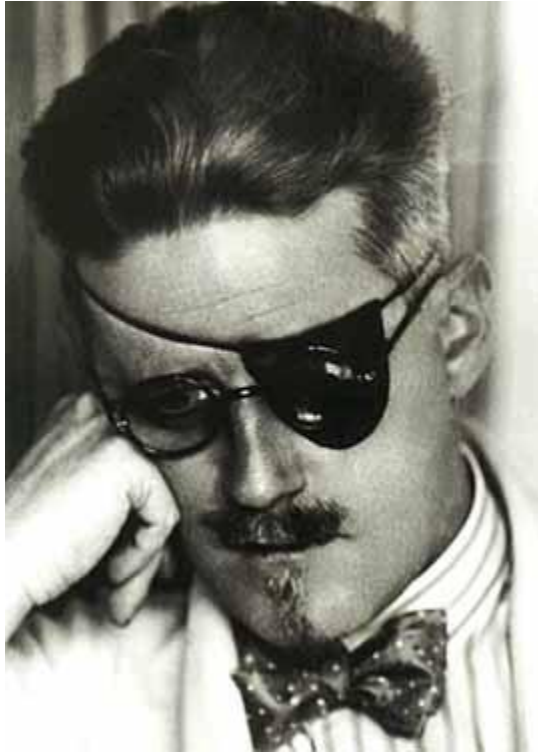


## James Joyce's eyesight and blindness

Jorn Barger June 2000



[\[pic source\]](#)

[pagenumbers 'E' are 2nd edition of Ellmann]

c1888: (6yo) glasses prescribed for nearsightedness (broken but replaced)

He had tried to spell out the headline for himself though he knew already what it was for it was the last of the book. Zeal without prudence is like a ship adrift. But the lines of the letters were like fine invisible threads and it was only by closing his right eye tight tight and staring out of the left eye that he could make out the full curves of the capital. [\[PoA1\]](#)

c1894: (12yo) advised by 'foolish doctor' to put aside glasses (E26) school medical officer (Costello 129)

June 1904: can't tell if it's Nora at rendezvous

7 Feb 1905, to Stannie: "I was examined by the doctor of the Naval Hospital here last week and I now wear pince-nez glasses on a string for reading. My number is very strong-- could you find out what is Pappie's." [e192]

Jul 1907: rheumatic fever initiates eye problems; Lucia named after patron saint of eyesight (E262, 268)

1908: iritis (Costello 276)

Dec 1909: iritis in Dublin (Costello 290)

1910: drinking in Pirano (near Trieste) [\[map\]](#) [\[info&pix\]](#) later blamed for eye problems (E535)

Aug 1917: attack of glaucoma, insensible with pain for 20min, iridectomy by Sidler on right eye for glaucoma, exudation permanently reduced vision (E417)

July 1918: iritis returns in both eyes, almost incapacitated for a week or more "dangerously ill and in danger of blindness" (E442)

Nov 1918: eye troubles recur

Feb 1919: "my eyes are so capricious... This time the attack was in my 'good?' eye so that the decisive symptoms of iritis never really set in. It has been light but intermittent so that for five weeks I could do little or nothing except lie constantly near a stove" (E454)

July 1921: five weeks recuperating from iritis attack w/cocaine, lying in darkened room, came to a head in three hours (E517)

Aug 1921: "I write and revise and correct with one or two eyes about twelve hours a day I should say, stopping for intervals of five minutes or so when I can't see any more." (E517)

May 1922: iritis recurs, spread to left eye (E535) "a furious eye attack lasting until [October]" (E538)

July 1922: Berman advises complete extraction of teeth (E536)

late 1922: everything (or eyes themselves?) looks red (E537)

Oct 1922: leeches and dionine from Dr Collin (E538)

Apr 1923: teeth extracted, Borach performs sphincterectomy on eye, unable to read until June (???) (E543)

Apr 1924: Borsch notices secretion forming in conjunctiva of left eye (E564)

June 1924: second iridectomy on left eye, nightmarish visions after (E566)

July 1924: eyepatch (E567) [\[pic?\]](#)

Nov 1924: sight dims again, cataract removed from left (E568)

Feb 1925: conjunctivitis in right, pain, leeches and morphine (E569)

March 1925: fresh trouble in right "one eye sightless and the other inflamed" (E570)

April 1925: operation on left, slight return of vision; right can read print w/magnifying glass (E570) scopolamine treatments

Aug 1925: sight too poor to walk on beach (E572)

Oct 1925: eyes better (E573)

Dec 1925: operation on left, quite blind after (E573)

1926: switches to large writing (E573)

spring-summer 1926: eyes better