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HILLS LIKE WHITE ELEPHANTS: **EPISTEMIC, NONEPISTEMIC AND NONSEEING**

A Thought Experimentⁱ

Accounts of seeing and not seeing have a long tradition in Hemingway studies. In these accounts, seeing the landscape, to give the narration a sense of place, are the *loci classici*. Baker, for example, credits Hemingway with "graphic vitality" in his "presentation of the land" and the "landscape as symbols" (xvii, 95). In Putnam's provocative essay on Hemingway, "perception has always held a moral value." Additionally, quoting Nick Adams, such perception means "to live right with his eyes" (101). More recently, Balaev claims that the swamp of "Big Two Hearted River" "functions not only to express the emotional action of the story but it also points toward the limits of language to convey the truths of existence." (112) ⁱⁱ In this, there is compatibility with Beegel's recent study, "The Environment."

Not seeing as "looking away" will occupy an important part of this essay—that is to say, the presence of absence conveys as much information about Hemingway's intention as the presence of presence. ⁱⁱⁱ A leading assumption is, then, that there is a causal relationship between the foregrounding of such words as "see," "looking," "look like," their objects and the way we interpret the text—especially the relationship between Jig and the American. As such, my account has a loose family relationship with Link's

"stylistic analysis" of "Hills." We start with the repetition and patterns of words, go to the objects they signify and end, hopefully, with a coherent reading of the issues of the text.^{iv}

In this the chief points of reference for the reader are the objects of seeing or not seeing—to start thinking about h/s has seen.

The chief issue we are pursuing is the knowledge of "differences." What differences, especially the difference between the characters, comes to light by means of epistemic, nonepistemic and nonseeing?^v Readers of Aristotle will perhaps call to mind, in this context, his correlation (perhaps the first in our tradition) of knowing the difference between things by means of seeing—please note that Aristotle puts seeing in the context of knowing. Seeing an object, ideally, leads to "knowing" it. Seeing is always prior to knowing:

All men by nature desire *to know*. An indication of this is the delight we take in our senses; for even apart from their usefulness they are loved for themselves; and above all others the *sense of sight*. For not only with a view to action, but even when we are not going to do anything, we prefer *seeing* (one might say) to everything else. The reason is that this, most of all the senses, sight makes us *know* and brings to light many *differences between things* (*Metaphysics* 980a22-28; *emph mine*)

So the question is who does the seeing, what kind of seeing is it (epistemic, nonepistemic or not seeing), what are the objects of the seeing and what effect does the whole have on our interpretation of differences in knowing—especially difference between what Jig know versus that of the American?

The essential difference between epistemic and nonepistemic seeing is with the presence or absence of a "belief content." With nonseeing there is, obviously, neither epistemic and nonepistemic seeing. Nonseeing, with Kukso, Martin and Sorensen (16-17; 188-90), I take things missing as regards their existence, location and (sometimes) duration in the text. Missing in this sense implies a hiatus in awareness (or consciousness) of the one nonseeing. The man's statement in "Hills" "I've never seen one," is an example (213).

The "belief-content" doesn't have to be any particular kind but it must be something, usually something remembered (Dretske 1969: 88):

Whereas seeing *that a* is F entails belief that *a* is F, nonepistemic seeing lacks commitment to a belief content. When cavemen witnessed a solar eclipse, they saw the moon even if they had no beliefs about what they were seeing (Sorensen 38).

Sorensen goes on to say that nonepistemic seeing is compatible with epistemic seeing. "The caveman can nonepistemically see a distant bird and epistemically see it (by virtue of his belief that the observed creature is a bird)" (39). An example of seeing both nonepistemically and epistemically is that of the lion in "Macomber." When it first sees Macomber it sees only an "object" and "thing," Only later does he see the "object" as a "man-figure" and a "man":

The lion still stood looking majestically and coolly toward this *object* (Macomber) that his eyes only showed in silhouette, bulking like some super-rhino....Then watching the *object*, not afraid, but hesitating before going down the bank to drink with such a *thing* opposite

him, he saw a *man figure* detach itself from it.... (If he was close enough) he could make a rush and get the *man* that held (the "crashing thing" (13).

After identifying the "object" as a man, he begins to form a plan—in short, he begins to "think," as all epistemic seeing produces. Notice particularly that the lion is not only "thinking" in a spatial way. He is also thinking temporally, of future consequences in his encounter with the "man figure."

I return to the spatial and temporal dimensions of epistemic seeing below.^{vi}

(Aristotle's comments about seeing and knowledge (above) rest on epistemic seeing. "Seeing is believing" also encodes epistemic perception).

Birdwatchers who epistemically see a bird not only just see a bird but can also see it as a specific kind of bird, say a robin, not a crow, a goldfinch not a magpie. In English we code this identifying-information not as "seeing," "looking" or "looking at," (examples of nonepistemic seeing), but as "looking like" and "seeing as."

Insofar as love, hate, pity, fear and the like can be expressed with the eyes (usually joined by the voice and body language) we can say we are seeing epistemically.

So, with seeing in "Hills" we have three possibilities to convey information about presence or absence as information: 1. Seeing things with belief (or more generally with remembrance of past things and experiences) and the ability to name the object of seeing; 2) seeing things without remembrance or without naming the object 3) not seeing things and not using their names—including, looking away. When Jig looks at "the ground the table legs rested on" she looks away from the all the other things she has looked at, the hills, the bead curtain and most saliently the man (212). With "ground" we infer that the

station (at least that part) has no artificial surface. And we also infer that she may still have a memory (belief-content) of looking at other things, including the man. Still, by her looking away the contents of her short term memory are missing from the story.

However, contents of her long-term memory are present— as we will see.

Inference (and presupposition) are important ways absences become present in the narrative and ultimately aid our understanding of what's going on between Jig and the American. When each looks away from the other in order to look at something else they become absent from each other.

Can we infer that the man's looking at Jig is often a gaze? At times perhaps a stare? Her six-fold "please, "please," "please" is, we might suppose is accompanied with a stare (214). Speech is often (depending on its tone) redundant on seeing and body language. But we cannot be certain about other ways she looks at the man. Since Hemingway leaves them presupposed, not asserted, we cannot name them, "look," "stare," "gaze," "glance" "notice"— or what else. But we can be fairly certain they are epistemic, heavy with memory as belief content.

The other absence, as salient as looking away in "Hills," is by what linguists (and philosophers) variously call "implicature," "inference," and "presupposition." These contrast with "assertion," or the presence of a presence. When Hemingway writes "the girl was looking off at a line of hills" (211) he is asserting the existence (and presumably the truth) of Jig's action. The hills are present to Jig consciousness—or we might say, following Dretske, she is "aware" of them (2206: 147). But Hemingway occasionally implies (and presupposes) looking at an object while asserting looking at a different object in the same sentence: "She (the waitress) put the felt pads and the beer glasses on

the table and *looked* at the man and the girl"—putting the pads on the table obviously presupposes that she is looking (minimally) at the pads and the table (211).^{vii}

Does Hemingway ask the reader to infer the implicit meaning all objects of looking (unpack its presuppositions) while asserting their explicit meaning? His "definition" of explicit and implicit hangs most famously on the cooperation of writer and reader, each of whom "knows":

If a writer of prose *knows* enough of what he is writing about he may *omit* things that he *knows* and the reader, if the writer is writing *truly enough*, will have a *feeling* of those things as strongly as though the writer had *stated* them....A writer who *omits* things because he does not *know* them only makes hollow places in his writing.^{viii}

If we look at this passage (the celebrated iceberg analogy) from the point of view of epistemic seeing, it describes an impossible situation—impossible not in theory but in execution. "Stating" something, what I have been calling asserting something, is clear enough. Its form rises from an intelligible subject and predicate: "The hills across the valley of the Ebro were long and white" (211) After reading it we "know" (and can visualize) the location, size and color of the hills. That is, we see them epistemically. With the "to be" verb, "were," Hemingway brings into the picture what scholars of the Indo-European language calls the three-fold purpose of the "to be" verb; namely, to state existence, location and (sometimes) duration (Kahn)

With this knowledge the reader is prepared to read epistemically and nonepistemically seeable objects in the rest of the story and their relationship with knowledge— not just the hills but "things" like the three characters, the river, the shadow

of a cloud, the table in the shade and so on. But then Hemingway destroys the possibility of reading these ways with the negative phrase, "does not know them." In effect, he reduces all his earlier positive statements to negative ones with no existing referent. The result is, in Sorensen's words, an "exhaustiveness" of positive statements about knowing an existing object:

Positive statements. Knowing how things are not gives you knowledge of exhaustiveness. If there is a reduction to be achieved, it will run from positive truths to negative truths (Sorensen 227).^{ix}

Had Hemingway accompanied his statement about "feeling those things strongly" with one about knowledge it would have restored the validity of his statements about omission. Graves, another well-known American writer (and admirer of Hemingway, especially "Big Two-Hearted River") gives a succinct statement of the necessity of joining knowledge with feeling—in order to know and to write truly:

Feelings without knowledge, love and hatred too, seem to flow easily in any time, but they did not work well for me" (Graves 5).

Feeling and knowing, in short, are eternally separate and distinct—as long as they are not brought together, and made intelligible, by actions and words that presuppose or assert, feelings like love, pity, empathy, hate and the like.

Reading involves the participation of reader and writer on the basis of "knowing." What about a reader who cannot unpack presuppositions? Obviously, then, s/h loses (misses) much of the information flowing from the text—including, of course, the rhetorical intention(s) of the author.

Jig's seeing comes in the form of "look at," "looked across," "looking off" and "look like." By the criteria given above, "look at" is nonepistemic. It has, at least in the context of its utterance, no belief content: "That's all we do, isn't it. Look at things and try new drinks" (213) She is saying, in effect, that the "things" they look at are insignificant and (perhaps) largely devoid of meaning. They are not memorable and so useless for seeing later, enjoyable, things.

Joy, excitement, pleasant memories are absent from the text. Are "new drinks" enjoyable to them? Perhaps. But the new drink they are now having "tastes like licorice" (212). Insofar as the taste of licorice is an individual one, good to some, bad, or not so good, to others, Hemingway seems to be leaving the question open how it tastes to Jig. ^x

Is Hemingway suggesting that nonepistemic seeing (on the whole) is what tourists do? The couple are, after all, Americans in a foreign country. If so, then seeing in this context is compatible with Jig's lack of Spanish. But how good is that of the man? Hemingway doesn't give us many details. He only speaks two Spanish words, "dos cervezas" or "two beers" (211). Hemingway gives his other communication with the waitress in English:

The man called 'listen' through the curtain. The woman came out from the bar.

"Four reales."

"We want two Anis del Toro."

"With water?"

...

"You want them with water?" asked the woman.

"Yes, with water." (212).

We might translate this as:

El hombre llamado 'escuchar' a través de la cortina.

La mujer salió del bar.

"Cuatro reales."

"Queremos dos Anis del Toro."

"Con agua?"

"¿Los quieren con agua?" preguntó la mujer.

"Sí, con agua."

We might draw several conclusions from this: 1) the waitress speaks English. She has served many American tourists; 2) Hemingway's Spanish was not very good and he didn't want to go to the trouble of writing in that language. (It was, after all, the age before Google Translate); 3) Hemingway asks the reader to imagine the man speaking Spanish in order to indicate the man's need for control.

Si le preguntas cuál es mi elección de estas tres posibilidades es, yo respondería "me pregunta otra pregunta."^{xi}

Notice that the man looks mostly at near things, Jig at both near and far things:

They sat down at the table and the girl looked across the hills on the dry side of the valley and the man looked at her and at the table (214).

She also looks at things before and behind things near and far things.

Across, on the other side, were fields of grain and trees along the banks of the Ebro. Far way, beyond the river, were mountains (213).

Jig looks at a "higher" object, "the mountain," than the man.

Jig's far things, the river, the mountains, the fields, are more distant than the man's. His only far thing is looking down the tracks for the train.

He looked up the tracks but could not see the train (214).

I also suggest that Jig's farthest seen thing, the mountains, can represent being "free": I base this on my own experience as a backcountry skier, hiker, mountain climbing and the similar activities of my friends—but I also call on Chani Lifshitz's account of why many Israeli were killed in a recent avalanche in Nepal.

She said that many of the Israeli travelers who come to Nepal do so after three years of mandatory military service, sometimes involving combat and the deaths of friends on the battlefield: 'After three years (their term of service) they're *looking for a place that's far and free* (*emph mine*; Najjar).^{xii}

Does this mean his relationship with Jig is going nowhere because what might save it isn't coming? Perhaps. But thinking metaphorically about Hemingway's words is even riskier than what I am attempting to demonstrate here about seeing.

Does the man look epistemically? Yes, of course:

He did not say anything but looked at the bags against the wall of the station. There were labels on them from all the hotels where they had spent nights (214).

This, as noticed before, is memory as belief content.

Looking near or far can be either epistemic, nonepistemic or not looking:

"They look like white elephants" she said.

"I've never seen one," he said (213).

Does "one" refer to hill or elephant or both? Most likely to both, for when we refer to the part of something we also imply the whole. "Arm" implies "body," "leaf," "tree" and so on.

So what should we make of Jig's seeing one thing in front of another thing, a near thing before a far thing.^{xiii}

The girl stood up and walked to the end of the station.

Across, on the other side, were fields of grain and trees along the banks of the Ebro. Far away, beyond the river, were mountains. The shadow of a cloud moved across the field of grain and she saw the river through the trees (213).

This suggests to me that far, and high, things have more significance to Jig than near and low things as appears in her sight of the "the mountain," the most distant and highest of all objects seen in the story.

But what is the significance here? Perhaps it relates to the relative dimensions of a hill with a mountain. Mountains, depending on the weather, are more salient than hills. As any mountaineer (or even someone passing through them) can tell you mountains, unlike most hills, attract the need to climb them.

But there may be something else significant here. Most speakers (and scholars of Hemingway) take seeing near and far things (the landscape in general) in a spatial and

directional sense. From the standpoint of our body we can look in six different directions and see, consequently, six different kinds of landscape (Miller and Johnson-Laird 233-303).

But perhaps Jig is taking the landscape around and over the Ebro in both a spatial and temporal sense. In particular, is she making reference to her future with the man *after* her abortion? Is the mountain beyond the hills, the field of grain, the trees and the river a possible destination for her? A future with a child? A family? Notice the times she is the one who brings into the conversation a reference to the future:

"Then what will we do afterward?"

The man's response suggests that any future will have to replicate the past:

"We'll be fine afterward. Just like we were before" (212).

Biologists have coined the term "pluripotent" to describe the nature of a stem cell. Unlike any other cell in the body, it alone has the ability to become (replace) any other type of cell. Like the Greek god, Proteus, a stem cell never stays what it started to be but only what it becomes in its journey to another cellular location, function and duration.

Is this an apt description of the nature of epistemic, nonepistemic and nonseeing seeing in other works of Hemingway? Can these seeings, working as a triad, help to create fictional character—or we might want join with other fictional devices to *become* such characters, Nick Adams, Robert Jordan, Catherine Barkley or Frederic Henry?

Given the space I have, I can only suggest a possible answer to the question. Seeing alone cannot create character for the reader. It has to be joined by all the information flowing from the senses, especially hearing, touching and feeling. But I believe we can say that seeing, following Aristotle, is the principal sense. My reason is

his reason: that is, it is the most beloved, and pluripotent, of the senses because of its ability to identify "differences."

We see, but do not hear or touch, the characteristics in others by gender, age, color of the skin and the like. But we see, and respond to them, by how and what we see. Hemingway, whose eyes were not all that good, is a master in the manipulation of seeing as a foundation for character and especially for making the implicit explicit and for foreshadowing.

Please recall the first scene from "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber." We first meet, Robert Wilson and Macomber having a drink and "pretending that nothing had happened" (5). Macomber wife, Margot, or Margaret, enters, does not speak to Macomber, and begins picking out physical features of Wilson, the color of his hair, strubby mustache, red face and "'extremely cold blue eyes with white wrinkles at the corner" (6). We then begin to sense the frozen relationship between Margot and Macomber:

"Here's to the lion," he (Macomber) said. "I can't ever thank you for what you (Wilson) did."

Margaret, his wife, *looked away* from him and back to Wilson.

Wilson *looked over* and her without smiling and now she smiled at him.

...

Margot *looked at* them both and they both *saw* she going to cry (7).

...

"Yes, we take a beating," said (Wilson) still not *looking at* him (Macomber) (7).

...

"I'd like to clear away that lion business," Macomber said." It's not very pleasant to have your wife *see* you do something like that (10)

...

His wife said nothing and *eyed* him strangely (25).

Every reader of the story knows what eventually happens. Margot sees the buffalo charging Macomber, about to gore him, and "(she) shot at the buffalo...and had hit her husband about two inches up and little in one side of the base of his skull" (28).

Was she looking at the buffalo or at Macomber? To reframe the question: was she looking epistemically or nonepistemically?

Much of the above is about "how" we see and "how we fail to see." But seeing also presupposes where we are when we see and in what direction we are seeing. That is to say, where do we *stand* when we see and how that influences how and what we see. On this vast issue, the literary critic Ebbatson, taking the landscape as his point of reference, has this to say:

The landscape is not a totality that you or anyone else can look at, it is rather the world in which we *stand*, taking up a point of view on our surroundings. And it is within the context of this attentive involvement in the landscape that the human imagination gets to work in fashioning ideas about it. For the landscape, to borrow a phrase from Merleau-Ponty, is not so much the object as the 'homeland' for our thoughts (33).

In this we are reminded of Heidegger's description of the authentic human condition as "being in the world" (*sein in der Welt*) as an act of "dwelling" (*verweilzeit*) in the

world—all of which implies a familiar place to stand in the world. Without the familiarity of place there can not exist a homeland or a dwelling from which to see.

So, what, if any, does this have to do with seeing and nonseeing in "Hills"? One way to answer (or attempt an answer) it is to focus on the reader and h or h seeing and consequently knowing and thinking. In this, we first assume that the reader sees from where h or s dwells. H or s is at home in a place. From where h or s dwells they can see a familiar landscape, familiar faces and interact with them. But does the reader "see" any of this happening with the characters of "Hills"? Do Jig and the American dwell in a familiar landscape with familiar faces and a common language?

Of course not. Like many migrant worker, tourist or immigrant they are homeless and "placeless." Are we not then, with "Hills," being given a depiction of what much of modern literature (and films) give us? Namely, a world in which none of us can dwell or return to in order to dwell?

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NOTES

ⁱ I use the term in the German sense of "thinking about consequences: or what if...what would be the effects of...."). That is, "Gedankenexperiment." All page citations from Hemingway texts are to: *The Complete Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway: The Finca Vigia Edition*: New York, Scribner, 1987.

ⁱⁱ. See also David Seed's "Ernest Hemingway: The Observer's Visual Field," in *Cinematic Fictions*: Liverpool UP (2009): 68-85.

ⁱⁱⁱ Nothingness as absence in Hemingway is a critical aspect of his iceberg account of style. But it has, in different contexts, entered Hemingway studies with Beegel's

"nothing" thesis and with Murray's "Some Versions of Nothing." Beegel's account is especially important in the context of this essay: In her study of Hemingway's revision of four of his manuscripts, Susan Beegel lists, and describes, five "categories of omission" of the author. The fifth of these, after a comment by Harold Bloom, she calls "the Real Absence" (91) Citing such works as "A Clean, Well-Lighted Place," "A Natural History of the Dead," Death in the Afternoon and "After the Storm," Beegel notes that these works, and by implication other works of Hemingway, are "ultimately about nothing" (92).

For a general description of the presence of absence in imaginative writing see "Shots in the Dark: The Presence of Absence in Imaginative Writing" at: http://works.bepress.com/cgi/sw_config.cgi?context=gene_washington. Also available on the internet.

^{iv} One might also see this essay as a footnote to Link's account. It differs only by starting with a different set of words and following their implied, and presupposed, meanings.

^v "Epistemic," of course, comes from the Greek *epistanai* (*ep stanai*) to "stand upon," with an obvious common etymology with "understand" and "verstehen."

^{vi} All animals, it seems fair to say, see both epistemically and nonepistemically. Notice that the cat on your lap has no belief content about the TV show you're watching. A TV show has no belief content for it. But contrast that with the difference it finds in wet and dry food or your presence versus that of a stranger. But of all the animals I have observed over a long life, cats, birds, horses, the squirrel tops them all.

Right now (September 2014) my wife and I watch every evening a squirrel we have named Alterea gather nuts for winter. She (we think, but cannot prove, that females of all species are better at epistemically seeing than males) runs back and forth on a power line from one clump of woods to another. The clump on our left has the trees that supply Alterea with her nuts. She always exits it with a nut in her mouth, deposits it (we surmise) in a cache in the trees on the right. Then she repeats her journey until it gets too dark to see her.

All in all, a remarkable demonstration of thinking both spatially and temporally from the prior condition of seeing epistemically.

^{vii} On the difference between "presupposition" (inferring) and "assertion" please see, for example, Lyons II, 503, 753.

^{viii} *The Paris Review Interview*; "The Art of Fiction 21: Ernest Hemingway" (Spring 1958): 26.

^{ix} Readers familiar with basic Christian theology will recognize Sorensen's remarks as a recasting of how to talk about God by focusing on what He is not:

^x Seeing is perhaps the most enjoyable and informative of the senses. But what about the others mentioned, or presupposed in "Hills"—especially hearing and touching (feeling)? Perhaps some Hemingway scholar would want to undertake the task of explicating the synergistic effect of all the senses in the text and how it relates to the issues of the story?

^{xi} Si vous demandez quel est mon choix de ces trois possibilités est, je répondrais «Demandez-moi une autre question." If you ask me what my choice of these three is, I would reply ask me another question.

^{xii} I also think it possible that Jig's farthest seen things, the mountains, may represent being "free": I base this 1) on Marjorie Nicolson's *Mountain Gloom, Mountain Glory: The Development of the Aesthetics of the Infinite* 2) on my own experience as a backcountry skier, hiker, mountain climbing and the similar activities of my friends; and 3) on Chani Lifshitz's account of why many Israeli were killed in a recent (September 2014) avalanche in Nepal.

She said that many of the Israeli travelers who come to Nepal do so after three years of mandatory military service, sometimes involving combat and the deaths of friends on the battlefield: 'After three years (their term of service) they're *looking for a place that's far and free* (*emph mine*; Najjar).

Mountains, in this case Yosemite National Park, are the source of freedom in this account by the solo climber Alex Honnold. I quote only excerpts from his article ("The Calculus Of Climbing at the Edge") in *The New York Times* November 20, 2014: A27:

It's (free soloing) a wonderful freedom, in many ways similar to that of an artist who simply lives his life and creates whatever moves him.... We will all continue climbing, in the ways that we find most inspiring, with a rope, a parachute or nothing at all. Whether or not we're sponsored, the mountains are calling, and we must go.

For a succinct account of Hemingway's love of mountains, skiing, and the freedom they represent, see: <http://stalkinghemingway.wordpress.com/category/skiing/>. Perhaps Hemingway's short story, "Cross-Country Snow" serves as the *locus classicus* for its expression of such qualities—please notice forms of seeing, experienced and remembered, and the objects seen:

"Gee, Mike, don't you wish we could just bum together ? Take our skis and go on the train to where there was good running and then go on and put up at pubs and go right across the Oberland and up the Valais and all through the Engadine and just take repair kit and extra sweaters and pyjamas in our rucksacks and to give a damn a bout school or anything.'

'Yes, and go through the Schwarzwald that way. Gee, the swell places.'

'That's where you went fishing last summer, isn't it?'

'Yes.'

They ate the strudel and drank the rest of the wine. George leaned back against the wall and shut his eyes.

'Wine always makes me feel this way,' he said.

'Feel bad?' Nick said.

'No, I feel good, but funny.'

'I know,' Nick said.

'Sure,' said George.

'Should we have another bottle?' Nick asked.

'Not for me,' said George.

They sat there, Nick leaning his elbows on the table, George slumped back against the

wall.

'Is Helen going to have a baby?' George said, coming down to the table from the wall.

'Yes.'

'When?'

'Late next summer.'

'Are you glad?'

'Yes, now.'

'Will you go back to the States?'

'I guess so.'

'Do you want to?'

'No.'

'Does Helen?'

'No.'

George sat silent. He looked at the empty bottle and the empty glasses.

'It's hell isn't it?' he said.

'No. Not exactly,' Nick said.'

'Why not?'

'I don't know,' Nick said.

'Will you ever go skiing together in the States?' George said.

'I don't know,' said Nick.

'The mountains aren't much,' George said.

'No,' said Nick. 'They're too rocky. There's too much timber and they're too far away.'

'Yes,' said George, 'that's the way it's in California.'

‘Yes,’ Nick said, ‘that’s the way it is everywhere I’ve ever been.’

‘Yes,’ said George, ‘that’s the way it is.’

The Swiss got up and paid and went out.

‘I wish we were Swiss,’ George said.

‘They’ve all got goitre,’ said Nick.

‘I don’t believe that,’ George said.

‘Neither I do,’ said Nick.

They laughed.

‘Maybe we’ll never go skiing again, Nick,’ George said.

‘We’ve got to,’ said Nick. ‘It isn’t worth while if you can’t.’

‘We’ll go, all right,’ George said.

‘We’ve got to,’ Nick agreed.

‘I wish we could make a promise about it,’ George said.

Nick stood up. He buckled his wind jacket tight. He leaned over George and picked up the two ski poles from against the wall. He stuck one of the ski poles into the floor.

‘There isn’t any good in promising,’ he said.

They opened the door and went out. It was very cold. The snow had crusted hard. The road ran up the hill into the pine trees. They took down their skis from where they leaned against the wall of the inn. Nick put on his gloves. George was already started up the road, his skis on his shoulder. Now they would have run home together."

Perhaps the definitive work on the origin of Romanticism, and mountains as the focus, is Nicolson's *Mountain Gloom, Mountain*, especially chapter seven.

^{xiii} Sorensen has a long account of "near" and "far" in *Seeing Dark Things* (chps 1 and 2).

Word count: 4,196