

Thoughts on the incipient loss of sight through macular hole (2001)

yes my first inklings of sightloss occurred one morning when I woke up switched on my bedside light and pulled towards me and opened Ellmans biography of Joyce which I had been reading the previous night with undistorted vision so I was irritated to find that the lack of focus I had long experienced on opening my eyes of a morning could not be dispelled by the usual judicious rubbing of the eyelids and the resettling of the glasses on my nose irritation then gave way to dismay on discovering that the culprit was not lack of focus but a persistent wavering of the letters in the text induced by peering at it through my right eye which up to the point of this disturbing dereliction of duty had been my best my trustiest organ ah the optical betrayal! but how natural somehow that the inevitable erosion of the body continually anticipated and feared by the mind should be manifested first through the ineluctable modality of the visible that very ineluctability leading to the panic I then felt as an exmathematician recalling in some abstracted way what might happen when one's senses the source of one's contact with the outer world decay before the identifiable grasp of one's subjectivity goes I mean before one's mind gives way which to my great misfortune is quite likely since my eyes are crumbling before my very mind I shall have simply to accustom myself to the fact perhaps even to count myself lucky that viewed through my right eye roman letters are *mercilessly skewed into italics* in the manner of those oddly accentuated words in the King James Bible and faces transmogrified into the curiously sinister distortions of the figures in Francis Bacon's paintings so what then is left when the luxury of vision is withdrawn altogether pity perhaps of course initially selfpity but then what yes if I am lucky everybody else's pity