

Secondhand: Four Inscriptions

by Christian Bell

1: *The Pale King* by David Foster Wallace

3/24/12

Dear S----

You'd told me before that you'd wanted to get into DFW but couldn't. I don't know if, since we last talked, you've been able to, but I really think you should give *The Pale King* a chance. It's incomplete and you can tell where it's patched together, but DFW, with kudos to his editor, is one of the few to have created a fiction work of art that's not finished. Ironically enough, it feels that this book should be the beginning point for studying DFW.

I still remember that night we sat around my apartment table and drank beer and bemoaned the state of writers and artists dead too soon. Do you remember that night's big wind storm? Anyway, you're in another state now, and our lives have become different things and we won't likely have those times again. When I read this book, along with enjoying it, I felt pain that someone as gifted as DFW couldn't bear to live and was besieged by depression and I realized there wouldn't be anymore after this. He's being hailed as one of the most significant writers of his time. How cruel for us all.

C----

2: *A Confederacy of Dunces* by John Kennedy Toole

4/14/00

Dear S-----

I figured if I just give you my copy of *A Confederacy of Dunces* maybe then you'll read it. Ignatius will remind you of a certain someone, and Levy Pants will be all too reminiscent of a certain workplace we trudged through a few summers back. The book is a bit crumpled as you can see and it's great for reading. Somewhere in the middle, you'll see a red lipstick print, the remnants of an old girlfriend who manhandled my tomes--bending the corners, writing in the margins, and, yes, putting her mouth stamp on them. But don't get too excited. She destroyed hearts, something I'm sure she's still doing, wherever she may be. Forget about it and just enjoy the book.

Best,

C----

3: *Hey Nostradamus!* by Douglas Coupland

4/20/05

S----

I think this one is Coupland's best. It's amazing that this is Columbine without that word ever being used. What a terrible day. Remember we were glued to the tv and had to keep watching? It's been six years now and I can't forget. There have been too many terrible times now that I can't forget.

C----

4: *The Ambassadors* by Henry James

(no date)

To whoever reads this next--

Henry James makes my head hurt. You've been warned.

C----

