

Beginners

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Dedicated to the memory of Karen Silkwood and Eliot Gralla

*“From too much love of living,
Hope and desire set free,
Even the weariest river
Winds somewhere to the sea—“*

But we have only begun
To love the earth.

We have only begun
To imagine the fullness of life.

How could we tire of hope?
—so much is in bud.

How can desire fail?
—we have only begun

to imagine justice and mercy,
only begun to envision

how it might be
to live as siblings with beast and flower,
not as oppressors.

Surely our river
cannot already be hastening
into the sea of nonbeing?

Surely it cannot
drag, in the silt,
all that is innocent?

Not yet, not yet—
there is too much broken
that must be mended,

too much hurt we have done to each other
that cannot yet be forgiven.

We have only begun to know

the power that is in us if we would join
our solitudes in the communion of struggle.

So much is unfolding that must
complete its gesture,

so much is in bud