



# The Castle of Iron

*L. Sprague de Camp , Fletcher Pratt*

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The Harold Shea stories are parallel world tales in which universes where magic works coexist with our own, and in which those based on the mythologies, legends, and literary fantasies of our world and can be reached by aligning one's mind to them by a system of symbolic logic. In *The Castle of Iron*, the authors' protagonist Harold Shea visits two such worlds, first (briefly) that of Samuel Taylor Coleridge's poem *Kubla Khan* and second that of Ludovico Ariosto's epic, the *Orlando Furioso*.

## The Castle of Iron Details

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## Velma says

Set in the world of The Matter of France ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Matter\\_o...](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Matter_o...))

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## melo says

un gruppo di matematici in giro per il mondo dell'Orlando Furioso mescolati ai personaggi dell'Ariosto rivisitati al limite dell'assurdo.

peccato che il suggerimento da cui l'ho tirato fuori non menzionasse che si tratta del terzo di una serie, per cui - forse complice una traduzione che a pelle mi pare fatta da cani - all'inizio mi ha trovato un po' spiazzato.

capito il meccanismo, il primo suggerimento si è rivelato godibilissimo. leggero e godibilissimo. una boccata d'ossigeno, tra il penultimo Martin e il penultimo King.

il suggerimento era questo:

----- qte -----

[...] la dimostrazione che il manico di scopa infilato su per le terga degli attuali fan del fantasy è una aberrazione recente. Qui, un gruppo di matematici newyorkesi trova un sistema, una matematica della magia, che permette loro di shiftare in mondi che sono basati su opere letterarie... l'Edda scandinava, il Faerie Queene, l'Orlando Furioso... potete immaginare le conseguenze. Anzi no, non potete – leggete il libro, che da noi pubblicò la solita Nord.

Questo è fantasy razionalizzato, lieve, umoristico.

Si ride, e si ride spesso, e il livello della narrazione è maledettamente solido. Incredibile, che l'abbian scritto a quattro mani un ingegnere e uno storico militare.

L'idea qui non è di flettere poderosi muscoli e compensare le carenze dei lettori adolescenti, ma di giocare con l'intelligenza.

----- unqte -----

[fonte] (una recensione migliore di quanto potessi fare io)

errata corregge: la recensione menzionava "il castello d'acciaio" come titolo in italiano, che di fatto raduna tutti i libri della serie.

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## Joe Santoro says

I'm a big fan of Conan, so I wanted to think that Mr. de Camp was a good writer... but it turns out that he's really the Kevin J. Anderson of his era.

Granted, I haven't read the first book of the series, but that doesn't cover the fact that this was a hot mess.

The premise seems to be anything ever written in fiction is an alternate universe locked in place and time, I guess, since where they go is Crusades-era Arabia, and it's still the Crusade era.

Also, there's magic, which anyone at all can do if they just say a goofy rhyme and think really hard.

The plot revolves around one of the characters finding his lost wife from a previously visited alternate universe, and doesn't really offer anything one wouldn't expect. I'm glad I satisfied my curiosity about the series, but I certainly wouldn't recommend it.

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### **Kim says**

ONE STAR

Not up the standard of the previous book, "The Incomplete Enchanter". Silly and foolish. Life's too short.

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### **Adam McPhee says**

*"Maybe the guy's a sadist. According to all the correlations, abnormal sex patterns should be common in this Moslem society where they keep all respectable women locked up. Besides his personality reminds me of that sadist we used as a case study—you know the one I mean—that real-estate fellow the SPCA got after."*

Implying bestiality is a bit much. At any rate, it's outside of the spirit of Orlando Furioso. Also one of the psychologist heroes is called the Rubber Czech and he's Jar-Jar Binks-level stupid. And there's all that annoying, phoney not-quite-middle-english that people once used to signal Ye Olden Times.

Quite disappointed. Was really hoping someone in the twentieth century cared about Orlando Furioso, but apparently not. I doubt the authors read more than a synopsis of it (though there probably wasn't a good translation at the time).

It's a shame because I liked the premise: scientists/psychologists who travel to alternate realities based on works of literature. And there is one pretty good slam at the beginning: they want to learn more about the universe based on Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, but can't enter it for plot reasons, and opt instead for Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*, whose universe operates on a similar logic because Spenser lifted all the best bits from it.

Quit less than half way in. Might return to it someday but I don't know.

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### **Robert J. Sullivan says**

The third of le Camp's fantasies of Harold Shea, psychologist and fledgling magician. In this one, Harold ends up in a world of Saracens and knights, attempting to rescue his amnesiac wife, Belphebe.

I found this book flat instead of the amusing take on mythology that I found the others in the series. The writing is dated, there's a little swordplay and some misguided magic, but aside from a late cameo by Merlin (in a top hat, no less), I was impatient for the book to be over.

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### **Alessandro Paci says**

Stupendo libro, assoluta poesia. L'ho adorato per la sua particolarità, per come giustifica l'esistenza della magia, l'esistenza dei mondi fantastici stessi, per l'assoluta logica e indiscussa varietà della storia. Meraviglioso, non esagero nel dire che sia uno dei fantasy che in assoluto mi è piaciuto di più.

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### **Timothy Boyd says**

Very funny fantasy series. Great read. Very recommended

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### **Charl says**

I know they're classics, and I generally like de Camp's fiction, but I just can't get into it. Moving on.

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### **Steve says**

A sequel to "The Incomplete Enchanter," this takes us to an alternate universe based on Ariosto's "Orlando Furioso." The depiction of Medieval Islamic society, with its sorcerers and harem girls, is definitely from Ariosto's milieu, but I wonder if it is far off from De Camp and Pratt's opinions, too. It's like the costume dramas of the 1940's. For those who didn't care for the protagonist's male chauvinistic macho (which I didn't), it becomes obvious that this attitude does not serve him well. The exception is for the assumption that a poet must be a wimp, which certainly goes against the medieval stance. (This is also shown not to be correct, in the next story, "Wall of Serpents.")

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