

# *The Manuscript and the Dialogue of "A Clean, Well-Lighted Place"*

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THE KNOWN MANUSCRIPTS of Ernest Hemingway are in the possession of Mrs. Mary Hemingway, who on several occasions since 1972 has deposited short story material at the John F. Kennedy Library. This has been inventoried and arranged for examination, and was opened to research in 1975. In this material is a previously undiscovered pencil manuscript of Hemingway's much debated short story, "A Clean, Well-Lighted Place."<sup>1</sup> This discovery seems to resolve many of the questions about the original dialogue sequence and how the confusion in the story came about.

"A Clean, Well-Lighted Place" was first published in *Scribner's Magazine* in 1933. It has been the subject of a critical debate concerning the inconsistent dialogue between the two waiters since E. P. Kroeger and William E. Colburn first drew attention to the confusion in their articles published in 1959. Colburn argued that

The major difficulty in analyzing the dialogue arises because there are in the story several separate conversations between the waiters, and in only a few places is the speaker identified by the author. One line, however, we can assign to the younger waiter, because of information which is brought out later: "'He's lonely. I'm not lonely. I have a wife waiting in bed for me.'" Using this line as a reference point, we can trace backwards in the story the alternate lines and discover that it is the younger waiter who is asking about the old man's attempt at suicide and it is the older waiter who knows the details as to the method and who prevented him. Counting forward in the story from our reference line, however, we find the older waiter saying, "'I know. You said she cut him down.'" Obviously

<sup>1</sup> Ernest Hemingway. *A Clean Well-Lighted Place* 337. Manuscript. Titled pencil manuscript w/one false start. pp. 1-12. See also #222. Hemingway Collection. John F. Kennedy Library, Waltham, Massachusetts. Unless footnoted for explanatory purposes, all subsequent references will be by page number in parentheses after the quotation.

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