There's a kind of snail in the Maryland marshes perhaps I invented him that makes his shell. . . . That snail's pace has become my pace but I'm going in circles, following my own trail, I've quit reading and writing; I've lost track of who I am; my name's just a jumble of letters; so's the whole body of literature; strings of letters and empty spaces, like a code that I've lost the key to . . . . (Chimera 11)

An artist must execute his thought through some medium. But in this execution artist is completely free in the sense that he can do whatever he likes to do. Creative process is a rule-bound process. In artistic creation, cognitive element is as much important as the affective element . . . . (Joylakshmi Devi 141)

The quest of Barth and Nabokov for creative excellence revolves around their creativity in art. Their theory of creativity is a kind of organic theory where all the factors are so interrelated that the meaning of one is not intelligible without reference to the other. These relations do not stand in any of relation.
The expression is termed the expression of ideas or what is called content. But this content is not something preserved. Content is not separate entity, which is externalized or expressed. Content is in expression. It is in form. It is not a relation of form and content but *form-content relation*. Similarly, it is not the relation of art and society, or artist and observer, but *art-society* and *artist-observer*.

And the theory of creativity of Barth and Nabokov is profound, comprehensive, and perceptive. Their aesthetic view is termed as an integral aesthetics. The creation in its ultimate analysis is the creation of the social-self. Social role in the artistic creation has been so much emphasized by Barth and Nabokov that an artist cannot have any personality, which has no reference to the society. Individual man and universal man must be combined in an artist.

The art object, which is often attributed to a particular artist, is really speaking not of the artist alone but also of the society in which the artist lives. Art lives though the artist dies. It universalizes and immortalizes. Everything gets sublimated in art. And Barth and Nabokov fulfill all these requirements in their crafted art products. The argument of Christopher Caudwell “The world of art is the world of social emotions of words and images . . . .” (11). It ought to
be stressed that Nabokov’s mind belongs to a level far above the level of the common understanding and as his writings are the writings of a realized soul who has seen and experienced truth in and through the brilliant imagination and exquisite sensibility, it is very difficult to explain his theory in terms of our known aesthetic categories.

The contention of Barth and Nabokov has been that man lives in the universe. But the man is not a mere passive spectator here. He has in him his inquisitive spirit and that is why he wants to know the world in which he lives, moves, and has his being.

The artistic truth does consist in the correspondence with the fact but in the realization of the artist. The world, which the artist depicts, is not the world in which he actually lives. This is an imaginary world as felt or imagined by the artist. Art is the imaginary world, that is, the creation of imagination. When man is guided by reason he cannot fulfill all his multifarious dreams and desires because the dry and dread reality imposes restriction on him. But the objective barrier recedes as man takes recourse to imagination. And imagination is man’s free guide. What he fails to achieve in reality he achieves and realizes in imagination.
The art of Barth and Nabokov reflects on these aspects. Barth and Nabokov are aware that expression of imagination and the training or culture of imagination is essential for artistic creation. Imagination is to be expressed in a proper way.

An artist cannot overlook his world in which he lives. His imagination should stand the scrutiny of the rational mind. Barth and Nabokov believe that the thoughts of the artist are not mere fancy. They are also to be based on fact or reality. Thoughts originate from the world around.

While creating something the artist must remember two things:

1. One’s imagination cannot create a thing more artistic than nature.

2. One aesthetic sense cannot go beyond the condition in which one was born.

Artistic creation is conditioned by the surroundings and also by personal experience. Barth and Nabokov believe that the imagination, which is based on fact is capable of producing more art than one, which is not so based. One cannot be an artist by having
mere strong imagination. The argument is that to be an artist, imagination must be very much refined and very much cultured. For the guidance of imagination in a proper way intelligence and taste are essential. A real artist cannot ignore the demand of reality and at the same time he cannot forget the supreme goal or ideal of human life, which to Barth and Nabokov mean life of universal. The artist is an individual but he realizes in him the universal. Barth and Nabokov reject the view, which holds that creativity has no purpose. A consistent aesthetic theory, Barth and Nabokov think, cannot support the view that art is for art’s sake. Art is the means of self-expression. An artist realizes his greater being in and through his creation, and this realization brings joy to Barth and Nabokov.

Barth and Nabokov argue that in order to have true aesthetic enjoyment mind should be trained thoroughly. For many other enjoyments are confused as aesthetic enjoyment, and as such they spoil the real purpose of aesthetic activity. They who want to reach the goal of creation, rules and regulations are essential for them. This asceticism is to be accepted for the sake of true aesthetic enjoyment.

Artists, like all other human beings, live in society. They with their thoughts and feelings are the product of society. The materials
of artistic creation are derived from the outside world and they are again sent back to the world through their creation, that is, through the work of art. The way the artist transforms the materials collected from nature, the rules he implicitly follows while he paints or writes are his creation. Creativity involves proportionateness or coherence.

By proportionateness Barth and Nabokov mean that there must be harmony among the elements of the symbolic structure. If the artist as a writer depicts a picture in words it does not come in its minutest details. A writer reveals that much of a thing from which one gets the idea of a totality or completeness.

Barth and Nabokov place the accent on the argument that *Art is never an exhibition but a revelation*. The pride of exhibition lies in its unmeasured extravagance whereas glory of revelation consists in its complete unity. In creativity, form and content are essential. If content is soul, expression is body. In fact, excellence of the work of art depends on the harmony. Harmony among the different elements of medium as well as between form and content. Barth and Nabokov argue that ornamentation of medium is essential but it can in no way surpass the thought for the expression of which the medium has been
used. Otherwise real art loses freedom and is defeated. In the art proper there is life and as such it has growth.

When the critical attention is focused on Barth one realizes that his creative intelligence lies in his ability to create self-reflexive fiction and fabulation. All works of fiction are ultimately themselves, about their process of coming into being and maintaining existence. A work of fiction continually turns back on itself and draws the reader into it as a text. The truth is that fiction is always implicitly reflexive. The self-reflexive text is one that explicitly concerns with the process of narration and writing that in so doing unveils the mechanism of his making.

Self-reflexiveness, which is form of divergence, a digression from the story, becomes more explicit and less subtle when the novel tries to extricate itself from an exhausted content in order to get established in a new context. But whatever it does, the telling of the tale always fascinates narration.

This fascination of the novel with itself begins with Cervantes’s *Don Quixote*, and it reaches its most explicit form in Laurence Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy*, where author-narrator addresses the reader directly. Laurence Sterne’s observation, needs to be
quoted here “You must have a little patience. I have undertaken, you see, to write not only my life, but my opinions also. . . .” (4).

All the way from Cervantes to John Barth and beyond, there has been a marked difference in the use of self-reflexiveness. Though Sterne disrupts chronology with digressions and opinions, he anchors events firmly in time and place. His characters are nonetheless saddled with everything necessary to make the reader believe in their actual existence in a somewhat real world. Most works of fiction are either self-conscious or self-reflexive in various degrees, but there is a basic difference between self-consciousness and self-reflexiveness.

Self-consciousness establishes a conniving relation between author and reader into the privacy of the text, and therefore functions as a window that opens from outside into the text. In short, self-consciousness deals with the reading process.

But self-reflexiveness establishes a playful relation between the author and the text. It is a private act that makes itself public by allowing the reader to witness the interplay between author and creation. Self-reflexiveness relates to the writing process and it
functions like a mirror inside the text. Raymond Federman makes a pointed observation, which is worth recording here

   Of course, self-consciousness and self-reflexiveness often intersect within the same novel and are not always distinguishable, for they both use the same tools parody, irony, digression, playfulness to demystify the illusionary aspects of the story . . . . (21)

   The difference between the kind of explicit self-reflexiveness one finds in the eighteenth century novel, and the novels written in America during the late twentieth-century, is that the former reflected upon itself and questioned its possibilities in order to establish itself as a genre. The later used similar techniques to extricate itself from the postures and impostures of realism and naturalism.

   In the first case, it was a question of establishing continuity for the novel. In the second, it was a matter of creating a rupture in order to revive an exhausted genre. In the works of Vladimir Nabaokov, William Gaddis, Thomas Pynchon, and John Barth, the fictional illusion of reality is repeatedly destroyed so as to remind the reader that fiction is in fact an illusion.
As a persistent practitioner of self-reflexive narrative among contemporary fictionist, John Barth has grappled more than most with the question of authorial voice. The controversy over the question of how much the personality of the artist is to be felt in the narrative, has assumed near cosmic proportions in the critical wars of this century.

The presence of the author can never be obliterated. Barth offers a pertinent remark, which is worth quoting here “Finally, of course, it’s the author’s voice you’re hearing and the author is always full of those things he makes up . . . .” (9)

One can actually feel the actual presence of self-reflexiveness in the structure of Barth’s first two novels. The fiction, The End of the Road, was written by Jack Horner at a Remobilization Farm “in the wilds of Pennsylvania,” as part of the irrational therapies” of a nameless Doctor. “The narrative conceit,” according to this reconceptualization of The End of the Road, “is that he writes the story some years later, from the relocated Farm, as a first-person exercise in Scriptotherapy” (339). Similar principles underlie and redefine The Floating Opera, too, as a fictive construct.
Jacob Homer is obsessed with the story and sits continually recounting the events that occurred. He lives merely as the participant in the story that he has to tell, and he continues to live because he continues to tell the story. If these observations are true, Jake is quite possibly doing a very great deal of myth making, which means storytelling. He is exaggerating. He is lying. The Jacob Homer who writes, in a sense, is the Jacob Homer who lived the series of events.

In fact, fiction itself is the hero of the fictions of Barth. The storyteller is trying to present old material in a new way, and he does so by emphasizing the conventions of fiction rather than concealing. Throughout, there are sentences broken off as if thoughts were abandoned and interrupted, in which the authorial intrusion becomes part of a quote on which it is commenting.

The significant, relevant, and consequential passage runs thus

"I warn you, I've never been through it before," he added, laughing easily; "but I reckon we can manage somehow. The important thing to remember, after all, is that it's meant to be a funhouse; that is, a place of amusements. If people really got lost or injured or too
badly frightened in it, the owner'd go out of business here’d even be lawsuits. No character in a work of fiction can make a speech this long without interruption or acknowledgement from the other characters.” . . . (90)

In *Chimera*, Barth temporarily embraced the comfort of his familiarity with Scheherazade’s non-Western storytelling tradition before plunging back into the Western Heroic Journey to Immortality Quest. In the second story Barth chose Perseus, who was presumably successful in making it to the stars, his nightly constellation perennially reminding the reader of the immortality of his journey.

In the concluding story Bellerophon is a sort of a semi-charlatan, whose doubtful origins include confusion of identities with two of his early victims, Bellerus and Deliades.

What matters to Bellerophon is whether or not he is a hero, a Perseus or merely someone who imitated Perseus. His mere imitation established and his semi-demi Godship lost, Bellerophon must settle for being the story itself, “a beastly fiction, ill-proportioned, full of . . . , Lumps, lacuame, a kind of mixed
monstrous metaphor” (308), that ultimately informs the three-part text, which draws its name and shape from the monster of antiquity.

The implications of identifying the protagonist as the text itself are profound: first, the text wanders around doing tricks and jumping traditional hurdles in a Heroic search for immortality. Second, if Bellerophon is the story, so is his shape changing father, Polyeidus, who turns himself and the interview into the character Bellerophon in _Bellerophoniad_ form (307). Bellerophon, in the middle of a narrative digression, articulates thus: “We’re in a three-part digression already sinking in exposition as in quickmire” (308)

The extended, carping lament that follows sounds just like that of the frustrated narrator “Title” in Lost in the Funhouse, and both outbursts are to a large extent Barth’s authorial intrusions transformed into the principal subject of the text. Barth further complicates his positioning of himself in the text by assuming a triple identity: the reasonably straightforward author, the author-in-search-of-truth, and the author-as-shape-changing-dissembler-and-charlatan.

Barth gives himself a cameo appearance as the Genie who tells Scheherazade and Dunyazade the stories he is reading from _The
Thousand and One Nights that will be used by Scheherazade to captivate the king and spare her life. The textual passage makes interesting reading, and it is quoted below:

“He was strange-looking enough: a light-skinned fellow of forty or so, smooth shaven and bald as a roe’s egg . . .

He was tall and healthy and pleasant enough in appearance, except for queer lenses that he wore in a frame over his eyes. . . .” (8)

The most self-conscious of Barth’s novels, LETTERS has the author interpolating and explaining why he is doing what he is doing. At one point he argues for the benefit of the Reader thus

Currently I find myself involved in a longish epistolary novel, of which, I know so far only that it will be regressively traditional in manner; that it will not be obscure, difficult, or dense in the Modernist fashion . . . (341)

Yet again, in Charles B. Harris’s words, Barth’s persona in LETTERS sets out to depict the First and Second Revolutions
Simple revolution, rebellion against the existing state of affairs. Later he decides that his theme is not, but reenactment... Ultimately he learns... that the theme of LETTERS is neither rebellion nor reenactment, neither repudiation of the past, but synthesis and transcension... (161)

Here fiction is part history and part metafiction; Barth’s own fictitious characters develop the fictitious stories. In his scheme, there is a certain ingenious manipulation of truth and fiction when he compares literature and art with their importance to history. It is an undertaking that renders all historical truth no more than an artistic enterprise, producing intuitive rather factual accuracy, and at the same time implying that since nothing can be ascertained with any certainty, then nothing is worth the while. Turning the focus on Barth’s American ingenuity in employing fabulation in his fictions. In this context, it is interesting to record the argument of Robert Scholes

Self-reflection is a narcissistic way of avoiding cosmic imagination. It produces a certain kind of pleasure, no doubt, a masturbatory reveling in self-scrutiny; but it
also generates great feelings of guilt - not because what it is doing is bad, but because of what it is avoiding. Readers need imaginative help from writers, and if that is denied, they will, indeed, move away. But this will not lead to the death of imagination. A certain kind of imaginative self-reflection indeed goes through a death, which is a kind of metamorphosis; but imagination dies as the caterpillar, to be reborn with wings . . . . (218)

Fabulation definitely plays a part in this necessary and inevitable rebirth of imagination. The emergence of fabulation in Barth’s fictions is not only an exciting development in itself, but also an answer to the great question of where fiction could go after the realistic novel.

Barth who is willing to accept the word as his medium must move away from the pseudo objectivity of realism toward a romance or an irony, which will exploit language’s distinctively human perspective on life. It also means a return to a more fictional kind, a less realistic and more artistic kind of narrative more concerned with ideas and ideals, less concerned with things.
The fictions of Barth testify to the fact that he is an accomplished fabulator quite adept at creating self-reflexive fiction.

And turning to Nabokov it is argued that he is an exquisite creative self. The pointed observation of Nabokov, in the present context is worth mentioning here

Literature is invention. Fiction is fiction. To call a story a true story is an insult to both art and truth. Every great writer is a great deceiver, but so is that arch-cheat Nature. Nature always deceives. From the simple deception of propagation to the prodigiously sophisticated illusion of protective colors in butterflies or birds, there is in Nature a marvelous system of spells and wiles. The writer of fiction only follows Nature’s lead . . . . There are three points of view from which a writer can be considered: he may be considered as storyteller, as a teacher, and as an enchanter. A major writer combines these three story-teller, teacher, enchanter. And the enchanter in him predominates and makes him a major writer . . . . (32)
And the term, *creative*, cannot be applied to an activity, which does not result in a product having positive aesthetic or artistic value. Moreover, creative activity implies coherence and lucidity. Lack of coherence and lucidity is an evidence of lack of control. This charge cannot be applied to Nabokov’s well-crafted art.

In fact, critical control and inspiration make creative activity in Nabokov a resounding success. And in the creative process of Nabokov two moments are distinguished. One is the phase of inspiration, and the other phase is the moment of development or elaboration. In this context, the pointed observation of Richard Wollheim is worth quoting here, for it argues to the point adduced above:

First, that the work of art consists in an inner state or condition of the artist, called an intuition or an expression. Secondly, that this state is not immediate or given, but is the product of a process, which is peculiar of the artist, and which involves articulation, organization, and unification. Thirdly, that the intuition so developed may be externalized in a public form, in which case we have the artifact, which is often but
wrongly taken to be the work of art, and equally it need not be so. The ideal theory identifies the work of art with an inner process . . . . (52-53)

Yet again, Wassily Kandinsky reads three factors governing the creative art products of Nabokov, and they are worth mentioning here:

1. Every artist, as a creator, has something in him, which demands expression. 2. Every artist, as the child of his time, is impelled to express the spirit of his age. 3. Every artist, as a servant of art, has to help the cause of art [this is the quintessence of art, which is constant in all ages among all nationalities] . . . . (51)

These three parameters fit Nabokov as a cloak. Nabokov believes that *rasa* is the essence of art. The essential element of art does not consist in style, or figures, or in suggestion, but in *rasa*. *Rasa* signifies the peculiar experience that affords the *rasika*. It is not any emotion, but an emotion transfigured into extraordinary need.
*Rasa* is a realization of the impersonal contemplative aspect of the self, which is usually veiled in life by the appetitive part of it. But this *rasa* or artistic delight is not self-manifest. It is incapable of expressing itself. Artistic delight *rasa* waits for enjoyer *rasika*. Nabokov terms *rasa* as aesthetic bliss.

Nabokov, weaves ingeniously the different strands of his artistic, and well-crafted works by resorting to the elements of fiction, and a number of literary techniques. In fact, he employs them to the optimum artistic use. In the absence of the elements of fiction, and a number of literary techniques, Nabokov's feelings, thoughts and experiences, and his germinal ideas would constitute a still born baby without the emergence of the life force in it. When form, technique and theme blend well, a literary masterpiece is born. Form and theme dictate the techniques and all the three in turn enhance the central idea lending it distinct and unique texture and tone.

Incidentally, it ought to be stressed that the literary goal of Nabokov has been to turn into astounding creative self. And it must be mentioned to his credit that he has achieved a great measure of success in this regard. And Nabokov could do so because he is able
to employ his powers of imagination, inborn talents, writing capacities, inspiration, and apt modes of expression in a carefully combined and artistically fused manner for creating aesthetic artifacts. It ought to be stressed that Nabokov’s objective is to gain perfection in creative art. With single-minded devotion he aims at realizing at the absolute in art.

In fact, Nabokov through verbal mastery, language manipulation, linguistic experimentation, innovative forms and innovative devices gets recognized as a creative artist. Yet again, his art products are marked by a high level of mentation, exquisite use of technical tools with functional valuations and functional variations.

Nabokov has used language as the means of the artist for creating the art world and preserving it against time. John O. Stark’s pointed observation is worth quoting here:

In literature this bliss usually takes the form of wonder at the adroit use of man’s greatest invention, language, and this wonder is most intense when the wonderer is the linguistic master . . . . (83)
One is awed by his dazzling of verbal skill. Nabokov is renowned for his ability to introduce word pictures. To put it differently, like Walt Whitman, the Father Figure of American literature, Nabokov is a great image-maker. In fact, the reader is led into a world in which only art and language preserve the reader from the horrifying passage of time. Nabokov leads the reader into a passageway of delight and fascination with not only the possibilities of the imagination and language, but the staggering possibilities of the human dream of art as a vision of immortality. As a result reality assumes for the reader an elusive quality of circular timelessness.

In fact, design, it is true, is everything for Nabokov. He is interested in style, beauty and quality. Yet again, the subject of his art is life, and he understands it through imaginative leanings. Nabokov adroitly marries the past with the present. His literary products are edifices whose every corner deserves the closest attention, and such an examination is invariably a rewarding experience. Yet again, a good work of art takes the reader into another area of experience, which is the real world of the imagination. Moreover, a good literary product is perfectly contrived to be multi-dimensional and multi-layered in character.
The style is invariably mannered, unique and distinctive and individualistic as far as Nabokov is concerned. Moreover his style is based on the concept that actuality is, by and large, something objective that all the readers can perceive in the same way. His craftsmanship is never surpassed. He is a past master in verbal jugglery and technical excellence. Nabokov has the capacity to indulge in flights of imagination not thought of by other writers. As far as his imagery is concerned it is born out of his considerable writing power and craftsmanship. He can cast back to the living, bleeding heart of childhood school days, and capture it on paper. His immense writing capacities, language brilliance and craftsmanship are amply testified in his art products.

In his art products, Nabokov remembers and recreates life as he has witnessed adequately and admirably and extremely well. Among many other things, he knows about the matters of death and faith that puzzles everyone, and writes about them persuasively and convincingly. Nabokov is a virtuoso writer. The music and paintings he makes with words stun the reader’s senses at the same time they convince one of their totally natural rightness. The images of Nabokov are emblematic of the unique social-cultural heritage of the Indian life and have deeply resonant associations for those who have
experienced them first hand. And Nabokov's exquisite language and subject matter embody Americanism in a way rarely achieved by other American writers in America. As significant as his roots in American life, is the fact that Nabokov's perspective is undeniably masculine.

In delineating the characters Nabokov employs adequately and admirably the principle of contrast. Incidentally, it ought to be noted that Nabokov's *Œuvres* are so many important statements in the contemporary discussions on the American aesthetic. American aesthetic is what is perceived as true, good and beautiful and useful. In each fiction, he depicts the aesthetic art as seen by him.

Nabokov immediately plunges the reader into the midst of tangled lives made complex by their personal histories and made interesting by their mystery. Each life skirts the edge of madness born of human will and eccentricity. The centrality of the storytelling instinct, however, must not obscure the importance of character in a dramatic text. As the visible enactors of the play's action, character is not only the most interesting phenomenon, but drives the plot in many of the theatre's greatest works.
Nabokov is essentially optimistic. And his art products proceed from his strong belief in the human potential and desire for change. Nabokov's belief in the relationship between personal and social change, his awareness that struggle and spirituality are primary characteristics of American tradition, and his sense of that unknown thing in his ancestors that yearns to be articulated are not solely intellectual concepts for Nabokov. They are part of his personal history. The pointed observation of Margaret Byrd Borgeman "... if life is a horror, art certainly is not. Rather art is the salvation from the horror . . . ." (119).

Nabokov presents truths, which are universal. But his chief concern is art which is elegant, dignified and sophisticated. Nabokov’s quest is to achieve perfection in art. He interestingly argues that he is not interested in showing the painting of a landscape but the painting of different ways of painting a landscape. Nabokov’s fiction is not about life but about art. Martin Green’s observation about immortality of art runs thus:

Art can confer immortality of a consciously limited and conditional kind, by “singing” its subject, “celebrating” the experience it describes, however painful or ignoble
that may be . . . . What Humbert wrote in the local and melancholy palliative to his misery, and a reparation to her memory, because it is an immortalizing tribute to their experience . . . . It [Lolita] does confer upon her [Lolita] the immortality of art. And it is the kind of art which could be felt as a tribute . . . . (372)

On the nature of Nabokov’s art and character Helen Mechnic makes a pointed observation:

. . . . he [Nabokov] is less concerned with character than with circumstance and pattern; his work is a bright surface protecting the concealed cherished core of individual passion . . . . It is by passion he is most attracted. In Nabokov’s work love and art are the major themes . . . . (22)

Sylvia Paine in Bekett, Nabokov, Nin makes an interesting statement, about art & love in Nabokov’s work:

Art and love constitute more than themes in Nabokov’s work; they are his approximation of the original and the ultimate, his meaning, the word, which was in the beginning, and also the last word . . . . (53)
It is through creative art that Nabokov wants to experience being. Alfred Appel, Jr., in *Nabokov's Puppet Show II* makes an interesting statement, which is worth quoting here:

His [Nabokov’s] art records a constant process of becoming the evolution of the artist’s self through artistic creation and the cycle of insect metamorphosis is Nabokov’s controlling metaphor for the process, provided by a life-time of biological investigations, which established in his mind “links between butterflies and the central problems of nature.” Significantly, a butterfly or moth will often appear at the end of a Nabokov novel, when his artistic cycle is complete . . . . (26)

Humbert after completing his autobiography made the remark that the memoir should be published after the death of Lolita. In this statement of Humbert one reads the significance that art lives though the Regnor and the other characters introduced in the work of art are no more. Interestingly the author and his characters get immortalized through a work of art.
Lewis H. Rubman in *Creatures and Creators in Lolita*, and *Death in the Compass*, makes a pertinent, and a valid observation, which is worth recording here “Martin Green sees this as a testimony to Humbert’s love for Lolita. I see it as an affirmation of literature’s superiority to life . . . .” (434)

Nabokov paints the world, in his works, as a labyrinth of passages, a series on unopened doors, a thwarted or negated quest. The fictions give expression to the life of men and women, their hopes and despairs, and their fate. The protagonists suffer and fail. In such a situation it is through art that Nabokov affirms.

The protagonists confront a doubtful existent Law and a menacing Judgment. Furthermore, the characters by their nature of living become touchstones of reality. Alfred Kazin corroborates and it reads thus:

It was this belief in art as model of the transcendent truth to be found within existence, in art as *la vrale veritie*, in fiction as the largest rhythmic manifestation of the life within us that ties us to what is out there, that had been behind the lonely individual struggles, early in the
century of those great artists for whom the novel was visible and invisible reality realized . . . (288-289)

Motivated by an intellectual curiosity Nabokov seeks to know what is true. His art provides answers but not convincing ones. He offers a solution to the crises faced by man in his endeavors to find out the real and to realize his identity. Nabokov argues that everyone has to submit to violence to suffer annihilation at the end of life’s labyrinth. In other words, Nabokov states that death alone is the answer. It is in the light of such an assertion that one appreciates the fatal gunshots that climax five of Nabokov’s major fictions, and the sudden deaths that end two others.

In his work, The Gift, Nabokov reveals that his first love is Russian literature. But his main concern in The Gift is literary creation. The protagonist Fyodor presents Chernysshevski as a materialist with vulgar tastes, and with a myopic vision. On the work, The Gift, Sylvia Paine makes a pointed observation in Beckett, Nabokov, Nin, which is worth quoting here:

*The Gift* is a sunburst of joy, of art and love beyond all known horizons; and the delight of discovering its
intricate patterns gives the reader a share in its creative bounty . . . (65)

In the end part of *Invitation to a Beheading* Cincinnatus C., slowly descended from the platform and walked away. This conclusion to the novel proves that Cincinnatus C., the individual dies. But Cincinnatus C., the artists lives. The implication is that ultimately that it is art that triumphs. The scene is depicted thus with artistic brilliance and creative excellence. The textual passage makes interesting reading and hence it is quoted *in extenso* here:

All around there was a strange confusion. Through the headman’s still swinging hips the railing showed. On the steps the pale librarian sat doubled up, vomiting. The spectators were quite useless and they all kept surging and moving away only the back rows, being painted rows, remained in place. Cincinnatus slowly descended from the platform and walked away off through the shifting debris, He was overtaken by Roman, who was now many times smaller and was at the same time Rodrig: “What are you doing?” he croaked, jumping up and down. “You can’t, you can’t! It’s dishonest towards
him, and towards everybody . . . . Everything was coming apart. Everything was falling. A spinning wind was picking up and whirling; dust, rags, chips of painted wood, bits of gilded plaster, pasteboard bricks, posters; an arid gloom fleeted; and amidst the dust, and the falling things, and the flapping scenery, Cincinnatus made his way in that direction where, to judge by the voices, stood beings akin to him . . . . (191)

In *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight* the major themes is art. Nabokov subtly points out that it is through the hero’s art that one learns of the life of the hero. Sebastian was the hero. He was lonely, self conscious, high strung, and nervous. He sought obsessively for some kind of unattainable satisfaction. When Sebastian was four years of age, his mother Virginia Knight deserted his father. And Sebastian’s father remarried and Sebastian hated his father for that. Because of these happenings Sebastian’s childhood was disrupted. Sebastian’s half brother was V. And Sebastian began to adore his father when he died in duel defending the honor of Sebastian’s mother. After the Russian upheaval Sebastian and V had to flee to Berlin, from where he went to Cambridge, and V to Sorbonne for higher education. Sebastian fell in love with Clare Bishop. So long
as he lived with Clare, he was able to turn out good work. He deserted Clare for Lecerf who was a flirt. Lecerf deserted him later. This resulted in a life of restlessness. From his mother he acquired the habit of pursuing a goal in a rambling manner.

Just as Sebastian patterned his life after his father, and followed his mother's capricious manner, V sought identification with Sebastian with his mother's fretting consciousness. Till Sebastian died because of Lechmann's disease V's life lacked a sense of direction. In fact, V was quite uncertain, self-depreciative, and passionless. But after Sebastian's death V turned into a writer. V wrote the biography of Sebastian to wipe out an utterly fallacious picture of Sebastian's life painted by Sebastian's ex-publisher Mr. Goodman, who wrote *The Farce of Mr. Goodman* or *The Tragedy of Sebastian Knight*.

The biography of Sebastian that V wrote is a pointer as to how biography should be written. In his biography the narrator and his subject find a fine fusion. The significant, relevant, and consequential passage from *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight* makes interesting reading and hence it is quoted "I am Sebastian, or
Sebastian is I, or perhaps we both are someone whom neither of us knows. . . ." (205).

And Susan Fromberg in "The Unwritten Characters in The Real Life of Sebastian Knight", makes an interesting observation, which is worth quoting here:

In *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight* Nabokov expresses his belief that artistic creation is a paradigm of the process, which created the "real" world; just as his characters are expressions and extensions of his own soul, so he and his characters, and everyone else may be the expressions of the souls of the ultimate artificers of the natural world . . . . (442)

Nabokov with deep concern for art asserts that one can overcome mysteries, doubts and uncertainties through art. Nabokov transforms all that he has observed and absorbed into translated truths in his creative Art. He centers his creative art world on his sense awareness. In other words, his perceptual consciousness is distilled and presented appealingly through the coloring of imagination. Yet again, Nabokov with his wand like pencil transforms the trivial into the timeless and the transcendent.
In Nabokov’s fiction there is enough of experience, shared consciousness, and something to add to one’s life. Yet again, there is an adequate treatment given to the concept of self. And this self is imprisoned in time past and time future. He finds himself separated from the world of timelessness. But the way out is through consciousness, which he creates in his works. Julian Moynahan makes a considered statement, which is worth quoting here:

Yet through consciousness, through reflection on the riddling and cryptic appearances of the world both outer and inner in which the prisoner finds himself immured, he begins to invent patterns, themes, repetitions, which hint at or gesture toward a possibility of transcendence into “the free world of timelessness” from which he has been banished through the catastrophic accident of biologic birth. And art, supremely the reflection of consciousness through which these discoveries become possible . . . . (16-17)

The assertion that Nabokov’s concern is creative art, is reiterated for its stress, value and significance. And it is generally contended that Nabokov’s creative art is anti-realistic and
anti-mimetic. But it is Patricia Waugh’s pointed observation on the alternative world theory of Nabokov in her work *Metafiction*, that defines Nabokov’s creative art. The observation is to the point, and hence it is quoted *in extenso* here:

Most metafictional writers, however, eschew both, “non-predication” and “falsity” positions. They are self-consciously anxious to assert that although literary fiction is only a verbal reality, it constructs through language an imaginative world that has, within its own terms’ full referential status as an alternative to the world in which we live. Fictional statements exist, and have their “truth” within the context of an “alternative world”, which they also create. Statements of the real world have their “truth” in the context of a world, which they help to construct. Fiction is merely a different set of conventions and constructions. In this view, a fictional character is “unreal” in one sense, but characters who are not persons are still “real”, still exist, within their particular worlds....
Metafictional texts show that literary fiction can never imitate or “represent” the world but always imitates or “represents” the discourses, which in turn construct that world. However, because the medium of all literary fiction is language, the “alternative worlds” of fiction, as of any universe of discourse, can never be truly autonomous. Their linguistic construction (however far removed from realism they may be) always implicitly evokes the contexts of everyday life . . . . (100)

And Nabokov’s fiction is metafictional in the sense it is a fiction about fiction. It is a new self-reflexive fiction that he has created. As an involuted art it turns in upon itself. It is, in fine, conscious of its status as fiction. On the metafictional fiction *Pale Fire* Patricia Waugh makes a pointed observation, which is worth quoting here:

In Nabokov’s *Pale Fire*, the thriller form is used experimentally to explore precisely the dizziness of a total loss of self. It is a comic exploration in many ways, because conveyed through the idiosyncratically expressed solipsism of the mad Kinbote (or is it
Botkin?), the first person who may or may not be the King of Zembla. Kinbote has undertaken a detailed "academic" commentary on John Shade's poem "Pale Fire". The poem appears to be a biography of Kinbote himself, who is really Charles the Beloved, the King of Zembla. Or is he? Or is the poem about him at all? Or is everything an invention not only of Nabokov himself but of an hallucinated psychotic? The "shade" is introduced in the first lines of the poem winging its way in the "reflected sky". (85-86)

Thus, with the writing tools effectively employed and the details and happenings artistically transformed into an alternative art world, Nabokov has authored a unique kind of art. In his creative art one witnesses a perfect fusion of the elements of fiction, and there is the balanced blending of fact and fiction, memory and imagination.

Carol T. Williams sums up Nabokov's creative art based on the lines of Nabokov's poem *An Evening in Russian Poetry* "Not only rainbows every line is bent, And skulls and seeds and all good worlds are round . . . ." (20). She argues thus:
These lines contain the essence of Vladimir Nabokov’s metaphysical division. The human eye, he implies, can see only half of the circle (the rainbow’s arc); the other half must be taken on faith: This “twin halved” mortal world is originally composed of opposites “skulls [death] and seeds [life]” in whose synthesis the contradiction between death and life is eliminated, but honored as the basis of beauty i. e., the human is a Hegelian synthesis in which the opposing thetic and antithetic moments (aspects) are aufheben put aside and preserved . . . . (27)

Nabokov, then with artistic ingenuity creates an imaginatively conceived world. But it ought to be stressed that it is not altogether independent and different from the known world. It is the real world that serves as the basis for the art world. And Nabokov succeeds in his quest for the absolute in creative art. In fact, he gains higher reaches in creative art.

Thus, Barth and Nabokov succeed in their quest for creative self, and come to be recognized as outstanding creative selves, and there is no gainsaying this fact.