



Fresh Rain

A Quarterly e-Journal of the Open Path / Sufi Way

SPRING 2023

IN THIS ISSUE: Prose by Binah Taylor, Elias Amidon, Gabriel Leslie Mezei, Sabah Raphael Reed, Viv Quillin, and Yona Chavanne. Poetry by Ayaz Angus Landman, Jeanne Rana, Lysana Robinson, Sabah Raphael Reed, and Umtul Valeton-Kiekens



Dear Friends,

This Spring's theme is **Climate Change**. I asked writers to respond to the questions: what do you see within your own realm; how do you feel about it; what actions might you take? Do you feel hope or despair?

Special thanks to Mèhèra Bakker for Sufi Inayat Khan's quote, and to Umtul Valeton-Kiekens for sharing her paintings.

We had more pieces for this issue than expected, so some will come out in the summer solstice issue. We'll have a dual theme for summer: **climate change and nourishment**. For nourishment, what feeds you? What are the sources that support and nurture you? Do you turn to prayer, meditation, or creativity? Play with your dog or cat? Walk in nature, or talk with friends? Listen to music?

Thanks to all who offer their thoughtfulness expressed in writing for *Fresh Rain*. Consider contributing to future issues. Please share yourself in this way with our larger community.

With love for each one of you,
Amrita
editor, *Fresh Rain*: freshrain@sufiway.org



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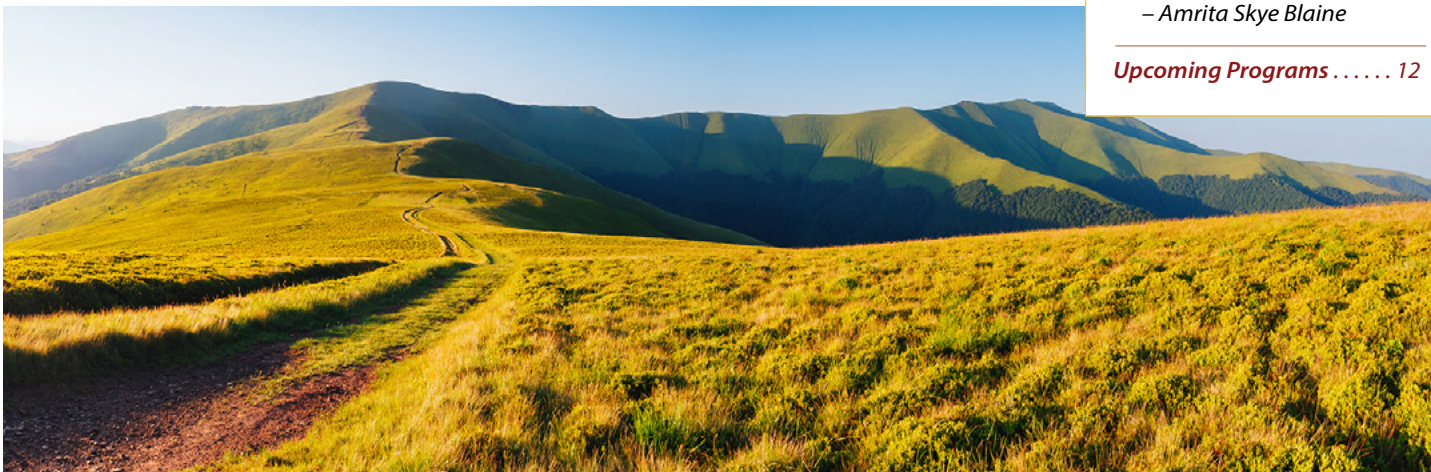
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Silver Linings

by Elias Amidon

If it's true, as the old proverb tells us, that "there's a silver lining to every cloud," what can we say is the silver lining to the climate crisis? Heat waves, rising seas, droughts, floods, extinctions, soil loss, acidic oceans, climate refugees, societal collapse—what possibly could be a silver lining to this darkening cloud of suffering and loss that's looming over us?

Humbled by the great cracking glaciers falling into the sea, unable to stop them, humbled by the rain that never comes, or comes too fiercely, humbled by forests in flames, by bewildered families trudging northward, by whales washed dead on the beach, we are humbled and will be humbled.

So, humility then, a hard lesson for a silver lining.

One day, by necessity, we will have less, less on the shelves of the big box stores, less on Amazon, less options, money, comfort, independence. And less will teach us, like it did our ancestors. Less will force us out of our doors to ask of our neighbors and to share. Less will teach us, by necessity, what we need and what we don't. Wendell Berry:

*Those who will not learn
in plenty to keep their place
must learn it by their need...*

So, having less, we will find what is more. Another hard lesson for a silver lining.

The child asks, looking at a photo in a magazine, "Why does that polar bear look so sad?" And you try to tell her about the exhaust from your car and how it joins all the other exhausts from all the cars and trucks and houses and power plants and factories of all the world, making the air hold more heat from the sun and the planet gets hotter and the polar bear's home is melting, so that's why he's sad. "You mean the way we live touches the polar bear, even though I've never seen one?" Yes, the way we live touches even more than the polar bear, it touches everything. Like a wise man once said:

*When we try to pick out anything by itself,
we find it hitched to everything else in the Universe.*

So, we learn, too slowly perhaps, how nothing is separate from anything else, and how what we do touches everything and is touched in turn. We are one whole intertwined unbelievably mutual life, here together.

As things fall apart we learn this, the most beautiful silver lining.



Environmental Activism

by Gabriel Leslie Mezei

Sixty years ago, *Silent Spring* was published by Rachel Carson.

“Silent Spring is considered the book that started the global grassroots environmental movement. Released in 1962, it focuses on the negative effects of chemical pesticides that were, at the time, a large part of US agriculture. Rachel Carson and her work began initiating a shift in global environmental consciousness.” – fourminutebooks.com

Yet, it took a long time for the threat to be taken seriously. By now, we can call it an impending environmental disaster. Are we doing enough about it? Not by a long shot. Many believe that it will take a transformation of our spiritual consciousness before we will act accordingly.

The awareness is there already about the accelerating ill effects of our oil-based way of life. But are we ready to give up some of our conveniences? There is little evidence of that. Some believe that only some kind of catastrophe would reverse this lassitude.

Some of us assert that a widespread spiritual consciousness-raising is needed. An awareness of our unity in diversity. Most of us are ready to make sacrifices for members of our own family. We all must realize that we are all members

of one great *human family*, and be prepared to work toward a better future for all our sisters and brothers.

I used to be a Facilitator for the “Awakening the Dreamer, Changing the Dream” transformational symposia for the Pachamama Alliance, begun in 2005. It describes the goal as: “Bringing forth an environmentally sustainable, spiritually fulfilling, socially just human presence on this planet.” It was daring to include all three dimensions, especially the “spiritually fulfilling” one. It is now available as an online self-administered experience at www.pachamama.org

Added more recently, the Game Changer Initiative <https://landing.pachamama.org/game-changer-intensive-8-week-online-course> is a unique online course that will inspire and equip one to become a game-changing leader in the world, and the Drawdown Initiative <https://connect.pachamama.org/drawdown> a series of workshops that supports one in finding one’s unique contribution to reversing global warming.

Most of us are aware of the dangers to our environment and perhaps try to do something about it in in our own lives. The inspirational communication tools described above add another dimension, which we could share with those close to us.

The universe is like a dome; it vibrates to that which you say in it, and answers the same back to you; so also is the law of action we reap what we sow.

— *Bowl of Saki*, February 15, by Hazrat Inayat Khan

Waymarkers in the Gathering Storm

by Sabah Raphael Reed

The climate of the entire planet is changing and changing fast. A great unraveling is underway, much of it the result of actions of the human species. Climate from this perspective is not just the weather, but the entire interconnected web of conditions that affect life on Earth: atmospheric, ecological, spiritual, social, political, economic, and cultural.

In one version of the Hopi creation myth of Grandmother Spider—the wise woman in a cave who weaves the world into existence—a rabid dog keeps pulling at a thread in the weave until it unravels. Grandmother Spider patiently begins again and again, being always willing to let go of the original design in order to weave the world anew.

We are that rabid dog.

But in moments of grace, we are also able to attune to the wisdom of Grandmother Spider. Such wisdom offers us Waymarkers in the gathering storm.

Waymarkers include—

- ◆ The litany of “bad news” appears as a torrent of overwhelming and disconnected catastrophes. Yet together such catastrophes invoke remembrance of *interbeing*; the interconnectedness and unity that flows through all creation. Nothing is separate from anything else. The military-industrial complex depends upon the myth of separation and the dynamics of domination that arise from that. Our calling is to refute that myth and commit to living re-enchanted and re-ensouled lives, rooted in interbeing.
- ◆ Listen to the wisdom of the wider-than-human world. Listen to the Earth, planets, moon, and stars. Honor the cycles of birth and death and trust Nature as teacher. *Everything in life is speaking... in spite of its apparent silence* (Sufi Inayat Khan).
- ◆ Stay present to what is, welcoming back home all that is wounded and wounding—all that is cast out. Be part of restoring the broken fabric of the world, of making everything whole. Be part of the healing.
- ◆ Turn toward our pain and grief for the world, accepting the gifts of broken-heartedness and vulnerability. Sorrow breaks us open and deepens us. Endarkenment is as necessary as enlightenment. *You must have shadow and light source both. Listen and lay your head under the tree of awe* (Rumi).
- ◆ Know that all beings are held by the Beloved and re-sourced in pure presence. Awakening to this we are able to be conduits for gratitude, joy, love, humility, intimacy, steadiness, kindness, compassion, *seeing what matters and doing the beautiful* (Pir Elias). Remember we are never alone.



- ◆ Understand this moment as an initiatory journey—calling forth purification, relinquishment, bewilderment, and surrender. We are entering an inescapable time of descent into the unknown—a landscape of unknowing—with no certainty of return. Learn how to be undone and how to bear faithful witness to the multiple processes of dying that are taking place. Recognize this as a moment of collective *fana*.
- ◆ Realize that profound planetary transformation is underway, creating possibilities for the evolution of consciousness. To find our way we must first recognize we are lost. New ways of seeing, new forms of language, new relationships, new species, new capacities will inevitably arise. Out of the dark, something as yet unformed will emerge, even though we may not be there to see it.

Such guidance cannot be fully received or understood through cognitive or conceptual faculties alone or through social and political action—though each of these has its place. Rather, there is a mystical opening with energetic resonance that is calling to us—individually and communally.

Our task now is to attune to this wisdom through the embodied and undefended Heart.



Can we talk about climate change, please?

by Binah Taylor

A sprinkle, a little more, pause. We have waited 154 days, painful arithmetic as much as to measure our soil's thirst. Like anxious parents, we watch over fig and olive trees as they bow to the inevitable, fruits interrupted before their prime. Even the hardiest, a sport fig, self-appointed gatekeeper of the dry barranca, is too unwell this scorching summer to yield her succulent offerings. Along the hill crest below eagles' peak, rows of almond trees, well adapted to this harsh environment, tell the same story—meager fruit suspended like forlorn earrings. Only the interlopers, avocados and mangoes, thrive, empowered by water brought in by stealth from elsewhere. The Alpujarra spring that gave our village its name and inspired poems for its sweet waters is now a mere trickle. Will desalination be next?

"It's because San Miguel had to stay in the church," the faithful account for rain's scarcity with conviction. This September the annual fiesta returns releasing our saint from his long covid lockdown of three years. White-plumed helmet jaunty, he emerges with his sword accompanied by firework bangs to ward off the devil. Amid incense and Sulphur fumes, this spiritual warrior journeys round the village carried by footmen in shoe shuffle behind the priest, the swaying incense holder a metronome for the brass band in the rear. As if by secret signal, drops escape from sooty clouds, moistening all below.

"It's because San Miguel is out!" The faithful are affirmed.

Not to be. Wind change brings *Levante*¹, her breath a hairdryer. In the drama, ocean's fog responds, inviting *Calima*² to cover our village. The foggy tangerine glow kindles hope for real rain, even a yearning for a Biblical downpour which can last for days, the streets shape shifting into crisscrossing rivers. Those of an alternative persuasion look skywards, seeking guidance from night's stars, who bear witness to earth's struggle.

Farmers are turning their backs—too hard, no future—on this land whose stony terraced hillsides sustained their families for centuries. Another wildfire has sparked debate in the Plaza: one side naming this a whistleblower, the other shrugging it off as normal. Magical thinking and practical outlook sit at the same table.

This hottest-on-record summer has given *cambio climático*³ a compelling voice. Few though talk about a *climática crisis*⁴: coronavirus still commands that space. While the scent of attitude change grows stronger, there is either lassitude because it feels too big or a lack of urgency because it's somewhere in the future—yet this province presides over a 5-billion-euro annual turnover of plastic greenhouse agriculture on increasingly impoverished soils. So vast it can be seen from space. There is no time to waste; the drumbeat calls.

Such is living in the fragile ecosystem of an ancient village in southern Andalucía. While climate mandarins argue in their metropolitan glass offices, we are breathless at the very edge, mouths agape, not yet part of their conversation.

Postscript: Since this piece was written last October, the rains finally arrived in December more than two months late. While a cause for optimism for the year ahead, it is nevertheless a stop-gap situation.

¹ Easterly wind of the Western Mediterranean sea

² Orange hued dust from North Africa

³ Spanish for climate change

⁴ Spanish for climate crisis



Continual Change

by Yona Chavanne

*“... Right now we are in the natural bardo of this life.
 (...) the natural bardo of this life is where our work lies.
 By coming to understand how this life is a bardo—a state
 of continual change—we will be ready to face any other
 bardos that may arise, however unfamiliar ...”*

—Pema Chödrön

Each moment, there is movement or change. Often not perceivable, they are part of the unseen. How to figure out the dance of infinitely small particles in this solid wooden table?

Day after day, almost imperceptibly, we move from light to night. Starry night. Our moon reflecting our sun. Sky clears up, new morning light!

Each of our lives starts with a tremendous change. We were nothing. Nothing that we know. Pure potential. Emptiness.

Two human beings make love. Now two microcells, egg and sperm, start their dance of creation, sketching touch by touch a new body. Little body grows within the tender amniotic waters of a mother’s womb. And one day, little body is propelled thru a dark and narrow tunnel into a light it had no idea of. Day light, electric light...This change is rude—from mellow water’s protection into cold air. Great shock!

A new life emerges and breathes and screams. Here I am!

We are given birth. Our being-human adventure begins. We suck our mother’s breast. We have no idea about the future developments our life will take. We are fed. We feel loved. We learn to trust.

Who knows what will happen next? We learn to walk. We learn to rely upon the apparent solidity of earth and mountain. We experience. We identify. We love and grief. We fight with others and with ourselves. Is there more to life than these turbulent, impermanent sensations? We know one day we die. We don’t know what will happen next.

We hear a strong inner call for freedom, for joy, for spaciousness. Daringly, we accept and try to tame ourselves to the mystery. What am I, vulnerable little one in the immensity of the cosmos? Am I this consciousness which makes me one with all? Am I both this which changes and doesn’t change?



Umtul Valeton-Kiekens

Flash Fiction

by Viv Quillin

My twelve-year-old grandson Rowan and I were playing at "Flash Fiction" whilst on a walk. It takes my mind off my aches and pains and his mind off the fact that we are walking just for its own sake. Somehow the turns that we take with carrying on the story line always slip into me saying something hopeful and positive like "And the dear little fairies healed all the people who had been struck dead by the giant's machine gun." Rowan would retort with another explosion/weapon attack/natural disaster which would wipe out most, or all, of humanity. And I would find another solution, possibly involving ladybirds providing everyone with life-reviving magic custard. A lot of artistic licence is allowed in our literary forays.

Most recently when we were playing this game Rowan said something like "Then a huge meteor blasted a great crater and everyone in the world fell into it."

The response that I made was not what I expected to hear myself say. "As all the humans were tumbling into the void one of them called out a suggestion. *If we all hold hands and say "Yes we can do this," we will rise up and be saved.* So they all held hands and sang out "Yes we can do this." It didn't save them from plunging into the void and losing their lives, but what a wonderful way to die, holding hands and saying "Yes we can do this."

Rowan didn't add anything to this story and we walked on in silence, arm in arm. I felt both sad and hopeful that I'd maybe offered some kind of model for how we could face a huge crisis with loving connection and the joy of unattached hope.

Perhaps it's a form of laziness or self-indulgence but I don't think so. I'm trusting that now is not the time for me to fight and protest on behalf of our climate. Although I believe that these actions are valuable, if only as a form of solidarity, I can't honestly see them making enough difference to halt radical change in our natural world. Not being any kind of expert on environmental issues, I hope that my belief is misguided. Famine and other hardships which may precede the end of our environment being able to sustain life, are what I want to be prepared for in spirit. Loving kindness and the willingness to seek beauty in the most unlikely places may be called upon to find any purpose and pleasure in being alive.

For this planet and for myself, death is not something I fear much. When I contemplate the end of my own life or that of the earth, it fills me with a vivid love and appreciation of Life right now. At the end I believe that there will simply be a return home to the infinitesimal stardust which everything has been made of all along.



Viv Quillin

Stop the Steal

In big ways and small
The moment
Will be stolen from you.
“Stop the steal” then
Is an internal injunction
To slow down and notice
How nothing can be stolen
From you
Without your consent
The deepening waters
Of this revelation
Will set you free
In truth
We all know
There is nowhere else to go.

— Angus Landman

*(Apologies for neglecting
to include this poem in
the Winter issue)*



Imagine the Bay

before shell mound middens
and tule bark canoes.

Imagine the bay
before freeways, bridges,
the necklace of city lights
reflected in water.

To visualize a place
unpeopled is
disturbing
yet reassuring.

Humans are
a red tide
an episode

in the eternity of
sun, wave, rock,
cloud, rain, sky.

— Jeanne Rana

Listen to the Earth

Listen to the Earth,
She's speaking.
Listen to the Earth,
She's weeping,
crying out in pain.
She's calling us,
calling us,
to change our ways.
Let's look deep inside ourselves
with honesty and compassion,
this Earth, our home,
is there within us.
We each can heal her,
one small step
by one small step.
It's our only chance.
It's not too late.

— Lysana Robinson



Climate change

Everything we took for granted falls away.

The path obscure,
a not-known landscape
momentarily visible
through the caul.

We sense there's no way back.
Our maps are faint, our lights unsure.

A raven perches on the rock
to sing us home.

— Sabah Raphael Reed

This poem was created after a chilla during the Summer Experience summer 2015. My task was to go to the seaside, alone, and talk to her at midnight. After that, there was a meditation in the Sufi Temple called "The People of the Night." – Umtul Valeton-Kiekens

Come Closer

Midnight
 complete quietude
 distant murmuring of gentle waves
 All I could do was pray
 plead for purification
 Come, come closer!

Walked up to the edge
 of sand and sea
 in awe watched vastness
 in shades of grey
 Come, come closer!

Horizon dissolved into sky
 emphasizing stillness
 Breath synchronized your murmuring
sjffffff, sjffffff
 Come, come closer!

White tongues edged gentle waves
 like sawas on the sea
 being the only form in boundless grey
sjffffff, sjffffff
 Come, come closer still!

Is this an invitation to dissolve?

Church clocks mention distant time and
 another calling penetrates
 O, no mind People of the Night
 no mind you can wait,
 Come, come, come closer!

My feet licked by white tongues in timeless moment of dissolving
sjffffff, sjffffff



Come, come, whosoever you are!
 Do come, from whatever Caravanserai,
 such welcoming response to all
 our abuse, abuse, abuse
 to sea, oceans and all waters
sjffffff, sjffffff
 Blessed, blessed, blessed be the waters all over the globe!

White tongues lured me back to my feet,
 sucked me out of praying
 Come, come, whosoever you are!
 We are not a caravan of despair!
 Ahhhhhhh!
 No despair! What a message of Grace...

Come, come!
 Another call from beyond,
 yes, People of the Night, I am coming
 well prepared walked up to golden Cupola
 Blessing and prayer continued
 deep into the night!
 Dissolving into shades of grey
sjffffff, sjffffff

Gratefulness

And This

I wrote this poem during the devastating California fires in the fall of 2018. These fires are clearly due to our rapidly changing climate. Since then, every year, I have a go-bag packed and in the car.

shredded by loss

hot, fierce, unrelenting
wind blows toward us
blackened Bible page
charred shopping list
tatters of lives flutter
nine miles from the fire
nine miles!

what of my missing friend
rural, within the firestorm
no contact
in the dark I lie awake
ten protracted nights
ten nights

we are shredded by loss
innocence wrenched away
dry seasons are not benign
now we know
ashes of animals, people
rain down too
we breathe each other in

– Amrita Skye Blaine



Upcoming In-Person Programs



Awakening in a Troubled World
Three Residential Retreats
with Pir Elias Amidon

Awakening is not a private act.

Recognizing our true nature is simultaneously a recognition of our collective body, our interbeing with all of creation. What guides our lives then is no longer anxiety or self-concern but spontaneous compassion and kindness. In these retreats we will open ourselves to our true nature and our collective body — this radiant, living mystery that we share with all being — and consider together how we may best serve our troubled world.

U.K.: May 25 – 28, 2023

Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

Netherlands: May 31 – June 2, 2023

Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

Germany: June 8 – 11, 2023

Click [here](#) for more information and to register.



Vision Quest in Spain
St Llorenc, Mallorca, Illes de Balearis,
Spain • July 5 – 19, 2023
Dr. Oskar Demmer, MD, Suzanne
Demmer, and Brigitte Gittenberger

This vision quest will take place in the western mountain range of Mallorca between Pollença and the monastery Lluc — a wonderful wilderness area with rivers, lakes, forests, canyons, and marvelous views of the sea. Click [here](#) for more information.



Umtul Valetton-Kiekens

Upcoming Online Programs

Every Thursday



First Thursday:
ALANKARA

A classic style of Sufi communal contemplation.
Click [here](#) for more information



Second Thursday:
SAMA

Musical meditations (zikr) with
Murshida Suzanne Inayat-Khan
and Omar Inayat-Khan
Click [here](#) for more information



Third Thursday:
SHARING SILENCE

with Pir Elias.
Click [here](#) for more information



Fourth Thursday:
A TIME FOR QUESTIONS

This is a time for asking Pir Elias
any questions you might have.
Click [here](#) for more information



Fifth Thursday:
ATTUNEMENTS

Community offerings of
meditations and practices.
Click [here](#) for more information



Living Sufism

This year's theme is *Love's Drum —
the Resilience of the Human Spirit*.
Open to all. To register, click [here](#).



Openings

Esoteric Study Class open to
Sufi Way initiates and Open Path
graduates. Click [here](#) for more
information