

## on Hemingway

Editors' guide sheet to writing, given to all new reporters (including one Ernest Hemingway) at the *Kansas City Star*:

"Avoid the use of adjectives, especially such extravagant ones as 'splendid,' 'gorgeous,' 'grand,' 'magnificent,' etc., and use short sentences, short first paragraphs, and vigorous English."

Hemingway: "The best rules I ever learned for the business of writing."  
"All our words from loose using have lost their edge."

\*\*\*\*\*

Eudora Welty on Hemingway:

Hemingway's world is "as dark as night. Not that it is obscure; rather, it's opaque. Action can be radiant, but in this writer who has action to burn, it is not. The stories are opaque by reason of his intention, which is to moralize. We are to be taught by Hemingway, who is instructive by method, that the world is dangerous and full of fear, and that there is a way we had better be. There is nothing for it but, with bravery, to observe the ritual.... In a painting by Goya, who himself used light, action and morality dramatically, of course, the bullring and the great turbulent wall of spectators are cut in diagonal halves by a great shadow of afternoon (unless you see it as the dark sliced away by the clear, golden light): half the action revealed and half hidden in dense, clotting shade. It's like this in Hemingway's plots. And it seems to be the halving that increases the story."

—from "Looking at Short Stories" [1955], in *The Eye of the Story: Selected Essays and Reviews* (New York: Random House, 1978), pp. 89-90.

"Hemingway in our time has sought out the formal and ruthless territories of the world, archaic ones often, where there are bullfight arenas, theatres of hunting and war, places with a primitive, or formidable, stripped-down character, with implacable codes, with inscrutable justices and inevitable retributions. But whatever the scene of his work, it is the places that never are hostile. People give pain, are callous and insensitive, empty and cruel, carrying with them no pasts as they promise no futures. But place heals the hurt, soothes the outrage, fills the terrible vacuum that these human beings make. It heals actively, and the response is given consciously, with the ardent care and explicitness, respect and delight of a lover, when fishing streams or naming over streets becomes almost something of the lover's secret language—as the careful conversations between characters in Hemingway bear hints of the secret language of love. The response to place has the added intensity that comes with the place's not being native or taken for granted, but found, chosen; thereby is the rest more heavily repudiated. It is the response of the aficionado; the response, too, is adopted. The title 'A Clean Well-Lighted Place' is just what the human being is not, for Hemingway, and perhaps it is the epitome of what man would like to find in his fellow-man but never has yet, says the author, and never is going to."

—from "Place in Fiction" [1956], in *The Eye of the Story: Selected Essays and Reviews* (New York: Random House, 1978), pp. 131-32.