Ceres S. C. Alabado and the Formative Years of Philippine Children's Literature, 1960–1988[1]

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INTRODUCTION

CERES SANTOS CUYUGAN ALABADO (1923–2016) was an award-winning writer, educator, translator, publisher, columnist, and founder of different organizations (for biographies and bibliographies, see Valeros and Valeros-Gruenberg 1987, 5; *Filipino Women Writers* 1999, 9-11; *Sulong Pilipina!* 1999, 137-38). Her literary and scholarly works, mostly written in English, were published in the Philippines and abroad. In the span of more than fifty years, her legacy in the field of children's literature had penetrated through generations (see Rivera 1982, 10-11; Paterno 1994, 12-13; Cabañero 1995, 1-37; Evasco 2007, 22; Tolentino 2008, 3; Almario 2010, 7-11). Cultivating her literary seedlings since the postwar period, her efforts in Philippine children's literature production preceded the Marcos regime-sponsored Aklat Adarna (now Adarna House) and the establishment of Philippine Board of Books for Young Readers (PBBY); her scholarly works, although deriving from foreign influences, reformed viewpoints, methods, and craft in a Filipino-oriented direction; and her institutionalization projects were revolutionary, serving as cornerstones for the future development of Philippine children's literature. The study focuses on the period 1960–1988, from the year when Alabado's first children's book was published (and thus became the first picturebook of a Filipino author published in the Philippines), to the year when Alabado received the first PBBY Achievement Award, which can be deemed as the validation and recognition of her legacy to the development and institutionalization of Philippine children's literature.

EARLY LIFE

Before settling on her literary niche, Alabado spent her early life situated in the Philippine setting controlled by the ruling colonial powers. Born on 26 October 1923, Ceres Santos Cuyugan Alabado was the third child of Gervasio Santos Cuyugan and Jacinta Belza. Along with Ceres were Mario, Dar, Ruben Dario, and Fides. The second child, Dar, passed away at six years old due to the then incurable infectious disease, diphtheria (Alabado 1995a, 29-32).

During the revolutionary period at the twilight of nineteenth century, young Gervasio of San Fernando, Pampanga, was a *cobrador de jueteng* and a messenger of Katipunan revolutionary letters and documents (Alabado 1995a, i). The spirit of the times then was of great turbulence; in a span of a decade, the Spanish colonial power shifted not into the hands of the colonized but into another colonizers'. To sustain their imperialist hold on the Islands, the Americans employed McKinley's "benevolent assimilation," in the form of utilizing "schoolbooks and krags" (Gates 1973) to their "little brown brothers." Within this context, Gervasio was taught by an American teacher, Hyde Clinton, and due to these English lessons, he was able

to go to America in 1905 at the age of fifteen (Alabado 1995a, i). Gervasio finished high school in California and moved to Chicago in order to study a medical course specializing in general surgery at the University of Illinois. As a *pensionado* by 1908, he got along with Camilo Osias, who would later become the Assistant Director of Education for the Philippines, a politician, and a pioneer in writing Filipino-oriented children's books, with his *Barrio Life and Barrio Education* (1921), *The Philippine Readers* (1922-1934) and *Pepe and Pilar* (1930s) (Alabado 2001, 75-77; Osias 1921, i; see also Paterno 1994, 11; Habana 2012). Gervasio went back to the Philippine Islands to serve under the Bureau of Health, worked as a doctor to prevent and treat Hansen's disease (leprosy), taught in rural areas proper hygiene, sanitation, and health care, and later on, entered the faculty of the University of the Philippines College of Medicine and the Department of Surgery of the Philippine General Hospital. Being a Santos, Gervasio is also related to Pedro and Jose Abad Santos, who were his cousins and often patients too (Alabado 1995a, 113). Jacinta, on the other hand, was a shy, mestiza girl from Buhi, Camarines Sur (1995a, 31). She later on left Bicol to pursue her nursing studies in Manila. It was at the Philippine General Hospital (PGH) where Jacinta and Gervasio met, and after getting married, raised a family in their home near the PGH. By the time Ceres was three years old, they transferred to Lucena, Tayabas (now Quezon province), in order for Gervasio to fulfill his job of establishing a provincial hospital in the said area. After some years, the family returned to Manila, first renting a house in Remedios street near the hospital, then afterwards buying a bungalow in Pasay (1995a, 89-90).

The Santos Cuyugans were a Catholic middle-class family who had the socioeconomic capability to access formal education and leisure through schooling, books, and music. Considering the Americanization of education and culture during her childhood years, Ceres would recall that back then, she "recited and sang 'Little Miss Muffet' and 'Little Jack Horner,' and read *Five Little Peppers* and *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm*" (Alabado 1979, v). Her bookworm brother, Ruben, in his elementary school days, was engulfed in reading volumes of *Journeys Through the Bookland, Book of Knowledge*, and Mark Twain's *Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn* (Alabado 1995a, 75). Ceres first entered school in the nursery-kindergarten in the neighborhood, run by Mr. and Mrs. Magill, American Christian missionaries in Lucena, Tayabas (1995a, 33). Afterwards, she enrolled in Lucena Elementary School where her elder brother Mario was also studying (1995a, 34, 41-42). Later on, she finished her high school in Philippine Women's University (PWU), where she would also take her master's degree after the war. During her high school days, she was enrolled for a music teacher's course at the St. Scholastica's College of Music. Afterwards, she entered

the University of the Philippines (UP) for her bachelor's degree, where she would meet her future husband, Corban K. Alabado, who was then a feature editor in *The Collegian* (1995a, 98-100). The two temporarily parted ways when the Japanese Occupation started. Corban K. Alabado, enrolled in the Reserve Officers Training Course (ROTC), was drafted in the USAFFE and was sent with other UP students to Camp Olivas, Pampanga and later on in a camp in San Marcelino, Zambales ([Corban] Alabado 1995, 1-14).[2]

After the war, Ceres and Corban got married. Ceres resumed her studies in education, as Corban continued in his law studies. She finished her Master of Arts in English in PWU in 1956, a year before Corban passed the bar and became a lawyer ([Corban] Alabado 1995, 120). The couple had five children: Arion, Alan, Ariel, Ana, and Arigo. Opportunities provided her an invitation to enter the field of children's literature. Dean Natividad Osorio of PWU and Fr. James Bowler of the Ateneo Graduate School of Education asked her to teach children's literature in undergraduate and graduate levels respectively (Alabado 2001, 126). Challenged by the scarcity of resources and teaching materials since most of them were destroyed by the war, and by the dominance of foreign literary works, which were the remains of colonial education and literary production,

> I decided to re-educate myself in the indigenous culture, to research, to dig up what there was and had been or write and produce new and other materials for our children. (Alabado 1995b, 40)

In order to fulfill her teaching load, Ceres developed her craft with a concept in mind. Children's literature, for her, is the meeting of the indigenous and the colonial, the content and the technology.

TOWARDS THE FILIPINIZATION OF CHILDREN'S LITERATURE, 1950S–60S

Production of children's books in the immediate postwar period underlines the narrative of economic dependence to America. According to the book historian Patricia May Jurilla (2008, 41), "book publishing [after the liberation] did not prosper readily or as easily. The book trade still relied heavily on imported titles. . . during the early 1950s, local book publication was meager." Since 1951, the Quirino administration attempted to impose a ban on the importation of textbooks; however, it was met with succeeding suspensions until 1954 (Retizos 1951, 5, 22; *Official Gazette*

2. Corban K. Alabado was honorably discharged in June 1945 as 3rd Lieutenant in the USAFFE, continued his law studies, and passed the bar in 1957.

1952).[3] The underlying rationale for this was the difficulties faced by local printing establishments in acquiring bookpaper and other materials vis-à-vis the modern types, four-color illustrations, adequate printing presses, heavy supplies of paper, ink and other resources, and updated researches and tools for textbook publication by the American publishing companies such as the American Book Company and Ginn & Company (Retizos 1951, 5; Jurilla 2008, 41). Thus, in this sector, the prewar dominant economic control on educational and literary production continued to be in the grip of foreigners during the immediate postwar times.

The 1960s was marked with recurring public calls for producing "our own" children's books and literature, not only in terms of strengthening local industry, but also of creating content which upholds "Filipino identity." A Rockefeller library consultant, by the name of D. Marie Grieco, turned to be oft-cited for her remarks on the state of the country's children's books (see Grieco 1962). At a talk with the Bibliographic Society of the Philippines, she pointed out:

> Even if the law did not tell you to develop ideals of nationalism, patriotism and freedom, you would want your children to be taught such values. You could have books which depict the beauty of your country, the values of your own culture, the meanings of your own customs… Since your culture emphasizes different aspects and values of childhood, all American reading textbooks are not suitable for use here. ("*The need for local literature*" 1962, 27)

The gravity of such demands were bolstered through the harsh remarks on the current state of books and literature for children, describing the situation as that of "deplorable state"; the literary and educational production as "bend(ing) young minds," "treasonous," "leftover/ trash/ cast-off"-feeding; and a "bad candy" causing decay (Grieco 1962, 89; "The need for local literature" 1962, 27; Sibal 1964, 68; Santos 1965, 35). Maximo Ramos pointed out that the alienation of the Filipino child from his own past and people made him regard "the heroes of his race, such as Lapu-lapu and Diego Silang, as miscreants and considered alien conquerors as

3. By October 1951, the feature article by Retizos on the textbook importation ban delved into the resources of Bureau of Printing, the situation of textbook production, and the viewpoints of government officials on the issue. The prohibition, by this time, would be in effect on 1 July 1952. On 22 April 1952, "on recommendation of Secretary of Education Cecilio Putong seconded by the chairman of the Import Control Commission, the Cabinet suspended the ban on the importation of textbooks from elementary and high schools for a period of one year. The ban on textbooks takes effect on June 30, 1953, but with the Cabinet decision, the suspension is extended to June 30, 1954."

heroes" (Alabado 1979, v). Jose T. Enriquez, Assistant Director of Public Schools, acknowledged in a 1968 speech some sharp statements from other institutions and columnists, such as "there is no children's literature native to the Philippines," and "the field of juvenile indigenous literature in the Philippines is far from being developed" (Enriquez 1969, 493; see also *Proceedings* 1968, 6-13). He backed them up with a personal observation on an ambivalent article, which emphasizes that "the influx of western culture seems to undermine this [family solidarity] beautiful tradition and to dim its virtues," yet its author suggested for further studies "mostly materials of alien origin" (1969, 493, 497). Nationalism, if to be defined as the "antithesis to colonialism" according to Claro M. Recto (1986, 231), emerged as an ideology in this type of postwar cultural production. For Ernesto Y. Sibal, it was in the act of "Filipinizing" the educational system (in Education Secretary Alejandro Roces's words), with the process of "purging" and "decolonizing" the mind, that the Filipinos, especially the children, could attain national survival (Sibal 1964, 68). This Filipinization of children's literature rested on "loving something smaller and immediate" (Matute 1962, 446). Enriquez pointed out that although there is commonality among children in the world, "ethnic divergences somehow provide a basis for some variance among them," and suggested that researches, particularly those of "native juvenile literature," should "reveal the familiar experiences that appeal to Filipino children, or underscore the interests that will most conform to their personal and social expectations" (1969, 497). Furthermore, writer and educator Genoveva Edroza Matute offered,

> What better beginning can there be in sowing the seeds of love for one's country and one's people than the literature one hears from a mother's lap or from one's first teachers? Our country is so rich in folklore and tradition, both in prose and in verse, that to ignore them and keep them out of the literature we teach our children is nothing short of folly. (1962, 446)

Conscious of the state of children's literature and the call for its Filipinization, Alabado viewed the production as a collaboration between foreign innovations and native resources. In an early article, Alabado rooted her history of children's literature primarily on the medieval educational system and invention of the printing press in Europe (1966, 463). Recognizing both the need to write with Filipino material and orientation and the foreign scientific and technological advances in literary writing and production, she declared,

> This does not mean that we should be anti-foreign literature. There are those that are relevant to our realities or advanced in scientific and technological information, we could learn from. These we should read and study and imitate and improve upon. Thus, out of all the foreign materials available to me at that time, I chose those I could use as models for the techniques and themes used. (1979, vi)

Alabado enriched herself not only through studying Western (American-European), First World children's literature, but also through formulating methods and processes on how to modify these corpuses to benefit Third World children. Aside from revising her literary history narrative through incorporating the Philippine precolonial oral tradition rather than originating Philippine children's literature on the Spanish print production, she also widened her horizons through investigating the cases of other Third World countries. One of its results was her article in *Sagisag, Sa Daigdig ng Batang Apro-Asyano* (Alabado 1976), where she discussed the impact of children's literature on the consciousness of the Afro-Asian children.

However, she made it clear that while foreign culture is not to be completely rejected, the children must first "read and learn about their own culture." A budding children's literature writer, Rene O. Villanueva would cite Alabado, declaring "Ang panitikang pambatang susulatin sa panahon ngayon ay kailangang magkaroon ng sariling pambansang anyo at nilalaman" (1977, 45). She also viewed the act of writing for children in this orientation as a service to the children and to the country:

> Serving the children food for thought, for their mental nourishment and strength, as essential a need to their growth as food, clothing, and shelter. Serving the country by developing its own indigenous literature for the young, for how can it preserve and be proud of its culture among the nations of the world, unless it possesses a national literature? (Alabado 1979, 3)

Yet the formulation of critique to colonialism and conceptualization of Filipinization themselves did not suffice. They needed to transpose themselves into the systems of production and distribution in order to attain reception and shape collective consciousness of the Third World children. Alabado was aware of the underestimation of the genre; that the space allotted for the publication of what was then considered as "children's literature" was confined only to textbooks,

supplementary readers, comic books, and periodicals. As her square one, it was through magazines and journals where Alabado started publishing.

ALABADO'S EFFORTS ON CHILDREN'S LITERATURE PRODUCTION, 1960S

Literature that were considered "for children" in the early years of the postwar period made its way through serialized publications. During the 1950s to early 1970s, children's and juvenile literature and even studies pertaining to them were frequently published in magazines and journals for teachers and women. Some of these publications for teachers, which feature sample literary works as teaching aids, selected conference speeches, education researches, and the like (Alabado 2001, 127-28).[4] While, women's magazines of the immediate postwar period went along with the revival of prewar magazines that served as newspaper supplements (usually "Sunday supplements") (Encanto 2004, 57-58). *Woman and Home* (WH), a magazine of the *Manila Chronicle,* became one of the earliest women's magazines to feature children's literature (Encanto 2004, 58-62; Salanga 1991, 63-64). It was in *WH* where the winning pieces of Pamana, Inc. writing contests first appeared, such as Gilda Cordero Fernando's *Horgle and the King Soup* (Cordero Fernando 1964, 20-21). Aside from featuring some stories by Alabado, the 13 December 1964 *WH* issue, under the editorship of Eugenia D. Apostol, published five children's stories and two legends.[5]

Alabado began publishing stories in *The Philippine Journal of Education* (PJE) with the help of Paz Benitez Marquez (Alabado 2001, 127). These were the stories which were turned into a single picturebook: *The Little Lizard, Bagol,* and *The Christmas Lantern*. In addition, her three stories collectively known as *Hulyo the Horse and Dyip the Jeepney* appeared in 13 September 1964 *WH* issue (Alabado 1964, 14-15).

Seeing the paucity of forms of children's literature, at that time ranging only from state or school-sponsored textbooks and readers to the much popular and vernacular comics and serialized stories in magazines, and the potential of her stories to be published as "picturebooks," she pitched the idea to Benitez Marquez,

4. These serials include *The Philippine Journal of Education, The Filipino Teacher, The Education Quarterly,* and *Far Eastern University Faculty Journal.* Numerous works and articles on children's literature appeared in *The Filipino Teacher,* such as those of Genoveva Edroza Matute, Jose T. Enriquez, and Minda C. Sutaria. During the 1960s, *Mga Tulang Pambata,* a regular column on children's poems, was managed by P. N. Nicasio, accompanied with illustrations and frequently printed in colored pages.

5. The works are *The Legend of Mariang Makiling* by Alberto S. Florentino (pp. 3-5), *A Legend of the Coconut* by Loreto Paras-Sulit and Lina Llaguno (6-7), *From Kitty Pie with Love* by C. V. Pedroche (10-11), *The Mighty Octopus and the Little Red Ant* by Maria Yotoko and Manuel Rodriguez, Jr. (12-14), *The Shy Fish* by Tita L. Ayala and Lina Llaguno (15), *Brighty the Nail* by Tita L. Ayala and Linda del Rosario (16), *Jinx the Dragonfly and his Light* by Teresa Cordero-Pardo and Gilbert Perez (18-19).

who in turn was not ready for this innovation. Picturebooks are defined as "a book in which pictures or drawings or illustrations play an equally important role, they appear in every page, and are integral part of the action in the text of the book" (Alabado 1979, 47). The rejection of the idea pushed Alabado to venture into self-publishing. Through the advice of *PJE* technician, Severino Taruc, she purchased a Minerva printing press, which could print four colors. However, even with the acquisition of needed machine, Alabado still faced challenges in publishing her first book. Illustrators were hesitant to jump into the project due to her "shoe-string budget" and the prevalent underestimation of children's literature. For her project to materialize, it took tight negotiations with the illustrators Antonio Liwag and Ben Hur Villanueva. This difficulty on consulting illustrators for a project was once echoed in a 1977 speech of Alabado in an illustrators' colloquium of Palihang Adarna (Alabado 2001, 202; see also Torrevillas-Suarez 1975, 17; Alabado 1995b, 41).[6]

At last, when everything had been settled, and after repeated experiments on the printing process, the Alabado-led The Filipino Library released the first Filipino picturebook, *The Little Lizard and Other Stories* in 1960 (Alabado, Liwag, and Bonifacio 1961). Formed by Alabado, Cora Vigilia, Virginia Bonifacio, and Narita Gonzales, The Filipino Library, Printers & Publishers held office at 123 Edison, Makati, Rizal (now Makati City) (Alabado 1995b, 41). Alabado named the titles Bobby Benedicto books after her husband's business partner (Alabado 2001, 128, 170; [Corban] Alabado 1995, 120). It was indeed the meeting of foreign technology and form, and native content and passion. Having twenty-one spreads, this hardbound picturebook measured 8.5 x 6 inches, which became a template for their succeeding picturebook publications. It featured the stories which initially appeared in *PJE: The Little Lizard* (pp. 1-11), *Bagol* (pp. 12-25), and *The Christmas Lantern* (pp. 26-41). Illustrations were made by Antonio Liwag, using watercolor and pen. The picturebook was also translated into Pilipino by Virginia Palma Bonifacio in 1961. Succeeding this were picturebooks such as *The Big Lonely House* and *Tupo and the Blow-Pipe* by Alabado, *The Proud Hen* by Corazon Vigilia, and *Tugmang Pilipino* by Virginia Palma Bonifacio, all illustrated by Ben Hur G. Villanueva. The publication of picturebooks can be

6. "Looking back, I had the near-to-impossible task of producing books for children and young adults. I know I can write, so I wrote. But to illustrate them, this I cannot do. So I did not hesitate to look for illustrators to the extent of going to their houses, falling on my knees, if needed, pleading—whatever it took to convince them to draw for me. There were times I had to go back a dozen or so times: either the illustrator was out of town, or, if he were home, was sleeping (and this was at noontime). If I find him home, I explained my plight and the answer I hear after all the trouble of explaining and directing was: 'The quality of my work depends on the payment I receive.'"

considered as an innovation and "first of its kind"; however, Alabado herself pointed out in a 1975 interview that *The Little Lizard* series were "crude, poorly-made books I regret having put out at all" (Torrevillas-Suarez 1975, 14). Improvements in form can be seen later on with the rise of Pamana, Inc.

The first two picturebooks, *The Little Lizard* (1960) and *The Big Lonely House* (1961) featured anthropomorphism and personification in the form of fables and parables, with characters such as lizards, a coin, and houses. Illustrations occupy at least a page in every spread. The next picturebook, *Tupo and the Blowpipe and Other Stories* (1962), had a different type of content (Alabado and Villanueva 1962). Unlike personified objects or animals, stories dealt with prehispanic peoples and societies, such as *Tupo and the Blowpipe* (1-15), *Pulo and his Wife* (16-28), and *Abu Ali* (29-39). Tupo was a primitive boy who learned to defend himself through a bamboo weapon. Held in Cebu, Pulo's story was a cautionary tale on greed, with Indian color through a Hindu god character, Ganesha. Abu Ali, set in Ma'i (Mindoro), was about a Muslim boy who wished to sail in a great ship.

Alabado's fascination for writing about Filipino children of the prehispanic era or as a member of ethnolinguistic group was remarkable. In the '70s, praising her for discussing the ways of life and behavior of "national or cultural minorities" such as Tasaday,[7] Ifugao, Negrito, Ibaloi, and Tausog, Almario notes: "Sa halip na ituon lamang ang pansin sa buhay-lunsod, na siyang malimit paglunduan ng mga aklat na ganito simula pa sa *Pepe and Pilar,* sinikap niyang palawakin kaagad ang daigdig ng karanasan ng mga paslit na mambabasa" (1976, 44). In a lengthy descriptive essay, Alabado defined who the Filipino child is, sharing her multicultural, multisectoral, and archipelagic perspective of characterization in her craft (Alabado 1979, 14).[8]

PAMANA, INC. AND CLAPI, 1962

The realities of economic production during the recovering national economy became hurdles to Alabado's vision of Filipinized education of the young through reading books. In her first attempts to publish her works, she faced the specifics of consumerism in local commercial publication. Her Filipino Library publishing firm did not gain enough foothold to survive the economic competition. She realized the

7. Tasaday peoples were later on revealed as a Presidential Arm for National Minorities (PANAMIN) hoax, used as a Marcosian propaganda tool.

8. Alabado: "He is a rural and urban, mountain and lowland, and a seafaring child. He is black, brown, and white. He is rich and poor, schooled and unschooled, a Christian, Moslem, Buddhist, pagan, primitive and modern. He loves and hates. Cries and laughs. But most of all he dreams."

factors why children's literature appeared as an artists' "no man's land": the lack of devoted publishers, the powerful importation of foreign books, and the financial capability and purchasing preferences of children's parents (see Torrevillas-Suarez 1975, 17). Regarding the publishers, Alabado relates:

> The cost of printing is 45 percent of the price of the book. Then you have the distributor commission, which is 40 percent, the writer-artist fee, which is 10 percent, and editorial services, taxes, etc., which makes up 5 percent. What is the margin of profit for the publisher? Practically zero. Is it any wonder no publisher wants to enter into children's book publishing? (Torrevillas-Suarez 1975, 17)

These were the main reasons that Alabado pushed for the establishment of an organization. In 1962, she organized Pamana, Inc., a non-stock non-profit organization composed of civic community leaders, in order to "initiate the production of Filipino children's books and promote writing and reading children's books" (Alabado 2001, 132; 1995b, 41; Cabañero 1995, 2).[9] It held office at 330 Legarda cor. Sandejas St., Pasay City. With this, her circle of children's literature writers and enthusiasts widened, and more books were published. Starting in 1963, Pamana, Inc. held an annual story writing contest, where the winning pieces were published as picturebooks. Its winners were proved to be classics: *Makisig, the Little Hero of Mactan* (won in 1963, published in 1964) by Gemma Guerrero Cruz, *At Nakaawit si Birling* (won in 1964, published in 1966) by Felipe Ibarra, *Horgle and the King's Soup* (won in 1963, published in 1965) by Gilda Cordero Fernando, *Ang Kaharian sa Tuktok ng Kawayan* (1965) by Carlos Roberto, *The Adventures of Pikoy* (won in 1968, published 1969) by Maria Luisa P. Muñoz, and *Anak Datu* (won in 1968, published in 1972) by Abdulmari Imao (Seriña and Yap 1980, 8, 9, 50, 72, 90).[10] A compilation of masterpieces, illustrated by Alfredo Roces, *Stories of Long Ago: Six Pamana Prize-Winning Stories* (1966), was also published, along with Alabado's works, *Asog* (1968/69) and *Kangkong 1896* (1969), Isabel Taylor Escoda's *Once Upon a Hilltop* (illustrated by Rebecca Perla Gonzales, 1968) and *Ati-atihan* (1969),

9. Its incorporators include Luz Banzon Magsaysay, Waldo Perfecto, Fernando Zobel de Ayala, Carmen Guevarra, Helen Benitez, Carlos P. Romulo, Ruben Santos Cuyugan, and Manuel Quezon, Jr.

10. For the actual Pamana publications, see Gemma Guerrero Cruz (author) and Emilio D. Rodriguez (illustrator), *Makisig: The Little Hero of Mactan* (Makati: Pamana, Inc., 1964); Gilda Cordero Fernando (author) and Gilbert Perez (illustrator), *Horgle and the King's Soup* (Makati: Pamana, Inc., 1965); Carlos Roberto (author) and Rod P. Perez (illustrator), *Ang Kaharian sa Tuktok ng Kawayan* (Makati: Pamana, Inc., 1965); Felipe Ibarra (author) and Antonio Golez (illustrator), *At Nakaawit si Birling* (Makati: Pamana, Inc., 1966); Abdulmari Imao, *Anak Datu* (Makati: Pamana, Inc., 1972).

and *The Wind Whispered to the Grass* (1968) by Amenita Lo and Arigo Alabado (Seriña & Yap 1980, 50, 79, 89-90).

During this period, Alabado published her two novels which can be categorized as "young adult:" *Asog* and *Kangkong 1896*. *Asog*, Alabado's and Pamana, Inc.'s first novel, is a 229-page long narrative revolving around a boy named Mariano in a setting submerged in an atmosphere of a local folktale coinciding with an ongoing reality of a health issue, the proliferation of leprosy (Alabado and Alabado 1968). In the story, Mariano tries to uncover the mystery behind the tale of Mount Asog (Seriña and Yap 1980, 15). An earlier draft of the novel was entitled *A Secret Formula* (Alabado 1967).[11] The novel featured charcoal drawings illustrated by Alabado's son, Arigo. The appearance of cross-references can be considered as the meeting of Alabado's two parental roots: Dr. Gervasio Santos Cuyugan's experience as a Culion leper colony doctor and the Buhi, Camarines Sur folktale she got from her mother's father, Lolo Tikoy.

In 1969, a remarkable novel which contributed to the preexisting historical fiction tradition was born in the field of juvenile literature. A 333-page book, Alabado's *Kangkong 1896* featured illustrations by Carlos P. Valino and Arigo Alabado (Alabado and Valino 1969). Teodoro Agoncillo, renowned historian and the author of *The Revolt of the Masses*, became its history consultant. It narrated a coming-of-age tale of the fifteen-year-old Plorante Acabo who got entangled in the zeitgeist of mystery and anxiety, as time neared toward the explosion of Philippine Revolution initiated by Katipunan. In a 1976 review, Pura Santillan-Castrence (1976, 342) paid attention to the symbolism of *kangkong* (swamp cabbage) as an indicator of Alabado's poetic genius:

> Nagkataon pa naman na ang pangalan ng aklat ay napaka Pilipino— Kangkong— tila sinadya upang maging simbolo ng pagkamaralita, isang dukhang halamang mahirap lipulin, kahit saan; may tubig lamang ay nag-uugat, tumutubo, yumayabong, naniniko ng ibang halamang hindi kasing sigla, kasing tapang, kasing handang lumaban sa mga hamon ng tadhana.

Santillan-Castrence praised the translation of English thought to a Filipino literary language, which signified the meeting of two cultures in Alabado's craft. She also emphasized in her review the impact of tragedy in the revolution, the shift from optimism-idealism to pessimism-realism, and the development of maturity from boyhood towards adolescence. For the critic Eugene Y. Evasco, *Kangkong 1896* presented praiseworthy historical revisionism in a historical fiction for the young: featuring youth

11. A copy for the National Library was received on 16 February 1967.

and women as revolutionaries, providing voices to the inarticulate, depicting the horrors of war, and contributing to the anticolonial and national literature (2007, 41-45).

Along with Pamana, Inc. was the establishment of Children's Literature Association of the Philippines, Inc. (CLAPI), with Alabado as the founding president. Registered as a non-stock, non-profit organization on 2 March 1966, it was established to "bring together all those particularly concerned with children's literature and to cultivate closer fellowship and cooperation among the members" ("What is the CLAPI?" 1967, 13; Cabañero 1995, 2-3).[12] For Alabado, it served as the marketing arm of Pamana and other publications (1995b, 41).[13] It proved to widen its horizon through conducting different activities such as book publishing and marketing, annual national and regional work-conferences, literary workshops, overseas trips, fora, outreach programs, theatrical presentations, and contests. One particular project was *Binhi,* which aimed for children's section improvement in existing libraries and the publication of *Ako sa Amin* (Alabado, Guzman, and Almario 1977). It was through CLAPI that the movement for the wider recognition and institutionalization of children's literature was realized, since it acquired in its projects support and partnerships with the government institutions and private organizations (for the concise history of CLAPI, see Cabañero 1995, 1-37). Up to this date, it is still operational.

IN THE CLAWS OF DICTATORSHIP, 1971–1984

The 1960s had been a busy decade for Alabado. However, in the 1970s, with the Martial Law regime, Alabado faced another form of blockade for an artist and advocate for the young: political censorship and silencing. It is to be noted that Alabado allowed a particular period in her children's literature histories for the Marcos dictatorship, which she considered as "the peak of the young people's activism, expression for, by, and of the young" (Alabado 1995b, 42; see also 2001, 173-98). Another manifestation of the artistic suppression was embodied in the history of her two works, *I See Red in a Circle* and *Batang R.P.* Both works can be temporally plotted on the two ends (1971 and 1984) of the chaotic period, as the nation sat on top of a social volcano.

Dedicated to "the militant and progressive youth who would rather die than live and become like their elders," *I See Red in a Circle* narrated the story of Maria and her

12. Its incorporators include Virginia F. Agbayani, Emilio R. Castillo, Consuelo Damaso, Dr. Aurelio O. Elevazo, Gilda Cordero Fernando, Jose J. Ferrer, Marcela B. Garcia, Ruth Q. Gomez, Tomas R. Maglaya, Josefa V. Manahan, Alfonso B. Millena Jr., Santos Pascual, Patrocinio S. Picache, and Maria Isabelita Riego de Dios.
13. This contradicts the historical narrative of Angelica A. Cabañero, who considered CLAPI as the organization that arose from the declining Pamana, Inc. which "went the way of the Filipino Library" due to its failure to sustain its book publishing venture (1995, 2).

college friends during the First Quarter Storm (Alabado 1971). It featured the inner complexities of anti-dictatorship stance (such as the quarrels between different activist groups), police brutality, demonstrations, government corruption, family dimension of activism, and love in a time of tyranny. It resonates the ancestry of Alabado which was involved in the militant movements, such as Pedro Abad Santos, the Cuyugans, and the Alabados. Using the lens of autobiographical approach, it may even be inferred that Maria was Alabado's only daughter, Ana, who was a UP Diliman Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education graduate (Messenger conversation with Ana Segovia, 5 April 2018). Mama (Ceres), "the lawyer" Papa (Corban), "a brother of Mama, a sociologist" (Ruben Dario), and the "four brothers" by the name of Val, Ted, Vic, and Joe (Arion, Alan, Ariel, and Arigo) smoothly correspond to Alabado's family members. The main organizations featured here were Kabataang Makabayan (KM) and Makabayang Kilusan ng Bagong Kababaihan (MAKIBAKA). In an interview with Alabado, it was pointed out that "MAKIBAKA was dominated by young students, although it also incorporates the mothers of these students," a phenomenon depicted in the novel (Edwards and Roces 2000, 121).

Published months before the declaration of Martial Law, it was later on banned by the Marcos administration. Andres Cristobal Cruz had a chance to write a review of it before its prohibition in a *Graphic* issue dated 14 June 1972. In his column *Roving Eye,* Cruz reviewed four books which were "new volumes on activism, varying in tone and quality" (1972, 56-57).[14] He underlined in his review the human dimension presented in a violent era, the "reflective note" through the vocalization of the supporting majority, and the macabre and tension felt within the "well-chosen" photographs inserted in every opening of a chapter.

> Alabado has given flesh and bones to the students massacred at Congress and the Battle of Mendiola, and to the marches and rallies. One is no longer concerned with questions of whether the events and incidents are fiction. *I See Red in a Circle* is the authentic experience of an authentic revolution in the making. (Cristobal Cruz 1972, 57)

Its banning appeared to be the reason for its invisibility in Seriña and Yap's children's books bibliography in 1980. However, as Alabado recalled, copies of the said book reached schoolchildren, who eventually liked it best because "it had a lot of action in it" (1979, 1).

14. It includes *Free My People, Towards a Filipino Social Revolution, A Century of Activism* (Corazon Damo-Santiago), and *I See Red in a Circle*.

Enclosed within the parameters of strict censorship imposed by the Marcos regime, Alabado saw a glint of light to express her progressive sentiments through a column in *We Forum*. One of the leading critical newspapers, it was founded by Jose G. Burgos Jr., a former *Manila Times* reporter, in 1977 (Salanga 1991, 69-70). Alabado started writing poems through a column entitled *Batang R.P.* However, in December 1982, Burgos and the *We Forum* staff were arrested by the military, and the office was padlocked. She set the collection aside for a while until she was encouraged by the historian Encarnacion Alzona to publish it (Alabado 1984, v).

Published by Rex Book Store, *Batang R.P.* (1984) is composed of forty-six Filipino/Tagalog poems for children. The contents discussed sociopolitical themes, such as national liberation, anti-American imperialism, forced disappearances, demonstrations, political prisoners, and the like. Alabado wrote in free verse form; the poems' voice attempted to capture that of a child, with an aim to prove that forms of activism choose no particular age. The poems are accompanied by illustrations of children, including some of Alabado's grandchildren.[15] *Batang R.P.* won the Catholic Mass Media Awards in Book Category in 1984.

In between these controversial publications, Alabado struggled to sustain her advocacies with the organizations she founded and led. In 1975, picturebooks of The Filipino Library (under CLAPI) featured children of different cultural groups: *Tasaday* and *The Rattan Gatherer* (Negrito) (Alabado and Banzon 1975a; 1975b). Along with these was the Jibin Series, including *What is Christmas?* and *Possession* (Alabado and Banzon 1975c; Alabado and Abrera 1975). The protagonist of these stories was named after Alabado's first grandchild, Jibin Alabado. They taught sense perception hand-in-hand with moral values such as parental love, generosity, and discipline. Other Alabado titles include *Fisherman, Dog, What Do You Say?, Ang Nakakatakot na Demonyo/ The Terrible Devil, What Is Blue?, What Is Yellow?, What Is Red?, What Is Green?, What Is Orange?, What is Violet? Flower Gatherer, The Sun and the Moon, What Color Is This?, Rajah Sulayman, One was Abu, One Christmas Day, Brother! Brother!, Rice Farmer, Wood Carver, Pushcart, Lapu-Lapu,* and *Is Seed in Your House?* (Cabañero 1995, 1-2).

It was also in this period when Alabado produced one of the earliest sourcebooks on the subject. A forteen-chapter book, *Writing for Children in the Philippines and the Third World* (1979) is a comprehensive reference for creative writing, comparative literature, history, and cultural studies about the Filipino child and Philippine

15. The children illustrators are Luke Ari Alabado (also the illustrator of Corban K. Alabado's *Bataan, Death March, Capas*), Marlon Reyes, Angelica Palma, Carlito Marcelo, Larissa Alabado, Jerome Alabado, Dexter Anastacio, Alvin Reamillo, Sean P. Malicsi, Aries Espinosa, Celnan Jopson (son of Edgar Jopson), Olympia Beltran, Danny Javier, Genesis Samonte, James Tan, Bullet Soriano, and Carminia Segovia.

children's literature. It laid down what can be considered as the "taxonomy" of different branches of children's literature. It also includes forty-four whole pieces and excerpts of various literary works for children, which she considered to be contemporarily remarkable. This book preceded the generations-apart authoritative volumes of *Bumasa at Lumaya* (1994 and 2016).

ALABADO AND ALMARIO: THE TALE OF TWO PIONEERS, 1970S–1988

In a book chapter, poet-critic Virgilio Almario considered Alabado as the "godmother of modern children's literature" (2010, 8). Almario recognized the "pioneering spirit" of Alabado in the field, especially her efforts during the formative years of "modern" children's literature, the fruits of which were its institutionalization, standardization, and expansion (1994, 28-29).

Around the early 1970s, as Almario recalled, Alabado approached him after a workshop session in Galian sa Arte at Tula (GAT) and invited him to speak in a CLAPI lecture on children's poetry (Almario 2010, 7-8). Afterwards, he became a frequent speaker on the topic in CLAPI seminars, such as those held in Manila and Cebu. In 1976, he published his article in *Sagisag* magazine, a Department of Public Information publication, in appreciation of the changes in the current situation of children's literature, led by the "crusade of CLAPI" (Almario 1976, 39-45). Alabado would also publish an article in *Sagisag* in 1976 under his editorship with Bienvenido Lumbera. CLAPI, having partnerships with the government that time, published in 1977 a compilation of illustrations, poems, and short prose by children from different schools. Entitled *Ako sa Amin* (1977), it was edited by Alabado, Almario, and Gloria Villaraza Guzman. Later on, Almario became a CLAPI member.

Eventually, in the same year, the finance officer of Imelda Marcos-held Nutrition Center of the Philippines (NCP), by the name of Louie Lagdameo, discussed his blueprint for a grand-scale children's book production at the Chinese Embassy. Alabado worked as the executive secretary of Association for Philippine Chinese Understanding (APCU) (see Torrevillas-Suarez 1975, 17). He consulted Alabado for a division manager, to which Alabado suggested Almario (Alabado 2001, 200). After nearly a month of preparation and decision-making, Almario agreed to Lagdameo's proposal, which gave birth to Aklat Adarna (Almario 2010, 12-15). Under NCP Publishing Corporation, Aklat Adarna had eight series of 4 x 7 inches, landscape-oriented picturebooks, wherein children's stories went hand-in-hand with nutrition facts and guides on the endpapers to push forward the "mental feeding program" of the nutrition center. By 1980, as the project became productive, it became the Children's Communication Center (CCC), then connected to Ministry of Human

Settlements and Ministry of Local Governments and Community Development. NCP continued to publish picturebooks, known as Bulilit series, with six book types (Aklat Balangaw, Sakbibi, Talisik, Punyagi, Haraya, and Himaton) (Alabado 2001, 206).

Held on 3 June 1977 in Caliraya, Laguna, the NCP Publishing Corporation organized a writing workshop called Palihang Adarna for children's literature writers (Guzman 1977, 52-53; Cabañero 1995, 14; Alabado 2001, 200-204). The organizers invited speakers such as Alabado, Amelia Lapeña-Bonifacio, Tony Velasquez, Bienvenido Lumbera, and Jose Lacaba.[16] Alabado shared her experiences in the pioneering efforts to produce, standardize, and expand children's literature during the 1960s.

In 1984, the Philippine Board of Books for Young People (PBBY) was created. By 1986, there would be a PBBY-CLAPI joint workshop, which also became as an avenue for the induction of newly-elected officers. That year, Alabado remained in the presidency while Almario replaced the 1985 vice-president, the writer Domingo Landicho (Cabañero 1995, 17). After the EDSA People Power Revolution of 1986, Aklat Adarna turned into Adarna House, Inc., under Almario's ownership (nowadays, it is "under the helm of his family," see Adarna House's "About Us" 2018). The board would acknowledge the outstanding contribution of Alabado to Philippine children's literature through the awarding of the first PBBY Achievement Award on the National Children's Book Day, 19 July 1988. This paved the way for the creation of Gawad Ceres S. C. Alabado, "an annual award for the best of each year' publication or production of a children's book, play, radio, tv, or video program" (Cabañero 1995, 19).

SWANSONG AND FAREWELL, 1980S–2006

The gap in the literary and scholarly production of Alabado during the 1980s to 2000s may be explained through the following: Alabado's active leadership in CLAPI, her migration to the United States,[17] and the expansion of Philippine children's

16. The Palihang Adarna fellows were Gloria Villaraza Guzman, Jose Gonzales, Maridol Rañoa, Cecille T. Caguingin, Susan de la Rosa Aragon, Reuel M. Aguila, Jesus Manuel Santiago, Genara Banzon, Rodolfo Desuasido, Aida Santos Maranan, Migen Osorio, and Rene Villanueva.

17. As of this writing, the exact year of migration of Alabado to the United States is yet to be known. Some of the clues to look at are her and her husband's publications. By 1995 and 1996, they would publish their books (*Beautiful Dreamer* and *Bataan, Death March, Capas*) in San Francisco, California through the Sulu Books. However, on 24 November 1995, Alabado attended the pearl anniversary of CLAPI. Did she simply travel in 1995 to attend the 30th year celebration, and then go back to US? In 2000, her picturebook *God, Please Hold Me in Your Hand* was released in South San Francisco, California, through AA Multimedia Productions. In a conversation via Messenger (20 Aug 2018), her daughter Ana Segovia was yet to confirm the puzzling migration year, but she pointed out that Alabado stayed with her in Santa Clara when she first moved to the US.

literature as recognized genre and production. Leaving the "luxuriant forests" she earlier cultivated as sprouts, Alabado had another field to explore in the overseas. She organized a group of Filipino-American writers in the United States, initiated projects to finance their publications, and went with Corban K. Alabado to different American libraries to research on Filipino-American relations and history. Gaining access to a wider, international community of readers, some of her works were translated into English and Chinese, appearing through different journals and book publications. In the Philippines, institutionalization of children's literature continued to materialize, through the first workshop on children's literature of UP Creative Writing Center (1983), the establishment of PBBY (1984), the opening of a children's story category in Palanca Awards (1989), and the establishment of organizations such as Ang Ilustrador ng Kabataan/ Ang InK (1991), Kuwentista ng mga Tsikiting/ KUTING (1995), and Alitaptap Storytellers Philippines (1999) (Evasco 2012, 128-29).

Alabado managed to produce her swansong books. Notable was her comprehensive children's literature history, *Multimedia Multicultural Children's Literature in the Philippines: A Historical Perspective* (1998/2001). It can be considered as the representative body of Alabado's historical research through the decades, which origin can be traced to the mid-1960s (see Alabado 1966). Other books were her family biography, *Beautiful Dreamer* (1995); a picturebook, *God Please Hold Me in Your Hand* (2000), a story book, *Moloka'i mo bettah* (2005), and *Philippine World War II Stories for Children* (2009), coauthored with her husband Corban. All were published in California, and some had their Philippine edition through the Quezon City-based New Day Publishers.

Alabado passed away on 2 October 2016 in South San Francisco, California, at the age of 92. After two months, Alabado's remains were sent to the Philippines, for her to finally rest in her native soil.[18] On her obituary, a Descartesian quote of her reads: "Where the children are, I am" ("In Loving Memory" 2016). Thus was the life and works of a pioneering writer, artist, and leader who cultivated and enriched the gardens of verses and prose for Filipino children.

CONCLUSION

Before heading toward the needed recovery and digitization of the 1960s children's literature as pointed out by scholars (Evasco 2012, 146), a comprehensive historical study of Alabado should be written first in order to appreciate the vast field of Philippine children's literature she started to nourish

18. A public Facebook post by Cora Ambito Alabado, dated 2 December 2016, featured photos of the mass before interment of Alabado at the Basilica of St. Peter, Quezon City. The mass was officiated by Fr. Boy Makabenta.

and expand since the mid-twentieth century. This preliminary study attempts to go through creative and scholarly works, interviews, and supplementary sources to reconstruct the contexts of Alabado's pioneering efforts and contributions. It can be considered as a short response to fill in the gap in periodization of the current history writings on children's literature. The researcher hopes that future historico-literary studies would also attempt to survey the other unexplored facets of Alabado's legacy. As she ventured to enrich the gardens of Philippine children's literature, we should also cultivate the gardens of her past in order for the present to appreciate its fine blossoms.

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Woman and Home. 13 December 1964.

PHOTOS

Ceres Santos Cuyugan Alabado [*Sulong Pilipina* 1999, 137]

Ceres S. C. Alabado's 90th birthday, 26 October 2013, St. Justin's Church, Santa Clara, California. 2nd row, L-R: Tom Segovia (Ana Alabado Segovia's husband) and Dulce Alabado (wife of Arion Alabado). 1st row, L-R: Ana Alabado Segovia (Ceres' 4th child), unnamed priest, Ceres, and Arion Alabado (Ceres' eldest child) [Courtesy of Mrs. Ana Segovia]