

Deciphering the Golden Flower One Secret at a Time JJ Semple

Reviewed by Araminta Matthews, FrontStreetReviews.com

When I think of memoirs, I am often bored by the thought of reading the machinations of some person's mundane existence. I imagine the story to be amateurish, over-written, and esoteric. Couple that memoir with a critical commentary on a [in]famous philosophical treatise from Chinese spirituality and I expected a full-on yawn-fest. Instead, I was met with a frank, enlightening foray into the depths of *The Secret of the Golden Flower* from the perspective of a real person, flaws and all. JJ Semple's *Deciphering the Golden Flower One Secret at a Time* is truly a phenomenon unto itself. This book uses one person's real life to extrapolate the intricacies of *The Golden Flower*, from pre-discovery to post-discovery, and it is quite a ride.

Beginning with a memory and an accident, Semple recounts an incident involving a splinter and its catastrophic effects on his life. Perhaps when one reads critical commentary – or even a regular memoir, one expects the story to begin at the beginning. That is, according to Aristotle, the point before which there is nothing. Wouldn't that be Semple's first encounter with kundalini? Or the moment in 1972 when he first lays eyes on the *Golden Flower* treatise? While it might be our inclination to believe that commentary should begin with the object upon which it comments, when it comes to the spiritual, one knows that nothing is coincidence. It is no coincidence that Semple had a tragic accident involving wood just as it is no coincidence that Semple encountered the concept of kundalini and its applications in the real world. Self-realization begins at birth; it is the journey as much as it is the destination. Semple seems to know this and recounts his story from the true beginning – his earliest memory – which is long before he ever hears of *The Secret of the Golden Flower*.

At the same time as encompassing the spiritual element, Semple's book also masters the craft of writing and entertainment. He has mastered dialogue in its creative nonfiction element and brought alive through voice the characters of his memories. In addition, his writing is constantly hand-carved – in no instance does it feel over-written or flowery, as though he has kept his language on a leash close to his hip.

Perhaps the best feature of this book is the epilogue, a chapter dedicated to clarifying the process of applying *The Secrets of the Golden Flower*. The epilogue includes exercises for examining your own facial symmetry, cleansing yourself from within with meditation and diet, and opening yourself up to the inner voice of your Life Force. These instructions offer no pretense or "corner-on-the-market" language. First and foremost, Semple says that we are just as capable as he at applying this knowledge, and what's more – we should do it to the tune of our own inner heartstrings.

I recommend this book to everyone. Truly, this is the best book I've read in a long time, both in terms of practical application of spiritual practice and market entertainment. This book is a riveting experience.