



EXCERPT

INTRODUCTION

So it was natural for Frank to turn to other branches of the arts, closer to home, where a profounder kind of experimentation was taking place. One of these was American painting, which was just then in what is now called the "heroic period" of Abstract Expressionism. This art absorbed Frank to such a degree, both as a critic for *Art News* and a curator at the Museum of Modern Art, and as a friend of the protagonists, that it could be said to have taken over his life.

THE COLLECTED POEMS OF
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EXCERPT

ODE TO WILLEM DE KOONING

Beyond the sunrise
where the black begins

an enormous city
is sending up its shutters

and just before the last lapse of nerve which I am already sorry for,
that friends describe as "just this once" in a temporary hell, I hope

not to be inimitably weak
and picturesque, my self

but to be standing clearly
alone in the orange wind

while our days tumble and rant through Gotham and the Easter narrows
and I have not the courage to convict myself of cowardice or care

for now a long history slinks over the sill, or patent absurdities
and the fathomless miseries of a small person upset by personality

and I look to the flags
in your eyes as they go up

on the enormous walls
as the brave must always ascend

into the air, always the musts
like banderillas dangling

and jingling jewellike amidst the red drops on the shoulders of men
who lead us not forward or backward, but on as we must go on


out into the mesmerized world
of inanimate voices like traffic

noises, hewing a clearing
in the crowded abyss of the West



ABOUT COURBET

6



Beside the sea, green mammoths with frothing lips,
the long razor of the air, the pomposity of the sun,
the man is gone. Only his voice booms like blood vessels
bursting in the eyes. A century of suffering came out
of his work, no Rimbaud he. At supper we eat beef
and at breakfast tears, there's no fort for the heart
to injure itself upon, no capital punishment
for the monks. Our father's fortune is dwindling,
and even he, we remember, didn't like our looks much.
A woman of crepe is standing before the fireplace.

Now speak, delicate green bird of lust, before
you plunge towards the flesh that spreads its steppe
across Europe and Asia and is itself remembering:
"To be a master is that death, affront to nature,
like one child vomiting upon its father's future."

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