Chapter - 2
AMERICA: THE LAND OF FREEDOM

. . . . America has stood for three and a half centuries as a “city upon a Hill”. Its Puritans and philosophers, Daniel Boones and George Babbits, frontiers and market places, mobility and abundance continue to make the United States a laboratory of national character . . . .

(Luther S. Luedtke 29)

In fact, to America, and the Americans freedom is sacrosanct and is of greater value, significance, relevance, and consequence than safety and equality. Yet again, a superb composition of Edward Estlin Cummings argues for the zeal of newness, novelty, innovation, the sense of independence, individuality, and above all the breath and spirit of freedom reigning supreme in the mind and heart of every American.

And it ought to be stressed that Barth and Nabokov are the artist-geniuses, with a keen awareness and intensity that are typically American. In fact, their works gain in strength, significance, relevance, and consequence because of their American applicability and American worth and relevance. By identifying with America the
liberty-land and by extolling her freedom the distinct American freedom Barth and Nabokov have in their well crafted art products immortalized America. Nabokov has glorified America and has recognized her as a pragmatic and dynamic nation. He has found America to be endowed with the nature and qualities ascribed to her by Walt Whitman.

Barth and Nabokov accord America a grand treatment in their art products. They have eternalized America as God’s country and the world’s richest nation. And if America fails to protect the freedom of the Americans as well as the people of other nations then the intellectual squarely condemn America for America’s failure to safeguard democracy and freedom as it happened when Hungary was razed to the ground, and when the Hungarians were subjected to defeat and disgrace by the Communist Russia in the sixties.

Barth and Nabokov have enjoyed complete artistic freedom in America to express their mind and art with perfect candor. The pointed assertion of Walt Whitman is worth recording here, “How beautiful is candor! All faults may be forgiven of him who has perfect candor . . . .” (5). And it is a matter of the fact that in no other land is the artist allowed complete freedom of art to the fullest extent
possible as in America, the land of freedom. Therefore, Barth and Nabokov pay their debt to America through their richest tribute to America. In fact, they make America come alive on the pages, of their art products, as it were in flesh and blood.

Moreover, Barth and Nabokov are not blind to America’s prodigious faults. But what they greatly admire in America is the fact that she is always on the move. Barth and Nabokov are conscious of the fact that their eulogy of the country that they have loved is not unfounded. For one thing, America is a nation strongly founded on democratic principles. Therefore, the writers down from Walt Whitman, Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, through William Faulkner, Ernest Hemingway, Edward Estlin Cummings, Robert Penn Warren, Flannery O’Connor to John Barth, Vladimir Nabokov Alice Walker, James Baldwin, Lorraine Hansberry, Toni Morison, Saul Bellow, Claude McKay, Langston Hughes, Norman Mailer, Luther Luedtke pay their debt to America by naming her as the leading nation of freedom, the foremost ally of democracy perpetually dedicated to an unconditional defense of all oppressed people and the sworn enemy of authoritarianism.
The American intellectuals believe in the social justice track. And their cry against the social wrongs perpetrated by the society and the American Establishment is not shrilling, strident, sentimental or effeminately hysterical. On the other hand, it is their mature sensibility that guides their mind and art, and disciplines, their denouncements and decrivals and strictures. In fine, their protest has a certain sobriety and decorum. One other factor, which should be recorded here is that no other writer of other nations indicts either the Left Wing Authoritarianism or the Right Wing Authoritarianism, as the American intellectuals do. In voicing their protest against the Authoritarianism they never mince words.

Barth and Nabokov know that America is the land of artistic freedom. It is because of this strong fact that Barth could with artistic freedom deal with divergent issues of life as his fictions testify. The protagonists and the characters that Barth portraits are bold attempts at innovative characterization. Such bold ventures at uniquely arresting characters with their mind set operating on the ramifications of love and sex are possible only in America the land of artistic freedom.
In fact, the blatant and frank treatment of all aspects of sex quite unabashedly by Barth is due to the artistic freedom that he enjoys in America. Todd Andrews, the narrator of *The Floating Opera*, is an intensely rational twentieth century American, a detached observer in a freedom loving America. He is almost conscious of observing.

Todd is a bachelor lawyer in Cambridge. He was born in 1900; his mother died when he was seven, and he is now fifty-four at the time of writing. His father hanged himself on Ground-Hog Day, 1930, in the basement of the family home. Todd began preparing to write an inquiry into the death of his father. This project soon developed into a second inquiry that took the form of an autobiographical letter to his father. *The Floating Opera* is a part of that self-inquiry. Todd's discovery of the condition of his heart makes him recognize his own vulnerability and mortality. This recognition is an obscure way, attracting him to suicide.

Todd develops a sense of black humor and cynicism. Todd's father, in destroying himself destroyed the source of his son's actions. Therefore, Todd could not see any reason for living; for living is identical with action, and he decided to commit suicide.
This sense of the absurd and the suicidal maniacal tendency creep into postmodern society is implied.

Todd intended to kill not only himself but also as many of his townspeople as possible. His plan was to blow up the Floating Opera, a showboat that had moored at Cambridge, and the performance of which that night was being watched by almost everybody. Todd knew, including the Macks and their daughter Jeanine, who was possibly Todd's child. But his plot failed and the Floating Opera did not for some unknown reason explode.

The second novel of Barth, entitled, *The End of the Road*, describes a battle between two College teachers: Jacob Homer, a nihilist who teaches English, and Joe Morgan, an existentialist, who teaches History. They disagree on the meaning of human nature, and when debate does not resolve the dispute, they turn from words to action. Jacob Homer is a postgraduate student, who is twenty-eight years old. Jack Homer is found by a Black Doctor in the Pennsylvania Railroad Station in Baltimore, where he has been sitting paralyzed for a day because he cannot make up his mind as to what he should do. The Black Doctor wakes him up from the mental paralysis, and takes him to his Remobilization Farm.
The Black Doctor names this state of absolute indecision *Cosmopsis*, the cosmic view. He advises *Mythotherapy* for the malady. The therapy prescribes over-simplification of complexity for the purpose of comprehension. *Mythotherapy* involves the contingent use of any number of stories, or myths as a therapeutic framework for one's choices. The Black Doctor advises Jack Horner to take a position, teaching prescriptive grammar, which he assumes, is uncomplicated, and will prove a stabilizing influence because of its emphasis upon rules and logic. Following that advice, Jack Horner becomes involved in a friendship with a history teacher, Joe Morgan and his wife, Rennie.

The crucial episode in *The End of the Road* is the one in which Jake and Rennie secretly observe Joe, alone, cavorting in front of a mirror, engaging in numerous uncharacteristic acts, and finally masturbating. It is because of America offering the artistic freedom that Barth presents such a scene quite graphically. Rennie notes later that all the trouble began at that point. Rennie was a person who had neither a positive nor a negative approach to life, but after this incident of her husband masturbating standing before a mirror, she refuses to follow her husband's rationale any further.
Rennie irrationally does what she wants to do, and these develop a sexual relationship between Jake and Rennie. Jake’s inability to take decisions, and to keep himself from lying and playing games, results in Rennie’s death on an operating table in the midst of an abortion. Rennie’s death brings Jake’s games to a sudden end and it strips bare his various masks and induces him once again to immobility. He leaves his apartment to commit himself totally to the Doctor’s care.

The theme of Barth’s third novel, *The Sot-Weed Factor*, deals with the major theme of illusion that subjects many people in America to a state of disillusionment. All action in *The Sot-Weed Factor* take place between the polarities, illusion and reality. Henry is the pragmatic existentialist, who literally follows the idea that existence precedes essence, and claims that therefore a man, in all his freedom, responds to any set of conditions with a bold resolve to be his own self. Ebenezer is a Platonic absolutist, who operates on the idea that essence precedes existence, and his decision to be a virgin and a poet guides his activity throughout the novel, *The Sot-Weed Factor*. The novel, is also a grand collection of double identities, personifications, disguises, impersonations, role
exchanges, poses, role-playing, changes of position and self-revelations of hidden characteristics, and impostures.

Barth’s next fiction, *Giles Goat-Boy*, engages classical philosophy and Christian theology. He has chosen a modern University as the setting. But his focus is *The Holy Bible* through which he parodies what seems to be the entire spectrum of Western thought. He spoke thus “What I [Barth] really wanted to do after *The Sot Weed Factor* was a new Old Testament, a comic Old Testament. I guess that’s what this new novel, *Giles Goat-Boy*, is going to be about a souped-up *Bible* . . . .” (75).

The souped-up *Bible* is a play field for the inversion of theological, mythological, philosophical, political, and literary concepts. *Giles Goat-Boy* is a novel of the future. All nations and peoples come together in the novel. The theme of *Giles Goat-Boy* is illusion not reality. The main theme is the treatment of a myth perhaps the most important aspect of human cultures, yet a record of dream rather than reality. *Giles* is built on a series of parallels between Russia and America, East and West, pacifism and activity, light and dark, mystery and knowledge, natural and supernatural, among things. Max represents the Hebraic tradition.
represents the development of American culture. Mystery and knowledge, as well as mystery and tragedy are contrasted. Within this context *Giles Goat-Boy* concludes that unity is the answer.

The next novel, *Chimera* is *chimerid*. A *chimerid* is a Barthian invention resembling those of Borges, Nabokov, and Joyce. The word, *chimerid*, also gives a name to an artistic process by means of which the *Comprehensive Encyclopedia* of Tlon and the Library of Babel are led into a malinoctial computer on perpetual Reset Print out Garble.

Barth is dramatizing what would occur if a computer could in fact take all the words in the world and work for an infinite capacity to combine. The result would eventually be a quite a logical epic a *chimerid*, both a monster and a story of a monster, that is the invention of language itself, and which records events as they occur. Barth says in *Chimera* that the author believes in a fiction capable of unlimited interpretations.

The general principle, I believe has no name in our ordinary critical vocabulary; I think of it as the principle of Metaphoric Means, by which I intend the investiture by the writer of as many of the elements and aspects of
his fiction as possible with emblematic as well as dramatic value: not only the *form* of the story, the narrative viewpoint, the tone, and such, but where manageable, the particular genre, the mode and medium, the very process of narration even the fact of the artifact itself.... (203)

The next novel, *Lost in the Funhouse* is a record of awareness. It has two main disparate, connected themes art and love. But the point is that Barth finds inescapable self-consciousness about roles. The artist-hero, who is lost in the funhouse, is thoroughly aware of what he does. He knows he is lost. He knows he is in a funhouse with deliberately constructed deception; but he also knows that it is funhouse.

The artist-hero knows that he perceives the situation, conceives of the situation, creates the situation, and recreates the situation in writing an account of it. And finally he is aware of his control over some aspects of the account. He does not know the ultimate source of his material, but he can observe himself forming his material. He can observe himself, lost, aware of being lost, and aware of the deliberate attempt to discover himself.
The funhouse is everything. The term refers to the universe, ramshackle and run-down, fragments of illusion and bad dreams of days past. But the funhouse is a palace of art and a palace of pleasure.

Barth advances the view that writing is hard work, with the artists never fully in control, and with no divine reassurance or insight behind them. The unpredictability of writing is further complicated by the role of the reader, whom the narrator of “Life Story” calls the “dogged, uninsultable, print-oriented bastard” (127). To name the reader the “print-oriented bastard” requires gumption one on the part of the writer and this gumption is gained because America is a land of freedom.

The novel, LETTERS deals with letters and epistles. It also deals with alphabetical letters: the atoms of which the written universe is made. The book is divided into seven sections, lettered (not numbered) as L.E.T.T.E.R. and S. Each of these letters appears superimposed on one of the calendar pages of the seven months from March through September 1969. This device not only determines the dates of the letters compiled in each of the seven sections, but also
the number of letters written by each participant, which once more spell out the sub-title of the novel: “an old-time epistolary novel.”

The significance, relevance, and consequence of LETTERS is boxed and presented in this thesis:

The novel can be seen as an engagement with the status of language and letters; as a scrupulous examination of the sensibility of the sixties, complete with copious drug taking and other forms of studied radicalism.

The first of the sea-stories, Sabbatical: A Romance, is not only about literature, but also about socio-political reality in America, and the personal lives of a few close members of two families, the Turners and Secklers. Sabbatical: A Romance is about decision making in life and art. The novel, Sabbatical: A Romance, charts the sabbatical voyage of Fenwick Scott Key Turner and his spouse Susan Rachel Allan Seckler. They set out in a cruise, taken while the latter is on sabbatical leave for the academic year 1979-1980. On this sabbatical voyage both husband and wife hope to come to know better their hearts and minds vis-à-vis several decisions, which lie ahead.
True to its sub-title, *Sabbatical: A Romance*, is also an attempt at reclaiming the romance. The work exhibits the three-fold structure characteristic of the many aspects of romance. For example, the book is divided into three sections labeled, “The Cove”, “Sailing Up the Chesapeake, Sailing Up the Chesapeake, Sailing Up the Chesapeake Bay”, and “The Fork”. The regnant visual image is that of three waterways or courses of action meeting in a point. After all of their soul searching, Fenwick and Susan determine to “swing with the tides take what comes,” do their “work” and “savor” their “pleasures of each other” while they “may” offer what little they can to the world, and hope for “the best” (360).

Having arrived at the fork in the twin channels of their life together and their joint narrative, they discover that “at a place where three roads meet, there are four choices” (351). This is an existential life predicament, which everyone faces, and chooses, and then regret, which is yet again an existential predicament. Barth has placed on the title page, with gumption and artistic freedom, which America the land of freedom offers him, the exotic design consisting of an open-ended Y, incompletely contained by a circle, and containing at its fork another circle. Resembling a steering wheel, this emblem is suggestive of destiny.
Viewed from a different perspective, it becomes a diagram of the female reproductive system, a depiction of the book’s basic biological conceit that focuses the reader’s attention on the point of conception, the power of the artist to fecundate the twin ova of fact and fancy within the protected microcosm of his fiction.

The other sea story is titled, *The Tidewater Tales: A Novel*. It is another sailing narrative. And *The Tidewater Tales: A Novel* recounts the sometimes sunny and sometimes tempestuous relationship of Peter and Katherine Sherritt Sagamore, the two-narrator protagonists. Peter and Katherine are the proud owners of the sailboat story, and they love storytelling. Richard Lehan’s observation, argues to the point:

Peter and Katherine spend their time with a variety of family members and friends: their major preoccupations involve the sea, sex and stories, and the tales we hear are most about seamen and semen, navigation and narration, textuality and sexuality . . . . (10)

And *The Tidewater Tales: A Novel* is about the possibility of, and the need for, creativity and productivity (in both raising a family and writing) in the face of a seemingly desperate, brutal, chaotic, and
entropic world. On Barth’s fiction Stan Fogel and Gordon Slethaug make a pointed observation, which is worth quoting here:

Barth’s fiction contains both/and paradigms: both reveling in storytelling, both rich, leisurely narration and terse caustic denial of narration and both theory and fiction. To borrow Barth’s own metaphor, one wants in a lover both heart-felt desire and technical virtuosity. Meshing the two extremes produces a richer, more balanced performance. Thus, Barth’s fiction is probably the best introduction to the experimentation and playfulness of postmodernism . . . . (11)

The recurring feature of Barth’s fiction is his concentration, each time in a pair of complementary novels, on a particular genre, which through parody he takes toward a *reductio ad absurdum*, while at the same time reaffirming the historical presuppositions of genres as such. The hidden paradox, then, derives less from the tension between those novels than from that between the authorial impulse for innovation and a given body of literary texts. The true paradox consists in the ultimate disrespect the ironic author has to exhibit toward the very tradition that sustains him.
Barth’s generic novels are designed to be the last of their kind, so that beyond them, new vistas open up for literature. What makes Barth’s treatment of literature paradoxical is the fact that his own literary career continues to undermine the sense of an ending created in each pair of complementary novels. For Barth, traditional art and personal life enter into a dialectical relationship, centering on the figure of the Author. Like the Roman god Janus, Barth faces both ways toward reality and toward fiction problematizing, and at the same time reconciling their ontological separateness through his double, or ironic points of view. This is why Barth is termed one of the quintessential authors of what has come to be accepted as postmodernism in literature. Thus, it established that Barth enjoys artistic freedom for America is a land of freedom, therefore freely and unabashedly deal with sex and with all aspects quite frankly.

Nabokov’s response to America, the land of freedom, was that of a Russian American, And the fact remains that it was in America, the land of freedom, that offered to Nabokov the scope, freedom, and encouragement to shape into unique, original, and individualistic artists, and thereby gain distinct literary eminence.
In regarding the relationship between literary modernism and postmodernism, Barth’s literary development brings postmodernist fiction to life. He accepts his literary predecessors as models, yet rejects their fiction as artifacts. The transmutation of exhausted literary genres into a sequence of fictionalized experiences, makes Barth a central figure of the postmodernist literary movement which, like life itself can never be exhausted.

Writing fiction, for him, is a rebellious and heart-felt paradoxical re-enactment of the father-son relationship. The premodernist writers used to employ the romantic cliché that the poet uses his heart’s blood as ink. One familiar comic trope in Barth’s fiction is the replacement of this cliché by a postmodernist metaphoric view of the relation between the pen and the penis mirroring at the same time transcending the revolt of modernism against tradition, especially the tradition of Romanticism. The implied analogy is more than a pun. The author is a creator, engendering something on something else. Fiction is begotten, and like children, they then become independent of their author.

Barth scrutinizes and diminishes positivism: the idea that there is something to express. For him life is secondary to language. He
writes as if life and language have a much more mixed relationship. Thus, Barth examines life, literature, love, art, and sex blatantly precisely America is a land of freedom and America offers artistic freedom to artists to stretch the limits of life, literature and language.

Nabokov studies America as the land of freedom where the individualist can live fully and love freely, and where the artist can express his feelings and thoughts, and experiences about love, sex, violence, races, gender war, institutions, ideologies, and received religion unreservedly, and frankly. Nabokov for his part glorifies love. He suggests that only in a nation like America, the land of freedom, there can be scope for experiencing love completely. In fact, Nabokov argues that love loses its value and meaning in a totalitarian state.

Incidentally, Vladimir Nabokov’s Adam Krug, the protagonist of the fiction, *Bend Sinister*, is a perfect individualist. He is the proper definition of individualism. In relieving contrast to those who suffer from the loss of identity, Vladimir Nabokov’s Adam Krug is an individualist, who safeguards his dignity, honor, and self respect, and thereby his separate identity. He is unique in his singleness and in his ability to maintain his individuality and separate identity.
Adam Krug was a middle aged Professor of Padukgrad. The land had been forcefully taken over by the revolutionary chief, Paduk, who was his classmate and therefore Adam Krug had to face professional crisis. Thus, the land of freedom had taken a sinister bend. Julian Moynahan makes an interesting observation:

In 1947 the small nations of Eastern Europe were bending left under pressure from the U. S. S. R. Bend Sinister for all its qualities of fantasy and its many passages which hint that the oppressions suffered by its main characters reflect universal conditions, depicts a turning away from individual freedoms toward the imposed collectivism that closely resembles what was happening in such countries as Poland, Bulgaria, Hungary, Rumania, and Czechoslovakia during the immediate post war period . . . . (23)

That his nation had taken the evil turn from the democratic way of life to the dictatorial form of rule posed to Adam Krug the national crisis. Furthermore, Adam Krug was struggling to pass on the news of the death of his beloved wife, Olga, to his son, David, and it resulted in the personal crisis. Notwithstanding these crises he
maintained his own self for as his name proclaimed he was an individualist. L. L. Lee comments thus:

Adam is Hebrew for the man, the first man, the archetype, the individual. Adam Krug is Russian for “circle”, “the circle in Krug, one Krug in another” and, therefore he is a symbol of completeness . . . . (101)

As he was a person of singular identity Adam Krug was not prepared to compromise his individuality with the ways of the new but evil regime, which was founded on Skotoma’s idea of ekwilism. Paduk wanted to legitimize his government by getting it authorized by the intellectuals of the land. But Adam Krug could not be blandished, threatened or brainwashed to deviate from his individualistic stand. Adam Krug’s definitions of his own self proves the point:

He [Paduk, the Tad] will go on licking my hand in the dark. I am invulnerable. Invulnerable the rumbling sea wave [Volna] rolling the rabble of pebbles as it recedes. Nothing can happen to Krug, the Rock . . . . (81)
In the midst of dead fossils Adam Krug was the only real man who effused to sign the manifesto prepared by Paduk. Even in his defiance he displayed his originality and individuality.

The textual passage presents an interesting reading:

Dr. Azureus had personally handed the document to him and had hung around while Krug had leisurely put on his spectacles and started to read . . . . Azureus saw Krug spread the last page on the flat wooden arm of the cretonne armchair and unscrew the muzzle part of his pen, turning it into a cap. With a quick flip-like delicately precise stroke quite out of keeping with his burly construction Krug inserted a comma in the fourth line. Then (chmok) he re-muzzled, re-clipped his pen (chmok) and handed the document to the distracted President . . . . Legal document excepted, . . . . and not all of them at that, I never have signed, nor ever shall sign, anything not written myself . . . . (54-55)

Thus, Adam Krug stands out from the others as one who maintains his separate identity and individuality. He is a shining example of individualism. Individualism is a reality in America, the
land of freedom. The little boy, David, was fond of his parents. Every night he asked his father how his mother was and when she would return home from the hospital. It should be recorded that David's love for his parents was one of innocence and elemental charm. Furthermore, it was unalloyed in opposition to that of the tyrant Paduk.

Adam Krug suffered from a crisis after the death of Olga. He did not know how to break the news to David. He decided against divulging the news for he did not want to cause grief to his little son, David. Adam Krug under all circumstances maintained his composure and remained cool. But at the last meeting that he had with Olga at the hospital he became aware that she would die soon. Therefore, he felt disturbed. On the way back home from the hospital Prof Krug was overwhelmed with grief though his own psychological double pointed out to him that, a middle aged man and a genius artist, should be ashamed of shedding tears. In this domestic context Adam Krug appears as a responsible and loving husband grieving over the loss of his wife. Knowing full well that Adam Krug loved his little son, David, the tyrant, Paduk, separated David from Krug. The unhappy boy was taken to a Sanatorium afterwards and the dictator was responsible to what happened to him, though he
did not order the death of David. The way David was tortured to death and the callous manner in which his death was announced reveal Paduk’s insensitivity. Yet again, it is a sad reflection on the state of affairs in an authoritarian country. The relevant passage runs thus:

And then the fun began. One of the patients (a “representative” or “potential leader”), a heavy handsome boy of seventeen went up to the “little person” and sat beside him on the turf and said “open your mouth”. The “little person” did what he was told and with unerring precision the youth spat a pebble into the child’s open mouth. (Ibid)

There cannot be a more inhuman way of torturing a small child than the manner in which David was treated. His privates were assaulted. He was battered. His limbs were torn. His bones were broken. All these indignities and injuries were heaped on the child who could not even understand why he was treated so. Paduk’s single aim was to torture the child so that he could bring Krug to his knees. He could not succeed because Krug turned mad on learning
of the cruel death of David, whom he deeply loved. The death of David gets dismissed thus in a totalitarian state:

"This ought never to have happened. We are terribly sorry. Your [Adam Krug’s] child [David] will be given the most sumptuous burial a white man’s child could dream up; but still we quite understand, that for those who remain this is (two words indistinct) . . . . We are more than sorry. Indeed it can be safely asserted that in the history of this great country has a group, a government, or a ruler been sorry as we are today . . . ." (Ibid)

This is the condition of life in an authoritarian regime and this is the callous attitude to life, love, and death in such a country. Conversely, in America, the land of freedom, life and love are honored and given due recognition. Furthermore, it is unthinkable in America, the land of freedom, that the Government could torture individuals to make them accept and revere the ideology of the nation.

Nabokov, in fact, experienced in America freedom to live and love, which he could not find in Communist Russia, or the Nazi-
ruled Germany. In his *magnum opus, Lolita*, Humbert’s love for the nymphtet is undeniable. In this context, David E. Morton makes a pointed observation that it is a story of love “All the overlays of the humorous, the comic, the bizarre, the grotesque cannot disguise the fact that at a fundamental level it [*Lolita*] is a serious story of love . . . .” (71).

At the end of the novel [*Lolita*], Humbert felt sorry that he had denied Lolita the innocent pleasure of childhood and had hurried her into putrescence. He knew that nothing could make Lolita forget the foul lust he had inflicted on her. The assertion of William Anderson is to the point “Humbert’s regenerative knowledge of his ability to love the actual Lolita at the end of the novel [*Lolita*] is a ritualistic purification of himself and a final banishment of his former attitude . . . .” (378).

The relevant passage from the fiction, *Lolita* when Humbert pleads with Lolita to go with him reveals his love for her.

. . . . here she [*Lolita*] was with her ruined looks and her adult, rope-veined narrow hands and her goose-flesh white arms, and her shallow ears, and her unkempt armpits, there she was (my Lolita) hopelessly worn at
seventeen, with that baby, dreaming already in her of becoming a big shot and retiring around 2020 and I looked and looked at her, and knew as clearly as I know I am to die that I love her more than anything I had ever seen or imagined on earth, or hoped for anything else . . . . I want you to leave your incidental Dick, and this awful hole, and "come to live with me and die with me" [Italics as in the Original] . . . . (275)

On this aspect of Humbert’s love for Lolita, Martin Green makes a qualified statement on this aspect of Humbert’s love for Lolita, and it is worth quoting “Humbert, we are convinced, does want Lolita fully; he does love her. It is a perverse love, but it is love and so is to be sympathized with. The novel thus breaks down one of our most intimate and powerful taboos . . . .” (366).

It ought to be recorded that one of the strengths of Lolita lies in Nabokov’s adroit handling of the theme of love. The manner in which he identifies Humbert as the true lover lifts the novel [Lolita] to great heights. And this writing method saves it from being dismissed as pornographic literature. That Nabokov could write his magnum opus, Lolita, in the manner that he wrote it was because the
land that adopted. To put it in other words, if Nabokov could unabashedly describe sex acts, it is because of America, the land of freedom that allows her artists a complete artistic freedom. The passage quoted below describes Humbert’s sexual intimacy with Lolita at *The Enchanted Hunters*:

> And let me be quite frank: somewhere at the bottom of that dark turmoil I felt the writhing of the desire again, so monstrous was my appetite for that miserable nymphet . . . . (139)

This above quoted lines bear evidence to the fact that writers, such as, Nabokov could indulge in a frank discussion of sex without inhibitions or prudery. As Julian Moynahan express it “America had figured as the place beyond cabined and confined traditions and sanctions . . . .” (36).

Moreover, if satisfactory sex brought the male and the female close to each other, thwarted sex resulted in violence. This is the contention of Norman Mailer in his *magnum opus, The Naked and the Dead*. Humbert’s shooting of Quilty is a pointer in this regard:

> I fired three or four times in quick succession, wounding him at every blaze; and every time I did it to him, that
horrible thing to him, his face would twitch in an absurd clownish manner as if he were exaggerating the pain; he slowed down, rolled his eyes half closing them and made a feminine “ah!” and he shivered every time a bullet hit him as if I were tickling him, . . . . (303)

Nabokov, thus, studies the themes of love, sex, violence with perfect candor in his fictions, and thereby eternalizes America, as the land of freedom. These subjects apart, from describing the places visited by Humbert and Lolita, he immortalizes America as the land of freedom, American landscape. Walter Cohen rightly asserts “. . . . in Lolita, America is one the central characters . . . .” (342).

Humbert took Lolita literally from coast to coast and over the length and breadth of America. The tour of the pair in love punctuated by sexual bouts in hotels and motels and by visits to places of scenic and historic importance took them across several towns, cities, and states such as North Carolina, Georgia, Mississippi, Arkansas, New Orleans, Independence, Missouri, Abilene, Texas, Arizona, Los Angeles, Utah, Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Michigan, Tennessee, Ohio, New York, Vermont, and Maine. One fact, which cannot be ignored, is the element of sarcasm
couched in the description of the places visited by Humbert and Lolita. Furthermore, the two important, relevant and consequential parameters of America are individualism, and democracy. And all the American intellectuals value these two strengths of America and repeatedly deal with them in all their manifestations and ramifications. The passage makes an interesting reading:

If he [the artist] breathes into anything that was before thought small it dilates with the grandeur and life of the universe. He is a seer . . . . he is individual . . . . he is complete in himself . . . . the others are as good as he, only he sees it and they do not. He is not one of the chorus . . . . he does not stop for Regulations . . . . he is the President of Regulations . . . . (22)

And Ralph Waldo Emerson's reads well in conjunction with the assertion of Walt Whitman, when he deciphers that American intellect raises himself from private considerations “He is the world’s eye. He is the world’s heart . . . .” (59).

And all Americans immortalize America as the land of freedom. Thus Nabokov has examined the twin themes of
individualism and freedom to explore freely and frankly love, sex, and violence, and thereby to project America as the land of freedom.

Thus, it is established that Barth and Nabokov enjoy artistic freedom, because America makes that possible in ample measure. And the simple reason is that America is a land of freedom.