



Dragoncharm

Graham Edwards

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On craggy slopes above the cliffs, nests of untidy timber house the Natural dragons - with no fire or magic. Nearby live the Charmed dragons, whose magic guards the fortress. But no magic is strong enough to resist the onset of a new era as the world changes.

Dragoncharm Details

Date : Published 1997 by HarperCollins (first published November 28th 1996)

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Author : Graham Edwards

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Genre : Fantasy, Dragons, Fiction, Science Fiction Fantasy

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From Reader Review Dragoncharm for online ebook

Kazuko says

Best dragon fantasy novel of all time!!

Rachel says

This is my all time favorite book. This is the kind of book that you either love or hate. I can't explain it exactly, but there's a ageless feeling I get whenever I read it.

Bridget says

I love the way tension is controlled in this novel and the way the final scenes play out. I find the descriptions of character emotions a little cliché, but it didn't matter because the plot was so enjoyable.

Ira Nayman says

Title: *Dragoncharm*, Special Edition

Author: Graham Edwards

Ebook: 484 pages

Publisher: Graham Edwards (June 12, 2016)

Language: English

Kindle: \$3.99

Writing about non-human creatures is a problem for speculative fiction.

On the one hand, anything truly alien, truly foreign to human experience will be all but incomprehensible to a human reader. (I can remember reading one or two short stories which portrayed an alien experience from the point of view of the alien; not only was there nothing in the experience that I could identify with, but, in one case in particular, there was nothing I could recognize.)

According to Protagoras, “man is the measure of all things.” I used to think that this was the height of arrogance, to think that all things must be measured by our limited yardstick. Now, I suspect it may be the only practical approach to understanding, in however limited a way, the universe, since it is the only yardstick that human beings are fully capable of reading.

On the other hand, writers often anthropomorphize alien creatures, giving them human characteristics and emotional makeups. The danger with this approach, however, is that if your alien creatures are too human, you will have lost the purpose of making them alien in the first place – you may as well have been writing about human characters from the get go.

There needs to be a sweet spot where there is just enough of the alien creature that is truly alien to human experience to make using the device of the alien worthwhile, but enough that is human so that readers will be able to follow a story and, perhaps, empathize with the characters. One common way of achieving this is to mix alien creatures with human beings, allowing each to comment on the strangeness of the ways of the other. When a work only involves alien creatures, the balance is a lot trickier.

Dragoncharm, by Graham Edwards, is an engaging novel, but it errs, perhaps, on the side of anthropomorphism.

In a world before humans existed, dragons are divided into two camps: charmed (who have the ability to wield magic) and natural (who do not). Long ago, there were only charmed dragons, but they have slowly been supplanted by natural dragons. Charmed dragons live in caves built out of mountains; natural dragons live in communities out in the open.

Oh, and charmed dragons seem to be going insane.

Dragoncharm is epic in scope, not just because a vast battle between factions of dragons seems inevitable. While all of this is going on, some characters are warned to prepare for the “turning,” something that could not only potentially change the world of the dragons, but remake the entire universe.

The world of *Dragoncharm* is very well conceived, focused on the different natures of the two sets of dragons. Charmed dragons, for example, use their magic to fly, so their wings tend to be stumpy appendages rather than the large, muscular wings that the natural dragons rely on. Used to moving through the wide open skies, natural dragons find the corridors and caves of the charmed dragons claustrophobic.

Building on this foundation, Edwards weaves a credible story in which the two sets of dragons, having become isolated from each other, have come to fear each other. Rumours of the destructive nature of the insanity plaguing the powerful charmed dragons give the natural dragons cause to fear for their safety. For their part, the charmed dragons know that their numbers are dwindling, and have reason to believe that if they do not act, they will become extinct.

Edwards’ masterstroke is showing how both sides succumb to charismatic, demagogic leaders who set them down the path to war. The charmed are led by a dragon whose lust for power over others is palpable, while the natural are led by a dragon whose sanity is questionable and whose main motivation seems to be, in the immortal words of The Batman’s Alfred, “watching the world burn.” *Dragoncharm* is at its most insightful when it portrays the ways such leaders play upon the ignorance and fear of the populations they lead.

There were minor problems with *Dragoncharm*. At one point, for instance, a dragon is said to land on its feet, but the expression doesn’t work for an animal that doesn’t have feet. Moreover, in discussing the theme of the novel in his introduction to the reissued volume, Edwards kind of gives away where the story has to go, which I thought was ill-advised.

My main problem with the novel as epic fantasy, though, is that the dragons aren’t, well, dragony enough. Relationships, whether between children or parents, male and female (I didn’t get a sense that there were any gay dragons, although there may have been subtle hints that I just missed) or friends (and, I suppose, enemies) were all clearly recognizable as human. There is no reason to believe, however, that dragons would develop emotional connection to each other in the same way that human beings do.

There are occasional glimpses into a specifically dragon way of life. When dragons are relieved to see the

objects of their affections appear, for example, they literally jump them and roll around on the ground with them to express their joy. To use another example: young dragons have a game/competition to see who can fly to a given point fast enough. More details like that would have been appreciated.

On the other hand, it is possible to read *Dragoncharm* not as fantasy (in his forward to the Special Edition, Edwards states quite specifically that he does not consider it fantasy), but as a fable. Fables often use animals as thinly disguised stand-ins for human beings. What this does is distance the reader from the action of the story, making the author's moral easier to accept.

If read as a fable rather than a work of epic fantasy, *Dragoncharm* succeeds brilliantly.

Originally published on the *Amazing Stories* Web site (<http://amazingstoriesmag.com/2016/08/...>) on August 22, 2016.

Tegan says

Very original book, however it was so up and down for me. At times I was so involved with the characters that I couldn't put it down and at other times it was boring, slow moving and I was uninterested. Maybe that says more about me than the book, so don't take this to heart. The world building is exactly what I would imagine for a world inhabited by dragons and did provoke great visual imagery. Some of the politics and in fighting between different dragon factions was where the book lost interest for me, it seemed that most of the dragons didn't know (and hence I didn't) why they were fighting each other and resulted in a at times confusing plot. But all told it was good story and not what I was expecting when I picked up the novel and I will probably in time read the other two books in the series.

Deanne says

my all time favourite book! Loved it, could read it over and over again.

Lynette Chambers says

I loved the story idea - and was drawn in rather quickly. However, as the story dragged on, and more and more "dragon" characters were introduced, I found that it was difficult to keep up with the direction the tale was going. I wound up jumping ahead and scanning pages just to get to the end and see how it wrapped up.

David says

A very interesting and atypical fantasy book told from the perspectives of a dragon society. Very imaginative storytelling that is well-told enough that you can relate to the dragon protagonist.
