

BE HOLDING

APRIL 4, 2015—TODAY

You might have noticed there's nowhere to go,
the wind cutting little eddies

at your collarbones
and behind your ear,

as Dr. J drives from the foul line extended
to the baseline, defended valiantly

by Mark Landsberger, who, in this poem,
despite the doofy urge to make him so,

is not allegorical,
but is rather simply a hardworking journeyman

ball player with decent athleticism and size
and a floppy mop of dusty blond hair

got caught up in the gust,
sliding his size 16s quick

so that Doc, after catching the ball at the elbow
and taking one hard dribble toward the baseline

where the dunk would usually commence,
could not access the paint,

or the lane, or *the key*, which is what
we call the area nearest the goal,

which, in this case,
is an iron hole drawn in space,

and therefore implies a window
though the key makes it also a door

that Landsberger, it seemed,
was trying to keep shut,

and so Doc leapt,
he *left his feet*,

which means more or less jumping with the ball
with nowhere to go, and which

we're warned against by coaches
from day one

for the ensuing requisite stupid pass
or more simply though no less stupid

travel, also called *walking*,
which the leaping often leads to,

keep your feet!
again and again,

which makes the leaping—leaving your feet—
sound sacrificial,

the way in certain places, certain
countries, or countries inside of countries,

you must leave by foot with nowhere to go,
which there is,

and Doc, you should note, after the one dribble
clasps the ball with only his right hand

without once at all in any shape or form
using the left, which, *among other things*,

friends, differentiates this from all
the descendant moves—

Kevin Durant, Dwyane Wade,
Steph and Giannis and Harden and Kawhi,

yes, Bron Bron too,
I shall not be moved—

and using only one hand,
which is amazing but not yet miraculous,

more a physical and therefore genetic fact
(thanks Ma & Pa Erving),

Doc's hand becomes an octopus
gripping the ball nothing like prey,

and with that ball snugged in his mitt
Doc maybe kinda sorta thought something like

I am going to put this schmuck
(the schmuck in this case being Landsberger,

though do not, please, revert to a simplistic
allegorization of the journeyman,

which word I repeat advisedly)
on a poster,

though schmuck is a word I'd be
surprised to hear Doc say,

and the word *posterize*,
(common usage: *posterize his ass*)

you might be thinking,
is a bit of an anachronism in this poem,

in this move, which ostensibly occurred
in the 1980 NBA Finals,

though we all know that nothing happens
only when it happens,

we all know nothing happens
only when it happens,

emerging more in the epoch
(which in the NBA lasts 3-5 years)

following Doc's retirement—
Nique and Jordan,

Hakeem the Dream and Clyde the Glide,
Barkley, The Glove,

and yo, remember Shawn Kemp?—
though Doc probably thought it anyway,

visionary that he was, *when will they verb
what I keep doing*

*to these schmucks,
especially Bill fucking Walton,*

driving from the foul line extended
toward the baseline

as the unsuspecting Landsberger
who did a fine job

of shuffling his size 16s and not holding,
keeping Erving from the key,

and who must for a scant
and fleeting moment

have felt a degree of pride
when Doc, after the hard dribble right,

left his feet with nowhere to go,
Billy Cunningham on the sideline,

his hands on his hips,
his sport coat thrown open,

a few strands of hair stuck
to his moist pink brow

and almost smiling
as Doc began sailing

out of bounds, over the baseline,
and Landsberger, a solid leaper, skied

and foreclosed the possibility of Doc
sneaking a shot in

this side of the basket
(by which I mean dunking probably quite hard)

by putting his hand against the backboard
—a big door swinging shut—

at which fine and commendable defensive effort
Erving simply decided in the air

to knock on other doors
by soaring more



—have you ever decided *anything*
in the air?—

turtling his head into his chest
so as not to bash it

against the backboard,
flying like that, in fact, now

behind the basket and backboard
where Kareem, a good help defender

—umm, wait a sec, that's wrong—
Kareem, one of the best defenders *of all time*,

5 time NBA All-Defensive first team,
6 time NBA All-Defensive second team,

6 MVPs (sorry MJ),
not to mention

(which means it requires mentioning),
Kareem was one of those Negroes

they changed the rules for,
banning the dunk for years from the NCAA,

which is to say
banning emphatic and exquisite flight,

which maybe explains
the wise and sort of tired eyes of

Kareem, *one of the best basketball players*
of all time,

who had slid to also cut off the baseline,
which he accomplished,
but found himself now looking into the sky
directly out of bounds,
which his own suddenly unfamiliar
body must have been telling him
was so weird,
this is so weird,
looking and looking like this,
his hands extended timidly,
a silver maple's branches
creaking and swaying
in a hurricane,
for Doc was amongst the trees
as we call the big men
like Kareem, *the trees,*
who reside mostly in the lane,
or in the key,
growing there, rooting,
the thousands of fans now

holding their breath, looking
into the sky, some of their hands

reaching out instinctively toward their neighbors
beside them, or their palms

instinctively laying on the shoulders
before them, or forearms shoved

gently into a wrist or hip beside them,
a few arms of strangers suddenly locked

as if going for a stroll,
the whole of the Spectrum

become a kind of dew-glistened web
shivering its gems in the gales

as Erving went higher
and now began

to extend his right hand in a precise arc
beginning precisely above his head,

painting a broad and precise circle
not unlike Leonardo's *Vitruvian Man*

in his hula hoop
of perfect proportions