

"The Post-Creativist Corpus Of Astu Abalar"

fiction by

Vernon Frazer
568 Brittany L
Delray Beach, FL 33446
frazerv@bellsouth.net

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Vernon Frazer
568 Brittany L
DeFray Beach, FL 33446
(561) 495-8815
frazerv@bellsouth.net

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A despairing grimace darkened Astu Abalar's features of indeterminate ethnicity. The reclusive author closed the Spring 1992 issue of the *Arizona Quarterly*, in which an essay had portrayed William Gass's *The Tunnel* as a paradigm of the work-in-progress as a Post-Modernist genre.

"You don't have to say a word," I reassured Abalar, watching the sweat from his cramped hand shimmer on the ballpoint pen poised to print for so many years that his sweating fingers had erased its brand name. "In the fifteen years I've served as your secretary, you've authored so many works-in-progress that you could claim the genre as *your own*."

"You're right," he said. His pen twitched with anticipation.

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The intense controversy surrounding Abalar's work has prevented the literary cognoscenti from recognizing its scope and anticipating its impact on future generations of writers---if, indeed, that nineteenth-century holdover can accurately describe the practitioners of the literary medium whose transformation is implicit in every Abalar opus.

In a century in which successive literary movements, from the Dadaists to the Post-Modernists, have declared the end to Literature as we know it, Abalar's corpus promises not only to end Literature as we know it, but to begin Literature as we have yet to know it. If the critical and public neglect of Abalar's ablest efforts during his thirty-nine years of living contributed to his painful passing, the critical reassessment of his life's work will contribute to the joy of future literary artists.

Abalar worked in many forms. Poetry, fiction, drama---each offered him a means of expression whose imaginative sorties approached the imaginary. No matter the form, Abalar assimilated its tradition and advanced it. He fused the Modernist and Post-Modernist relationships between author, text and reader into an unlikely but enticing unity.

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"I've wasted enough time with works-in-progress," Abalar continued. "It's time I finished at least one of them."

Before his pen could dot the blank first page of his spiral-bound notebook, my hand clutched his wrist. My blue eyes stalked his brown eyes and cornered them. "Don't do it, Astu" I warned him. "Don't do it."



Fortunately, just as every writer has an editor who helps to strengthen his focus on the core of a work, every great writer has an exegete who illuminates the work for the public. If, as Abalar's secretary, I merely carried out his instructions, as his friend and confidante (and future exegete, I might add) I warned against his monumental act of unwitting destruction. The presence of one single word on a blue-lined page would negate the conceptual impact of his entire *oeuvre*, just as, some years later, Gass's completion of *The Tunnel* would negate its status as an example of the work-in-progress as a Post-Modernist genre.



"I feel as though I've wasted my entire life. All of these works in my head, more than I can even count--but not one on paper."

"And therein lies your genius."



If Abalar established the work-in-progress as a Post-Modernist genre at least two decades before literary theorists identified William Gass's *The Tunnel* as a Post-Modernist paradigm, he transcended the genre with his uncreated work, which established itself as the predominant literary idiom of the Post-Creativist movement.

Prior to Abalar, all literature restricted interaction between the reader and the author because the text functioned as passive intermediary. In their rejection of the directive

completeness of the Modernists' now antiquated collective corpus and its inherent limitations on interactivity, the Post-Modernists implicitly encouraged an imaginative interaction between reader and text that diminished the author's role to presenting ambiguities which readers could interpret within the context of their perceptual liberation.

With a single refusal to scratch his pen against the page of his notebook, Astu Abalar not only eliminated the barriers to full participation of author and reader, but eliminated the distinction between them, as well. Through its inclusionary nature, Abalar's work, regardless of genre, anticipated and extended the interactive literature of the Post-Modernists to a degree that exceeds the interactive applications of millennial computer technology. Abalar achieved this sophisticated advancement of the literary arts through the simplest, yet most radical means possible: he eliminated author and text.



"Do you mean to tell me that all this...all this is *mine*, regardless of what I have or haven't done?" He spread his arms the width of his monastic studio, piled high with imagined manuscripts and cramped with the empty file cabinets that contained his completed output.

"Yes, Astu, it is," I assured him.

"But is it enough?"

"It's more than enough."

I reminded the frustrated writer that an author's body of work cannot be assessed properly within his lifetime, then assured him that if he assigned all rights to me, I would, as his exegete, provide the appropriate appraisal of his lifelong all-or-nothing effort.

Abalar reluctantly set down the ballpoint, ending my years of witnessing the intense author poring over the magnificently-crafted nothings on which his reputation will rest. Abalar devoted every waking moment of his writing years to envisioning the completion of his literary projects and avoiding the act of beginning them, thereby endowing them with greater conceptual dimension than if he had actually committed them to print.

"Then, when I look at what I've thought of, and what I haven't thought of, and combine the two, I guess my work is done. Sometimes, though, I feel as though I haven't even scratched the surface."

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Although the reclusive Abalar spent most of his adult life formulating his singular body of uncreated work, its quantity stirs as much contention among contemporary

scholars as its quality. The vehement opinions expressed in university English departments concerning his productivity range from the pensioned Modernists, who assert that Abalar accomplished nothing but idle dreaming, continues to the tenured Post-Modernists, who cautiously appraise his output as moderate, and culminates with the unemployed Post-Creativists, who insist that his body of work was so overwhelmingly prolific that it not only justifies their existence but consumes it, as well.

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Although the exegete often has greater insight into the author's work than the author himself, he does not always have a corresponding insight into the author as a person. It is with profound sorrow that I admit my failing. Little did I know that Abalar's signing away a lifetime of uncreated work would signify the end of a life unlived except for its commitment to literature. His health declined rapidly because he believed he had completed his life's purpose. His rise into immortality, however, has stirred intense speculation about the other works he could have uncreated within a full life span—a speculation as endless as the controversy concerning what he achieved.

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Don't Wait!!!

Join the Great Abalar Debate

DID HE OR DIDN'T HE?

Just complete this form today and win a 10-day round trip ticket to the English Department of your choice.

Name of Work _____

Genre _____

Created Uncreated Abalar Non-Abalar Not Sure

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The conflicting contentions of literary scholars have increased the mystique surrounding Abalar's productivity. My own efforts have identified 2,000 works Abalar uncreated in his lifetime, ranging from post-Elizabethan tragedies such as *Juliet and Romeo*, post-Victorian novels such as *A Tale of Two Suburbs*, aleatoric fictions such as *Nova Local*, experimental plays such as *I'm Afraid of Virginia Woolf*, and innovative poetry such as *The Pizza Cantos*. Abalar's seminal elimination of the textual barrier between author and reader has multiplied the number of uncreated works attributed to him, including the lyrics of Bob Dylan's *The Attic Tapes*, unrecorded songs by the Doors, undiscovered compositions formerly attributed to Frank Zappa, and numerous detergent commercials. As the audience for his work expands, it discovers work Abalar uncreated in new media. Some computer experts, for example, consider Bill Gates an uncreated work of Astu Abalar and propose copyrighting *Windows 2000* in Abalar's name. Clearly, Abalar's uncreated works transcend the limitations of genre and

medium.

Because Abalar's works, by their very nature, will remain unread, unheard and unseen, their potential for altering the relationship between writer, text and reader---not to mention the creative process itself---remains unlimited. Abalar combined the imagined and the unimagined in a corpus which is both imaginable and unimaginable, depending on the qualities the reader brings to it. The openness of each Astu Abalar *tabula rasa* demands full participation from the reader, who must imagine all creations and uncreations, and discern which belong to Abalar and which do not. For the serious student of literature, this task poses a challenge against which the later works of James Joyce pale in comparison. It provides endless source material for future Ph.D. theses, as well. To a gifted exegete, Abalar's corpus virtually encompasses the yin-yang of Being and non-Being itself. The more sophisticated Abalar scholars assert that the non-Being of his work constitutes a fundamental component of its Being.

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**Does it exist
or
doesn't it?**

Only the exegete knows for sure

ASTU ABALAR

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Extending this premise, I have initiated legal action against authors who have plagiarized Abalar's uncreated works because Abalar's committing them to thought constituted an act of uncreation that was tantamount to creation. The notoriety generated by media coverage will increase the public recognition and appreciation of Abalar's work, especially the obscenity trials that will result from the recent discovery of his erotica

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in which the reader's imagination conjures thoughts more delectably sinful than mere quotidian life—or Abalar himself—could offer. The obscenity trials will not only increase Abalar's notoriety, but his estate, which I, as executor, will devote to a prospering exegesis.

If, as it is said, within every loss, there is a gain to be found, then, in losing my close friend, Astu Abalar, I have found a gain in the enriching body of uncreated works my friend has left, not only to the world, but to me as well.

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“If it's not blank, it's not an Abalar”

THE END