

## Vincent Writes To Theo From Grave To Grave

Dear Theo

now that you have joined me at pilgrim's end  
for love of you i surrender the privilege of silence  
that is the sole reward of death  
i do wish you had chosen a passage better than mine  
to this boring peace / not the way of the pox  
that twists the brain & corrupts its force  
so you stagger blind awake or in dreams  
through a war where all combatants are you

i never knew how to live so how could i have known how to die?  
but i wanted a sweeter death for you little brother

who shot me? does it matter? that odious bully rené secrétan  
who put salt in my coffee & snakes in my paint box?  
whom i called "the terror of the smoked herring"  
& who called me "the faithful lover to the Widow Wrist"  
after he caught me masturbating in the woods? no  
he tormented me because i was never mad enough for him  
making me dead would cost him a victim

did i shoot myself behind the dungheap as some have written?  
in the stomach? at distance? theo you know how dishonorable  
i think suicide to be & that i would never do it by the vulgar gun  
if i had to i would drown myself with elegance  
with lilies near & florid japanese silks about my person  
(they tell me here that death below the waves can be ecstatic)  
no it does not matter who shot me theo  
it matters that i did not shoot myself

i think of poor poxed-like-us franz schubert  
snobbed all the way to the crypt in queer-hating vienna  
that all my sorry years condense into his terminal sonata  
& i am the pilgrim of that first movement who settles in the air  
& guides the hopeful theme as it searches  
the global borders of e flat major  
for a foot to stand upon until all dissonance  
has fallen out of the key & the questing air  
must swing back unto itself if it will have purchase

that the beginning is the resolution every time

theo i have lived that theme

little brother we began in the love of the true  
we were the ictus & rebound that christens the new  
the tension & release that gives soul to the image

but dear theo  
not even in the grave do we resolve  
& that  
if i am true  
is the best of us