

**Poems, Dreams, Stories and  
Visions**



**Sam Slutsky**

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**High Pat Press**



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cover design:Sam Slutsky  
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## INTRODUCTION

The writing in this collection is a selection from the “Image Writing” section of my book “T’ai Chi Ch’uan Notes”. The entries of each section are recorded in a (somewhat) chronological order.

I do not fully comprehend some of the things described in this document. They all relate to and come out of my learning, training, work and direction. They are not about what I do, but what comes to me from others and from the imagination.

## **BONE DREAMING**

a collection of movement poems

## **Helix**

The vertical spinning stillness;  
ascending and descending on currents of air –  
through the bone.

## **Bone Dreaming**

(dedicated to Tom Dyehouse)

Dancing skeletons.

Pearl

Joint

Bone

Rock.

### **Off Kilter**

Equilibrium is a continuous flow of  
imbalance – balanced  
in constant change.

**streaming** – the flow of spirit  
through matter – **threading**.

### **Body breath and mind**

Letting go of speed and embracing slowness – **gravity**

Giving up movement and direction – **pulsating**

Being whole and part of the whole – **vacuous**

## **Air**

From the in to the out (**and around**)  
through the up and the down (**and beyond**),  
permeating the boundary (**within**).

### **Shadow Boxing**

At the intersection of stillness and motion,  
the corporeal shadow awakens  
and inhabits the space that space contains.  
Living in the contraries – both distinct and united,  
the breath is the other side of the air;  
the space –  
of the body.

**A magic journey**  
Interacting with space  
in timelessness  
to discover the evident  
by moving in stillness.

**The pivot point**  
still while moving  
and moves when stopped.

### **Perpetuity**

Come in from the outside,  
to emanate (once again)  
from the embryo - that is always there.  
And there you are  
with everything that's happened,  
before anything has happened –  
The beginning wholeness of energy and space.

## **Intricacy**

From great complexity  
to complete simplicity,  
containing complexity within itself.

### **Anti Matter**

The essence emerges  
unwoven backward  
out of the structures, feeding  
back through to  
the re creation of the heart.

**Dynamic counter circularity**

of the transition between  
the in and the out, and the up and the down  
between motion and stillness  
and their alternates

(where some things stop and begin the motion of their counterparts),  
united and interrelated around  
the transitional counter circularity.

Every sphere of rotation takes part in this,  
some stopping as others begin.....  
finding stillness within the larger motion.

## **Labyrinthe**

Warriors surround  
the spiral pillar, within  
the space of three circles.

### **Jitterbug**

Release center inside,  
Knee-elbow spin bounce  
gather drop weight.  
Under feet-hands expand  
down upward in outward.

### **Two in one**

Everything, like anything, is the otherthing.  
Can language stretch that far – that close?  
To the counter inner and outer movement  
in and around bone to the expression of muscle,  
coiling  
and rebounding around stasis.

## **Of Being**

Nothing is shared  
and all partake.  
Undefined and undefining  
The way to is.

### **In Congruity**

Having been and becoming,  
Reflecting and revealing the other side;  
Being still  
the same place.

(for David Saxe)

## **As One**

Being whole within change;  
embracing  
and embraced by,  
both the inner and the outer space  
– as one.

### **Syncopation**

External and internal placement  
and outside inside movement,  
from in and out, from up and down,  
the form self gives the formless –  
space, shape and texture.

## **Geela**

Everything aligned and connected,  
upon the ground within space  
in still motion.

### **Shadow Mind**

The shadow mind releases to the inside;  
fluctuating inside out  
and outside in;  
front and back and side to side.  
The great middle is always void.

### **Inside out**

Inside outside circle,  
outbreath feet to hands;  
outside inside circle,  
inbreath hands to feet.

**Am**

I am the still point  
the extremity and beyond;  
present  
and gone

## **DREAMS**

**A dream: (1971)**

I had a miraculous dream on the night of the first T'ai Chi class I attended.

*There was a huge comet approaching the earth on a collision course which would destroy the planet. I rushed to the point of impact, and with a sweeping motion of my body, I effortlessly deflected the comet off into space.*

After 25 years of training I deflected my cousin Steve in a push hands session in the same manner of that dream. I remembered it immediately and that way of movement entered my work.

**A dream: (1987)** This dream occurs at a troubled time. It was the first time I had been knocked down on my knees in prayer. I called Mr. Lee back for his help (he died in 1982). I saw a shadow of him. He was looking at me, shaking his head with that simultaneous smile and frown on his face that he reserved for fools. That night;

*I am a young Oriental man walking down a dusty road on a sunny day. I am wearing a long multi colored robe and my hair is in a long braid at the back of my head. I am on my way to visit my father. I arrive at a temple. The interior is like a small mosque with vertical beams throughout. Shafts of sunlight streak through the room and touch the floor, creating a texture of darkness and light. There are a few small groups of men in discussion seated in circles on the floor in different parts of the room. I go to the group where my father is. He is an old, bald occidental man wearing a white robe.*

*I ask him for an answer to the resolution of my dilemma. He points to the wooden floor into which there are interwoven paths of carved script. I crawl along the floor on my hands and knees reading the words which pertain to philosophy and martial strategy. A gong begins to sound repeatedly.*

I wake up in my bed. The gong sound is really the heat radiator clanging. I know that I can reenter the dream, but I am afraid that if I do I may lose the memory of the dream entirely. So I stay awake. The message of the dream was the same as the advise that Mr. Lee gave me before he died about the direction for my life. He said that the way for me was "the T'ai Chi and the philosophy together". A few days later when I looked back into the dream, I realized that the script that was carved into the floor was Hebrew.

**A dream:**

*I am standing on the earth. I begin to bounce up and down on the surface, keeping continuous contact with the ground. The initial movements are more rapid until the earth under my feet begins to move with the rhythm of my motion. As the movement becomes deeper and more synchronized, I slow down my motion and the whole surface of the world is undulating (like an enormous trampoline).*

**A dream: The warrior (1996)**

*It is night. There are people, bodies and fires everywhere. I am a short squat Mongolian warrior on a battlefield in the 12<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup> century. I wear lacquer armor and helmet, and I wield a very large sword with both hands. I walk through the field, not hacking and slashing, but moving the sword like a scythe at the pivot point just in front of the hilt, mowing people down like dried wheat.*

**A dream: (1998)**

*I am standing in a field at the edge of a forest at night. I want to move through the forest but I am afraid because it is dark and I may bump into the trees. I sense that if I adhere to the continuous space in which the trees exist it will be OK. I run through the forest at speed, not attached to (or avoiding) the trees, and move through the space without effort or incident – joyously.*

This is similar to what I learned about night driving. I was drawn to the lights of the oncoming cars because I focused on them. I then realized that if I focused on the darkest spot beside the brightness of the lights, I would hold to the lane of passage beside the approaching cars.

**A dream: The fire man (1999)**

*He is seen from above passing through a stone arch. He is aflame and walking through fire (and he is not harmed by it). He wears silver armor with gold trim. There are three golden circles, one at the top of each shoulder and one on the crown of his helmet, all aligned horizontally (add diagram).*

## **STORIES**

## FROG STORY

**Preamble:** I had killed a frog to use its bones for preparing a medicinal powder a few years earlier. The method I used to dispatch the frog was a knife thrust to the back of the neck. I severed its spinal cord – but it would not die. It kept twitching, and I kept stabbing it. It kept moving. I cut at its tendons. Still moving. I was in a frenzy; needing it to die to end both our agonies. I felt so much remorse and guilt over this, that I found a strong place in my heart for frogs. There was one frog statue that I particularly liked. It was a small ivory carving of a standing, portly frog leaning on a walking cane, holding a chillum to its mouth. It belonged to a friend, and after a few years of trying to mooch it from her, I succeeded in trading for it for an ivory horse.

**Story (Nova Scotia 1985):** Kim was standing at the kitchen door with his bags in his hands, ready to leave for Bhutan where he was to teach English. He was not well and had recently had a bout of pneumonia, and I was worried about how he would fare in somewhat primitive conditions. I said “stop, I have a traveling companion for you”. I ran up to my room, got the frog and gave it to him.

Some months later Kim sent a letter to his girlfriend Gwen with a wondrous tale. After Kim had been in Bhutan for a while, he went into the mountains to visit a Buddhist monastery. He had an audience with a hermit monk who lived in a cave within the monastery. As Kim was leaving, he offered the ivory frog to the monk as a token. The monk told Kim not to leave the frog because he “was dead in this life” (was dying). Kim left the token.

Time went by. One day a group of monks came down from the monastery to ask Kim about the frog and where and how it had come to him. When he told them that it was given to him by someone whose hands had the healing touch, they nodded and smiled. They explained that the hermit had been healed through his meditations with the frog. Frog was enshrined and I was disconcerted by this, because I believe that the chain of good will can only continue if the frog keeps being passed along.

This is the story of Kim and the frog as it is known to me. I came to understand that my wish for Kim’s welfare, sent through the frog was passed on the hermit with Kim’s wish for him.

## CROW STORY

Mr. Lee talked about how one went to the mountain (as a metaphor of transformation) twice in ones life. Once after the death of ones teacher and once again when one died. The first journey to the mountain is to train and refine ones work and oneself and gain mastery of the subject. Through this process the work becomes ones own. After this period one returns to the world to carry on the occupation of teacher and pass on the gift that one had received.

After Mr. Lee died I lived in Wolfville NS. on Canada's east coast from 1983 to 1985 with the conscious intent of going to the mountain. When I returned to Montreal in 1985 I thought that my time on the mountain was done, but I was wrong. My friend and colleague Jean Kwok said that the time on the mountain lasted 18 years, and she was right.

Soon after I moved to Wolfville with my five year old daughter Rachel, I met a woman who did meditative readings and was recommended by friends. I did not believe in any of these things at that time, but I decided to see her for a reading while maintaining a skepticism in my mind. We sat facing each other in meditation and then her eyes opened and she told the story of what she saw.

*"I see a large black bird (like a condor or a vulture) perched in a tree. It is very strong and upright. It has a lot of pain, but it can support it well. It is looking for a home but must come to know that its home is in its self".*

Her interpretation was that I was in Nova Scotia to find something, and that once I had accomplished that, I would return to where I had come from. She said that I was being called back to Montreal by a woman who she described. I thought that it was complete bullshit because I had no desire to return to Montreal, but events fulfilled themselves as she foretold. I did return to Montreal, and the woman that was calling me back was not from my past (as I had imagined), but from my future. This shifted my concept of time from a linear, sequential view to one where past, present and future are continuously interwoven with each other in every moment.

I had a second reading a few months after the first. As the reader and I sat in meditation I felt something emerging out of the back of my neck, and when it broke free her eyes opened and she said that the black bird was above my head. I shivered started to believe.

Because of my geographical location, I took on the crow as my spirit animal. After I returned to reside in Montreal, I was presented with a bundle of 3 crow feathers and one Blue Jay feather by a T'ai Chi student from Toronto. I added a small blue feather to the bundle that was given to me on a visit to France. I find crow feathers everywhere, but most often in the Canadian Maritime Provinces.

## **VISIONS**

## BEAR DREAMING

I woke up on a winter morning in Feb. 2004 or 2005 (I don't remember which), and I laid around in bed. A thought of Alaska drifted through my mind, and then I was there.

*I am in Alaska for work. I am standing in a kitchen room of a cabin with walls made of dark wood and windows facing in all directions (it may have been a one room cabin, but I never saw the space behind me). The cabin is isolated and surrounded by fields and trees. There is a woman sitting at a table set diagonally in one corner of the room. She has long black hair and is wearing a white shirt. We are looking at each other, and her face is blurred so that I cannot make out her features clearly.*

*I look out of the window to my left and see a few grizzly bears (about 8) milling around in the yard. I feel a little nervous, but they make no threatening gestures. I send myself up into the sky and look down. I see bears coming from all directions converging on the cabin.*

*I am back in the room and there is a knock on the door (also on my left side). I look through the door's window and see a native man with long white hair wearing a blue and red checkered shirt and blue jeans. He gestures for me to come out of the house and join him. I am nervous about the bears, but they seem calm and I go out.*

*I stand in the doorway and he looks at me saying, "you will join our tribe so that you can cross the borders freely, and you will go all over to represent the bears. You have to live here for three months of every year, grow your hair long and never cut it, (he gestures the woman out of the cabin) and this woman will be your wife".*

*I am down the stairs and I look at her standing in the doorway. She is wearing blue jeans and has large thighs.*

I am in my room lying in bed. I had not gone back to sleep, but was transported to that other place – and came back.

### **Subsequent events:**

**Bear:** I had never had a waking dream before. I have had several in a half sleep and half awake state, and I was curious about the meaning of this bear dream. I called my friend and T'ai Chi brother Reggie in New York. He is a medicine man and elder of a native tribe in New York State. He said that I had received a significant vision, and that I should not go out looking for it. Its meaning and fulfillment would manifest

itself through time. He said that the bear is the keeper of the medicine. The next time we saw each other he gave me the tools and instructions for smudging. I have come to believe that going all over to represent the bears indicated that I would travel and teach the Chinese injury medicine that I practice.

**Hawk:** In the fall of 2007 my oldest friend David came for one of his visits to Montreal and presented me with a huge hawk feather. He had been playing golf and was standing next to a small lake that was stalked with fish. He looked up and saw a bird high in the sky. He watched it dive down into the lake and come up with a fish, and as it lifted off it dropped a feather at his feet. He looked down at it and thought “Sam would like that”.

I phoned Reggie to ask if the gift of this feather was legitimate and what its meaning was. He said that I was gifted by this event, and he told me what the hawk represented.

**Eagle:** In the spring of 2008 I was in Nova Scotia teaching a T'ai Chi seminar. During a break on the last day of the sessions, K said that she was going to her house to get things that she had for me. She came back and gave me an eagle feather and a copy of a song that she had written some time before.

She said that she had been walking in the woods near her house and saw an eagle feather on the ground. That night she woke up from her sleep with the last two lines of a song she had written in her mind, and thought of me. The next day she got the feather and kept it for me. The lines of the song were;

*“An eagle feather falls from the sky.  
Now do, do what you gotta do.”*

I called Reggie to ask him about this event, and half way through the story he started to laugh and said “you were definitely gifted with that feather”. He said that the eagle feather is the highest feather and explained its significance.

## BEAR VISION 2 (2010)

I spoke to a friend who was in a difficult time because of her boyfriend's philandering. She thinks that she may be pregnant.

Later in the day I am sitting at my kitchen table, thinking back to the times when I was like him, or like her. Sometimes people have so much pain that no amount of grasping can fill that hole in their hearts. I felt that the only way to resolve this was to live ones life through the spirit.

*I am at the western edge of Lafontaine Park facing east (I may have been with someone who was behind me). There is a zoo there and I am facing a cage of bears. A group of about six or seven black bears come up to the cage opposite me and stand up against the bars. They are looking at me and speaking to me. As I go to move on they become unsettled and require, and I stay.*

*A big grizzly bear comes along and chases them away and he stands there looking at me. He (she) goes up to the edge of the cage and sticks his right paw through the bars and hooks a claw around a vertical bar. He pulls until the claw comes off and it falls on the grass outside the cage.*

*We look at each other and he seems a little menacing and I hold up my palm facing out and he backs away. I step over a smaller outer fence and kneel to pick up the claw, and as I take it I see that there is a deep gash in my left thigh. There is no bleeding and does not hurt and I think that I will go home and wash it with borneol and then apply blue tin paste.*

I am sitting at my kitchen table.

It occurred to me later that the act of the bear pulling out its claw was what gashed my thigh.

## JOHN RANKIN AND THE OWL FEATHER

### John Rankin

When I was a young man coming of age, I met older men who I admired, and whose being fascinated me. Later in life I recognized that these men had inner characteristics that were inherent but as yet unknown in myself.

I was fortunate that some of them recognized me and invited me into their company - and I became acquainted with ideas, music, philosophy, insight and myself. I have come to believe that the journey of life is to become truly oneself and to be generous to others.

I met John Rankin in Vancouver in 1963. I was 18 years old and he was one of these men. He was in his thirties and an artist. He did not paint by layering the paint on, but by wiping it away. All of his paintings that I ever saw were of sun flowers or corn. He had sharp features, light hair and blue eyes. He had a lot of love in him and a strong streak of violence. What bothered him most was people who were superficial and inauthentic. We spent a lot of time together that summer, and I returned to Montreal that fall to resume studies at the university.

John moved to Montreal 2 years later to live with his wife and young daughter. We visited a number of times until they all moved back to Vancouver. I returned to Vancouver for a few months in 1967, and we would see each other. He had become more angry, antagonistic and dissatisfied with the general human condition.

We exchanged a few letters after I returned to Montreal, and then I did not hear from him for quite a while. I wrote to him and got a reply letter from his wife. She wrote that in their last conversation he told her that he was leaving her for the last time because he could not bear all the games, and that he was going to see me because I would be the only person who might understand. John then proceeded to jump off the Granville St. bridge to his death. She told me not to be sad; that he was done with this life and wanted to go to another place.

I kept his and her last letters to me for many years. Twelve years ago, I wrapped both letters and the Hebrew prayer book for the dead in a fine cloth, tied it with a tassel, and sent it all down the rapids of the Rouge River.

## The owl feather

In May of 2011, a former student came from away to take a series of private lessons at my house. He offered to bring me an owl feather when he came up for the summer T'ai Chi seminar.

I remembered from a scene in a film that the appearance of an owl foretold of a death, so I called Reggie for advice. He said that the owl feather was powerful medicine, and sometimes used by shamans to communicate with the spirits of the dead. This was one of those places that I did not want to go. I asked if I could refuse the feather, and he said that I could not refuse it. He said that I should not smudge with it, and that I should keep it separate from my other feathers.

One month later I was lying down watching a movie when John Rankin flooded in and filled the room like a mist. He was smiling and the feeling was pleasant - and then he left. He did finally come to see me after 40 years.

I had not yet received the owl feather, and Reggie replied that the gate was open and that I should smudge with sage often. The feather did arrive in early July. It took a few days to find a place for it in my house that felt comfortable for me.

**Some other older men:** Robert Wolders, David Pinsen, Shotaro Iida, Lee Shiu Pak, Arnold Bergier.

I am such an amateur.

July 11, 2011.



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