WORRIES and TURMOIL

0. WORRIES and TURMOIL - Story Preface

1. EARLY LIFE

2. AN ARTIST IS BORN

3. STUDYING ART, FEELING PAIN

4. THE FIRST MASTERPIECE

5. THE PARIS YEARS

6. INFLUENCE of JAPANESE ART

7. EARLY LIFE in ARLES

8. THE BANDAGED EAR

9. VINCENT at SAINT-REMY

10. THE ATTACKS CONTINUE

11. PAINTING in AUVERS-sur-OISE

12. WORRIES and TURMOIL

13. VINCENT COMMITS SUICIDE

14. THE SADNESS WILL LAST FOREVER

Although he was painting constantly, Vincent still had worries and turmoil while living in Auvers-sur-Oise. This oil-on-canvas, which measures 73 x 52 cm, depicts “Doctor Gachet’s Garden in Auvers.” Vincent created it during May of 1890. Today it is owned by the Musée d’Orsay, in Paris. Click on the image for a better view.

After his "hours" with Jo and Theo, which he acknowledges were "a bit difficult and trying for us all," Vincent painted furiously. Describing the pace of his work, he observed "the brush is almost falling from my fingers." (Letter to Theo and Jo, 10 July 1890.)

His words also give voice to his own worries although, in mid-July, he still sees a future for himself as an artist:

> *It is no slight matter when we are all made aware that our daily bread is at risk, no slight matter when for different reasons we are also made aware of the precariousness of our existence.*
>
> *Back here, I, too, still felt very sad, and the storm which threatens you continued to weigh heavily on me as well. What is to be done? Look here, I try to be fairly good-humoured in general, but my life too is threatened at its very root, and my step is unsteady too.*
>
> *. . . I have painted three more large canvases. They are vast stretches of corn under troubled skies, and I did not have to go out of my way very much in order to try to express sadness and extreme loneliness. . . I'm fairly sure that these canvases will tell you what I cannot say in words, that is, how healthy and invigorating I find the countryside. . .The third canvas is Daubigny's garden, a picture I have had in mind ever since I came here.*

Van Gogh also expresses regret on having no children:

> *I often think of the little one* [his namesake nephew], *I don't doubt it's better to bring up children than to spend all one's nervous energy on making pictures, but it can't be helped, I am, or at least I feel I am, too old now to retrace my steps or to desire anything different. That desire has left me, though the mental suffering remains.*

He thanks Theo for a recent letter, confirming that Vincent is not a bother:

> *I was afraid - not entirely - but nevertheless a little - that my being a burden on you was something you found intolerable - but Jo's letter proves to me clearly that you do realize that I am working and making an effort just as much as you are.*

Still devoting nearly all his time to painting, Vincent mailed a letter to Theo dated July 23, 1890. It begins with this comment:

> *I would like to try, perhaps, to write to you about a lot of things, but the inclination has passed, and then I feel the pointlessness of it all.*

His attention is entirely directed to his paintings:

> *As far as I'm concerned, I am giving my canvases my undivided attention.*

The canvases he mentions are:

- Daubigny's Garden
- Thatched Sandstone Cottages in Chaponval
- Wheat Fields at Auvers Under Clouded Sky
- Plain Near Auvers

There is another letter to Theo - never mailed - which is also dated the 23rd of July. It gives us more evidence of a gathering emotional storm. Van Gogh describes his paintings as:

> *canvases, which even in the cataclysm retain their calm.*

And . . . he describes the price he is personally paying for his dedication:

> *I have risked my life for my work, and it has cost me half my reason.*

Four days later, around dusk, Vincent took a walk to the beloved fields at Auvers. This time, however, he had more than his art supplies with him.

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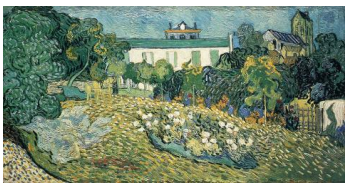

Daubigny's Garden, without Cat - July, 1890
Quoted passage from van Gogh's letter to Theo van Gogh, 23 July 1890.
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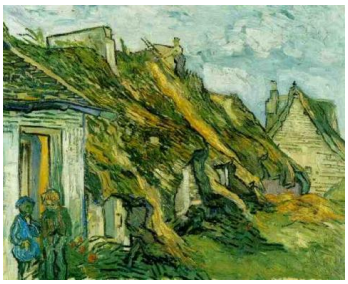

Thatched Sandstone Cottages in Chaponval - July, 1890
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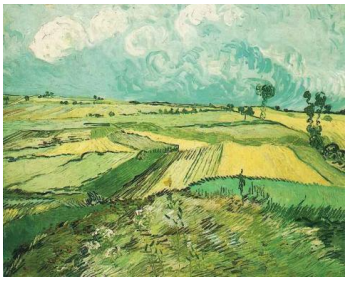

Wheat Fields at Auvers under Clouded Sky - July, 1890
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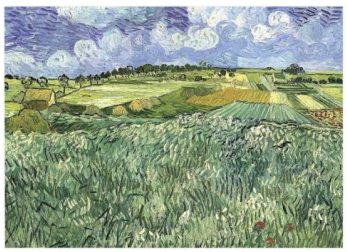

Plain Near Auvers - July, 1890
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