**A Banked Jumper in Late Life**

Gary Carter

we are old men

playing a young man’s game

pretending to be the boys we were

in the summer of love

driving to the hoop with abandon

but holding back enough to be sure

there’s not too much pressure on a knee

uncertain of its future

cartilage & tendon tenuous after

too much time

too much pounding

too many steps

over too many years

but we can dream can’t we

be for one glorious moment

Larry Bird lofting a soft jumper

that barely ruffles the twine when it falls

or imagine we are number twenty-three sailing free

defying gravity to finger-roll the leather

over the front of the iron

gentle as a mother’s kiss

we are old men

playing a young man’s game

but we cannot be denied in heart

what the body cannot deliver & so

we embrace with tribal joy each moment

each squeak on hardwood

each sweet dear god kiss & swish of a leaning jumper

so beautifully & geometrically banked

that universal laws are denied yet confirmed

fists bumped

shirts become skins & we begin again

first to eleven

we are old men

playing a young man’s game

with love denied the young

who don’t know yet what it means

to remember how it feels to be young

to bounce with every step

to face each day with hope

to believe in lust fulfilled & hardwood glory

& tight bodies of girls

who reward young warriors

in ways that can only rival

that of old men playing a young man’s game