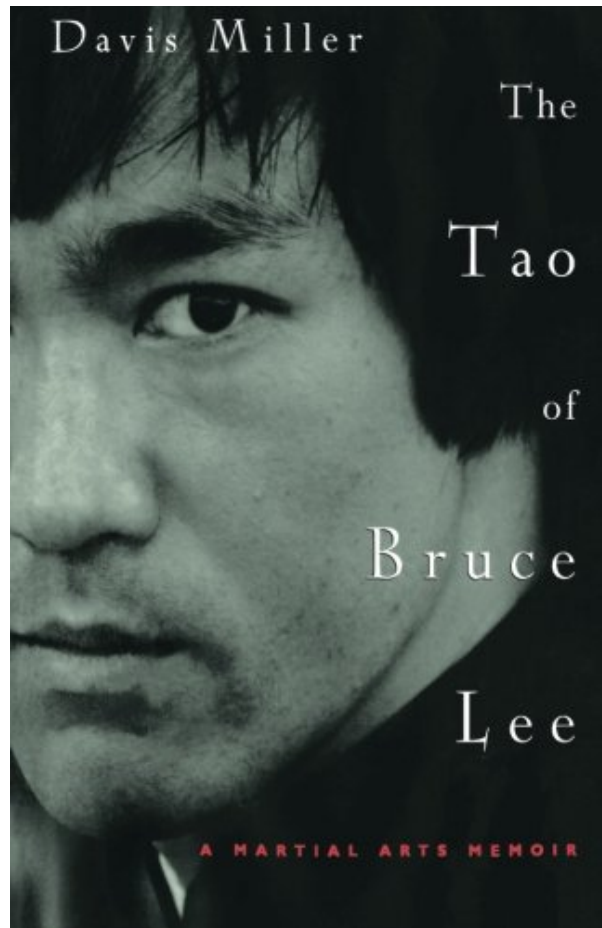
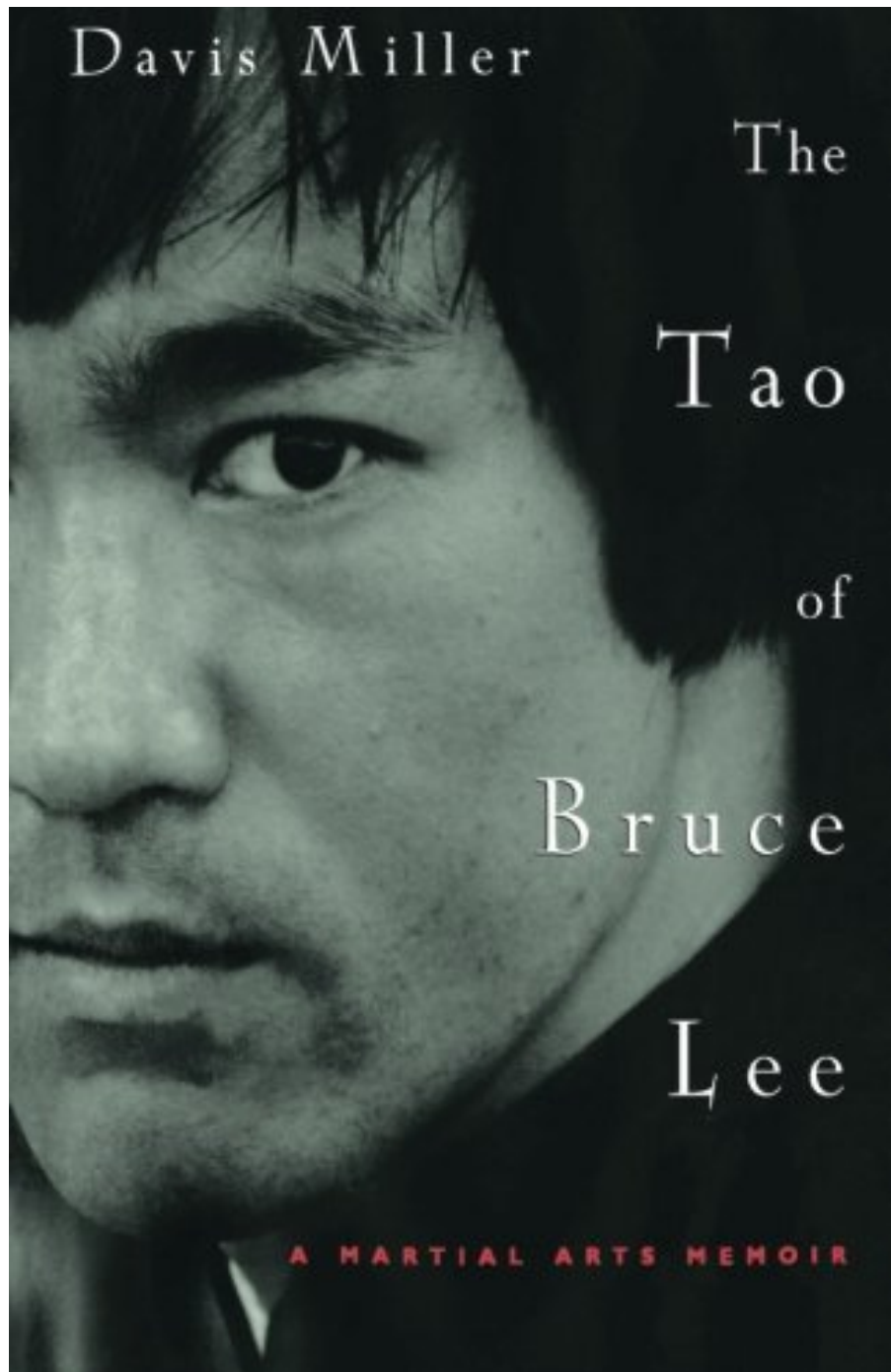


THE TAO OF BRUCE LEE: A MARTIAL ARTS MEMOIR BY DAVIS MILLER



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THE TAO OF BRUCE LEE: A MARTIAL ARTS MEMOIR BY DAVIS MILLER PDF

In this companion volume to his critically acclaimed first book, *The Tao of Muhammad Ali*, Davis Miller turns his attention to a second iconic figure of the twentieth century--and another of Miller's own seminal influences: film star and martial arts legend Bruce Lee.

Just weeks after completing *Enter the Dragon*, his first vehicle for a worldwide audience, Bruce Lee--the self-proclaimed world's fittest man--died mysteriously at the age of thirty-two. The film has since grossed over \$500 million, making it one of the most profitable in the history of cinema, and Lee has acquired almost mythic status.

Lee was a flawed, complex, yet singular talent. He revolutionized the martial arts and forever changed action moviemaking. But what has his legacy truly meant to the fans he left behind? To author Davis Miller, Lee was a profound mentor and a transformative inspiration. As a troubled young man in rural North Carolina, Miller was on a road to nowhere when he first saw *Enter the Dragon*, an encounter that would lead him on a physical, emotional, and spiritual journey and would change his life.

As in *The Tao of Muhammad Ali*, Miller brilliantly combines biography--the fullest, most unflinching and revelatory to date--with his own coming-of-age story. The result is a unique and compelling book.

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Part biography of Bruce Lee, and part autobiography of the author

By Bernie Gourley

While one expects this to be a biography of Bruce Lee, the first half of it is much more an autobiography of the author that is loosely themed around Bruce Lee's influence on his life. It's an unusual book in this regard. However, while my description may induce visions of a dismal read by a self-absorbed author, it's really not so bad. The latter half of the book is much more tightly focused on the events of Bruce Lee's life—or, more dramatically, his death.

To be fair, there's not much material for a Bruce Lee biography. Few lights have shone so bright that, while brief, they provided decades of afterglow. Bruce Lee was just in the news last week as he was made a character in a new MMA video game—over 40 years after his death. (It might seem odd for Bruce Lee to be featured in an MMA game, but while movie Bruce Lee showed us high-flying, high-kicking kung fu, Bruce Lee the founder of Jeet Kune Do emphasized the ability to fight at all ranges, against opponents of any style, and in a pragmatic fashion.) But Bruce Lee the movie star delivered only four completed movies as an adult (though he had a childhood acting career unrelated to Kung fu.) Martial Artist Bruce had only one real fight

that anyone knows about and even it remains a subject of great controversy to this day. There are competing claims about who came out on top, to what degree, and how. According to the book, there's not even much of a sparring record of which to speak.

With the proceeding information in mind, it might not be such a surprise that the author took the tack he did and still produced only the slim volume that he did. Miller's description of his own life pulls no punches and he spares himself none of the embarrassment incumbent in being a young man seeking to emulate the squealing man with the fists of fury. He doesn't come across as the narcissist that one might expect from a person who devotes at half of a biography of a global superstar to his own obscure juvenile years. In fact, his profile is of a scrawny kid who got his fair share of wedgies and other bully-induced torments. The autobiographical parts are more homage than self-aggrandizement.

Just as Miller is honest about his own lost pubescence as a scrawny kid, he will win enemies with his frankness about Bruce Lee and those in the gravitational pull of the kung fu superstar. Those who deify Lee will no doubt be displeased to read intimations that he died not on a walk with his wife and from a rare adverse side-effect of a prescription—but non-illicit--drug, and instead died on the bed of a lover from a hash or pot overdose.

Furthermore, Miller tells of how Bruce Lee told his students to stop teaching Jeet Kune Do, because Lee was worried about where it was going. Miller goes on to report about how Bruce Lee's martial art went awry according to many. Then there is the suggestion that Lee had little first-hand fighting (or sparring) experience on which to build such a combative art in the first place.

However, the overall portrait of Lee is of an exceptional human being, and one who had such a wide range of influence, from fitness to philosophy. While the Bruce Lee physique is now much sought after and regularly seen among movie stars, all the leading men of Lee's era were doughy by comparison. (One may look no further than his Way of the Dragon nemesis, Chuck Norris.) Lee wasn't just a movie star and martial artist; he was also a philosopher and thinker. While it's true that he didn't produce much in the way of novel ideas, by Hollywood standards he was a regular Algonquin Roundtable member. Lee oozed charisma so powerfully that after all these decades he's almost as likely to be seen on a T-shirt as Che Guevara—don't ask me why the Latin American Guerrilla fighter is so popular in silk screen, but that's beside the point.

To sum it up, this isn't a book about Bruce Lee, it's about how his life and death shaped so many other lives—starting with Miller's. While I didn't count pages, there seems to be about as much space devoted to the events surrounding Lee's death as the events of his life. Of course, there's a bit of sensationalism, but inquiring minds want to know. People are intrigued about how a man who looked to all appearances to be one of the healthiest men on the planet could have died so young. (It's an interesting irony that Bruce Lee's almost complete lack of body fat—estimated at under 1%--could well have exacerbated his over-sensitivity to whatever substance killed him.)

I'd recommend this book for anyone curious about the life and death of Bruce Lee.

7 of 8 people found the following review helpful.

Bruce And The Truth

By Junaid Hamid

The subtitle, A Martial Arts Memoir, describes what this book is really about. It's not a biography about Bruce Lee - though various "facts" and "myths" about him are detailed or debunked. Rather, it's a tale of how Bruce Lee's movies, athleticism, martial arts prowess, focus and determination, philosophy, and larger-than-life persona awoke the dormant soul of a ninety pound weakling. The Tao of Bruce Lee details Davis

Miller's transformation from sad, loner, directionless, teenage failure into an accomplished martial artist, writer and, most importantly, vibrant, purposeful human being. The misery of Miller's life before seeing Bruce Lee explode on the screen in Enter the Dragon is, in places, gut-wrenching. But the sadness and despair are replaced by optimism and an the urge to yell, "atta-boy!" as the young Miller slowly wriggles out of his cocoon. Miller's is a story of possibilities; if he can discover himself, find meaning and contentment in life, anyone can. Beside the quasi-spiritual autobiographical stuff, Miller touches on Bruce Lee's martial arts skills and reputation, his meteoric rise to superstardom, particularly in Asia, the facts surrounding his death and his enduring worldwide impact. There is a lot about Muhammad Ali and comparisons and contrasts between these two very talented men (and what they gave to the world.) Miller brings up Ali so much, one may wonder why he didn't simply write one book, The Tao of Muhammad Ali and Bruce Lee. This book is better on reflection than when actually reading it. I like it more now - and would rate it higher - than I did when I turned the last page this morning. It has a good aftertaste.

18 of 19 people found the following review helpful.

beautifully written personal essay and social commentary

By George Douglas

First, this is a book that will unfortunately infuriate many of the most extreme Bruce Lee fans, though Davis Miller is very patient and gentle in his regard for Lee. Those of us who are less prone to accept Bruce Lee's martial arts godness are likely to be deeply affected by Miller's own very optimistic story, his commentary about the dangers of religious literalism and his exploration of the nature of myth, as well as Lee's cautionary tale about the myopic downsides of personal ambition. And many people who have had little interest in Lee or his movies will find that they are thoroughly captivated by Miller's storytelling ability and, in the process, they will find that they gain a real-world respect for Bruce Lee. "The Tao of Bruce Lee: a martial arts memoir" is the story of the influence that Lee had on the young Davis Miller and how the more mature Miller outgrew his childhood idol and finally what he calls the "sociopathic prettification of violence." In this way, and others, this book can be compared to the wonderful film, "Breaking Away," the hopeful account of a troubled teenager who is besmitten with the Italian national bicycling team and how, when he finally manages to race them, he is forced to outgrow his simple-minded romance and become his own (much more interesting and capable) person. Miller writes in a style that is accessible and enjoyable to almost every reader, Bruce Lee extremists notwithstanding. This book is an extension of his outstanding first book, "The Tao of Muhammad Ali," and since that book was published in 1996, Miller has grown significantly as a writer. Together, the two books can be seen as the yin and the yang of the same story. "The Tao of Bruce Lee" is a fascinating mix of serious personal essay, new journalism, memoir, and sumptuous old-fashioned storytelling that, in many ways, is unlike anything else that I have read, though Miller himself notes the influences of Joan Didion and Tim O'Brien, among others. And this is every bit as fine a book as Mr. O'Brien's "The Things They Carried" and Ms. Didion's "Slouching Towards Bethlehem," both of which are among the best pieces of American writing of the past half-century. "The Tao of Bruce Lee: a martial arts memoir" is a brave and beautiful book that deserves a large, mainstream audience. I hope that it can somehow manage to find its proper home among discerning readers who care about non-genre literature. Miller's new book easily ranks among the best American writing of this new century.

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