

Benjamin Shalva

Portrait of Dr. Gachet

*“The doctor is sicker than I am, I think ...
Now when one blind man leads another blind man, don't they both fall into the ditch?”
- letter from Vincent Van Gogh, 1890, two weeks before his death*

Eyes slim chips of sky
stained by a later hour,
later than the brush-stroked day

just past your cap – as if
the eyes, impatient
with the watched pot

of a tepid mind and blushing
blood, lunged to dusk –
these the painter paints,

seeing what we assume
you see: a madman mocking,
mocking from behind

his lime green, black
and blue; leaving you,
the doctor, nobly dethroned,

with foxglove – pretty
poison – pouring
from your humble cup.