

Release the Hounds!

The November 2008 FAPA contribution of Rogers Cadenhead, PMB 120, 1093 A1A Beach Blvd., St. Augustine, FL 32080 • email: cadenhead@gmail.com • web: <http://workbench.cadenhead.org> • issue #1

71 Years Late to the Party

Introductions are in order: I'm Rogers Cadenhead, a 41-year-old web publisher, computer book author and lapsed journalist. My golden age of science fiction was the late '70s, when I scoured libraries and secondhand bookstores in Dallas-Fort Worth for anything I could find by Robert E. Howard, Michael Moorcock, Madeline L'Engle, Stephen R. Donaldson and FAPA's own Robert Silverberg. I joined the comics APA CAPA-Alpha while in college, but I gafiated from fandom to build a career and family, only finding my way back recently. There's more I could tell, but I need to hold some information in reserve to serve as filler in future mailings. So I'm afraid you'll have to wait to find out how I met my future in-laws when I was taken to a Florida nudist camp against my will.

For this edition of *Release the Hounds*, I've searched through dusty old digitized newspaper archives and reviewed a recent science fiction novel by an old colleague.

First Mentioned

The online archives of the *New York Times* are one of the wonders of the web, going all the way back to the Gray Lady's founding in 1851. Articles in the public domain can be read for free, as can articles from 1987 onward. Most articles from the period from 1922 through 1987 require a fee to read. In honor of my first appearance in FAPA, I did a little digging to find the first appearances of some noteworthy authors in the *Times*.

March 1, 1938

J.R.R. Tolkien's first mention in the newspaper occurs in "Books Published Today," an article listing the day's new releases:

The *Hobbit*, by J.R.R. Tolkien. (Houghton Mifflin, \$2.50). A story about trolls and goblins, for children.

Houghton Mifflin published the first American edition of *The Hobbit*. The book originally was published in London on Sept. 21, 1937, and sold out its initial print run of 1,500 copies within eight weeks. Twelve days after this mention, *Times* critic Anne T. Eaton wrote a gushing review of the novel, describing it as "one of the most freshly original and delightfully

imaginative books for children that have appeared in many a long day."

Another literary classic turns up on the same day, *Out of Africa* by Isak Dinesen, along with a book whose title suggests that it has been unjustly forgotten: *Barks of a Nazi Dog*, a children's story by Lucy Bannard Van Sickle.

June 7, 1939

Isaac Asimov's name appears in a list containing hundreds of new graduates of Columbia University, accompanied by the news story "Audience of 20,000 Attends Annual Outdoor Ceremony at Columbia University." He's listed under a University Council heading as the recipient of a bachelor of science.

July 25, 1943

Robert Heinlein shows up in “Superman's Anthology,” a review of *The Pocket Book of Science Fiction*, a collection edited by FAPA founder Donald A. Wollheim. Heinlein's contribution to the book, “— And He Built a Crooked House —,” is described by reviewer Fowler Hill as a “shaggydog school” yarn told in a deadpan style.

Fowler writes, “Heinlein's story has to do with the weird experiences of persons who visited a house built, in plan only, on fourth-dimensional lines. An earthquake came along, however, and actually knocked this dwelling into the fourth dimension.”

Heinlein's story was first published two years earlier in the February 1941 issue of *Astounding Science Fiction* (pictured at right). The main character of the story lives at 8775 Lookout Mountain in Los Angeles' Laurel Canyon, “across the street from the Hermit — the original Hermit of Hollywood.”

That's a self-deprecating reference to Heinlein himself, who lived at 8777 Lookout Mountain Avenue in a house he built in 1933.

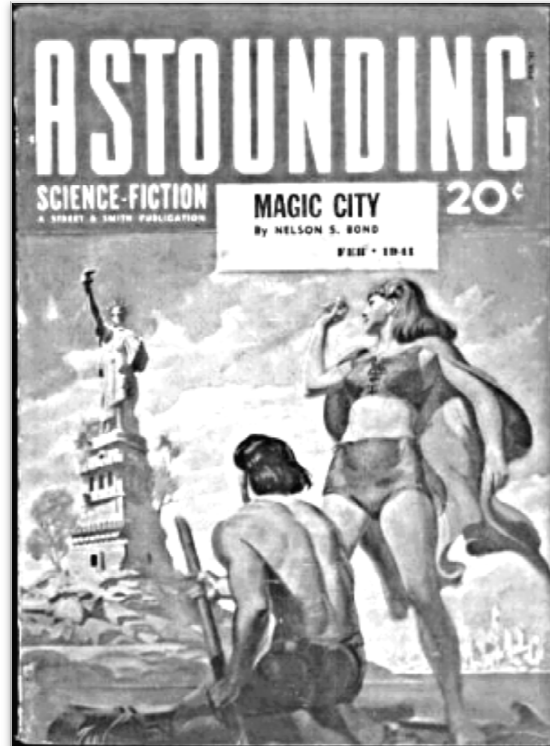
Today, the home's worth \$1.09 million, according to the real estate web site Zillow.Com.

August 29, 1946

Robert E. Howard, 10 years and one month after his suicide, rates a mention in “Books Published Today” for this book:

“Skull-Face and Others,” by Robert E. Howard. (Arkham House, \$5). A collection of fantastic stories.

The anthology, edited by August Derleth, had a print run of 3,000 copies and was a massive book, containing 28 Howard stories totaling 475 pages in length.



June 26, 1947

Arthur C. Clarke comes up in “Books of the Times,” a review by Nash K. Burger of the non-fiction anthology *British Thought*.

The reviewer only describes Clarke's contribution with a single sentence: “Arthur C. Clarke gives us today the interplanetary world of tomorrow.”

Clarke's essay, “The Challenge of the Spaceship,” turns up again 33 years later as the title of a collection of his non-fiction writings. The essay was revised from a speech that Clarke gave to the British Interplanetary Society on Oct. 5, 1946, as he explained in another of his non-fiction collections, *Greetings, Carbon-Based Bipeds!*, from 2000:

... I am particularly proud of the fact that when I sent a copy to George Bernard Shaw, I received one of his famous pink postcards with a request: 'How can I join the society?' I only hope that I am equally interested in

new ideas in my own ninety-first year; GBS promptly became a member and renewed his subscription for the remaining three years of his life.

July 8, 1947

Ray Bradbury gets praise in "Books of the Times," where reviewer Orville Prescott covers the Derleth-edited anthology *The Night Side: Masterpieces of the Strange and Terrible*.

"The present volume contains twenty-three stories (by no means all masterpieces)," Prescott states, "which range from such suave English stylists as Dunsany and de la Mare to such determined devotees of horror as the American pulp writers H.P. Lovecraft and Ray Bradbury."

Bradbury's story, "The Smiling People," originally was published in the May 1946 issue of *Weird Tales*.

Nov. 13, 1955

Robert Silverberg appears in "Teens: Into the Future," a review of new science-fiction books by Villiers Gerson.

I find myself with considerable chagrin to be in the position of delivering bad news.

Gerson was not kind to Silverberg's first published novel:

I wish that I could be as enthusiastic about "Revolt on Alpha C" (Crowell, \$2), but I find Robert Silverberg's story too inept and unreal to warrant inclusion in such fast-moving company. Young Larry Stark, newly graduated Space Patrolman, lands with his crew on a planet of Alpha Centaurus, only to become embroiled in its rebellion against Terran control. When his best friends join the rebellion, Larry is forced into a series of old-hat adventures.

The novel includes a newly graduated space cadet named Harl Ellison. I haven't read the book, but a post on the Usenet group rec.arts.sf-lovers described Harl as "the protagonist's best friend, who leads him into rebellion."

Aug. 20, 1961

Harlan Ellison achieves the most positive first mention of all these authors in "Criminals at Large," a review of several books by Anthony Boucher.



Ellison's picture comes from the back cover of *Gentleman Junkie*, the second of the books praised by Boucher:

If you want a stimulating departure from the frequently anthologized authors, you should investigate the short stories of Harlan Ellison, who has recently published two collections. "The Juvies" (Ace, 35 cents) deals with the overfamiliar theme of juvenile delinquency, but the best of Ellison's stories have immediacy and impact, partly attributable to the fact that he is writing directly from experience (as he documents in an interesting non-fiction introduction on juvenile crime). "Gentlemen Junkie" (Regency, 50 cents) is a longer and more varied book -- twenty-two stories totalling almost 100,000 words

In these 'stories of the hung-up generation,' Ellison lashes out indignantly at the vices and stupidities of the world as it is, sometimes shouting the already obvious, sometimes

achieving little beyond shock-value, but often probing deep enough to agonize a nerve you never suspected you had. At their best they reveal a vigorous young writer who has things to say and the power to make you listen to him.

The back cover of *Gentleman Junkie* elaborates

Review: 'Emissaries from the Dead' by Adam-Troy Castro

While in college I freelanced for *Amazing Heroes*, a comics magazine that paid slightly more than the postage required to mail the checks. I was part of a reviewing stable that included Adam-Troy Castro, who recently wrote *Emissaries from the Dead*, his first science fiction novel set in a world of his own making.

Emissaries, which is subtitled "An Andrea Cort Novel," carries forward a protagonist from his short stories. The world's wonderfully bizarre, an artificial planet built on the inside of a mile-long cylinder by millennia-old sentient software called the AIsorce. Each advanced civilization explores space first with its software, and this code has outlived its coders, joining together with programs from other worlds.

The software has engineered sloth-like, spider-armed primates who hang from the vines and roots on the outer edge of the world, surviving only as long as they can hold on. These creatures are Brachiators, from the verb *brachiate*, and they're the best thing about the novel:

The battlefield was a patch of Uppergrowth indistinguishable from any other, marked only by the thirty nearly immobile figures wrapped in what their species must have considered to be frenetic combat. There were two groups, whose paths prior to this moment in their respective histories were easy to track by the vines they'd shredded in their wake. They hadn't collided head-on,

on the experience mentioned in Boucher's review: Ellison "ran with a teen-age gang in Brooklyn to gain background."

Ellison's next project, as described on the cover: "Currently living in Illinois, he is at work on a serious novel of Negro-White relations in the North."

but rather at an angle, joining in battle as soon as both tribes realized that they'd now be competing for the same patch of their world's ceiling.

The fresh, juicy manna pears hanging in bunches from every vine in sight revealed the conflict as ridiculous, as even Brachiators forced into a course change could have found more food than they could possibly eat within an hour's travel, but that didn't matter to them; their armies had met, and their war had to be fought. ...

The Brachiator battlefield looked like an orgy where everybody had fallen asleep in mid-hump.

Unfortunately, the Brachiators aren't the focus. The novel's about two murders that take place in a small colony of human researchers. Cort's an unloved diplomat who must solve the crimes without implicating the AIsorce, and the bulk of the 386-page novel consists of her talking to potential suspects and interacting with the software. Castro's story is all talk, ending with Cort's six-page Scooby Doo monologue on how she solved the crimes.

Despite the weaknesses in plotting, Castro's setting carries the book and makes the prospect of another "Andrea Cort novel" intriguing. He just needs a mystery that hangs on a species as compelling as the Brachiators.