

Letter 641a  
Auvers-sur-Oise, c. 12 June 1890

Dear Mother,

I was struck by what you say in your letter about having been to Nuenen. You saw everything again, “with gratitude that once it was yours” – and are now able to leave it to others with an easy mind. As through a glass, darkly – so it has remained; life, the why or wherefore of parting, passing away, the permanence of turmoil – one grasps no more of it than that.

For me, life may well continue in solitude. I have never perceived those to whom I have been most attached other than as through a glass, darkly.

And yet there is good reason why my work is sometimes more harmonious nowadays. Painting is unlike anything else. Last year I read somewhere that writing a book or painting a picture was like having a child. I don’t go so far as to make a claim for myself, however – I have always considered the last-named the most natural and the best of the three – if indeed they are comparable. That is why I at times try my very hardest, although it is this very hard work that turns out to be the least understood, and though for me it is the only link between the past and the present.

There are a lot of painters in this village – next door a whole family of Americans who paint away day in, day out. I haven’t seen any of their work yet – it’s unlikely to be up to much.

Theo, his wife and his child were here last Sunday and we lunched at Dr. Gachet’s. There my little namesake made his acquaintance of the animal world for the first time, as there are 8 cats, 3 dogs, as well as chickens, rabbits, ducks, pigeons, etc., in large numbers. As yet he doesn’t understand much of it all, I think. But he looked well, and so did Theo and Jo. It is a very reassuring feeling for me to live so much closer to them. You too will probably be seeing them soon.

Once again thanks for your letter, and hoping that you and Wil remain in good health, I embrace you in my thoughts,

Your loving Vincent