

## A FRANK O'HARA TRANSLATION

### STEPS

How funny you used to be New York  
like Gene Wilder in *The Producers*  
and the St. Mark's Church was always rocking with poetry

Here today in Maine I have just slow-crawled out of bed  
early on Veteran's Day, a rolled towel  
wrapped around my neck to cradle it from stiffness,  
it's still early morning November dark, but I think  
the blue sky will put in an appearance  
When I was young and living in Manhattan  
all I wanted was my bed in my fourteenth floor apartment  
and you in it,  
the late night traffic roaring by  
on Amsterdam Avenue below, heading noisily uptown.  
On Spring days I'd wander the cluttered streets in a crowd  
and not be concerned about anything other  
than what the day might provide—  
now Autumn crowds me  
with its fallen leaves and blue despair.

I was just there a few weeks ago  
taking in the music, taking in the air.  
New York, tell me,  
where is Taylor Swift—  
*she's just getting home to her condo  
after a night of drinking and dancing with friends,  
and Woody Allen's on a shoot,  
some people are out early, walking their dogs  
in their fall coats, and Central Park's  
slowly filling up with runners getting ready for a morning jog  
before they head off to work—*

why not

the Kansas City Royals shower in champagne because they won  
and in a sense we're all winning  
we're all still alive.

In those times when we were young  
your apartment was on West 10<sup>th</sup> Street  
and I lived on West 86<sup>th</sup>  
We'd drink downtown and mostly fuck uptown,  
money for a taxi always part of my  
not-so-innocent calculations  
when we were having an evening out.  
We'd drink at the White Horse and then depart  
not that we needed liquor (we just liked it)

And you're still living there in New York  
on West End Avenue,  
having moved uptown with your husband  
after several years in Brooklyn,  
and though I'm so far north  
I can never get back to you,  
the compass of my heart  
still always points to where you are,  
my true north, my true heading,  
and certainly a part of me  
has always stayed behind with you.

Oh god it was wonderful  
to be young  
and get into bed with you  
after drinking too much Jack Daniels  
and smoking just a bit of weed  
and then loving you so much

November 2015