

The Circus Of Dr Lao

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by Charles G. FinneyThe Circus of Dr. Lao /By Charles G. Finney, with Drawings by
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abalone arizona is a sleepy southwestern town whose chief concerns are boredom and surviving the great depression that is until the circus of dr lao arrives and immensely and irrevocably changes the lives of everyone drawn to its tents expecting a sideshow spectacle the citizens of abalone instead confront and learn profound lessons from the mythical made real a chimera a medusa a talking sphinx a sea serpent witches the hound of the hedges a werewolf a mermaid an ancient god and the elusive ever changing dr lao the circus unfolds spinning magical dark strands that ensnare the town s populace the sea serpent s tale shatters love s illusions the fortune teller s shocking pronouncements toll the tedium and secret dread of every person s life sensual undercurrents pour forth for men and women alike and the dead walk again dazzling and macabre literary and philosophical the circus of dr lao has been acclaimed as a masterpiece of speculative fiction and influenced such writers as ray bradbury this bison frontiers of imagination edition features a new introduction by noted fantasy writer john marco and striking illustrations by boris artzybasheff from the first edition

charles finney s the circus of dr lao published in 1936 has been widely read in the last eighty years and has influenced significant authors in the field of fantasy yet it has been examined in just three critical studies in that time this study examines finney s novel as an epistemological fantasy a heretofore undefined term that precipitates an epistemological crisis of knowing and certainty the novel opens a way for fantasy literature to establish itself in a modernist landscape by foregrounding the marvelous and extraordinary knowledge that lies just outside the realm of human experience finney presents dr lao s circus as a surrogate model of success and while many of the characters in the novel are unable to accept the truth offered them by the beings of fantasy the author uses their experiences to satirize the complacencies he witnessed upon returning to america from the far east in the 1930s

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