
Subject: Re: Robert L. Forward (The Flight of the Dragonfly)
Posted by [Anonymous](#) on Tue, 17 Sep 2013 19:20:23 GMT
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Originally posted by: @RUTGERS.ARPA:milne@uci-icse

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From: Alastair Milne

> > I discovered another new (to me) author on that same trip ...
> > Robert L. Forward. His first novel, DRAGON's EGG, was published
> > five years ago and is a real treat.

> Forward's latest book, "The Flight of the Dragonfly" has been
> released in a trade edition. Like "Dragon's Egg", the science is
> absolutely first rate (as you would expect); very solidly based and
> yet imaginative in the style of Hal Clement's planets. The
> engineering of the spacecraft and especially the Christmas Bush
> robot(s) is unique.

Thank you. Having read and enormously enjoyed Dragon's Egg, I take that as a strong recommendation. I'll have to try to find "... Dragonfly".

I agree completely about Forward's science. After the disappointments, gaps, and need for massive suspension of disbelief so common with most sf, the solidity and excitement of Forward's ideas is a great relief.

> The characterizations of the scientists in Dragonfly is, like his
> first book, very stilted. To a man (and woman), the characters are
> *absolutely* dedicated to their arts-science (all are multiply
> talented), and are extremely well-adjusted to each other and their
> fates (they cannot have children, will never return from their
> voyage, and experience relativistic alienation). They have no
> faults. The story would be very boring if it had to depend only on
> the characters and their interactions.

I have to contend with you about the characterisations on 2 points: 1 - the explorer type is often like that -- witness Thor

Heyerdahl, or the people who are not content until they've walked to the South Pole or dog-paddled the Pacific (I am *not* mocking; I am using hyperbole to emphasise a point): without that kind of oneness of purpose, they couldn't do it. 2 - I think you're only talking about the human characters. What about the various characters throughout the history of the Egg (just now I can't remember what they called themselves)? Quite a variety of range and colour there -- recall the "messiah" who was the first to feel the probe laser on his topsides. And of course, that was the focus of the story: the evolution of the neutron creatures and their society, and the most notable characters in their history.

- > Buy it to read a world-class scientist speculate on inter-stellar
- > travel. The plot, in this case, is not the thing, nor the style.
- > I've certainly paid a lot more (than the trade price) for books that
- > taught less without half of the interest.
- >
- > Lyle McElhaney
- > ...denelcor!lmc
- > {hao, stcvax, brl-bmd, nbires, csu-cs} !denelcor!lmc

Agreed on all counts.

Alastair Milne