

68 TAMALPAIS ROAD • BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA • 94708

July 12, 1971

Dear Ernest:

The date up there isn't quite correct -- it's the 13th now. But I've been reading your novel for the last two days and have lost track of time. It's 2:00 A.M. on the third day, to be exact.

I won't be able to make much sense right now -- and why? I feel all beaten up, crawling out of one of Prince Elmo's brawls, picking broken teeth and bones and whatnot out of myself. For the time being I can't even speak the language: I was trying to say something perfectly pleasant about dinner tonight and out fell this horrible toad of a cliché -- as you now have made me aware -- something as harmless as, "Dear, these plums are really succulent!" See what I mean?

I'm certain that many people are going to think, as I do, that this is an extraordinary novel. I'll have to write you later in a more composed way, but for the time being I can only tell you that no piece of fiction has had me reading with such constant attention for years, if ever. Your inventiveness is inexhaustible.

Maybe it's a great book. Or maybe you've just so undone me by it that I'd like to think that I was in on the making of a great book. Anyway, I'm undone.

Yours,

