

**BOOKS**

# Trapped in Oz

Lions and tigers and yoga instructors, oh my!

BY MITCH CALE

SPIRITUAL JOURNEYS ALONG THE YELLOW BRICK ROAD  
by Darren John Main.  
Findhorn Press, 2000;  
\$12.95 softcover.

**W**e all know the story of *The Wizard of Oz*.

A girl, Dorothy, is sent via cyclone from her home in Kansas over the rainbow into the mystical land of Oz. She embarks upon a quest to return home, which entails a journey to the Emerald City to ask the wizard for his help.

Along her way down the Yellow Brick Road, she picks up some tasteful new shoes, makes new friends, knocks off a couple of wicked witches and exposes the wizard as a fraud, only to wake up safe in bed and realize her journey was just a dream. And let's not forget those flying monkeys.

*Spiritual Journeys Along the Yellow Brick Road* offers an interpretation of everything in *The Wizard of Oz* from the colors of Dorothy's dress down to the aforementioned monkeys. Author Darren John Main, a yoga instructor and spiritual counselor, believes we are all like Dorothy, trapped in Oz and trying to find home.

Home, he writes, is found when we awaken from the "dream" of life into a Kansas of everlasting, unchanging peace. For some, Kansas is heaven or nirvana, but what it is isn't as important as the quality of the journey there.

Like Dorothy, we arrive in Oz disoriented and startled by the bright colors and awesome sights. Our first contact with others is the family (in Dorothy's case, the Munchkins); however, they cannot follow on our heels through life.

That's where our personal ruby slippers, good witches, lions, tin men and scarecrows come in. By drawing from their unique wisdom, by resisting the poppy fields that lure us from the path and by learning not to ignore Toto, Main contends we can make our journey through Oz more enriching and enjoyable.

*Spiritual Journeys Along the Yellow Brick Road* leaves no stone unturned in Oz: Main examines all the major characters, objects and plot elements for their spiritual significance. He also includes lots of



trivia that Oz fans gleefully can whip out at the next Dada Ball.

Two choice tidbits: In the Oz books by L. Frank Baum, Dorothy's slippers were silver (MGM made them ruby for the 1939 film to show off the powers of Technicolor), and those creepy Oh-Ee-Oh marching soldiers actually are called Winkies. Who knew?

*Like Dorothy, we arrive in Oz disoriented and startled by the bright colors and awesome sights.*

Although this book is well-researched and has great entertainment value, there is a certain clumsiness to it that stems

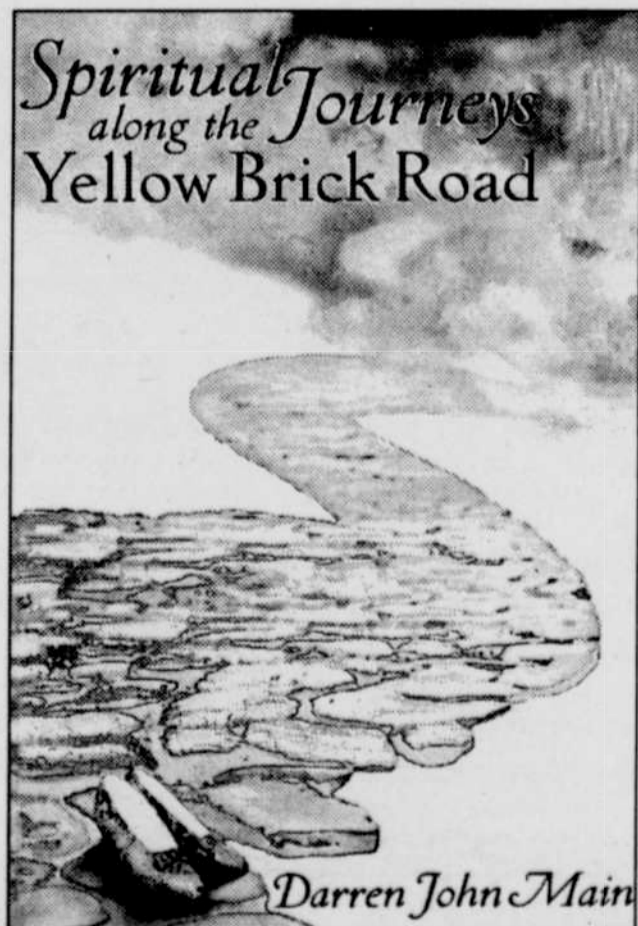
from Main's attempt to include too many facets of religion and spirituality in his treatise. References to the Bible, the Koran and Hindu, Buddhist and Jewish wisdom as well as yoga practices abound but never are discussed in much detail, which forces the reader to endure what amounts to New Age name-dropping.

Main also seems to assume the reader really has no knowledge about anything—hence, the minefield of footnotes with everything from the definition of the word "gentile" to an explanation of what the Castro District is. The author has the bad habit of defining metaphors vis-à-vis other metaphors and can stretch a simple analogy for pages. As a result, at times the book reads like a long cliché.

Unfortunately, these little annoyances can become a bit overwhelming, but with patience, the forgiving reader can mine the choicest insights from

this take on a beloved film. **JM**

MITCH CALE is a Portland free-lance writer.



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