

From The Best American Poetry 1999. Robert Bly, ed. (New York: Scribner. 1999)

## George Bilgere

### *Catch*

My father came home with a new glove,  
all tight stiches and unscuffed gold,  
its deep pocket exhaling baseball,  
signed by Mays, or Mantle, or The Man,  
or some lesser god I've since forgotten.  
He took off his tie and dark jacket  
and we went outside to break it in,  
throwing the ball back and forth  
in the dusk, the big man sweating  
already, grunting as he tried  
to fire it at his son, who saw now,  
for the first time, that his father  
who loved to talk baseball at dinner  
and let him stay up late to watch the fights  
unfold like grainy nightmares  
on Gillette's Calvalcade of Sports,  
the massive father, who could lift him  
high in the air with one hand,  
*threw like a girl*—far and away  
the worst we could say of anyone--  
his off-kilter windup and release  
like a raw confession, so naked  
and helpless in the failing light  
that thirty years later, still  
feeling the ball's soft kiss in my glove,  
I'm afraid to throw it back.

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