

“Hemingway’s Uncanny Homelands”

Hemingway’s modernist expatriate mentor, Gertrude Stein, writing in *An American in France* (1936) famously wrote “American is my country, and Paris is my home town.” In this paper I will explore the degree to which Paris served as home or hometown for Hemingway—from the time he resided there to his relocation to other “homes.” Was Paris a home away from the Oak Park, Illinois home he could never go back to? The way Hemingway writes about the concept and feeling and place of “home” echo the strange associations found in the *heimlich-unheimlich* that Freud explains in his essay on “The Uncanny”?

According to Krebs in “A Soldier’s Home” (1925), “‘you can never go home again’.” Krebs echoes a feeling shaped by Hemingway’s own experience upon returning “home” to Oak Park after recovering from an injury he sustained as an ambulance driver in Italy. The idea that “you can never home home again,” doesn’t necessarily mean that Hemingway didn’t believe one could not find and return—either physically or imaginatively—to a place that felt like home, a place that felt familiar and comfortable. More often than not, it is the foreign, exotic, and remote places that Hemingway felt were more like home than his boyhood home.

Later in his life, Hemingway reportedly told his friend A.E. Hotchner, “If you are lucky enough to have lived in Paris as a young man, then wherever you go for the rest of your life, it stays with you, for Paris is a moveable feast” (quoted in *A Moveable Feast* xii). This suggests that home, for Hemingway, is both a physical place and a set of associations, memories, and feelings about a place that make it somehow transportable. In *Green Hills of Africa* (1935), Hemingway writes about East Africa, where he and his second wife, Pauline, went on safari in 1933: “I loved this country and where a man feels at home, outside of where he’s born, is where he’s meant to go” (283-84). Hemingway traveled again to Africa to go on safari a second time with his fourth wife, Mary, during the winter of 1953-54 (part of which is recounted in his posthumously published novel *True at First Light*). Home, here, is associated with a place, regardless of its foreignness or remoteness, that imparts a feeling that is seemingly part calling and part fate.

To understand these connections, strange and familiar, between Hemingway and home, we might ask whether and to what extent the moveable feast that Hemingway called Paris, his home from 1921-1928, remained with him throughout his life as he traveled, relocated to, and wrote about foreign and remote places that either he or his characters called home: Kenya, Key West, Cuba, and Idaho. I will explore the uncanny by first juxtaposing Oak Park (the heimlich and familiar, become unheimlich and unfamiliar) with Paris (the unheimlich foreign and unfamiliar become heimlich and familiar), and then extending this association of home and the uncanny to the various places Hemingway, and his fictional avatars, called home (the familiar or heimlich) versus those places that never quite feel like home—or could never feel like home again (the unfamiliar or unheimlich).

Even after returning to the United States to make his home in Idaho, Hemingway, to a certain extent, remained an expatriate. Do his associations of foreign places with home offer a bridge between the geographical and the psychological in ways that echo the homeliness—*heimlich/heimlichkeit*—of remote and foreign places in ways that resituate him (the expatriate white male modernist) in a colonial or post-colonial world? What it is about the foreignness of places like Kenya, Key West, Cuba, and even Paris that made them feel like home. To what extent were these places temporary homes for a man in search of a permanent familiar feeling of home?