



UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

A Tribute for Carolyn Sy Hau, winner of the 2021 Goodman Prize

I am very pleased to announce this year's winner of the Grant Goodman Prize: Prof. Carolyn Sy Hau. Though she is, strictly speaking, not a historian, you can see how everything she writes is informed by a keen historical sensibility. At one point, I recall Benedict Anderson referring to her as one of the premiere historians of the Philippines. It's not hard to see why. Not only is she one the leading scholars of Filipino-Chinese culture; she has also written about literary history and elite political cultures in ways that are powerful and compelling.

Carol's books on nationalism and literature are classics in the field, and combine a sophisticated theoretical approach with close readings of a range of texts from the nineteenth to the twentieth century. A prodigious researcher and writer, she has managed the remarkable feat of either publishing her own books or editing collections of essays nearly every other year for the last decade.

Each of Carol's books has reshaped historical studies on the Philippines. Read together, her first two books, *Necessary Fictions* (2000) and *On the Subject of the Nation* (2004), constitute the most analytically sophisticated account of postwar Philippine literary history, accounting for the shifts in the genre and the evolving nationalist consciousness that these novels convey.

Her landmark book, *The Chinese Question* (2014), is the only account of the evolving meanings of being Chinese in the Philippines, from the emergence of the colonial-era Chinese mestizo class to the present discourse on Chinese-Filipino/“Tsinoy.” Her account of the Tsinoy as the new mestizo, culturally integrated and imbibed with the social and economic capital that stems from various forms of “Chinese” influence within Southeast Asia, is an unparalleled account of a new cultural formation that few scholars have even noticed. Looking at Chinese contributions to Filipino nationalism and communism, *The Chinese Question* also examines the provincial Chinese, the fraught relationship between the Chinese and the state in the last quarter of the 20th century, and the “integration” of the Chinese in Filipino popular culture.

In another important book, *Elites, and Ilustrados*, Carol synthesized the vast literature on the ilustrado and altered our view of various topics, from Marcosian developmentalism and crony capitalism to state-sponsorship overseas work. The book provides a much-needed methodological corrective to studies of the Philippine elite that only focus on the oligarchy's patrimonial features. These works see corruption and rent-seeking as the be-all and end-all of works in the Philippine political economy. However, Carol shows that the history of Philippine elite/s must be understood not only through the Philippine political economy's cliches but also through culture and a rigorous re-reading of macroeconomic theory. That a literary scholar has written a work that alters our views of twentieth-century economic history is a testament to Carol's breadth and her endless capacity to evolve as a thinker.

Carol's latest book, *Interpreting Rizal*, is an incisive set of essays that returns her to the key works of Jose Rizal, where she reconsiders, among other things, the central role that Maria Clara plays in Rizal's *Noli* and the national hero's place in an emerging pan-Asian anti-colonial imagination.

Aside from authoring several prize-winning books, Carol has also collaborated with various colleagues to produce a number of edited collections on a dizzying array of topics. These include: “*The Best of Tulay: An Anthology of Chinese Filipino Literature in English, Tagalog, and Chinese*. With Benedict Anderson, she co-edited Carlos Bulosan’s *All the Conspirators*; and with the Thai scholar-and-public intellectual Kasian Tejapira *Traveling Nation-Makers: Transnational Flows and Movements in the Making of Modern Southeast Asia*. Carol also co-wrote in Japanese with Prof. Takashi Shiraishi, *How is China Changing East Asia? The 21st Century Regional System*; and with the writers Katrina P. Tavera and Isabelita O. Reyes *Querida: An Anthology* (2013), a compilation of poems, essays, and book excerpts that looks at the role of the mistress in Philippine politics and society. She also edited with J.Paul Manzanilla, *Remembering/Rethinking EDSA*, a compilation of essays and poems that asks us to reconsider the significance of the 1986 “People Power Revolution” that ended the 15- year rule of the Marcos dictatorship, along with *Elite: An Anthology*,

It is well worth noting that Carol is also an award-winning fiction writer. Her literary works include: *Recuerdos de Patay and Other Stories* (2015), *Demigods and Monsters: Stories* (2019), and *Tiempo Muerto* (2019), all of which reflect a sensibility honed in exile and deep political engagement. That she writes literature and doesn’t simply study it is a tribute to the capaciousness of her thinking and wide range of her talents.

Carol’s significance can be gauged by the fact that she has become one of the most widely known Filipina scholars in Asia and the world. Her position at Kyoto makes her a valuable interlocutor in the Asian and Southeast Asian study of the Philippines. This intra-regional concern with Philippine Studies is seen in the journal she edits and in the many conferences she has organized. She has also trained a number of Japanese graduate students who

have been doing important research that open up our understanding of less studied fields such as economic history, urban anthropology and domestic labor. Thanks to Carol's active interventions, many Filipino scholars have received fellowships at Kyoto to carry out their work and interact with Japanese students and faculty.

Last but not least, Carol has been a true institution-builder, a scholar who believes in bringing Southeast Asian studies back to Asia. She was instrumental in launching the quadrennial Philippine Studies Conference in Japan (PSCJ) and the Southeast Asian Studies in Asia (SEASIA) consortium. She has also been a key contributor to our field's most important journal: *Philippine Studies: Historical and Ethnographic Viewpoints* (PSHEV). If she is not writing for the journal, she is either reviewing, contributing interviews, facilitating its conferences, or guest editing.

For all these reasons, Caroline Sy Hau is richly deserving of the Grant Goodman Prize. We heartily congratulate her for winning this award.

--From the nominating letters of Vicente L. Rafael, Patricio Abinales and Lisandro Claudio