



# Fresh Rain

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

WINTER 2023

**IN THIS ISSUE: Prose by Umtul Valeton-Kiekens, Viv Quillan, Simon Vivian, and Erica Witt; Poetry by Gabriel Leslie Mezei, Jeanne Rana, Lysana Robinson, Umtul Valeton-Kiekens, and Amrita Skye Blaine.**



Dear Friends,

This winter's theme is **Dualities**—light/dark, innocence/experience, joy/sorrow, agitation/ serenity, and more.

We received prose contributions from Umtul Valeton-Kiekens, Viv Quillan, Simon Vivian, and Erica Witt. Poetry includes Gabriel Leslie Mezei, Jeanne Rana, Lysana Robinson, Umtul Valeton-Kiekens, and Amrita Skye Blaine.

The beautiful paintings are by Umtul Valeton-Kiekens, painted especially for this issue! Special thanks to Mèhèra Bakker for Sufi Inayat Khan's quote.

For the Spring equinox issue, let's consider **Climate Change**. 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? This theme feels like an American expression we have, "the elephant in the living room," so let's tackle it.

Thanks to all who offer their deep hearts for *Fresh Rain*. Consider writing for 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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## Apparent Duality of the Phases of the Moon

by Umtul Valeton-Kiekens

The moon is, from our view from the earth, different nearly every day; she travels through phases from where we cannot see her, when she turns her dark side to the earth, to brilliant fullness.

All of the sudden, one evening when the first sliver is there, a feeling of happiness arises; there is a promise in the air.

Always looking out for that first crescent of the new moon... it gives a sense of relief, to see her re-appearing, a reassurance that she will once more shine to her fullest soon, which is palpable already in that first appearance...

Yet it all happens from our point of view only.

That sliver grows every day and rises every evening a little later... she travels through space where the earthly law of time is not valid.



So, she grows until, one evening, rising quite late in the evening: There she is, full and brilliant. What a contradiction, only two weeks ago to the dark moon, and we were able to witness that magic!



Yet it all happens from our point of view only.

The brilliant full moon is, in fact, always there.

It is interesting to have more thoughts about that—we cannot see her fully because of the shadow of ourselves, of our planet earth, who is covering her from partly to totally or not at all.

All happening in apparent reality ... from our point of view only.

To me, there also seems to be a difference of light in her waning and waxing. In waning her light seems to get duller every step on the way to non-existence—and in her waxing she *seems* brighter.

Not only her form differs, her brightness, timing, but then her colors as well! Last night I witnessed the waning moon rising and she was bright red. There are Blue Moons, Yellow Moons, and White Moons also. What a creative planet to be able to take on all these different garments. It is almost as if she wants to say: you see this you can do too; there is hope for you, for the world.



I am using these metaphors because it is very much like our experience in life. Some days the light from within is shining bright, other days it is less. At least we can understand the moon and the shadow of the earth, but we cannot always understand why we feel less brilliant one day, then dull the next. To me, I do recognize there is something like a shadow covering the light from within, like on a cloudy day. There seems to be a kind of reciprocity too, when there seems to be less light coming from within, there also seems to come less light from the outer world to “feed” or light your inner one.

This is all again apparently like the phases of the moon, an apparent duality and from our point of view.

And then one day that first sliver reappears, lifting up spirits to hope, renewal end excitement ... growth to the full moon.

*(continued on p. 3)*



My hope is like a bird carrying the full moon in its wings and bringing its light of hope and healing all over the earth....



**Once you have given up your limited self willingly to the Unlimited, you will rejoice so much in that consciousness that you will not care to be small again.**

If you ask someone to say where he is, he will point at his arm, his hand, his body. He knows little beyond that. There are many who if asked, "But where do you think you are in your body?" will say, "In my brain." They limit themselves to that small physical region which is called body, thus making themselves much smaller than they really are. The truth is that man is one individual with two aspects, just like one line with two ends. If you look at the ends, it is two. If you look at the line, it is one. One end of the line is limited, the other end of the line is unlimited. One end is man, the other end is God. Man forgets that end, and knows only the end of which he is conscious. And it is the consciousness of limitation which makes him more limited. Otherwise he would have far greater means of approaching the Unlimited which is within himself, which is only the other end of the same line, the line which he calls, or which he considers to be, himself. And when a mystic speaks of self-knowledge this does not mean knowing how old one is or how good one is or how bad, or how right or how wrong. It means knowing the other part of one's being, that deeper, subtler aspect. It is upon the knowledge of that being that the fulfillment of life depends.

When a man has a ragged coat he says, "I am poor." In reality his coat is poor, not he. What this capacity or accommodation contains is that which becomes his knowledge, his realization, and it is that which limits him. It forms that limitation which is the tragedy of every soul. Now, this capacity may be filled with self, or it may be filled with God. There is only room for one. Either we live with our limitation, or we let God reign there in His unlimited Being.

– Sufi Inayat Khan

## Polarity and Duality

by Erica Witt

I have been struggling with Parkinson's Disease for several years. It has become my principal learning field in my particular aging process. What I say about it is what I have learnt from my experience; very little comes from science, pharmacology, neurology. I expect a Neurologist would be horrified! But it's my "take" on this quarter's Fresh Rain theme.

PD, for short, is a neurological condition. What little is understood by our present understanding is that it's main cause is a lack of dopamine in the brain, which affects muscles, movement, mood, leading to increasing dysfunction. The autonomic nervous system has become somehow exposed to conscious awareness, like an electrical fault, an intractable switching from positive to negative poles: yes/no, endlessly repetitive, frustrating, exhausting, the movement exaggerated to a flip/flap, a gyration, a violent paroxysm by fatigue, excitement, anger, agitation.

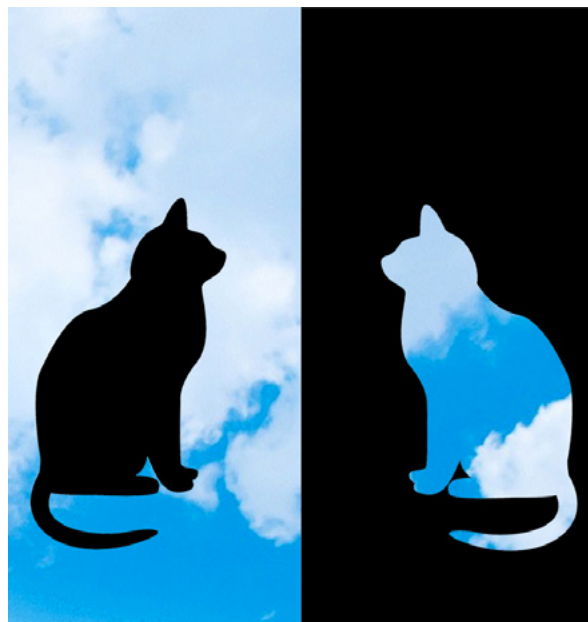
I call this *polarity*, like the bi-polar, oppositional nature of so much of our experience: Yes/no. Black/white. Male/female. Good/bad. We steer our lives/our lives are steered, and our experiences orchestrated in accordance with these subliminal triggers.

Do we? Don't we? Answer in two sentences to pass your exam: Pass/fail. Win/lose. Success/failure.

*Duality*, for me, is different. It is a shift from the oppositional, antagonistic nature of Polarity to a more balancing, co-operative interplay of forces. Like Dual Nationality for instance, where power-play has matured to a choice of options, a mutuality of benefit. Perhaps! Or like both arms working together with different rhythms and roles to fulfill a task together, beating eggs or cutting up logs.

No doubt we need both Polarity and Duality in different areas of our lives or in changing stages of development.

I've also been reflecting on the organizational input of the two hemispheres of our brain. For me, the left brain manages the factual and numerical, reasoning side of life. The right brain creates and organizes by color, texture, juxtaposition, the imaginative responses to what's going on in our lives. Do these two sides compete or do they cooperate? Writing, I would say is left brain. Imagery is right



brain. Left brain is straight lines and corners. Right brain is squiggles and curves. And this is just for the visuals. There's music: rhythm or melody? and so on.

All this is just my fascination at scratching the surface of things, grasping awareness in brief glimpses as life hurries by. Watching in a two-dimensional/three-dimensional time-bound way the mysterious interplay of our bodies, our lives, our consciousness.

I expect God laughs, but with kindness and generosity I hope, at my rumblings and mumblings. The mystery of it all is so vast, tantalizing, and overflowing with possibilities. My pains and frustrations are, on a good day, just a little contribution!



## As I Me Walk-Ed

by Simon Vivian

When Amrita sent out her call for contributions to this issue of Fresh Rain on Dualities something inside me responded, a visceral sense, a remembering maybe—but something....

I let this rest in me for over a week, resurfacing from time to time but without coherent form. There were a few strands that had announced themselves.

I'd remembered a song that we sometimes sing in one of our groups that goes—

“As I me walk-ed one fine May morning, I heard a bird sing...”

This sounds like being taken for a walk—but by whom. And then the bird sang—and that was enough.

And again, a time when asked to say who we were in a group gathering together I said: “I’m called Simon.” Why not just Simon? I was making space between I and Me.

What’s this with dividing myself in parts, making a duality a masking of this that I am, whole. I’m not whom you say I am—am I or Me?

But then the Bird Sang and there was neither I nor Me, just this listening being listened and the looking being looked and all was well and always has been forever and ever.

It’s so easy to make stories.

And so today, I sat here and began to narrate this. It finds wonder in me without knowing the what, why, when or how. And that’s just fine.

I’m reminded of a few words that Pir O Murshid Fazal Inayat-Khan wrote back in 1973 in his lecture on *Interest in Everything*:

*“... we should not lose sight of the fact that in this illusionary existence in which purpose is not really separate from life, everything man does is done either in vain or in vanity. The mystic chooses, rather than to do things in vanity, to act in vain, chooses rather than to find that nothing is interesting, to be interested in everything, while knowing that there is nothing to be known.”*

## Having It All

by Viv Quillan

As I write this, I’m feeling tentative relief and gladness because perhaps the war in Ukraine is coming to an end. At the same time, I have a heavy heart about all the pain that this war has brought about and the damage which now needs to be repaired. The loss of life that it has caused can never be repaired. My heart is muddled and confused by being pulled in different directions.

Even without the drama and dreary hardship of a war, in our humble little lives, who has not experienced sleepless nights when all troubles seem to magnify? As the dawn creeps into the darkness, gently illuminating a new day, it can lift our spirits and shine fresh hope on our situation.

Another scenario—tired and anxious we slip into the blessed, velvet serenity of night and maybe sleep, which gives us a welcome break from our seemingly endless tribulations. Then the glare of daylight brings us to yet another day to be got through.

Who can say what is destructive or healing? Good or bad? Both at the same time? As I thought of writing about Duality, my heart, no, my brain sank under the burden of trying to make some sense of it.

Always glad to procrastinate, I went for a walk and, in an orchard, I came across a fluttering of November butterflies in the autumn sunshine, feasting on fermenting pears. They were amongst an abundance of hornets, bees, wasps and other insects. I wondered if they would get hangovers later.

As insect numbers are plummeting globally, I could have used this moment to feel sadness and anxiety about the future. For once, I was simply suffused by the sweetness of the experience.

Inspired as always, by the terrible and wonderful, huge and tiny magnificence of nature which we are an integral part of, Duality seemed to me like this: There is no sense to be made of it, only the agonizing and beautiful, bittersweet joy of Having It All.

I find that bathing everything in Love helps too.

### The Pendulum

Between turbulence and calm,  
the eternal pendulum swings  
from one extreme to the other  
passing through the centre point twice.

At rest, it settles mid-point,  
motionless, giving me chance  
to choose the equilibrium  
of an open heart and still mind.

Devoid of human prejudice,  
extremes may be seen merely  
as transient forces in motion,  
seeking balanced co-existence.

Through contrasting emotions,  
sadness and joy,  
panic and serenity,  
Life is fully experienced.

Maybe if I watch  
the pendulum without  
judgment I will see  
Beauty manifest in All.

—Lysana Robinson



### Great and Small

I am so great  
Yet pitifully small;  
Now I know  
I'm human after all.  
Great and small  
It's hard to live with both;  
But impossible  
To live with only one.  
So I give thanks  
For existing at all;  
And I'm learning to live with  
Being great and small.

—Gabriel Leslie Mezei

**at the poetry reading**

the featured speaker  
 focused on despair  
 a carnival of dread  
 drowned refugees  
 raped field workers  
 shock and awe

yes there's all that  
 but I find myself  
 writing of reconciliation and hope  
 I still choose happiness today  
 although they say the sky is falling

that sounds smug  
 sorry! I'm trying  
 to find my way  
 to see the shining  
 in the shit

everything is terrible  
 everything is beautiful  
 stay with that  
 until it works for you

—Jeanne Rana

**Ever Changing**

In this ever-changing world,  
 how fragile equilibrium is.  
 Gratitude, openness and  
 joy, jostle with sadness,  
 threats and despair.

This need not be unsettling.  
 Peace and Stillness are constants  
 as are the sun, moon and stars,  
 even when hidden behind  
 walls, darkness and clouds.

The moon and stars  
 shine only in the darkness.  
 Daily the sun brings the light.  
 We accept that they each  
 take their turns to be visible.

Focus on the beauty of life,  
 cultivate inner calm and resilience  
 to become the deep well  
 from which we draw and share  
 joy and sustenance for all.

—Lysana Robinson

**charting my anxiety**

charting my anxiety  
 building on my nervousness  
 I create a castle of cards  
 all atremble

holding my anxiety  
 fear of the unknown  
 what a medical test  
 will determine

adding to my anxiety  
 memories of chemo  
 "going down"  
 in that elevator afterwards

analyzing my anxiety  
 all this angst  
 and alliteration  
 what happens if I begin

deconstructing this story?  
 who is this I?  
 what is this feeling?  
 just more clouds

moving across the  
 mind meadow  
 the house of cards  
 wavers wildly then

falls flat.  
 This is here now.  
 Here is everywhere  
 and nowhere.

Oh! look at  
 that cloudbank  
 moving in  
 from the bay.

—Jeanne Rana

**nothing more to say**

Faust knew he would never be satisfied  
 so, he made a deal with the devil.

But isn't this the dark side  
 of longing for the divine?

We are all restless infants  
 nudging rooting left and right  
 because we smell the breast.

Faust thought he would never find it.

But  
 nondual thought proclaims we never left it.  
 We babes are at the breast.  
 Everything is perfect always.  
 God is looking out our eyes.

So now what?  
 There is no story  
 no deal with the devil  
 no longing for the divine

no action at all  
 nothing more to say.

—Jeanne Rana

During the darkness of the year  
 Off short days and long nights  
 Moon is shining by  
 ○  
 Enlightens our heart and warming our face  
 Spreading silence and rewarding waiting  
 By ever changing phases, colours and light  
 Moon is shining by  
 ○

There is a promise abiding  
 Red Mars on her side  
 They form a couple  
 Light is shining through darkness  
 A promise of a new year.

—Umtul Valeton-Kiekens



## And This

### simply be nobody

you were tutored from  
birth to be somebody  
—somebody *special*  
a ponderous weight

be content with unique  
—you are, after all—  
having to be someone  
divides this-that-is  
into 10,000 things  
adds the burden of  
“mine” and “yours”—  
no other creature  
does this

simply be nobody  
the world will spin on  
with less suffering  
buy a home, but don't  
claim you own it—  
what does “owning”  
mean, anyway?  
earn a degree but  
don't claim a persona

instead, rest in this—  
the undivided  
ineffable wonder  
of all that is

—Amrita Skye Blaine

### doorway through emptiness

emptiness is not the goal  
although it is a pirouette  
along the way—  
there is no goal

find the doorway through  
emptiness—return to the  
world wholehearted and  
open and kind and  
welcome ambiguity—  
that is your gold

—Amrita Skye Blaine

## Upcoming In-Person Programs



**Enter Into Silence**  
**Walking Retreat in the Moroccan Desert**  
**February 11 – 22, 2023**  
**Karim Noverraz and Elmer Koole**

This walking retreat offers us an opportunity to experience how the vast emptiness and silence of the desert connects us with our own inner silence. Click [here](#) for more information.



**Save the Dates!**  
**The following retreats**  
**are being planned for**  
**the summer of 2023:**

**England:** A 4-day retreat with Pir Elias • May 25 – 28, 2023  
 at Poulstone Court Retreat and Meditation Centre, Kings Cople, Herefordshire, U.K. • More information soon!

**Netherlands:** A 3-day retreat with Pir Elias • May 31 – June 2, 2023,  
 at the Universel Murad Hassil, Katwijk-aan-Zee, Netherlands • More information soon!

**Germany:** A 4-day retreat with Pir Elias • June 8 – 11, 2023  
 at Ellernhof Seminar Centre (www.ellernhof.de) Am Hamburg 20,  
 21368 Ellringen, Germany • More information soon!



**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 Lluç — a wonderful wilderness area with rivers, lakes, forests, canyons, and marvelous views of the sea. Click [here](#) for more information.

## Upcoming Online Programs



**Attunements**  
 A Monthly Program of  
 Sufi Practices  
**Starting in January, 2022**  
 Click [here](#) for more information



**Sama**  
 Monthly online communal  
 musical meditations  
 Click [here](#) for more information



**Openings**  
 Monthly meetings of Sufi Way  
 initiates and Open Path graduates  
 Click [here](#) for more information

