



# REVISTA INCLUSIONES

INVESTIGANDO EN TIEMPOS DE CAMBIOS

Revista de Humanidades y Ciencias Sociales

Volumen 7 . Número Especial

Julio / Septiembre

2020

ISSN 0719-4706

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**THEME AND IDEA FEATURES OF VLADIMIR NABOKOV'S  
“THE REAL LIFE OF SEBASTIAN KNIGHT” NOVEL**

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**Fecha de Recepción:** 12 de mayo de 2020 – **Fecha Revisión:** 30 de mayo 2020

**Fecha de Aceptación:** 30 de junio de 2020 – **Fecha de Publicación:** 01 de julio de 2020

**Abstract**

Vladimir Nabokov's "The Real Life of Sebastian Knight" novel, points to the creative personality and society, the loneliness of man, the metaphysical meaning of artistic expression, real and true life, death, unity of spirit. The consistently developing plot logic is aligned and the unity of the spirit is the main idea of the novel, and the moment that the deprivation of physical life can not be an obstacle to the unity of the spirit develops against the background of a specific and original trio: the author of the novel, the novelist and the hero of the novel. The analysis of the work is based on methods of comparative studies using methods of literary and psychological analysis, the theoretical features of postmodernism, Freudianism. Autobiographical characteristics of the novel created conditions for parallels between the events of the novel and the historical and comparative method of life and creativity of the writer.

**Keywords**

Vladimir Nabokov The Real Life of Sebastian Knight – Loneliness – Postmodernism

**Para Citar este Artículo:**

Azizaliyeva, Basira. Theme and idea features of Vladimir Nabokov's "The real life of Sebastian Knight" Novel. Revista Inclusiones Vol: 7 num Especial (2020): 380-393.

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PH. D. BASIRA AZIZALIYEVA

## Introduction

Vladimir Nabokov (1899-1977) was a poet, prose writer, translator and literary critic. The period of emigration in the United States is also a very important stage in the writer's work. V. Nabokov lived in America between 1940 and 1959 and wrote some of his most famous works in English. The writer, who emigrated to Europe after the establishment of Soviet power in Russia and who wrote stories, poems and novels in his native language between 1923 and 1940, entered a new stage in his creative activity with the novel "The Real Life of Sebastian Knight", first published in English in 1941. The literary and philosophical legacy of Nabokov, reflected in a peculiar form in works related to the period in the United States, covers problems related to the inner world of man, problems of civilization, the real world and imagination of the writer, a new life connected with emigration, memories of Russia and other problems.

His works, written by him in America, were also closely related to the thoughts pertaining to the European period of the writer. From this point of view, the American researcher John Foster correctly writes:

"Both works ["The Real Life of Sebastian Knight" and "Under the Sign of the Bastards"] reflect the thoughts of the European Nabokov in a limited sense before he crossed the Atlantic Ocean."<sup>1</sup>

According to the researcher, during the arrival of Nabokov to America, the influence of the European style is felt in his works written in English, as well as borrowing from the new American experience, which was reflected in his works, and, of course, this process took some time.

Russian researcher Nikolai Anastasiev also notes that the work on the work began when the writer was still in Paris: "V. Nabokov started to write this book in Paris in 1936, at that time the family lived in a single-room house and he had to work in the bathroom ..."<sup>2</sup>.

Besides having the autobiographical features, this novel can also be said to serve as a key to resolve the main ideas of Nabokov's novels, his manner of writing, literary principles, style, forms of building composition, codes and cyphers in his works.

The study of the novel "The Real Life of Sebastian Knight" is important in several ways; expression of the similarity of the first English-language novel of the writer with previous and Russian-language works; Innovations that occurred in the writer's work during the period of emigration to the United States; the study of the aesthetic ideas of the writer and the observation of their use in the novel; postmodern tendencies in the writer's work; studying the peculiarities of emigrant literature in the novel; Observing the relationship between the author and the readers; explanation of the problem of a creative person and society; The original style and style of expression in the novel. For this purpose, new literary heroes are analyzed in the light of the moral and psychological characteristics of the characters, and the main idea of the novel is monitored in the context of the writer, the hero and the reader.

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<sup>1</sup> J. B. Foster, Nabokov's Art of Memory and European Modernism (New Jersey: Princeton, 1945).

<sup>2</sup> N. Anastasyev, Fenomen Nabokova (Moscow: Sovetskiy pisatel'. 1992).

## Materials and Methods

### The Original Literary Style of Nabokov

The original literary style of Nabokov - the idea of the novel is distinguished by the peculiarity of the expression of the trio - the author, witness of what is happening in the novel and the hero of the novel.

The work was dedicated to a famous writer. It is a great and original writer's novel narrated by a narrative. Approaching from the point of view of three realities, a way, which is outside of the life's realities, but at the same time, is called real and here the truth is searched. Sometimes life ways of the heroes of Nabokov's novels remind the turns on the chessboard. In some cases the writer giving a detective style to the description of the events, builds the plot of the novel in a logical sequence with his original wording style and creative criteria.

"In this work, choosing comprehension of 'another me' (or the second personality) as a sample of linguistic and literary transformation, Nabokov described himself to some extent in the personality of the artist and hero Sebastian Knight."<sup>3</sup>

The novel, besides being a philosophical treatise about a literary work, life and death, also presents aesthetic ideas in a unique manner; he evaluates other works in the novel and writes a new book. The novel is told on the basis of the narration of Sebastian Knight's brother who writes a book about his life and who is kept in secret and only in one case is reminded as V.

"That is, the hero of the novel is an invisible person. He is a late Russian immigrant writer who is the author of many well-known works, and now his brother who is presented only with an initial "V" is trying to write his biography in the novel. As usual, there is a lot of autobiographical information here."<sup>4</sup>

The author notes that the descriptions, which have been given within the works of Sebastian Knight correspond to Nabokov's childhood years in Russia. The narrator who begins to write a book about his brother explores and explains the childhood and youth memories, Sebastian's friends, the women he loved, his books, ideas of those books and publication issues of them, as well as his way of thinking and distinguished features. This book presented by the narrator during speaking on that process in fact is a book about his brother. In other words, if not to take into account the characters, which take part in the description of events, the novel "The Real Life of Sebastian Knight" has got three main heroes: the narrator, Sebastian Knight and Nabokov. The reader is invited to be the fourth hero.

Here we also see the features of postmodern literature. Tayyar Salamoglu writes: "... According to postmodern aesthetics, the text turns into a novel not only by the author's notes, but also" to read" and "to write "again in the perception of each reader". Gorkmaz Guliyev also reflects on the question:

"According to the postmodern concept, a master who is deprived of the status of a creative demiur actually creates a text, not a work. The reader's perception of the text is based on the deconstruction of the leading categories

<sup>3</sup> J. B. Foster, Nabokov's Art of Memory...

<sup>4</sup> Anastasyev, Fenomen Nabokova.

of postmodernism. The deconstructive principle allows the reader to dismantle the text in all possible planes - from composition, plot, style, psychology, etc. and to assemble it anew independently on the basis of own comments. In fact, every text is written [by the reader - G.G.] here and now."

We observe these qualities in the work.

The idea of unity of the spirit which is clearly evident at the end of the novel emerges as a major cause and result moving forward towards the goal throughout the book, and finding the true meaning at the end. Nabokov's heroes and the spirit he has delivered to readers are seen behind the raised curtain, and from behind the removed mask:

"The end, the final. All return to their daily lives [Claire to the grave] - but the main player remains; because, no matter how much I try to get rid of my role, I just cannot make away with it. Sebastian's mask clings on me, this resemblance will never be erased. I am Sebastian, or Sebastian is me, or both of us are another person, whom we don't know." <sup>5</sup>

That another one is a writer, and he tries to unite with his readers by means of his soul. In order to understand the final words of the novel, which we have set as a sample more clearly, we will look through the novel. Nabokov's novels requires the reader be very careful, to approach to every thought and stated word sensitively. For the author, as we know, speaks with codes and cyphers and once we have lost the tip of a skein, it becomes impossible to find it again. "Nature of Nabokov's art is as follows: no analysis can be satisfactory" <sup>6</sup>. One of the important aspects of the novel "The Real Life of Sebastian Knight" is that the novel teaches style, manner, method of description of events and ideas of the writer, helps to understand and study Nabokov's creative work. "The Real Life of Sebastian Knight' – this title is not the biography of the hero, it is a story about the complexity of his writing." <sup>7</sup>.

Since the originality of postmodern literature is aimed at expression in a professional manner, a postmodern writer along with what is a philosopher, he is also an aesthetic. Because the created work in relation to literary and theoretical categories also appears in a different and new form. The novel "The Real Life of Sebastian Knight" also noted the above problems.

Before analyzing the novel, it would be helpful to pay attention to Fatih Ozguven's words:

"Knight [in chess, the knight moves horizontally or vertically twice, and then again goes once horizontally or vertically], Bishop [in chess, bishop cannot go beyond the color of the square it stands on]. Among the riddles that Nabokov has submitted to the reader and which he, rightly, does not want to disclose, there is one which should be disclosed in order not to be unfair to the reader who does not know English. Of course, it is up to the reader how he will evaluate this tip, it is left to his own imagination ..." <sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> V. Nabokov, *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight*. Nabokov V. *Novels and Memoirs 1941-1951* (New York: Literary Classics of the United States, 1996).

<sup>6</sup> D. S. Rutledge, *Nabokov's Permanent Mystery. The Expression of Metaphysics in His Work* (North Carolina: McFarland and Company, Inc., Publishers, 2011).

<sup>7</sup> Anastasyev, *Fenomen Nabokova*.

<sup>8</sup> F. Ozguven, *Vladimir Nabokov* (Istanbul: Contact means, 2013), 5.

During research of the novel we will observe that the author is right when he suggests the word "Knight" in the sense of the knight on the chessboard. Because, V. Nabokov managed to describe the moves in the life which look like the moves on the chessboard, he managed to create a scene within a prose. From this point of view, as in other novels of the writer, the novel "The Real Life of Sebastian Knight" also bears a dramatic character. The writer, presenting the truth as the events taking place as the sequence of coincidences, but in fact are the result of known and necessary objective laws, begins to write the life of Sebastian Knight saying that "unless you chase a known thing, you would never know what will the destiny bring to you"<sup>9</sup>. The narrator's first guide on this way becomes the diary of an old Russian woman called Olga Olegovna Orlova. Just from the very first pages V. Nabokov's aesthetic ideas begin to follow literary, philosophical and artistic thought. The author calls the diary "a man's most miserable way of eternalization himself."<sup>10</sup>

According to the author, as mentioned above, when the target is not known it is impossible to find the right path. It is not accidental that in order to present himself to the American literary environment V. Nabokov used this work which is written in such a unique and interesting manner. This is not only a diary, or an autobiography, it was an optimal form of presenting the personality and creative work of the writer which was the hero of the novel, and describing not his real, but true life. Sebastian Knight was born in Russia in 1899, his father was Russian and mother was an English woman Virginia Knight whom he met in Italy. When Sebastian was four years old his mother abandoned him and her husband and only once came to meet her son until her death. The narrator, i.e. his brother was the son of his father from his second wife who was Russian. As you can see, the life of the future writer began with huge losses, and it shaped his world view and brought different qualities to his life. It is not accidental that in the novel as the first work by Sebastian Knight was mentioned the novel "Lost Thing". From the first pages of the novel besides narration of the events, S. Knight's works are also spoken about, and they are analyzed and estimated by the narrator. Although a complex and mixed line is drawn together with the memories, quotes from Sebastian Knight's work, critical assessment samples on his works and the description of the events taking place at the current time, the style involving the logical sequence of thoughts and ideas helps to understand the work.

For example, let us consider an example. After talking about the novel "Lost Thing" where Sebastian Knight's childhood years are described, the narrator pays attention to the thought of a critic assessing this book in one of literary circles. In that critical report which his brother did not accept evaluation of his brother's work in such a context, it was stated:

"Poor Knight! In fact, his life can be divided into two stages – firstly he was an insipid man writing in broken English, then he became a broken man writing in insipid English."<sup>11</sup>

The events that V. Nabokov faced in his life and creative activity, interestingness of that sample matching with critical thoughts and its significance for the novel was its presentation namely at this point. Although the narrator does not accept "brokenness", "he searches the reason of Sebastian's life's and literary style's deprivation of a tremendous vitality"<sup>12</sup> in heaviness of the losses he had to face in his childhood, provides a true relation among the examples which at a first glance seems random, however are born from objective

<sup>9</sup> V. Nabokov, *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight*. Nabokov... 7.

<sup>10</sup> V. Nabokov, *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight*. Nabokov... 7.

<sup>11</sup> V. Nabokov, *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight*. Nabokov... 4.

<sup>12</sup> V. Nabokov, *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight*. Nabokov... 4.

laws from the gist. It should be noted that we do not agree with Chinara Ibrahimova's introduction of this sample as an assessment of an objective critic<sup>13</sup>. Because this sample comes into view on the basis of a polemic of critics and it becomes known that it bears a subjective quality.

## Literature Review

### The Contradiction between Man and Society Is the Cause of Sebastian Knight's Loneliness

The first tragedy of Sebastian Knight was his speech in a role of an abandoned child: "There was nothing that could a child do, he simply had a strange abundance of time, the time which went out from a track and spread to all four directions."<sup>14</sup> V. Nabokov's approach to word metaphysic thinking is on a foreground, he does not use a word without submitting it to the goal.

Sad childhood memories like his mother's leaving them and meeting him only once after it and a year later from this meeting her dying from a heart disease, his father getting wounded during a duel with a man who caused his wife to leave him and his dying from a disease caused by this injury, formed lonely and cold-blooded image of Sebastian. The author thinks the loneliness in character and life to be a key of the way he set off for finding realities of Sebastian Knight's life; he believed that when he will look into the door opened with this key, the true ideas will be revived:

"The key word of Sebastian's life was loneliness; as the destiny brought him everything that he thought he had dreamt of trying him not to feel strange, he understood more clearly the shortcoming in the sense of to keep to this, or another frame. When Sebastian understood it and began to develop a human mind as a rare-met talent or a passion, only at that time... began to worry about his skills and incompatibility."<sup>15</sup>

Not keeping to a frame was determined with his character, originality of his works as well as, with his attitude to the literary environment. His divergence from the things that he had got accustomed to and enjoyed from time to time was the consequent way of his loneliness, the author's words "he began to enjoy the things which are meant to give enjoyment and directed with his silence to the things in which he had been interested in"<sup>16</sup> confirm it once again. Namely for this reason, the narrator tried to investigate and write The Real Life of Sebastian Knight way and his real life style. One of the points realizing Sebastian Knight's "out-of-frame" character was his different way of thinking, his "permanent alertness". This point brought to the hero differences like time indicator, evaluation, acceptance in regard with the relations of other people.

Practical aspect of life interested Sebastian knight less, the writer owned a truth which the daily life disguised. His being met by the people around in a different way, his seeming a contradictive man, his cold attitude to his brother also derived from here. Sebastian Knight himself also confessed it:

<sup>13</sup> Chinara S. Ibragimova, "Tvorchestvo V. Nabokova i amerikanskiy modernistskiy roman XX veka" (Doctoral thesis, ASUL, 2013).

<sup>14</sup> V. Nabokov, The Real Life of Sebastian Knight. Nabokov... 6.

<sup>15</sup> V. Nabokov, The Real Life of Sebastian Knight. Nabokov... 33.

<sup>16</sup> V. Nabokov, The Real Life of Sebastian Knight. Nabokov... 36.

"... As I know this dangerous misery of my mind, I was afraid to get accounted with people, to hurt them, to seem ridiculous to them. It is so easy with the thing called practical side of life- saying between us, to sell a book in a moon light seems far away from the truth, as to hold a copy-book, and another thing- this peculiarity or shortcoming which caused pain to me when I faced it at the time of my loneliness became an instrument of an enjoyment" <sup>17</sup>.

The narrator's words about Sebastian saying "from time to time he becomes like a mad, he has strangeness" <sup>18</sup> sourced from it. As it seems, the writer calls this aspect both peculiarity and shortcoming, and it was related with acquisition of reality relativeness in practical life of reality. In the above-mentioned novel, in relation with the society, although not so strong, but Sebastian Knight's referring to the founder of psychoanalysis science, Sigmund Freud's ideas do not evade from eyes. S. Freud wrote in his work called "The future of an illusion": "It seems that the culture is built upon coercion and suppressing of desires." <sup>19</sup>

Sebastian Knight told about the spirit world and the imbalance between it and practical side of the society stating that the society will understand it as a disease:

"In my efforts to be adjusted to the colors of my environment, in my efforts resulted with failures I just looked like a color-blind chameleon. If my embarrassment was due to sweating palms, or pimples, it would be much easier to bear it by me or by others... But this disease which had nothing to do with the pains of maturity obtained a hidden form in me. One of the most polite inventions of the prisons is the one forbidding a dream to the prisoners."<sup>20</sup>

Some people did not understand and accept the author's style to build a scene within the novel. From this point of view, in V. Nabokov's work, life seems as a scene hiding the realities behind a mask. The narrator finds the real life philosophy of the well-known writer by removing this mask and we see it at the end of the novel.

Loneliness of Sebastian Knight, his "out-of-frame" character found its reflection as a writer in his attitude to the literary environment. At that moment, we come across autobiographic features coinciding with V. Nabokov's own life and literary career. As it is known from his life, the writer has always kept to his principle not to enter to the literary unities.

Sebastian Knight who was known for his original works actually did not accept the phenomenon of popularity. He author saying "At our time, the thing called popularity is actually something very ordinary which can be mixed with the inexhaustible glory of a book" <sup>21</sup> also did not accept Claire's advice whom he loved, with whom he lived for a certain time and who helped him to develop his career, to take part in the literary environment.

It is also impossible to ignore the concept of freedom and its expression in Nabokov's work. As noted,

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<sup>17</sup> V. Nabokov, *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight*. Nabokov... 52.

<sup>18</sup> V. Nabokov, *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight*. Nabokov... 79.

<sup>19</sup> Sigmund Freud, *Budushcheye Odnoy Illyuzii* (Moscow: AST Publishing Group, 2011), 5.

<sup>20</sup> V. Nabokov, *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight*. Nabokov... 51.

<sup>21</sup> V. Nabokov, *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight*. Nabokov... 79.

Theme and idea features of Vladimir Nabokov's "The real life of Sebastian Knight" Novel pág. 387

"V. Nabokov is a writer with original and various literary and philosophical thoughts. On the other hand, he is a writer who adheres to mediatory thought between modern literature and postmodern literature, also not indifferent to the principles of freedom of postmodern novels. Postmodernism can also be viewed as a new style of global capitalism, which destroys national economies, languages and national cultures."<sup>22</sup>

In fact, Nabokov's position sometimes coincides with postmodern thinking, and sometimes he does not accept the denial and excessive "innovation" of modernism. Therefore, such concepts as "high artistry, semantic adherence, pluralistic views"<sup>23</sup>, defined as the main features of postmodernism, are more characteristic of V. Nabokov's works.

Among Sebastian Knight's distinctive qualities his having his own hidden world, his peculiarities not fully understandable for the people surrounding him and even for his family draws attention. The narrator while characterizing his brother says "Let us the door remain closed, let only a thin light to leak under it"<sup>24</sup> thus tries not to tell all secret aspects of the writer to the reader. Each time during V. Nabokov's communication with the reader, his style calling the reader for a creative approach has always been on a foreground. This aspect was also related with the relativity issue which held an important place in the writer's world outlook. The idea that even the polished ideas coming from Sebastian Knight's, the narrator's and V. Nabokov's filters should not be absolute for a reader sourced from the literary principles of the writer. While setting off for searching The Real Life of Sebastian Knight, the author tries to convey these issues:

"... Don't be sure that you will learn the past from the lips of the present!... Do not forget that what is said to you is three-staged; firstly, the narrator trims it, then it is re-trimmed by a listener, and that the dead man in the story has much he has hidden from these two."<sup>25</sup>

The narrator telling the novel comes across with all above-mentioned three points while writing the book about Sebastian Knight and first of all, he tries to be loyal to secret world of his brother. It is not accidental that he burns without reading the letters and writings which Sebastian Knight before his death asked him in his letter to eliminate. He carries out his wish of confidentiality even when he comes across the name of a Russian woman in one of the letters whom he tried to find. Sebastian Knight's world remaining among the secrets made a distance between his brother and his stepmother:

"It always seems to me that, - my mother used to say, I have never known Sebastian truly. I knew that he got good marks at school, that he has read surprising number of books, that he is attentive to cleanness, that every morning he has had a cold bath despite his lungs being sensitive to cold, I knew it all and even much more than this, but still, I have never managed to know him. And even now when I think that he lives in a strange country and writes us letters in English, it seems he will always remain a secret for me."<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Anastasyev, Fenomen Nabokova... 214.

<sup>23</sup> Ibragimova, "Tvorchestvo V. Nabokova i amerikanskiy modernistskiy roman XX veka" (Doctoral thesis, Baku ASUL, 2013), 29.

<sup>24</sup> V. Nabokov, The Real Life of Sebastian Knight. Nabokov... 15.

<sup>25</sup> V. Nabokov, The Real Life of Sebastian Knight. Nabokov... 40.

<sup>26</sup> V. Nabokov, The Real Life of Sebastian Knight. Nabokov... 23.

The narrator speaks with the cyphers and codes, and here the issue of letters in English is a cypher used by the writer which gets clear towards the end of the novel. It is not accidental that Sebastian Knight's last letter to his brother was written in English. The analysis of Sebastian Knight's works in the novel, as we have mentioned, explains creation of cyphers by the writer by different means and the ways of decoding them. In the novel "Lost Thing" while speaking about the relations and letters between Sebastian Knight and Claire, the distinctive style that those cyphers bring to the writer's novels draws attention:

"If you ask me to name a writer surprising his art so much, and much more, a writer who uses a form surprising the people who want to see that real man behind the writer, I would not be able to name one." <sup>27</sup>

The narrator sets off to a way namely for finding "that real person hiding behind the writer" and he tries to fix the nods and decode the cyphers and at the end of the novel that man comes emerges.

One of the issues bringing a mystery to Sebastian knight's world is his elimination of all his incomplete works and notes before his death and his precept to his brother to destroy some others. The narrator who seems as a literary critic appreciates it much: "He is one of those rare writers who knows that only perfect sources and newly published books should be kept." <sup>28</sup> In the novel two books written about Sebastian Knight are talked about. One of them is Mr. Goodman's book who used to work as an assistant of the writer for a certain period of time, the other is the narrator's book covering the whole novel. In these two books we meet different Sebastian Knight. The narrator, enters to the debate both during conversations, and also while giving samples from Mr. Goodman's book, do not accepting the thoughts of the critic who distorted the real nature of the hero and could not understand the writer although working with him.

Mr. Goodman used to write about Sebastian Knight:

"Sebastian Knight was fond of strange and ridiculous aspects of events, and was so incapable while going down to serious basis that he ironized even the most sacred and beautiful feelings of others although he was not a heartless and ironizing man." <sup>29</sup>

As in other cases, the narrator does not set this sample accidentally. At first sight, Sebastian Knight could make such an impression. It can be confirmed if superficially to approach his attitude towards his stepmother, brother.

## Discussions

### Nabokov's Metaphysical Approach to Word Is a Word That Can Not Be Expressed

The most appropriate description of the relations between the brothers since their childhood years is given by the narrator in the form "as always, his putting silence and distance between him and me." <sup>30</sup> That silence and distance going on throughout all his life, find its actual meaning in Sebastian Knight's last letter and death.

<sup>27</sup> V. Nabokov, *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight*. Nabokov... 88.

<sup>28</sup> V. Nabokov, *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight*. Nabokov... 27.

<sup>29</sup> V. Nabokov, *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight*. Nabokov... 15.

<sup>30</sup> V. Nabokov, *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight*. Nabokov... 12.

Sebastian's strangeness and loneliness showed itself in his environment and in his attitude towards his brother since his childhood. While remembering childhood years, the narrator wrote:

"As if Sebastian was not a permanent owner of our family, as if he was a restless guest passing through a light room and disappearing in the dark of the night. I believe that it was not for preventing me to contact with one who is elder than me so much that cannot be a friend of mine and one that was too far away to show me the way, but it was the result of Sebastian's refusal from recognizing my love although I loved him much, and taking me as a stranger."<sup>31</sup>

After the revolution in Russia, the brothers' way split up in a family secretly escaping to Finland. Sebastian Knight settles at first in London, then in Cambridge, lives owning the heritage left from his mother, his stepmother and brother settle in Paris. The "silence" that we have noted between the brothers is conveyed with the regret of the words that the narrator wanted to say to Sebastian Knight, but could not say. The writer's approach to the relation between the word and the phrase sourced from metaphysic ideas is clearly reflected here. Throughout all the novel, beginning from the descriptions of the childhood years up to the events at the end of the novel, the narrator tries to express his feelings for his brother.

Regret for the unborn word lasts throughout the entire plot, the words which are one of the forms of real manifestation of the soul are wrapped to a silence without being born. This process has been given in the novel with very serious logical sequence, and as all other lines is tied to a main goal at the end of the novel. We witness the narrator's above-mentioned feelings for Sebastian when he sees him off after he comes to the funeral of his stepmother and stays with him for a certain period of time.

"Suddenly, although there was no ground for that, I felt sorrow for Sebastian, I wanted to say him some true things with hearts and wings, but those birds came to me much later, when I was left alone and felt no need for the words, they sat on my shoulders, on my head."<sup>32</sup>

The narrator tried to express his love which he could not tell which "began to blaze again with a double strength"<sup>33</sup>, by beginning to write a book about Sebastian Knight two months later after his death. The unexpressed word line continues with narrator's receiving a letter stating that his brother had a heavy and incurable sickness and his strong desire for seeing him before his death, talking to him, being able to say him the words he wanted to say.

### **The service of the hero's death line to express the main idea of the novel - the idea of spiritual unity**

All the lines drawn around Sebastian Knight come to a common point at the end of the story. Early death of the hero caused from a heart disease that the hero was suffered from unites all separate lines of the plot of the novel. As we have mentioned before, before his death Sebastian Knight writes a letter expressing his wish to see his brother and to talk to him. While reading the letter, the narrator gets excited, becomes surprised that he has never received such kind of letter from his brother, approaching to this issue very sensitively,

<sup>31</sup> V. Nabokov, *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight*. Nabokov... 12.

<sup>32</sup> V. Nabokov, *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight*. Nabokov... 32.

<sup>33</sup> V. Nabokov, *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight*. Nabokov... 25.

he tries to set off as soon as possible, however, fails due to his work. At the night of the day when he has received the letter he sees his brother in his dream. Being very dramatic and sad, the dream indicated to Sebastian's death and the last words he wanted to say to his brother.

S. Freud writes in his work called "About Dreams":

"Sometimes when we are on the eve of a journey to somewhere, in our dream we see that we have already reached the place...in other cases the dream does not express the real and true realization of the wish; at that time one should build some relation to comprehend that secret wish, or to conclude a result."<sup>34</sup>

The narrator's dream is on one hand expressed his wish to be able to see his brother as soon as possible, on another hand an accident which has been presented in a horrible way and its result, Sebastian's disease, his invalid appearance, his gradual disappearance, broken echoes of the words he wanted to say to them when he was going away from them symbolized the hero's death. The dream reflected the narrator's psychological state involving his wishes, excitement and sufferings to see his brother for the last time. It was not accidental that S. Freud writes in his work "Problems of Metapsychology": "We should look at the study of a dream as the most reliable way of deep psychological processes"<sup>35</sup>. The next letter comes from a doctor informing that Sebastian Knight's state is very desperate and incurable. At this time the narrator sets off with a wish to see his brother for the last time and to have a chance to meet and to talk to him before his death. The last chapter of the novel is accompanied with stressful mood of the hero and one of the thoughts that the writer stated throughout the novel – longing that cannot be conveyed, word that cannot be said- is reflected with all its bareness. Internal logical subsequence of the novel becomes to get clarified here and generally, towards the end of the story. Yet in the description of previous events of the novel the narrator researching Sebastian Knight's attitude to the word and thought with a critical eye expressed his conclusions in regard with the above mentioned issue. According to the author, Sebastian Knight was one of the writers who wanted with "an effort to make a bridge over the abyss between thinking and expressing"<sup>36</sup>:

"So, only thinking which is considered bare, actually, is not more than a thought that waits to gain a form it needs for. On another hand, the words which are emerging in the far, and again getting lost, are not hollow shells as they have been considered; they are simply waiting for the thoughts that they hide to flame them."<sup>37</sup>

S. Freud writes in his work "Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego" "that the practice of a tongue even in its whims remains loyal to a reality"<sup>38</sup>. Real appearance of the aesthetic thoughts that we have set samples, we observe in narrator's excitement to say the words before the death. However the narrator was not able to say his words to his brother, Sebastian Knight passes away before his arrival. Sebastian Knight's death is evaluated as

<sup>34</sup> J. B. Foster, Nabokov's Art of Memory... 23.

<sup>35</sup> Sigmund Freud, Problemy metapsikhologii (Moscow: AST Publishing Group, 2009), 83.

<sup>36</sup> V. Nabokov, Laura and her original (Saint-Petersburg: Publishing Group "Alphabet -classics," 2010), 64.

<sup>37</sup> V. Nabokov, Laura and her original... 64.

<sup>38</sup> Sigmund Freud, Psikhologiya mass i analiz chelovecheskogo "Ya" (Moscow: Academic Project, 2014).

his comprehension of the real life, the narrator's finding the truth he has been searching for. The love between the brothers that had not been expressed finds its reflection after Sebastian Knight's death. The narrator who begins to write a book about his brother two months later after his brother's death, expresses his feelings in such a way:

"... the love that I have always experienced for him during his life, but was prevented in one or another way, blazed out after his death so strongly that all my work turned into fading shadows."<sup>39</sup>

According to the writer, "a strange adaptation called a human death<sup>40</sup> takes away all formal relations between the people, however at the same time, there appears a soul unity". Emergence of unspoken words and unexpressed feelings after the death confirms this thought. Because, as the writer wrote, "it is just a physical death."

## Results

The events telling about Sebastian Knight's death are given in parallel with the description of his novel "Suspicious Lily". Here, two issues attract attention; the first is a death motif, another is chess figures about which we have spoken at the beginning of the work. At first, let's pay attention to the first issue. What does the writer mean by resembling the heroes of the novel to the knight figure on the chessboard? We have not met in the researches anything about this thought. Generally, there exists "a venue" where the heroes of V. Nabokov's novel play. Revitalization of life as a theatre is a traditional way. There can be various aspects and reasons for bringing the life on a chessboard plane. Here, the first aspect coming to the foreground is logics. "The Real Life of Sebastian Knight" is a novel where the thoughts, words and actions have been built in a very serious logical way. The scene here cannot be imagined only as a theater scene, because mathematical mind, logical approach, and metaphysical thinking also show them vividly. From this point of view, chess figures' being taken as a symbol draws attention as an original and interesting literary manner. Regarding the question, "Why namely knight figure?", the knight figure, unlike the other figures, can jump over other figures. Towards the end of the novel, in the sample set from "Suspicious Lily" story, this issue has also been touched, there is such a part in the work:

"We observe an old and kind-hearted chess player called Schwarz who tries to teach the movements of the knight to an orphan boy sitting in a house, in a room, on a chair."<sup>41</sup>

It is not accidental that when the narrator secretly looked through Sebastian's black school copy-book with his poems in English yet when he was sixteen, these poems were written with the name of the figure "Knight": "One detail has remained in my memory, it was the fact that under each poem there was drawn a little black knight figure."<sup>42</sup> Generally, the issue of chess figures was one of the literary styles that V. Nabokov did not want to clarify.

From this point of view, Rustam Kamal rightly wrote: "Nabokov knew the chess well, in all his creative work there is chess figure logic: But only he himself knew the rules."<sup>43</sup>

<sup>39</sup> V. Nabokov, *Laura and her original*... 25.

<sup>40</sup> V. Nabokov, *Laura and her original*... 25.

<sup>41</sup> V. Nabokov, *Laura and her original*... 136.

<sup>42</sup> V. Nabokov, *Laura and her original*... 13.

<sup>43</sup> R. Kamal, *Creativity as a game of loneliness. Nabokov V. Selected works* (Baku: East-West, 2010), 11.

As we have mentioned before, towards the end of the novel, while setting samples from Sebastian Knight's "Suspicious Lily" story, the words "a man is dying" is often repeated. When the cyphers began to be decoded towards the end, this phrase codifies Sebastian Knight's death. The author finds "an absolute resolution" in the above-mentioned work, it was resolution of the nodes with Sebastian Knight's death:

"The most mixed node is not something more than a twisted rope; for the nails they seem to be never resolved, but consists of only subtle rings going ahead lazily. When unskilled fingers remain in blood, eyes resolve it. He [a dying man] is this node and if he can track the yarn with his eyes, they will be resolved all together. Not only himself, everything will be resolved."<sup>44</sup>

Sebastian Knight's death leads to resolution of all events taking place around him and the hero's real life. It is a unity of souls, a spiritual proximity connecting the heroes, the main idea and essence of the novel emerges in this point. The narrator says:

"I do not know what secret he had, but I have understood it, and it is the following; the soul is not something more than a creation form, if you track the waves of any soul, it can be yours. The life after the death is perhaps an opportunity to live mentally in a plenty number of souls. Then, I am Sebastian Knight."<sup>45</sup>

The writer tries to express that when there is a soul unity, the conventionalities in the life scene acquire a relative character, as a form the body loses its significance, only soul determines the personality. Because of it, the novel ends in these words: "I am Sebastian, or Sebastian is me, or maybe both of us are another man whom we don't know"<sup>46</sup>. So, in the Sebastian Knight's example, a real man which hides behind the writer are the persons having soul unity.

## Conclusion

The novel "The Real Life of Sebastian Knight" has a very complex structure, at the same time, has a plot built systematically, on a logical sequence. The first significant condition of investigation of the work is the manner of approach and ability to track the internal connections between thoughts and words. Otherwise, description of events and research of ideas do not let to get a correct result. V. Nabokov's thoughts in the novel are divided between the narrator and the writer Sebastian Knight who is the hero of the novel. But it is not the collection of different thoughts; the same idea is completed with the narrator's and hero's words in a logical way. The novel is important from this point of view. V. Nabokov tries to say that unity of souls, if it has similar manifestations in minds, differences among the writers will disappear and Sebastian Knight, the narrator and Nabokov express the same idea.

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<sup>44</sup> V. Nabokov, The Real Life of Sebastian Knight. Nabokov... 139.

<sup>45</sup> V. Nabokov, The Real Life of Sebastian Knight. Nabokov... 159.

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