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All American Poem

Jeff Haynes

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ALL AMERICAN POEM

Jeff Haynes

tell me current spiritual phase in this long life
of seesawing between nonbelief and awe
are the words in red direct quotes
or translations of translations of translations
why do fools fall in love
why do fools run the country
why did one summer you live entirely off ice
only to come out the other side unrecognizable
who taught us to nuzzle up and kiss the bait waiting on the snare
who showed us how to put our fingers down our throat
and become empty vessels for something that would never come
why are we still waiting
what strange light led us from our bedroom to the basement
to where our father wept as he listened
to a baseball game on the radio
a bare bulb swinging like a golden halo overhead
the same basement where we first learned the embarrassment of love
how you can try and almost muffle it under cheering and static
how silence is a killer nonetheless
and since then
anytime a man cries in a movie
you cry too
Robert DeNiro in *Goodfellas*
Robert DeNiro in *Raging Bull*
Robert DeNiro in *City by the Sea*
tell me what box to check
if today would have been perfect
except for the rain
which we secretly prayed for
which sabotaged the parade
what is *schadenfreude*
who brought these black clouds to the party
tied them around our wrists with string
and told us to wait

well it's been a good long while now
where's the knife
the knitting needle
the railway spike
we're still waiting patiently on third
for the signal from homeplate
telling us when to close our eyes and charge
hope for the best
when the dust clears
who will be there to instruct us afterwards
who will be there to tell us when to lift
our tongues to the white light
and accept this gift of hurting
just because

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Jeff Haynes is an MFA candidate at Virginia Tech, where he also serves as Managing Editor of the *minnesota review*, and as an assistant editor of *Toad*. His work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Word Riot*, *Gabby*, *Hot Metal Bridge*, and elsewhere. You can find him online at: jeffhaynespoet.wordpress.com.