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Ashley, Mike. *Gateways to Forever: The Story of the Science-Fiction Magazines from 1970 to 1980. The History of the Science-Fiction Magazine Volume III*. Liverpool Science Fiction Texts and Studies. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007. 507 p. ISBN-13: 9781846310034

Once again, Mike Ashley has completed a tour de force. After *The Time Machines* (from the founding of *Amazing Stories*, by Hugo Gernsback, to 1950) and *Transformations* (the 1950s and 1960s), Ashley has now scrutinized and synthesized science fiction in the confused 1970s. During this decade the market fractured, but contrary to what many have maintained, science-fiction magazines didn't see their importance diminish. Indeed, they generally reacted robustly to the many challenges they faced.

In order to give an exact picture, the author divides his study into two parts. The first three chapters examine the period 1970-1977, when the different threads underlying the changing market emerge within times of political, economic and social unrest. The author then analyses the growth of these orientations in the years 1977-1982, and retraces the development of new sf and media magazines. His meticulous study of the 70s begins in the late sixties and concludes in the eighties, to provide the reader a better understanding of the decade. The essay is enriched with tables and annexes. The first of them is of particular interest, since it offers an overview of sf in various European, American, and Asian countries.

The decade starts first with the death, in 1971, of John W. Campbell, editor of *Analog*. Campbell had been a strong influence on the science fiction field, for good and bad, and his passing coincided with or, perhaps, allowed a diversification of the genre and its market. The period 1970-1977 was unforgiving for the magazines, due to malaise in the paper industry, numerous changes of editors, the publishing policies owners adopted, and competition from other "gateways". The main rival was the important phenomenon of the original anthology series, like *New Writings in SF* and *Dangerous Visions*. The anthologies provided a voice for writers who might not feel at home in the magazine market, or were unable to break in. This rival, however, experienced a rise and a fall, in which Roger Elwood had a great influence, though not entirely negative.

Traditionally, the magazine editor's role was to spot new talent and to help it to blossom. In the seventies, a second rival to the magazines emerged with the *Clarion Writers' Workshop*, organized by Robin Scott Williams. The "small but dangerous" (233) magazines, from fanzines to semi-professional publications, carved out a significant space in the science fiction and weird fields. They encouraged new writers, like Unearth, studied the genre (*Riverside Quarterly*, for

instance), or even dictated trends. All these new channels bring Ashley to conclude: "From the generally depressed and uncertain days of 1969, science fiction had pulled itself up by its bootstraps, tapping into the energy of new writers, new editors and a new freedom." (171-172) Ashley faithfully lists both the new and established writers and the titles of their work, and gives us some content description.

The new generation of writers is characterized by the sheer diversity of their work. Not only the fictions replicated the best of the old, but also expanded and matured the genre, as we can see with Michael Bishop, John Varley and William Gibson, just to name a few. Within the new talented writers, the growing presence of women writers like Joan Vinge, Ursula Le Guin, or Joanna Russ is to be noted. In spite of a general perception to the contrary, women had long contributed to the development of the field. But during the present decade, characterized by the rise of feminism and a more liberated SF, the barrier that women felt was lifted – even if equality was still to come. Women appeared in anthologies and magazines, and they published their own forum and fiction magazines, like the Canadian *The Witch and the Chameleon*.

Other new market orientations contributed to reshape the science fiction sphere. At the end of the sixties, fantasy became a marketable genre, in the wake of E. Howard's Conan books and of *Lord of the Rings*, and generated a number of almost semi-professional magazines. *Shayol*, for instance, included a shift towards exploration of sf and fantasy images. In fact, the seventies saw also the development of adult graphic science-fiction stories and comic-book magazines, a development to which French publications, like *Métal hurlant*, contributed. Role-playing games, such as *Dungeons and Dragons*, and computer games, confirmed the importance of fantasy in the field, while generating their own fandom and magazines. The latter became a threat to the fiction magazines. Finally, the horror sphere must be acknowledged as well; its best discovery, Thomas Ligotti, wouldn't be known without the specialized small press.

Some of the ways in which the market worked during the 70s had the effect of pushing the genre backwards. Resurrected pulp glories of the thirties overtook the paperback market, most of which did not belong to science fiction. The bookstore shelves were also filled with the *Star Trek* series, which generated a profusion of fan fiction (and a division in the fandom!), and with translations, especially of the German Perry Rhodan series. These orientations resulted from a wave of nostalgia, of which Byron Preiss took advantage in launching his *Weird Heroes* anthologies. Some major actors of the field reacted against this levelling of the genre; Stanislas Lem, an exceptional example of the growing presence of European science fiction on Anglo-American shelves, joined Robert Silverberg and Harlan Ellison in issuing a wake-up call. Ashley advances the thesis that some of the nostalgia came from a reaction to the new academic eye on the genre. Indeed, the decade witnessed a growth of academic magazines, such as "Science Fiction Studies" and "Extrapolations". That academics were writing about sf generated many worries, sometimes grounded in the sf fraternity's feeling that the professors simply didn't understand the genre, but also due to the quality of the reference works and readers produced.

The period from 1977 to 1982 saw the rise and fall of an important number of

magazines, "as if, following the transitional post-Campbell years, the field felt ready to regenerate itself." (308) *Galileo*, for instance, proved to be the success story of this period—and its worst disaster. On the opposite side, *Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine* and *Omni* both met with remarkable success. In fact, along with the leading magazines, sf and fantasy books continued to increase in titles during the second part of the seventies. The period is also marked by the rivalry – or help, as the eighties will show – of the media magazines derived from the phenomenal success of the *Star Wars* movies (which also provoked a raging debate about their quality as science fiction) and other blockbusters films.

The seventies saw the sf field mature, thanks to actors like Damon Knight, Ben Bova, Harlan Ellison and *F&SF*, just to name a few, even if the growth in sf-book publishing was primarily in formulaic adventure books and retro-pulps. Both fandom and market became fragmented, but this situation helped reorientation and adaptability. New gateways opened in the history of the genre.

Readers will appreciate this definitive story of the sf magazine. Ashley offers a comprehensive picture of the sf field, with great breadth, in a personal voice that makes his *Gateways to Forever* a very interesting and rich study.