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Borderline Citizen

Dispatches from the Outskirts of Nationhood

Robin Hemley

Keyline

Part travelogue, part memoir, part reportage, *Borderline Citizen* redefines notions of nationhood through an exploration of the arbitrariness of boundaries and what it means to belong.

Description

In *Borderline Citizen* Robin Hemley wrestles with what it means to be a citizen of the world, taking readers on a singular journey through the hinterlands of national identity. As a polygamist of place, Hemley celebrates Guy Fawkes Day in the contested Falkland Islands; Canada Day and the Fourth of July in the tiny U.S. exclave of Point Roberts, Washington; Russian Federation Day in the Russian exclave of Kaliningrad; Handover Day among protesters in Hong Kong; and India Day along the most complicated border in the world.

Forgoing the exotic descriptions of faraway lands common in traditional travel writing, *Borderline Citizen* upends the genre with darkly humorous and deeply compassionate glimpses into the lives of exiles, nationalists, refugees, and others. Hemley's superbly rendered narratives detail these individuals, including a Chinese billionaire who could live anywhere but has chosen to situate his ornate mansion in the middle of his impoverished ancestral village, a black nationalist wanted on thirty-two outstanding FBI warrants exiled in Cuba, and an Afghan refugee whose intentionally altered birth date makes him more easy to deport despite his harrowing past.

Sales Points

- The book features one of the most important issues of our times: who belongs in any particular nation and why? This issue, as highlighted in the book through reportage, narrative, and exhaustive research, gets at the heart of nationalism, patriotism, populism, and the sometimes arbitrary and confusing nature of borders.
- The book is of travel writing that looks with humour, insight, and compassion at some of the most far-flung and complexly bordered enclaves and territories in the world. The narration is accessible though the approach (the close up look at the territories and people featured in these pages) is unique.
- The book approaches travel writing in a novel way, avoiding the traditional pitfalls of exoticizing and patronizing the people and locales that are the various subjects of the book. As international author Xu Xi puts it: These "dispatches" are travel writing at its best, where the writer delves into the intimacies of foreign places, seeing beyond their exotic surfaces, in search of a global humanity. Brilliantly comic, darkly but poignantly introspective, *Borderline Citizen* should be required reading for the 21st century and beyond." And much of the book takes place in the Asia Pacific region: China, India, Bangladesh, Singapore, Hong Kong, Australia, and the Philippines, which would be of interest to our readers.

Author Bio

Robin Hemley (Robinhemley.com) was born in New York to a literary family. His parents were both writers and publishers and translators of the Nobel Laureate Isaac Bashevis Singer. He grew up in the Midwestern U.S. and studied as a high school student in Osaka, Japan. At Indiana University, he majored in Comparative Literature and also studied Japanese and other subjects in the East Asian Languages and Culture Department. He received his MFA at The Iowa Writers Workshop in the 1980's. Since then, he has been a professor at a number of universities, including The University of North Carolina at Charlotte, Western Washington University, St. Lawrence University, where he was then inaugural Viebranz Chair in Creative Writing, The University of Utah, The University of Iowa, where he directed the Nonfiction Writing Program for 9 years, Vermont College of



Fine Arts, where he was Faculty Chair, and most recently at Yale-NUS College in Singapore, where he was the inaugural Director of the Writers' Centre and where he is currently Professor of Humanities and Writer-in-Residence. He frequently gives writing workshops around the world. He is likewise a Professor Emeritus at the University of Iowa and Distinguished Visiting Faculty at RMIT University in Melbourne.

He has published fourteen books of fiction and nonfiction and his work has been published in many of the leading journals in the U.S. as well as in the U.K., Australia, Canada, Germany, Japan, Singapore, The Philippines, China, Iceland, and Ukraine. He has been awarded fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation as well as the Rockefeller Foundation, three Pushcart Prizes in both nonfiction and fiction, The Independent Press Book Award, The Nelson Algren Award for Fiction, an Editor's Choice Award from The American Library Association, the Governor's Award from the State of Washington, and many others. He has been a Fellow at the Bellagio Center for the Arts at Lake Como, Italy, The Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown, The MacDowell Colony, Varuna Writers Centre, The Bogliasco Foundation, The Hermitage, Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, and many others. He is the Founder and past President of NonfictionNOW, the leading international conference for literary nonfiction. He is a Contributing Editor of The Iowa Review, and Fourth Genre and with the writer Xu Xi, he organizes writing retreats and workshops through Authors at Large (AALauthors.com).