, which is rather long for a standalone collection, and at times feels even longer. Aside from two stories -- "Coin" and "Exchange of Pleasant Words"--it did not reward. Clare Again, another talented writer who can cash in for life on the strength of his background - presenting Aleksandar Hemon, Bosnian Ukranian but descended from the semi-mythical Alexandre Hemon - Breton is a popular surname in Brittany, as you will learn. Also interesting is the very well-established and publicized fact that Hemon began writing in English in , a mere 3 or 4 years after his arrival in the U. Sometimes Hemon tries a little too hard to be Nabokov "we will submit another image" to the reader, etc. Within eight years, Hemon had written his first book in English, The Question of Bruno, a collection of short stories. This collection shows a fluency that my own writing lacks. Yet, I missed that in this collection. The thing is, however, I believe Hemon has the ability to do it. Review will shown on site after approval.

9: The Best Books of the Decade | HuffPost

*In this case, though, the title of the collection is taken from the novella *Blind Jozef Pronek and Dead Souls*, which comes late in the book. This novella is divided into a number of subsections.*

*Dexterity with symbols Batsford companion to medieval England Wizard Study Guide The Life of Galileo Pt. 3. A. Report on establishments Computer corpus lexicography Show team members you care Cardiorespiratory physiotherapy adults and paediatrics 5th edition Common birds of Atlanta EVOLUTION ORE-BEARING PRECAMBRIAN STR Pioneers every one Origami Boxes and More! Deathwatch falling star The Invasion That Never Came 45 1820 PA Federal Census a*Page 163 Dictionary of Plastics Engineering Modern art impressionism to postmodernism History of the thirty years peace, 1816-1846. Aligning knowledge strategy with project characteristics Joseph Kasten A Phantom Love For Laura Lee Andre Techine (French Film Directors) Queuing models operations research Vedanta darshan Sap sd module Critical media studies an introduction Sat physics subject test book Technical protection devices and computer law My Favorite Patterns for Dressing Antique Dolls The Transnational Law of International Commercial Transactions (Studies in Transnational Economic Law) Apa style format 6th edition Edwardian England Flexible manufacturing system project 25. Income Tax Collection System80 Fundamentals of engineering electromagnetics cheng Americas Natural Beauty The medieval idea of the Bible Hay Day country market cookbook Polish journal of food and nutrition sciences Down in the Garden Journal Woodland Fairy Engineering mechanics statics 13e solutions manual Abstracts of feet of fines relating to Wiltshire, 1377-1509*