

KURT VONNEGUT

Algren Meets Donoso

True story, Word of Honor:
Back in 1966, with the Vietnam War going on,
in September, the start of a new academic year
at the legendary Writers' Workshop
out at the University of Iowa,
I introduced the world-class novelist Nelson Algren,
onetime lover of Simone de Beauvoir,
wife of Nobel Laureate Jean-Paul Sartre,
to the world-class novelist José Donoso,
nickname "Pepe,"
both of them now in Heaven.

We three had all gone bust,
and so had come to work as teachers
of Creative Writing.
I explained to Nelson
that José, that Pepe, was from Chile.
Nelson thought a moment,
possibly about Simone de Beauvoir.
And then he said to José, to Pepe,
"It must be nice to come
from a country
that long and narrow."