

The Green Man and the Circus

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William H. Ansley — 09 May 1998, 01:02

Is anyone else reminded of The Circus of Dr. Lao by Charles G. Finney when reading the passage describing Severian's encounter with the green man in ch. 3 of Claw (pp. 229-231, Orb ed.)?

I think the echoes are faint and distorted but unmistakable. The green man combines characteristics of the hound of the hedges and Apollonius of Tyana in his role as fortune teller. There are many other resonances, as well. The chapter is even called "The Showman's Tent".

For people that haven't read Circus, I highly recommend it, with one caveat: it contains passages that might not be considered politically correct by some today. But taking into account it was first printed in 1935, I think the likelihood of anyone taking offense is minor. It is an unique fantasy and it has had a wide influence in the field.

Finney's writing is lupine at least to the extent that he leaves the reader with some deliberately unanswered questions and ambiguities.

William Ansley