HAIKU, LATE SUMMER (A PRAYER)

Father, forgive me
for wavering unfaithful
here, amid sparrows.

Someone’s radio
just won’t quit playing love songs.
Leaves pin me to grass.

I’ve cut down an elm
to carve out a monument
to scattered petals.

Lightning in the west
advances this direction,
cracks in the ceiling.

Let me use plain words:
I don’t think I can handle
this autumn alone.

The leaves curl upward,
have learned to count on each drop
of water you give.
BEFORE WE TRY “I LOVE YOU”

We’ve tested the word obliquely.
On the phone, buffered by a dozen states,
we’ve admitted we’d love to be together.
That we’re lovers. That there are things
we love, each about the other. So easy,
proclaiming adoration for football, for chocolate,
for the road that links us, for days
like today. But when we speak of each other,
something catches the word at the trap door
of our throats. It’s like that egg
the magician deposits in the cave of his ear,
then draws whole from his mouth.
Seems impossible, something so large, hiding
in the space above the tongue. We suspect
a kind of trickery, until he cracks it into a glass
and we see it, a sun bobbing through its own
clear sky. We love days like that—
how everything seems possible and everything
surprises. Think of the finch, singing
by your window—how his burst of song
first amazes you, then strikes you as
the only thing he could possibly sing,
the only thing that makes any sense at all.