Lincoln in Love

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LINCOLN IN LOVE

When we hear the song of two tanagers and stand in the warm shade of an elm it's the same as it was in my dream. But in the dream it was night and no one was waiting for you. It was a summer night and yet the yellowthroats and two tanagers were out. We sat watching them courting across the river, chasing each other beyond the bank. We said nothing and there was no need to. One bird calling and one bird answering—but by daylight whatever they sing is a mystery. It means nothing at all or whatever it was was lost in my long ears.
I believe the birds
must know the words
but they won't say.
They like to see
you and me suffer
this way. They enjoy
the chagrin of children
like us. Of course
it won't be better
before it's worse.
They must cherish
the anguish of adults
as much: a man
explaining his marriage
to the darkness
where his dog sits
silent and the mule
waits to eat. In all
the field of natural law
we wade with our feet
submerged in sucking
mud and it seems
we must stop and
sink at any hour
because we are weak
and the only peace
is in our sleep
and the only power
is in our dreams.