Chapter - 3
LIFE SITUATIONS

If you have for thematic reasons a character who represents single-mindedly some position, then the dictates of drama suggest that you’re likely to have another character who’s his antithesis these are likely to be male characters if they’re embodiments of ideas then you need a woman between to be the catalyst for the reaction between the two males so that you can work out your dialectic . . . . (Alan Prince 55)

“Come on, old boy, don’t be a fool. Sign that darned thing,” said Hedron, leaning over Krug and resting the fist with the pipe on Krug’s shoulder. “What on earth does it matter? Affix your commercially valuable scrawl. Come on! Nobody can touch our circles but we must have some place to draw them.”

“Not in the mud, Sir, not in the mud,” said Krug, smiling his first smile of the evening (Bend Sinister 56)

With American ingenuity and with profound American spirit guiding his mind and art, Barth examines love as determining the
life situations of people in the postmodern era and Nabokov maintains that life for the postmodern individual revolves around identity crisis. In the place, the perspective of Barth concerning love as the fulcrum on which life situations in the postmodern world turns and twists is taken into academic and research-oriented consideration. Then the focus shifts to Nabokov.

Barth has evolved into one of the most enlightened luminaries of love as the determinant factor of life situations in the postmodern world. No American male artist since Henry James has written so well of women, exposed their fears and hatreds, depicted their sexual natures and championed their individuality as powerfully as John Barth. One of Barth’s most frequent themes is the ambiguity of love.

In his treatment of the theme of love, one can find not only a greater consistency in thinking, but also an increasing tendency to affirm the possibility of love. Barth’s tenuous affirmation of love is most clearly defined in the *Menelaiad*, but it is an important motif in all the later novels, in which he increasingly identifies the dilemmas of lovers with those of artists. Harold Farwell makes a pointed observation, which is worth quoting here:
Apparently that kind of love, which represents a creative attempt to be free from the prison of self has become for him at least as noble an affirmation as is the artist’s comparable attempt to transcend his limitations in his art . . . . (56)

No other writer has more sympathetically explored, from a feminine angle, the basic human activities of lovemaking, conception, and gestation. In a word without absolute values and meaningful existence, the moral responsibility of human beings for one another has become a precious gift to be treasured and fostered. Barth has moved steadily towards the celebration of male-female companionship, and particularly a mutual admiration of one another at all levels of human activity. Love triangles, coupled with fornication, recur in Barth’s works. *Shirt of Nissuss, The Floating Opera, The End of the Road, The Sot-Wed Factor, Giles Goat-Boy, Petition, Lost in the Funhouse, Menelaiad* are cited as examples in this regard. One attraction that the triangle has for Barth is purely technical. Harold Farwell makes a pointed observation, about the love triangle technic of Barth. “It [Love triangle] has probably more latent possibility than any other situation between characters that one can dream up . . . .” (58).
Todd Andrews discovers the truth at the end of the novel, *The Floating Opera*; “... nothing makes any difference, including the truth” (120). Although Todd applies his new awareness specifically to the question of his planned suicide, deciding that if there is no final reason for living, there is none for dying either, his truth is about a response to, and a reflection to his private crisis, and quest for a new personal awareness are intimate aspects of the love-story he chronicles. He got into a love affair with Jane Mack, wife of his best friend, Harrison Mack.

Jane suddenly, and without warning, offered herself to him. Todd later discovered that she did so because Harrison wanted her to do so. In fact, Jane and Harrison desired the affair out of love for Todd; they wanted no silly jealousy, no guilt, no recriminations. Richard Schickel considers this episode of Barth’s commentary on “liberal morality, both political and sexual and political” (58). It is because of Harrison’s left wing sympathies, sexual because of the curious and the self-conscious, almost ideological, nature of the affair itself.

The fiction, *The End of the Road*, is, obviously, another application of Todd’s truth. Again, the plot begins with the intrusion
of the narrator as a third party into a fragile privately defined relationship. It is the peaceful family life of Morgan, which is shattered by the intrusion of Jacob Homer, a man almost crippled by his awareness of the absurdity of absolute values. The textual evidence records thus:

He [Morgan] is incapable of making choices since no one choice seems satisfactory for very long by comparison with the aggregate desirability of all the rest, though compared to any one of the others it would not be found inferior . . . . He is the victim of moods which he compares to days without weather in which he ceases to exist, being without a personality. Whereas Todd's affair leads him to reject suicide as absurd, Jake's affair leads him into a death of the spirit or will. But he too avoids the option of death in the end . . . . (37)

The love triangle in the fiction, *The End of the Road*, is a much more prominent element. There is a struggle between existentialism and nihilism, or between two kinds of nihilism, with the Doctor's pragmatism serving as an alternative thesis, antithesis, or possible synthesis. The assumption is that the shift from nihilistic comedy to
nihilistic tragedy is a shift in genre, and that having satirized philosophy and burlesque in language in The Floating Opera, Barth decided to write something closer to a true novel of ideas.

And The End of the Road is a more realistic novel than its predecessor. In a world it is reduced to abstractions, Joe and Jake take others as specimens to be examined or manipulated, and where kindness and emotional empathy play no part, victimization is inevitable. Partly because Rennie is so little loved by the two men in her life, and partly because she is so little loved by herself, she (wife to Joe and mistress to Jake), is as antithetically a complete victim as is to be found in postmodern fiction. Barth is writing fiction, and that requires setting up a dramatically convincing reason for Jake and Joe to clash.

In his first novel The Floating Opera it is with the woman Jane and in the second The End of the Road it is a catalyst Rennie as Barth himself has pronounced “. . . .This is the case of mack and Todd Andrews with the woman Jane, in the first novel [The floating opera] Jacob Horner and Joe Morgan and the catalyst Rennie in the second novel [The End of the Road]” (57).
Barth’s metaphorical use of the term, catalyst, is chemically correct, and appropriate as regards Rennie. She is that energizing substance that causes activity between two forces, without itself being essentially affected. Rennie’s adultery is unlike Anna Karenina’s, because it is not motivated by male desire that flows toward the woman. Jake does not desire Rennie so much as to identify himself with her: “... she had peered deeply into herself and found nothing ... and he falls into bed with her just as absent-mindedly as clumsy animal” (66).

Since nothing has intrinsic value and worth, since a thing’s worth is always given to it from outside, the only values that have any validity are relative ones, peculiar to each person, and not necessarily upheld by any other: that is what Todd Andrews at last believes. That is also what Joe Morgan continually insists upon. His relative value is his marriage with Rennie. All the same Morgan thinks about its relative independence. The textual passage makes an interesting reading:

Certainly I’m not sold on marriage-under-any-circumstances, and I’m sure Rennie’s not either. There’s nothing intrinsically valuable about marriage ... . That
doesn’t mean that I don’t value it; in fact I guess I value my relationship with Rennie more than anything else in the world. All it means is that once you admit it’s not absolute you have to decide for yourself the conditions under which marriage is important to you . . . . (41)

For Joe, the conditions are extreme but rational, that he and Rennie “respect each other in every way,” “take each other seriously,” and “that means not making a lot of kinds of allowances” (42). On every subject they compare and examine ideas as deeply as they can. Every interest must be shared, and every goal must somehow relate to furthering the respect between them.

The fictions, *The Floating Opera* and *The End of the Road*, are similar in plot. Each book depicts a love triangle, in which a bachelor makes love to a married woman with the husband’s consent, and in which pregnancy results with neither man knowing for certain whom the father is. But the similarity is not as great as the difference. The love triangle reappears with Ebenezer cooke-Annacooke-Henry Burlingame in the *Sot Weed Factor*.

The affair in *The Floating Opera* takes up less than one-third of that book, and is played for laughs, whereas the affair in *The End*
of the Road, is the action of the entire book, and is not finally played for laughs at all. In the first book, The Floating Opera, Jane Mack survives and lives content with her husband and daughter, but in the second, The End of the Road, Rennie panics while having no abortion, vomits her supper of hot dogs and sauerkrant, and chokes to death. Jake’s conception of himself as a quester for meaning is juxtaposed against the roles of Joe and Rennie Morgan in much the same way as Todd is played off against Harrison and Jane Mack. This ménage a trios allows for comparing certain intellectual positions and attitudes.

Barth, in an interview to Alan Prince, is quite explicit about this usage and it reads thus “One of the images that . . . . recur through my novels, is . . . . the pair of opposites the two men in the triangles are usually contraries . . . .” (57). Yet each triangle has its own character and special nuances. As pointed out by Stanley Edger Hyman “Two male friends attain symbolic union by sharing the body of a woman . . . .” (21)

There is thus an implicit homosexual theme running through the three novels, which becomes quite explicit in The Sot-Weed Factor. Barth likes to remind the reader that the bachelor involved in
the love triangle affair is an opposite sex twin. He also likes to hint at the underlying significance of this generic fact for his fiction. Burlingame firmly believes that there is something sacred and mystic about twins, and if they ever come together, “... their union is brilliance, totality, apocalypse a thing to yearn and tremble for.” (497).

But Eben and Anna recoil because of the age-old taboo against incest, and their minds refuse to obey the natural tendencies of their bodies to the condition of oneness that they shared in their mother’s womb. Not until the incestuous quality of their love is fully confessed, is either free to love each other. The scene in which that occurs is the climax of the plot. Together in the black hold of a ship, a symbolic womb that Anna fears will be the only garden the chaste lovers will ever know, the twins face imminent death. Eben translates her desire to be throttled by him into something else, and, apparently attempts to consummate their love only to send her shrieking across the hold.

But the attack having been made, Eben must accept the full implications of his fallen humanity. He does so later in accepting humbly the love of Joan Toast. Although Joan dies in child-birth and
Burlingame deserts Anna, Malden belongs to the twins, and Eben takes as his heir the child that Anna gives birth to from Burlingame, out of wedlock. Living together in seclusion almost as if they were the only two people on earth, the twins finally share a few years together in peace and the ending fulfills the one hope that Anna was able to express while in the black bowels of the ship, "The Triangle".

Burlingame says to Eben: “Tis not the one nor the other I crave, but the twain as one” (490). Ebenezer’s recurrent dream of two alabaster mountain peaks is foretold in his misconception about the appointment as laureate, and the peaks symbolize more than twinship or the inclination to incest that both Ebenezer and Anna conceal. The peaks also have some connection with artist’s career in his attempt to scale Parnassus. Beyond these matters, the two peaks represent Ebenezer’s two-fold being: poetry and virginity.

Thus they are incipient symbols of art and love, subjects that dominate Lost in the Funhouse and Chimera. Ebenezer is never either artistic or virginal: for him the concepts are merely dreams. But to the artist as mature man, the twin concepts of art and love are genuine alabaster unity from duality another statement of the union
of ideal and real, and another means of attempting to unify both body and soul.

In *Giles Goat-Boy*, the goat-boy does join with Anastasia, but they are innocent of the knowledge that they may be twins, and when they learn of the possibility, they decide to stay apart. Giles’s decision, too, is of the mind over body; he is not much affected by the taboo against incest. When at last he learns to feel more than think, he comes together with Anastasia in the belly of the computer, and their union is “brilliance, totality, apocalypse” They may not be twins, but they are half-brother and half-sister.

And that is the closest fusion Barth has so far allowed. Giles admits that he cannot respond to Anastasia’s declaration of love in simple reciprocity. But the import of the comments is that he has moved through love and beyond it. Anastasia’s love is also more convincing than that of her brother’s heroic achievements.

Although Anastasia has been involved in more love tangles than all of Barth’s heroines put together, she has represented to each man only his own idea of love and has, therefore, remained unfulfilled herself, barren. It is perhaps Giles’s greatest feat that he alone can finally accept her in her selfhood. Ironically, he even
became the agent of resurrection and the entire relationship affirms the oldest traditions of romantic love.

The fiction, *Chimera*, celebrates love, sex, and the boredom of marital familiarity. The revelatory *pillow talks* of Dunyazade and Shah Zaman, the hearty sexual fellowship of Perseus and Calyxa, the lofty tenderness of Perseus and Medusa, the Amazonian geniality of Melanippe and Bellerophon, the intimate dinner-time give and take of Bellerophon and his wife and children all presuppose an exchange, a transaction, between suitor and wooed, speaker and listener. Jerry Powell, in this context, observes:

Barth’s position is quite similar to that of his contemporary, Nabokov, for whom a novel is a chess game that has the author’s moves already programmed into it, and that the reader play reading. The better the reader, the more demands he places on the author, but the process of reading is the point of the game . . . . (239)

Similarly, Barth’s main metaphor for writing is the act of love. The metaphor emphasizes the process or act of doing something, as opposed to any specific goal at the end. For both metaphors, chess-playing and love making, what one says or does is not so important
as how one says or does it. Barth takes a more pessimistic view of the significance of the game itself. They both believe in the playing of the game, but Nabokov believes that the act has some kind of absolute value, while Barth appears to believe he is accepting a relative value for lack of any absolute values in life.

In *The Last Voyage of Somebody the Sailor*, the outermost portion of the story is Simon in the hospital about to die. He tells the Doctor a story “The Last Story of Scheherazade”. The Doctor turns out to be his dead twin sister. In the story he narrates, Scheherazade is also about to die and he tells a story, “*The Last Voyage of Somebody the Sailor*”. Within this story, at least four characters tell stories: Simon, Sindbad, Jayda, and Yasmin. Barth, in his essay “Tales within Tales within Tales within Tales,” remarks thus:

The frame tale reminds the reader consciously or otherwise, of the next frame out: the fiction of our own lives, of which we are both authors and the protagonists, and in which our reading of *The 1001 Nights*, say, is a story within our story . . . . (235)

Simon has a relationship with a different woman in each of the first four voyages. From the fifth voyage on, presumably to the end
of his life, he remains true to Yasmin. The assumption, that he is in love with Yasmin till the end of the book, is based upon the ring that he fingers when he begins to tell his story. This is presumably one of the rings that Iban al-Hama gave to Yasmin and Simon before they set out on their final voyage. The relationship that he has in his first voyage is the one that will carry him to *The Destroyer of Delights*. His twin sister, Bee-Gee or Bijou, who was with him before birth, shows him the way to death. His second relationship is with Daisy Moore, who teaches him how to have sex and shows him that he could become someone great. The reader is shown Baylor’s marriage with Jane Price in his third voyage, but it is shown as it is breaking up.

His fourth voyage shows his best relationship, with the only possible exception being his relationship with Yasmin. Julia Moore, Daisy’s younger sister, is one of the reasons why Simon wants to return to his own time. From the fifth voyage on, he is with Yasmin, involuntarily as in the last voyages. These changing relationships reinforce the commonality of Simon’s story. Thus, Barth maintains that life situations revolve around love, and all the ramifications of love.
Turning the focus on Nabokov one acknowledges the fact that in his short fictions and fictions he examines the major theme of identity crisis as the basic life situation in the postmodern world. In fact, Nabokov himself suffered from identity crisis because of displacement, disorientation, new roots and reorientation. The displacements to Berlin and France, and then to New York, and finally to Montreaux resulted in disorientation. Old identities had to be shed and new identities had to be embraced. In brief, no other artist would have experienced as many crises in his identity as Nabokov confronted.

In that way he was able to create a new identity in the place of the earlier one that has to be erased because of displacement. In such an acceptance one reads Nabokov’s unique identity for in acceptance is individuality. One should record that Nabokov’s American identity stands when compared with his other identities. What one gauges as valuable from Nabokov’s life is that a man should train himself to adjust to new situations as they evolved. In fact, Nabokov’s recommendation is not to be obsessed with the lost identity but to create one and live it. Those that fail to do so suffer.
In many of his fictions the theme of identity, the loss of it, and the search for it is examined at great length. For instance, in his fictional work, *The Defense*, Nabokov projects the protagonist Luzhin, as one who from the beginning to the end was not certain of his existence. Luzhin was the eternal outsider and sufferer. He spent his adolescence and early manhood playing chess. He proposed to a Russian girl and married her. But obsession with chess interfered with his conjugal harmony.

With his intricate creativity in playing chess he was able to turn into an artist. But he degraded into an automaton indulging in professionalism. He failed as a man and artist because he was a slave to his art and a prisoner of it. His chess determined and controlled his life and even landed him in a state of insanity. He might be the artist but in his single mindedness the ideal victim. In this connection it is to observe L. L. Lee:

The themes and the structure of the novel [*The Defense*] are, then, contained in the first and last lines. In the first line the young boy discovers that he will now be Luzhin, in the last line where we discover that his first name and patronymic were Alexander Ivoonivich, but that no one
including himself ever used it, we see that he had no real existence and that the shape and story are his search for existence . . . . (50)

The search for identity gets expressed in the concern for lost time and along with it the lost identity. In fact, obsession with lost time ends in futility as exemplified in *Glory*, though Nabokov’s interpretation of the title is intentionally misleading:

It is the glory of high adventure and disinterested achievement the glory of this earth and its patchy paradise; the glory of personal pluck, the glory of a radiant martyr. But the end of the novel establishes Martin Edeilweiz’s trip to Zoorland Russia as a pointless journey . . . . (10)

Martin Edeilweiz, the protagonist of *Glory*, belonged to an affluent family. In St. Petersburg he enjoyed the privileged life of a privileged class. He received education at the hands of foreign governesses. His life passed peacefully until the Russian upheaval, which separated his parents from him. He and his mother fled to Yalta. He soon learned of his father’s death. With the fall of Crimea to Russian Communists Martin Edielweiz and his mother escaped to
Switzerland. Martin Edielweiz went to Cambridge for his education, where he met Sonia Zlanov. He loved her but she never reciprocated. He went to Russia to impress her.

To Martin Edeilweiz it was a gallant feat, an exploit, a deed of glory. But his journey back to Communist Russia was one of rank stupidity for he could never regain his lost identity there. Moreover, if he had journeyed to Communist Russia to rebel against the authoritarian Establishment, his trip would have gained meaning. In this connection, it is better to record L. L. Lee’s observation:

The novel [Glory] is aimed at the final action of Martin, his departure on a pointless and almost suicidal return to Russia, not to perform an action against the Soviet state, but simply to act, to do something without real point. His is a gratuitous act that quixotic, romantic, self-destructive, and self-creative . . . (52)

In the fiction, King, Queen, Knave, the three principal characters, Dreyer, Martin, and Franz by their nature, word and deed testify to the fact that like Martin Edeilweiz they lack identity. They are not able to be their own selves. Once again, L.L. Lee makes a pointed observation:
In brief, these people [Dryer, Martha, and Franz] have no real existence; they have only a social function or if we wish, they have only the function of the cards that give the novel, [King, Queen, Knave] its name and that in the end interchangeable . . . . (52)

In relieving contrast to these characters that suffer loss of identity, Nabokov introduces Adam Krug, the protagonist of Bend Sinister, Cincinnatus C., and Emmie of Invitation to a Beheading, and Humbert and Humbert in Lolita as individualists. They are unique in their singleness, and in their ability to maintain their identity. Of these Adam Krug is a striking personality. It is their individualism that properly and perfectly defines life situation. Understandably then, quest for individualism as a challenging problem of life has engaged Nabokov. At this point a brief consideration of what Nabokov means by individualism becomes necessary. In this connection the pointed and poignant statement of Alexis de Tocqueville, is worth mentioning here:

Individualism is a mature and calm feeling, which disposes each member of the community to sever himself from the mass of his fellows and to draw part
with his family and his friends, so that after he has thus formed a little circle of his own, he willingly leaves society at large to itself . . . (226)

The value, which is complimentary in any discussion of America, American Society, and Americans, is individualism. It is emphasized that the most characteristic quality and the striking feature of America is individualism. In such a condition, the individual has only two extreme options, either to bow down to society or to wage a relentless war against the American society and the American Establishment to protect his individuality. Ihab Hassan makes a pointed observation, "... the contemporary world presents a continual affront to man, and that his response must be the response of the rebel or victim, living under the shadow of death . . ." (46).

Yet again, the tragedy to day is that people have crammed themselves into conformistic boxes of established mores, convictions and beliefs about reality and correct behavior. The result is that they are able to relate to each other only as boxes of beliefs and ideas and not as individual human beings and this is tragic. Nabokov, understands that one enjoyed one's individualism only if one had the ability to remain the same, notwithstanding the varying aspects and differing conditions of life.
In this context, Emerson’s assertions that it is easy to be a conformist and that it requires a great deal of nerve, and fortitude, and determined will power to be a Bohemian non-conformist, are noteworthy. Emerson’s contention is that the conformist has no individualism could be read thus in *Self Reliance*.

It is easy in the world to live after the world’s opinion; it is easy in solitude to live after our own, but the great man is he who in the midst of crowd keeps with perfect sweetness the independence of solitude . . . . (46)

The argument is that unless one moves out of the conformistic circle one can never enjoy true identity. Nabokov projects this idea of non-conformism as a mode of asserting one’s individuality and unique identity. As such the tragedy of modern man is that he loses his dignity, honor, and self-respect, and thereby his separate, unique individuality, because he has no option except to play the roles defined for him by the society, and the Establishment, and the Military Organization. Therefore, Nabokov values selfhood. He is conscious of the shift from theocentricity to anthropocentricity. In fact, he knows that every aspect and analysis of life, be it social, philosophical or metaphysical, centered on man.

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In fact, as in Franz Kafka's *Metamorphosis* he got transformed into a hideous pathetic vermin wriggling in the iron grip of the society and the Establishment. As a result he was reduced to the square root of minus one, which was less than nothing. The individual in the modern world had to suffer the loss of identity owing to several factors.

At the outset, one could readily name displacement and disorientation the Diaspora. Moreover religious bodies, social organizations, educational institutions, power blocs, large and complex economic and political systems made demands, which lacked moral authority and legitimacy. The claim for loyalty and conformity to these demands was clothed in authoritarian repression. As such in the modern context of life most people just had no identity but enjoyed only identification, in the sense they just wore a label. Moreover, because of the complexities and multiplicities of modern life the individual suffers from psychological strains and stresses. The individual confronts his own doubles, which bring into question his real identity.

Yet again, because of Diaspora, displacement, and disorientation and reorientation, the displaced individual has to shed
his original identity and embrace a new identity. He turns into a torn personality a schizophrenic because of his inability to bury his old identity and embrace a new identity. This is the plight of the Jewish Americans in America. The only option that is open to the Jew or the Black in America is to move from the periphery and enter the mainstream of American life. In other words the identity of the Jew in America can be only as an American.

Nabokov, like Emerson and Whitman before him, spells out meaningful ways, which when put into effective practice will enable the displaced persons to establish and maintain their separate and distinct identity. He wants the self to be assertive. He argues that the individual should settle for self-trust, self-endeavor, and self-reliance. The self should give expression to his feelings, thoughts and experiences without any reservation, and with fear for none. The individual should not allow the impositions of society to impinge on him. He should learn to live deliberately and to speak with candor. But then he would have to suffer loneliness as our Lord Jesus Christ. All the same endeavouring to be one’s own self is the way to preserve one’s uniqueness, singleness, individuality and separate identity. A superb composition of Edward Estlin Cummings makes
this point quite clear and the poem is quoted, for it makes very interesting reading

no time ago

or else a life

walking in the dark

I met christ

close as i’m to you

yes closer

made of nothing

except loneliness . . . . (648)

Emerson argues to the point in his essay "Let him not quit his belief that a popgun is a popgun, though the ancient and the honorable of the earth affirm it to be the crack of doom . . . ." (55).

To amass wealth is a social requirement. But to be conscious of money and status is just to permit the society and the Establishment to exercise an iron grip on the individual. Therefore, Nabokov, in his separate but original way recommends to the individual to be his own self, notwithstanding the temptations and pressures of American society and the Establishment. But then to break loose from the roles devised by the society is not that easy for
ordinary souls. That is why Ihab Hassan argues to the point through a valid assertion and it is worth recording here:

He [self] is still grappling with the radical multiplicities of the human ego, oscillating not merely between two poles such as the body and the spirit but between thousands and thousands . . . . (28)

At this point, it ought to be noted that the Jews as a race have suffered displacement and the consequent disorientation and reorientation as no other race has suffered. As a result of displacement the Jews had to shed their identity of the original place to which they belonged and accept a new identity of the land where they were pushed. But the Jews wherever they are settled find it hard to give up their religion, rituals, customs, traditions, conventions, beliefs, and language. Therefore they suffer from dual identity or better still the pangs of cultural divide. Therefore, Nabokov portrays some of his principal characters with distinguishing Jewish properties and characteristic Jewish features.

Nabokov is fully aware of these Jewish properties. In relieving contrast to these characters that suffer loss of identity, Nabokov introduces Adam Krug, the protagonist of Bend Sinister, Cincinnatus
C., and Emmie of *Invitation to a Beheading*, and Humber Humbert and Loilta in *Lolita* as individualists with their distinct separate identity well sustained by them. They are unique in their singleness and in their individuality.

If *Bend Sinister* projects Adam Krug as an individual, *Invitation to a Beheading* introduces Cincinnatus C., as the one who never loses his separate and individualistic identity. Cincinnatus C., was sentenced to death for gnostical turpitude and thrown into the prison. Even in such a situation he remained opaque and not transparent. In fact, he stood in sharp contrast to the specters around him. The relevant textual passage makes interesting reading:

> .... standing now in the prison corridor with a sinking heart still alive, still unimpaired, still cincinnatic Cincinnatus C., felt a fierce longing for freedom, the most ordinary, physical, physically feasible kind of freedom.... (62)

If Cincinnatus could remain without losing his separate and distinct identity and individuality, Rodrig Ivanovich, the prison Director, Rodion, the Jailer, and M’sieur Pierre, the Executioner had turned into mere cogs in the official machinery the giant wheel of
the state. For instance, Rodrig Ivanovich had reduced himself to the
level of an automaton. By his dress modes, habitual gesture, and the
usual talk he struck sameness in the manner of a machine. The
textual passage makes interesting reading, and it is to the point, and
hence it is quoted below:

He was dressed as always in a frock coat and held
himself exquisitely straight, chest out, one hand in his
bosom, the other behind his back. A perfect toupee,
black as pitch, and with a waxy parting, smoothly
covered his head. His face selected without love, with its
thick sallow cheeks and somehow obsolete system of
wrinkles, was enlivened in a sense by two, only by two,
bulging eyes. . . . . Moving his legs evenly in his
columnar trousers, he stride the wall to the table, almost
to the cot but in spite of his majestic solidity, he calmly
vanished, dissolving into the air. A minute later,
however the door opened once again, this time with the
familiar gratin sound, and dressed always in a frock coat,
his chest out, in came the same person . . . . [Ibid]
Rodion, the jailer, was committed to a mechanical kind of life, marked by dailiness and dull routine. He fed the spider with the moth everyday, lived the same life and put an end to it the same hour. For instance, Cincinnatus C., could not proceed independently with his writing work beyond ten every night because Rodion, the machine, would put off the lights. “Here, unfortunately the light in the cell went out Rodion always turned it off exactly at ten . . . .” (83).

On the other hand, Cincinnatus C., alone could be Cincinnatus. He remained independent, individualistic, maintaining his integrity, dignity, and self-respect, and thereby stood apart from others around him. And he frankly gave expression to his feelings, thoughts, and experiences. In fact, to do so was his ardent wish. But as it was the fate with the individualists he was not understood. Cincinnatus C., had a sense of independence, which becomes apparent from his nonchalant attitude to what others thought of him, and his present state of health.

. . . . as there is in the world not a single human who can speak my language, or, more, simply, not a single human
who can speak; or even more simply not a single human.... (94)

On other character, which parallels Cincinnatus C., in individuality is Emmie. She was a child of innocence. Her very gesture was one of gay abandon. She was pure, untrammeled, and independent. She recalls to mind the child of innocence painted in words by Edward Estlin Cummings in his poem, entitled, Tumbling-hair. The poem makes interesting reading, and hence it is quoted below:

Tumbling-hair

picker of buttercups

violets
dandelions And the big bullying daisies

through the field wonderful

with eyes a little sorry

Another comes also picking flowers.... (26)

Furthermore the relevant and significant passage from Invitation to a Beheading makes interesting reading, and hence it is quoted below:
She [Emmie] hopped off the cot as the ballerinas run, at a fast riding pace, shaking her hair, and then she leaped, as though flying, and finally pirouetted in one spot, flinging out a multitude of arms. “School will be starting soon,” she said, setting the next moment in Cincinnatus’s lap suddenly, forgetting everything else in the world, she became engrossed in a new occupation she began picking at a black lengthwise scab on her shiny skin, the scab was already half off, and one could see the tender pink scar . . . . (127)

In Humbert Humbert one comes across a different but a unique kind of personage. He gets introduced as a middle-aged man still having the power and charm to attract the female sex. He had “the peculiar ‘sending’ effect” that his “good looks pseudo-Celtic, attractively simian, boyishly manly had on women of every age and environment” (103). Humbert, it must be acknowledged, was a man who never lost his individuality. He never sacrificed his way of living for the sake of social mores, moral scruples, and religious tenets. Knowing full well that his act was base he never fought shy of having incestuous intimacies with his stepdaughter, Lolita.
To Humbert marriage with Charlotte Haze was not a sanctimonious union. It was a matter of convenience, so that he could have his Lolita. Therefore, when he was asked to enjoy his promotion from lodger to lover he gleefully accepted it. After marrying Charlotte Haze Humbert Humbert contemplated murdering so that he could have bodily contacts with Lolita without interference. He confessed to having cherished murderous design, and in that confession frankly stated, quoted in extenso, one detects Humbert Humbert's sense of independence and separate identity.

Were I to catch her by her strong kicking foot; were I to see her amazed look, hear her awful voice; were I still to go through with the ordeal, her ghost would haunt me all my life. Perhaps if the year were 1447 instead of 1947 I might have hoodwinked my gentle nature by administering her some classical poison from a hollow agate, some tender philter of death. But in our middle class nosy era it would not have come off the way it used to in brocaded palaces of the past. Nowadays you have to be a scientist if you want to be a killer.
We are unhappy, mild, dog-eyed gentlemen, sufficiently well integrated to control our urge in the presence of adults, but ready to give years of life for one chance to touch a nymphet. Emphatically, no killers are we. Poets never kill. Oh, my poor charlotte, do not hate me in your eternal alchemy of asphalt and rubber and metal and stone but thank God, not water, not water . . . . (87)

After Charlotte Haze met with a road accident Humbert took Lolita on a long motor trip. At the first hotel, *The Enchanted Huntress*, Humbert wanted to drug Lolita with a dosage of sleeping pills, and then to operate upon a completely anaesthetized nude. Yet again, Humbert admitted very individualistically to his sexual intimacy with Lolita “The beastly and beautiful things merged at one point, and it is that borderline that I would like to fix . . . .” (134).

Lolita on her part was independent and practical. She it was who seduced Humbert at *The Enchanted Huntress*, and from then on Humbert and Lolita became technically lovers. When Humbert remarked to her that they were not rich and therefore they would have to share the same room, she completed his dialogue stating that
they would have to enter into a kind of incest. The dialogue reveals her sense of independence, and pragmatism:

"We are not very rich, and while we travel we shall be obliged we shall be thrown a good deal together. Two people sharing one room, inevitably enter into a kind of how shall I say . . . a kind"

"The word is incest," said Lo. . . (119)

It is established that the major American themes of identity, and individuality have engaged the mind of Nabokov, and he has subjected them to adequate and admirable artistic treatment in his fictions.

Thus, it is argued that Barth focuses on love as the pivotal force determining life situation, and that Nabokov maintains that life situation is meaningless individualistic identity.