29 Oct 1950

Dear Sidney:

Your calling yesterday gave a very happy turn to a day that was already good. I was glad also to speak for a moment again with Carson. As I mentioned to her I've recently read again Reflectors in a Golden Eye. It brought to the surface of awareness again my feeling that she, in dealing with the pathetic, the grotesque and the tragic, always does so in basic recognition of life and love that is expressed by the various characters, Hugsemana, Waugh, etc., deal with monstrosities and it seems to me they can find in life only
what is fraudulent as so petty as to be disgusting,
Carson gives us with far more power the genuinely
pathologic, often literally
invoking the unsayable, but
this is against a background
(often unstated) of the
true, the good - of love
that is love and not disguised
as perverted hate. Few if any
of her characters find
happiness (which is not a
crucial point) but always
one can tell that the losses,
the soul-butcherery, the
emptiness, is what it is
because man can tell
the truth, is not a sap or
a sentiment when he finds
joy in even the little
details of experience, and
sometimes, can even find
his own.
Some of our acquaintances here seem greatly interested in Mr. T. S. Eliot's Cocktail Party. They, like the book critics — and, apparently, the what is generally regarded as the world of literates — seem to feel that this stuff is pretty potent "philosophy" and also rare and wonderful "poetry." It may be. I can find in it only the most finicky doodling with what is so trivial as to strike me as almost obscene — obscenely pretty. I can't find anyone with even sub-marginal human feelings & values in the play. As for poetry, I can't conceive of anyone calling those sketches by such a term who's ever felt what even such a relative Beatian as I
can feel (with the literal rising of my hair) in efforts, generally considered learned and aesthetic, to convey a personal reaction to what we encounter in living.

If you have time read Mr. T.S. Eliot's 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' and read again Matthew Arnold's 'Dover Beach', Edna St. Vincent Millay's 'Renaissance', Willy Henry Thompson's 'High Tide at Jethro'sburg'. I know Mr. Eliot was awarded the Nobel prize.

I know that those of limited understanding notoriously fail to appreciate the more subtle and profound things and prefer the commonplace to the ignoble. But I'd still prefer that to be identified with what is regarded as an adequate response to Mr. Eliot (to Mr. Waugh). To see what I'm really reacting to, look at Eliot's 'Wasteland', the one
that brought him the Nobel prize.

But Carson's writing, though it is apparently regarded highly by the people who all but worship what I can read & only as I might to the twittering of fashionable old maids, seems to come from somewhere within human feelings not so very far from where The Shepherd's Tale came — and Of Human Bondage.

I am enclosing a short note of introduction to Dr. Sutphen. He impressed me particularly as a person. And his work in analysis with a couple of most difficult patients she sent to him makes me feel my immediate reaction was some good sense.
There are many things I'd like to take up, but I won't try now. I have hopes of doing more writing. I'm sending you a copy of the "new Mask." Leonard joins me in good wishes that are real indeed.

Sincerely,

[Signature]