

Korean CATCH-22

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 02 May 1998

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m.driussi — 02 May 1998, 17:28

It really doesn't take excessive imagination to read TBOTNS as a historical/psychological realistic novel about "the psychological breakdown and flight into fantasy by a young infantryman named Gene Wolfe at the frontlines in the Korean War."

After all, Wolfe has said in interviews that Severian's path to the war is pretty much like his own. Plus there are tons of details on Wolfe's Korean War experience in LETTERS HOME.

So, there you have it.

The Citadel of the Autarch = Texas A & M.

Valeria = Rosemary Dietsch.

Atrium of Time = the Dietsches' (front/back)yard in Peoria, Illinois

A.D. 1935.

Jolenta = Marilyn Monroe (Wolfe saw her when she visited the troops). Triskele = Snooper the dog (one paw crushed by tread). Pelerines = Red Cross girls. Pyrotechnic polearms = B.A.R. and the Chinese Forward Observers that Wolfe saw burned to death by flamethrowers on Hill Chinese 200. Agia's ploy at Mine = prostitutes working out of caves. Erebus = USSR (aiding/directing North Korea). Abaia = Communist China (aiding/directing North Korea). Ascia = North Korea. Nessus = Seoul ("there was a time when they [Ascians] laid waste to Nessus" [IV, ch. 24]; i.e., at beginning of Korean War, Seoul was overrun). Vodalus = Howard Hughes-like anarcho-aristocrat. Baldanders = the Atomic Bomb (Little Boy/Fat Man) [especially check out that mushroom cloud formation when flying saucer is parked over his tower]. Typhon = Gen. MacArthur, "American Caesar" as well as "Arthur awakened from the mountain where he sleeps." Kim Lee Soong = K-92, one of Wolfe's Korean "katusa" pals. Jonas = Algis Budrys and/or Hawkeye of M.A.S.H. fame. I, CLAUDIUS = one of the books Wolfe re-read at the front. The 18th Bacele of Irregular Contarii = the 1st Battallion of the 17th [attention 17 watchers!] Infantry (Wolfe's unit). Orinthyia = Porkchop Hill. The Samru = troopship Marine Phoenix, which brought Wolfe back to the US (May 18, 1954). Marriage to Valeria/ascent to the throne = Marriage to Rosemary (A.D. 1956) and conversion to Roman Catholicism.

Thus and so, Yossarian Severian Gosseyne, drawn into a war he didn't believe in, finally escaped by losing his grip on consensual reality and going Sane.

=mantis=