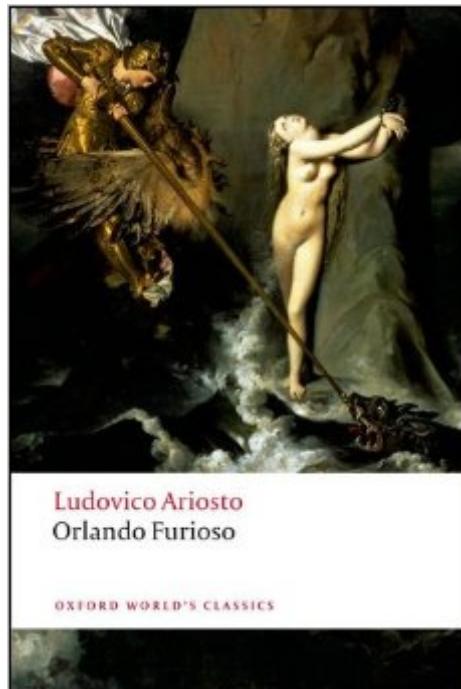# Orlando Furioso (Oxford World's Classics)

Synopsis

`I sing of knights and ladies, of love and arms, of courtly chivalry, of courageous deeds.' So begins Ariosto's Orlando Furioso (1532), the culmination of the chivalric legends of Charlemagne and the Saracen invasion of France. It is a brilliantly witty parody of the medieval romances, and a fitting monument to the court society of the Italian Renaissance which gave them birth. This unabridged prose translation faithfully captures the narrative entire andis a kaleidoscope of scenes and emotions of fact and fantasy.

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Customer Reviews

Orlando Furioso is a classic story that has often been overlooked by the average reader. We follow Charlemagne's paladins as they traverse the world, pagan and Christian, looking for adventure, fame, and love. They end up in many fascinating places such as enchanted castles, Hades, and on the moon with St. John the Apostle. Their adventures bring them into contact with fascinating people, incredible beasts, and magic weapons. They engage in sword fights and duels, convert the Muslims, and fall in love. The story centers on Orlando and other pagan and Christian knights as

they try to win the love of Angelica, a Saracen Princess. Meanwhile, a war between the Christians and Muslims is going on. These events are a continuation of the story told in Orlando Innamorato by Boiardo, which came before this poem. Ariosto, however, has given us a sequel that in many ways surpasses its predecessor. Orlando Furioso is a story of epic proportions that is subtly funny, never boring, and always beautiful. To the basic themes of chivalry and love, Ariosto has added elements of allegory, irony, and even prophecy to make an enchanting masterpiece. The stories contained are similar to the Arthurian legends, only with more humor and excitement. I agree with C.S. Lewis when he wrote: "Our oblivion of these poets (i.e. Boiardo and Ariosto) is much to be regretted...because it robs us of a whole species of pleasures and narrows our very conception of literature."For some reason .com links this review to both the Reynolds and the Waldman translations, but they are different books. Although the previous part of my review is valid for any translation, this part is only relevant for the Waldman version. I have not read the one by Reynolds.

Before anything else is said, it should be known that this edition is a prose translation, which does not retain most poetic characteristics of the original poem although for a modern English reader this is probably the best edition yet: fairly clear and still interesting in its own way. Orlando Furioso is a 16th century epic poem dealing with Charlamgne's wars against the "Saracens" who had (if we are to take the poem as historical fact) even reached the point of besieging the city of Paris. Of course,the book was not meant by its author to be historically accurate in any way, merely a parody of chivalric court legends as the book description says. Whoever reads this book and fails to sense irony on every page, even crude jokes in some parts clearly does not understand what he is reading in the least. But Orlando Furioso is not a parody of just chivalric court legends; it also pokes fun at the Illiad, popular tales and even common peasant stories. The heads (complete with helmets) sliced in two by a single sword blow are taken from The Illiad, in which Greek champions perform similar feats, although in Orlando Furioso, literally hundreds of men meet their end in this manner to the point of becoming amusing in a way. And I found it strange to notice a very clear similarity between the story told by an innkeeper in the book and the prologue to a translation of a 13th century version of the Arabian Nights (translated by Hussain Haddawy). Ariosto had no possible way to know of the existence of the Nights, but still it is interesting to see how truly close the two incidents are: In Orlando, two men who have given up on the possibility of women being chaste, take one woman and watch her day and night, yet she still deceives them in their own bed.

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