

## JAN MICHALSKI PRIZE FOR LITERATURE

### LAUREATE 2010

**Aleksandar Hemon**

***The Lazarus Project***

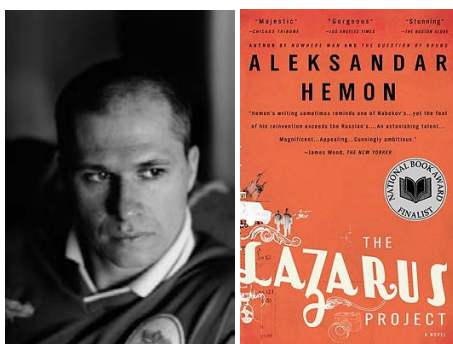
Aleksandar Hemon's tightly structured novel is about a 'nowhere people', the characters belonging more in the journey they undertake and in the psychology of disenfranchisement than they do in the territories in which they physically reside. Of course, they are born in and are raised in a geographical landscape with a name and a map, places otherwise known as Bosnia, Chicago or Moldavia. To tell the story, Hemon employs two narrative viewpoints - one in first person, the other in third, two narrative viewpoints, which juxtapose the moods of Chicago then and the US, as the novel draws canny parallels between late 19<sup>th</sup> century Chicago anti-radicalism and today's War on Terror.

Charged with empathy, the novel centres on a set of cosmopolitans, the jetsam and flotsam of displacement, the detritus of an empire of ideas no longer in existence. I see Hemon as an heir to major twentieth century European authors, his superb writing on occasion surpassing even Italo Svevo in his sense of pessimism Henry Roth, author of *Call It Sleep*, in that author's depiction of the turn of the century the Yiddish immigrant experience. Grief, loss, damaged memory, trauma of displacement: these are the notions that come to mind when I read ***The Lazarus Project***.

Hemon, who is himself a survivor of a collapsed empire, peoples his novels with the memories of survivors of pogroms. He is articulate, he writes very clearly, concisely and well. He is at once humorous and serious and he entertains as much as he educates his readers about the world in which he immerses his characters.

*Nuruddin Farah*

*Member of the Jury*



Aleksandar Hemon

*The Lazarus Project* - Novel - Riverhead 2008

*Le Projet Lazarus* - roman - Edition Robert Laffont 2010