

Transcript for Episode with Koichi Hagimoto
SPEAKERS

Joe Aguilar, John Galante, Koichi Hagimoto

+++++MUSICAL INTERLUDE+++++
INTRODUCTION

John Galante

Hi, I'm John Galante, I'm a historian of Latin America who specializes in migration and relations between South America and southern Europe. I also teach history and global studies at Worcester Polytechnic Institute, otherwise known as WPI.

Joe Aguilar

And I'm Joe Aguilar, a fiction writer. I specialize in speculative fiction and Chicano literature. I also teach creative writing and literature at WPI.

John Galante

And you are listening to *Crossing Fronteras*.

+++++MUSIC INTERLUDE+++++
TRANSPACIFIC EXPERIENCES; PHILIPPINES-CUBA

John Galante

Today we have with us, at the PRX podcast studio in Allston, Massachusetts, Koichi Hagimoto, a writer, and a scholar of Latin American literature, also a member of the faculty at Wellesley College. And I'm sure he'll fill you in with a lot more of his bio as we as we talk through things today.

Koichi Hagimoto

Thank you. Yeah. It's my great pleasure to be here. And thanks again for the invitation.

Joe Aguilar

I thought we can start off by talking a little bit about your academic career trajectory. How and why did you come to the US to study?

Koichi Hagimoto

Yeah, so I was born and raised in Japan, my family still lives there in Tokyo. And after high school, I came to the US for college, I just wanted to, you know, explore different possibilities. And I never thought I would spend the next 20-something years in the US. But I just wanted to, you know, go abroad, and ended up studying at a small liberal arts college in Southern California called Soka University of America. So that's where my journey sort of began in America.

John Galante

Is that a Japanese university? How does that, I've heard of it.

Koichi Hagimoto

Well, it's an American University, but they have a sister school in Japan, called Soka university. But they have a, you know, they have their own American version here in California. It's a new school too, and I was actually from the first class, it had just opened, yeah, in 2001. And I'm from the first class,

you know, graduated in 2005. And so my first experience in America was also interesting, because it was right before September 11. I got here in maybe the end of July, and then our semester started in in August. and then September 11 happened. So you know, there was so much uncertainty about, about this country about where I was, where I was going.

John Galante

Did you come here with like a cohort of Japanese students?

Koichi Hagimoto

There were some Japanese students who came to the university with me. But yeah, there were many international students from other countries too. So at Soka, I took my first Spanish class. Spanish had never occurred to me until I can tell to America how important it is to learn the language. And you know, from the first class, you know Spanish 101, I immediately just fell in love with the language and the culture. And in terms of pronunciation, there are certain similarities between Japanese and Spanish too, which was helpful for me to practice, you know, Spanish with my friends from Latin America. And, yeah, and and then I just wanted to keep learning Spanish.

John Galante

Were you interested in, in writing and literature before your encounters with Spanish, and then it was kind of like blended together? Or was it that you came sort of to the literature through the language?

Koichi Hagimoto

I would say definitely, like, language was the gateway for me. And when I was deciding on what I wanted to do after the college, I was exploring the possibility of doing a PhD in Latin American literature, or doing, you know, PhD in Latin American Studies, but that would have been in English. So my, my purpose was to continue studying about Latin America using Spanish. So by the time I graduated from Soka, I, you know, I decided to pursue a PhD in Hispanic Languages and Literature at Pittsburgh, as you know.

And also, if I could add just something else during my time at Soka, I, after studying Spanish for a couple of years, I went to Argentina to study abroad. So that was my first sort of encounter real encounter with Latin America and its rich history and culture. So I studied in Mendoza, Argentina, for a semester, which was a fantastic experience. And that's when I realized that learning the language was not the goal, per se, but rather, my goal was to learn about Latin America, using Spanish as a means of communication. And that's when I like really became interested in literature, history and culture.

John Galante

So you went to Pittsburgh, and kind of like developed a project that was, I think, quite different from what your experience must have been in Mendoza, the *Between Empires* book. I wonder if you could explain the conceptualization of that book and your approach to it.

Koichi Hagimoto

So I've, you know, like I said, because of my personal background, coming from Asia, I always wanted to bring in an Asian perspective to Latin America. And so when I was contemplating my the topic for my dissertation, I had come across this, you know, comparison between José Martí from Cuba, and José Rizal from the Philippines. And Rizal was never part of Latin American literary studies, you know, in a systematic way until that time.

But I saw the mention of this parallel, you know, in Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* and and I thought it would be really interesting to, to have a systematic comparison between Cuba and the Philippines, Martí and Rizal, because they were both national heroes in their respective countries. So

they had very similar trajectories in terms of how they became national heroes, how they articulated anti-colonial narratives, both against Spain and the US coming from different locations, of course.

And, and so I started looking into the actual writings by Martí and Rizal. And I had read articles and essays about these two figures. But I wanted to do a more comprehensive study, also, to emphasize the fact that the Philippines was an important player in the Spanish imperial trajectory for centuries. And that aspect, I think, has now become a really important topic in terms of talking about the global hispanophone, and how a lot of scholars nowadays are looking into the influence of Spanish writers, intellectuals, historians, across the Atlantic, but also the Pacific, including the Philippines.

John Galante

Yeah, it's interesting, going back to the start of your answer there, you said you always kind of thought or you had an idea that you wanted to focus on Asia, right?, even though you were interested in Latin American literature and Spanish.

Koichi Hagimoto

I would say, there was definitely a personal interest of mine, right. Coming from Asia, I wanted to, to look at Latin America from an Asian perspective, that's, that's the culture I grew up in. And I was fortunate to be writing this, you know, about this topic, around the time when Trans-Pacific Studies, as a field was emerging, right?

Prior to my project, there were scholars, historians, that, you know, looked into different aspects of the relationship between Latin America and Asia. But it was still not categorized as a field. That has changed over the last 15-20 years. And now you go to a conference about Latin America, there's always something about Asia-Latin America relations. And of course, before, you know, this emphasis on the historical and literary cultural connections between the two regions, there were always interests about, you know, political, economic relations between the two regions. But I wanted to focus on specifically, you know, the history and intersections between these two regions in terms of literature and culture.

Joe Aguilar

This term is still pretty new to me, Trans Pacific Studies. I'm wondering if you can talk a little bit about what that means. And I'm also curious about what has changed in the past 15 years.

Koichi Hagimoto

Yeah, so Transpacific Studies, as a field, I believe was, you know, defined in relation to Transatlantic Studies, which had always been the central focus of Latin American Studies, relations between Europe and Latin America, Africa and Latin America. But Transpacific Studies that as a field, you know, exploring different relations between Asia and Latin America has really expanded, like I said, over the last, you know, 15-20 years or so, because people are becoming more aware of the lacunae, right? And then there's also a more emphasis on the history of Asian immigrations, right, in Latin America. And so the presence of Asians in Latin America has all has always been there since the colonial times through Manila galleons, you know, connecting the Spanish Empire and colonial Mexico, Nueva España, New Spain. So the connections have always been there. But the scholarly attention to these intersections, I believe, has really expanded recently.

John Galante

I always wonder, especially the nine in the 19th century, to what degree, there's Transpacific connections happening, or if things are being filtered through Europe, through the United States, potentially.

I guess a simple way to ask it is, Were Martí and Rizal connected to one another in a lateral way? Or were they both connected in a vertical way to Spanish imperialism, US imperialism, capitalist systems, in which case they were opposing the same forces in parallel to one another, not necessarily connecting across the Pacific. Were they aware of each other? Were they writing to each other?

Koichi Hagimoto

In my study, I never found a direct correspondence or connection between the two. But when you look at their writings, their, you know, essays, novels, letters, you see a clear parallel between the two, and the way the countries, you know, celebrated their heroism is just so similar. But also, I would say that in terms of the, you know, symbolic connection between the two. Going back to the question about Transpacific Studies, the notion of the Global South was also important too, because, these two figures were writing against European against the West, right, including the new superpower, the United States, and the old superpower, which was Spain.

So 1898 was a critical moment for both Cuba and the Philippines. And when they became almost simultaneously independent, quote unquote. But then after that, their historical trajectories were vastly different. Right? Cuba, with its proximity to the US and how the Cuban Revolution changed everything for the course of history, for many Cubans, against American imperialism. In the Philippines, on the contrary, American armed forces were really important and English became the lingua franca, and they became part of a new American vision of exceptionalism.

John Galante

Were they part of a global movement or global perspective, that maybe today we would call from the Global South? Or were they part of a Transpacific sort of solidarity?

Koichi Hagimoto

What happened after their lives was that people who were inspired by Rizal, for instance, in the Philippines, and they knew about what was happening in Cuba, and they saw, you know, inspirations. Mariano Ponce, for instance, was aware of Jose Martí and the important role that he played for the definition of Cuban nationalism. And so there were people who were influenced by these two national heroes, who definitely conceptualized the the possibility of alliance or solidarity between the two, which never took its form.

But as a literary scholar, I wanted to imagine the possibility of these two connections and sort of arguing that the idea of an anti-global anti-colonial alliance could have been, you know, possible at the end of the 19th century.

And to be fair, right, they were, both Martí and Rizal, we're focusing on the independence movements, right? Well, actually, the correct way of saying is that Martí was a radical *independentista* who thought the freedom from Spain was the only way moving forward for the people of Cuba, while for Rizal was a reformist, which means that he wasn't advocating absolute independence from Spain, but rather, to make, you know, radical changes and improvements for Filipino society, so that, you know, it wouldn't be a colony of Spain and America. But unlike Martí, Rizal was not a radical, independent, independentist.

+++++MUSIC INTERLUDE+++++ **JAPAN AND ARGENTINA**

John Galante

Yeah, so now that we've kind of established that, right, we can, I think, take a look at these notions of, you know, Transpacific between Argentina and Japan, right, which connects to those, but is also very different.

Koichi Hagimoto

So after finishing my book on Cuba and the Philippines, I, I've done some edited volumes and just collaborating with scholars from across Latin America and the US and Europe and Asia, to expand this field of Transpacific Studies, because it is by nature interdisciplinary, right? And there were people who were working on, for instance, the, the representation of Chinese indentured workers in Cuban literature, the so-called yellow trade, which happened during the 19th century. And so I wanted to sort of reach out to other folks who were interested in exploring these connections between Asia and Latin America, while of course, working or thinking about my second book,

But I wanted to do something different, not unrelated, but different. This time, I wanted to, you know, focus on the Japanese in Latin America, and obviously, that has to do with my own background. But also I've realized that there, there have been important studies about the Japanese in Brazil, or the Japanese in Peru, for obvious reasons, they have the biggest Japanese communities in Latin America. And then I noticed that there was not, not much study about the Japanese in Argentina, and I had known about Argentine history of course, because of my previous experience in Argentina. So, I decided to, to focus on Argentina and and what it means to be, first what it means to be a person of Japanese descent in Argentina, and how Japan as a country and as an idea has been sort of conceptualized in Argentine imaginations.

And so my book, which just came out last year, *Samurai in the Land of the Gaucho*, I first wanted to explore the representation of Japan in Argentine literature and culture from the early 20th century. So the first part of my book is about how some Argentine intellectuals were interested in learning from the so called, you know, Japanese model in terms of their hygiene culture, their dedications to nationalism, and this was also the time when, Japan emerged as a superpower, right?, the first Asian country in modern times to defeat a European power against the Russian Empire.

And the idea of Argentina, as a nation, was always inspired by European models, of course, and the way they brought so many immigrants from Europe to whiten the population. And so they always looked at Europe as their example. But there were some intellectuals who traveled to Japan, and they saw that there was an alternative model of civilization, which I call Transpacific modernity in my book. So, this was in a way different from the kind of Western centered civilization model that they had previously. And so, they, these intellectuals celebrated Japanese culture, spirituality, patriotism.

And then the second part of my book switches, its focus. And I talk about how, in contemporary times, writers of Japanese descent, Nikkei writers, were revisiting and reexamining this traditional notion of Japan based on their own narratives of immigration, diaspora, identity, and so forth.

John Galante

Yeah, just I want to go back to the first bit first. How would you define a little bit more like Transpacific Modernity? What are what are some of its characteristics that help describe what it is relative to maybe other forms of modernity?

Koichi Hagimoto

One example is how the writer, the politician and physician Eduardo Wilde, when he traveled to Japan and saw how clean the society was, how refined people were and sophisticated yheir culture was. And Wilde as a physician who was concerned about the moral and the the physical cleanness of Argentine society at that time, he was inspired by what he witnessed in Japan. And so he was one of the first

Argentine intellectuals to propose the beginning of Japanese immigration to Argentina. And so, the kind of Transpacific Modernity takes place in terms of how Wilde, for instance, wanted to, you know, adapt this notion of hygiene, both physical and spiritual, you know, cleanness into Argentina. So that's one example.

Another example of Transpacific Modernity is how the Argentine Admiral Domecq Garcia, Manuel Domecq Garcia, who witnessed the victory of Japan during the war against Russia. He was inspired by the military power and what it represented in the world and how it could benefit also the Argentine experience in terms of war affairs and technology, and to modernize the country in that aspect. So Manuel Domecq Garcia, when he returned to Argentina, wrote about what he saw, and tried to promote Japanese culture and, you know, this notion of selfless patriotism that he experienced and witnessed in Japan. He thought that was something that could be incorporated into Argentine Navy, and, you know, Argentine nation as a whole.

John Galante

I feel like another aspect of it may be is is, thinking from an Argentine perspective, that the Japanese, like they figured it out, like they were able to catch up, right?, in a sense, through those mechanisms that you're talking about. And so you could see how it could be potentially quite attractive, not just catching up, but also becoming maybe a regional hegemon, right, which was something that was attractive to many Argentine leaders as well.

But what, like, the next step, I think, is then there's such, you know, a rooted kind of experience and advocacy in Argentina, especially among elites, to emphasize their westernness. And so it becomes a contradictory kind of experience then to be emphasizing their westernness, but then potentially looking to East Asia for a model.

Koichi Hagimoto

And the Japanese model, in that sense, was convenient, because it was physically located in East Asia, but its symbolic power was almost akin to the west, Because of the way it became an imperial power. So there was this ambition that was almost like the idea of Manifest Destiny. And so in that sense, the Japanese model that they looked at was conveniently non-Asian.

Joe Aguilar

I think about the, your statement in your book, Japanese immigrants as symbols of alternative whiteness, which I thought was really astute. And also the connection of exceptionalism in the regions to Argentina amongst its neighboring countries and Japan, likewise, was really fascinating to read about.

Koichi Hagimoto

Yeah. Thank you. Yeah, the notion of exceptionalism, I think, was one of the threads, you know, that connected Japan and Argentina, and how they define their national identity in opposition to their neighbors you know. In the case of Japan, especially China and Korea, and in the case of Argentina, Chile, Bolivia, and other countries, Paraguay, in Latin America.

John Galante

Yeah, and there's such a, to me at least, there's such a thin line between nation building and imperialism during that period of time.

Koichi Hagimoto

Oh yes.

John Galante

You know, the Russian Far East, the American Far West, the Argentine South, the peripheral islands of what is today Japan, they're so highly connected, and obviously putting it in the global context of like late imperialism, you can see the connection between Argentina and Japan, I think through those processes.

Koichi Hagimoto

And the history, the modern history of Japan, to many people is complicated, right?, because it was once an empire trying to conquer, you know, the world, especially East Asia. But on the other hand, it was a country defeated, devastated, you know, with atomic bombs, so it was a victim of the war. So those two oppositions are difficult to put together in a way.

And I think, for this project, I had to learn about Japanese history, of course, because I'm not specialized in in Asian history or Japanese history. So I needed to expand my vocabulary and just learn about a field that I wasn't familiar with. But I've discovered that now there's a new sort of attempt to reconsider the role of Japanese imperialism in East Asia, and to look at Japan from a more critical lens.

And so, for me, it was also important to emphasize how the influence of Japanese imperialism and their vision of nation-making was felt across the Pacific, you know, in this case, in Argentina, and, which was different from what happened in Brazil or Peru, because, in a way, because there were many more Japanese populations in in these two countries. So there was a real threat, you know, in the national imaginary, you know, in terms of the question of race and what it means to have interracial marriage and, in Brazil and in Peru, the Japanese presence was seen from a much more negative view than what happened in Argentina.

Joe Aguilar

I was really interested in that, how Japanese immigrants had a much smoother transition to Argentina, in particular, as compared to like Brazil in the 20s, or Peru in the 40s.

Koichi Hagimoto

Yeah. So because of the small size of Japanese community, immigrant community in in Argentina, there hasn't been a long history of Nikkei literature or culture until recently, while in Brazil and Peru, the contributions of Nikkei writers and artists have been evidenced for many, many years. So only recently has this new sort of movement of Nikkei literature appeared in Argentina, which I believe also has to do with the way in which the country is trying to redefine itself as a more diverse society.

+++++MUSIC INTERLUDE+++++**ALTERNATIVE WHITENESS; NIKKEI WRITERS****Joe Aguilar**

So I'm wondering about returning, maybe, to this the question of the project of whiteness in Argentina, Japanese immigrants as symbols of this kind of alternative whiteness, and the role of ethnicity and race in your own book project. I'm wondering if you might be able to unpack that a little bit more just talk about its role?

Koichi Hagimoto

So when Japan emerged as this new superpower, in the early 20th century, they also, some of the intellectuals wanted to, define the Japanese national imperial identity in terms of whiteness. And this was an era of the global, yellow peril. So the whole concept of race was changing, because of this surprising, right, quote, unquote, victory of Japan. Of course, it is problematic to say that Japanese

were white. That's simply not the case. And also, it will be wrong to say that Japanese were seen as white people everywhere. That's also not true, especially in America, they had no, Japanese Americans had a horrible experience during the war.

But in the case of Argentina, I was interested in how, like we discussed earlier, Japan was perceived as a country that was akin to the West, right?, in terms of its global influence. And so what was happening in Japan in terms of their racial definition, at that time, was also influential in how Argentines looked at Japan. And this was also related to how Argentine people looked at themselves it was obvious that they wanted to become the whitest country in Latin America. And, you know, trying to get rid of the indigenous roots, African roots and bringing in more white immigrants from Europe.

And so, nowadays, there's a conversation about the history of race politics in Argentina. But, as a Japanese individual, I also wanted to sort of critically look at the history of my country, and how that, you know, history of imperialism affected the other side of the world.

John Galante

So there's this book, on the experience of Italians in the United States, that is one side of an argument called *White on Arrival*, which basically suggests that Italians were always white. And even though they had experiences of discrimination, and ghettoization. The other side of that argument is that, you know, they were, you know, racialized and, you know, seen as inferior, especially southern Italians, etc, etc. Right

For the Japanese in Argentina, then, they arrive to Argentina, from this modern country, right?, something that, a country that's perceived as being modern and civilized, clean, as you mentioned. Are they arriving as, and I think in your book, you call them the Whites of Asia, I want to say, or someone else has perhaps, which is a super interesting notion.

Koichi Hagimoto

Right. So in my book, I'm not saying that these immigrants acted as if they were white, right?, I'm talking about the perception of Japan as a country at that time, and the people who came from that, right? And reference to Japan as the whites of Asia was made by several scholars, including Naoki Sakai, who also has looked at the history of Japanese colonialism in Asia, and how the militant Japanese, right?, behaved as if they were superior to other Asians, and they were whiter than other Asians.

But that's not what happened in Argentina, right. So the perception of whiteness was already, I would say, there before, even before the immigrants arrived in Argentina, because these Argentine intellectuals who are of European descent, were talking about the Japanese model. And so they were excited about bringing in these people, which, again, was not a large number. So it was helpful, that they didn't come with a massive boat of people, you know, coming to change drastically the, the racial profile of the country.

John Galante

And did those Japanese migrants perceive themselves as civilizers in some way, or did the Japanese government perceive Japanese migration as a colonial project in some way?

Koichi Hagimoto

I would say the government was interested in, first of all, getting rid of the Japanese people. So that was state sponsored immigrant migration campaign, in Brazil, in Peru. But in the case of Argentina, the early Japanese immigrants were actually from Brazil, and Peru, so they didn't come directly from Japan. And so they already had this experience and of, you know, being disappointed. And in Brazil,

you know, they were living in either poverty or just miserable life conditions, and they wanted to escape the country. So they decided to remigrate to some extent to Argentina, where, like I said, the environment was more welcoming.

I would say though, in my book, I talk about Yoshio Shinya, who was the first official Japanese immigrant who came to Argentina in the early 20th century, and who was also a close friend of Manuel Domecq Garcia, who I mentioned earlier. And so, Shinya's case was different, because he was an advocate of Japanese imperialism, he was a believer of national, you know, Japanese nationalism, and how beneficial it could be to his new like host country in Argentina. So here you have this sort of dynamic between, you know, a member of the immigrant community, trying to establish himself, but also trying to promote the positive images of of his country.

But his case, I would say, you know, was more similar to, you know, these intellectuals from Argentina, who looked at Japan as an alternative civilization model. But, the second chapter of my book has to do with how more contemporary writers are, you know, sort of rewriting this traditional, uncritical notion of Japan, you know, in the 21st century.

Joe Aguilar

You talk in your book about how early depictions of Japanese culture, like Borges, tend to homogenize and sort of essentialize. And you say only in the 21st century has the literary representation of Japan and Argentina more nuanced. I'm wondering if you might talk about what the contemporary nuance looks like.

Koichi Hagimoto

You know, this new generation of Nikkei writers are interested in writing about their own experiences as immigrants, which include, you know, episodes of racism, xenophobia, and being a foreigner being other in society. So their narrative of Japaneseness is more nuanced.

One of the aspects that I was really interested in was how they, you know, define their multicultural identities, right? So not belonging solely to one country or the other, but both and either at the same time. And so this hybrid nature of migrant articulation of Argentine characteristics, but also Japanese characteristics, you don't have to choose one, right?, only. And that itself, I think, is sort of reassessing right, the notion of whiteness already, because it's not a single category.

John Galante

I mean the term chino, right, in Argentina is a very particular term. Chino is a word that is sometimes equivalent to Asian, right?, in an Argentine context. But obviously, it means a particular place as well origins in a particular place. So that navigation is something that Japanese in Argentina would obviously have to navigate.

Koichi Hagimoto

Maximiliano Matayoshi, for instance, in his novel, Gaijin, meaning foreigner. He writes about a particular episode in which, you know, the protagonist was called chino and racialized by other Argentines, and he didn't, you know, know what to do. So that's the kind of sort of new voice that has been sort of that I wanted to focus on.

+++++MUSIC INTERLUDE+++++

SCHOLARLY INTERACTIONS AND DIASPORA

John Galante

So have you met these Japanese writers in Argentina? What do you think of their Japaneseness?

Koichi Hagimoto

Yeah, so, um, during my last visit to Argentina, which must have been years ago, I met Maximiliano Matayoshi. Is a good friend of mine now. I have exchanged emails with Alejandra Kamiya, because this book, this project also led to my new project, which is an anthology of Nikkei writers across Latin America. I'm co editing this anthology with Ignacio López-Calvo, who kindly wrote a foreword to my book. We're working with 50 writers of Japanese descent from Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Mexico, Peru.

And so meeting these writers in Argentina firsthand was really interesting, because I got to learn about their family histories. That also became an inspiration for me to unpack this notion of race in Argentina and how writing about Japanese Argentine identity helps define or redefine both Japaneseness and Argentineness, right?, because they belong to both spaces.

And in terms of what I think of their Japaneseness, I think they're interested in recovering the past, and which is the history of their ancestors and their families, while having their, you know, actual lives in, in Argentine reality, right? So they live in both the present and the past. I think that's the new kind of literature that we'll be reading and studying for many years because now transnational sort of focus on literature, which includes different cultures, languages, ethnicities, and racial and religious backgrounds.

I think the notion of hybridity, in that sense is also key to understanding what it means to be a person of Japanese descent in Argentina. And also just, you know, in general, like, what it means to be a complicated human being.

John Galante

What have their interactions been with you, you know, you yourself being a Japanese immigrant to the United States. This notion of diaspora to my mind should be connected to a sense of belonging, a sense of diasporic consciousness, that you feel part of a community. You have to recognize each other as being in some ways connected through your origins, at the minimum, or connected through your experiences, laterally, among the diaspora. So what have you noticed in that sense, right? And a more targeted question, what do you think they are perceiving you as in some way?

Koichi Hagimoto

No, that's a really interesting question, which has to do with the idea of home, right? Where is your home? Where do you belong? And my answer to that is, is always flexible, right?

I, I, you know, speak Japanese with my kids at home, I speak English at work, I teach in Spanish. So I'm always, you know, sort of navigating through these linguistic codes and cultural norms. But I've come to embrace the complex identity that I've defined for myself, and I want to keep expanding, and sort of keep challenging people's preconceptions. And just, you know, going to my Spanish class and start speaking Spanish and I always enjoy seeing my students reactions, you know.

John Galante

Then so if you extend that to your interactions with other members, if you want to call them that, of the diaspora. Is this a community in your sense? Is there a sense of belonging? Is there a sense of home? Or at the very least, how are people perceiving each other?

Koichi Hagimoto

I would say, there is definitely a sense of community because, you know, my diasporic friends, and I share certain experiences of being excluded from the mainstream sort of narrative and the impossibility

of, you know, defining home. And I do believe that people of Japanese descent have certain, you know, historical experiences that could be shared globally. And so I am now interested in this notion of global Nikkei literature.

The first project that I'm working on has to do with the writers of Japanese descent coming from Latin America, writing in Spanish and Portuguese, but now I would like to include those voices in the other America, for instance, or in Europe, or other parts of Asia or Africa, to have, you know, a better understanding of what it means to be a Japanese, you know, a Nikkei person in their respective countries and cultures.

John Galante

Well, thank you very much Koichi for all the really interesting insights, top down, bottom up, all around, back and forth. A really kind of incredible journey.

Koichi Hagimoto

Oh, I appreciate it very much.

John Galante

That you've had yourself and I think that your work has had, and they dovetail really, in really interesting ways with one another.

Koichi Hagimoto

I'm super grateful for the invitation.

Joe Aguilar

Thank you so much, Koichi

Koichi Hagimoto

Thank you. Thanks for those amazing questions.

+++++MUSICAL INTERLUDE+++++

CREDITS

John Galante

You've been listening to *Crossing Fronteras*. I'm your co-host John Galante, a historian of Latin American and an Associate Professor at Worcester Polytechnic Institute as well as the creator and executive producer of the podcast series.

Joe Aguilar

And I'm your co-host Joe Aguilar, a fiction writer and an Assistant Professor at WPI, and an executive producer of the podcast series.

John Galante

This show surveys the unique ecosystem of contemporary scholarship and art being generated by scholars and creatives in New England who are working in Latin American and Caribbean Studies.

Joe Aguilar

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John Galante

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