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## Collecting Cultural Magazines' Retrospectives

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Journal of Modern Literature

Indiana University Press

Volume 24, Number 1, Fall 2000

pp. 113-133

10.1353/jml.2000.0027

ARTICLE

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**In lieu of** an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:

### Collecting Cultural Magazines' Retrospectives

*Richard Kostelanetz (bio)*

Although I must own well over ten thousand books, I have only recently set out to collect books within a certain category. Most of my books

were obtained for a particular project: sometimes a work currently in progress, sometimes for a past project in which I maintain an active interest, but more often for those that I am planning to do in the future. In the course of my professional life, I have accumulated substantial amounts of contemporary American literature; criticism of contemporary literature; avant-garde literature; book-art books; criticism of avant-garde art and literature; various editions of books by favorite authors (such as Henry Miller, John Barth); and books by my friends. In no case are any of these accumulations complete, and I doubt that they ever will be.

My first publication was in a university quarterly that did not pay its authors; and although writing has been my principal source of income for over three decades, I continue to contribute to such eleemosynary journals, thinking that the abundance of them is a true index of cultural opportunity in America and thus that my continuing contributions to them constitute my principal charity. (Not all their alumni are so nostalgic, needless to say.) While my library includes shelf upon shelf of such cultural journals, more significant, I think, is the collection I have made of what I call self-retrospectives: the books in which such magazines select the best work to appear in their pages. Examples include *The American Scholar Reader* (1960), the *Evergreen Review Reader* (1968), and *The Stiffest of the Corpse: An Exquisite Corpse Reader* (1989). Although such books customarily appear in modest editions designed initially for the magazines' loyal subscribers or as special issues celebrating decade(s)-long anniversaries, they ideally give their editors an opportunity to show, better than a single issue, how they want to be regarded by posterity.

The advantages of collecting cultural journals' self-retrospectives are that no one else known to me is concentrating on them and that there cannot be many of them. I own a few hundred. The category is so unfamiliar that I customarily must explain it at least twice, even to a bookseller eager to unload his inventory. The category of cultural magazines necessarily [End Page 113] excludes commercial magazines. While the *New Yorker* clearly belongs to the latter category, if only because commercial publishers have long been eager to publish

collections of anything from its pages, other slick-papered periodicals are more problematic. Apologetically, I will admit to having some (although not all) volumes culled from *Esquire*, *Sports Illustrated*, *Rolling Stone*, *Playboy*, and *Vogue*, among others. Extending my taste for irony into book-collecting, I also own retrospectives from *American Boy*, *The American Golfer*, *Streetwise: The Journal of Portfolio Management*, and even from *Weightwatchers* and *Zymurgy: America's #1 Home Brewing Magazine*.

Some retrospectives appear long after the magazine has died. I have *A Dial Miscellany* (1963), *Civil Liberties and the Arts: Selections from **Twice A Year** 1938–1948* (1964), *Writers in Revolt: The **Anvil** Anthology 1933–1940* (1973), and *The **Smart Set**: A History and Anthology* (1966), all of them selected by people other than the original editors. Some of these books appear as a magazine is dying and perhaps dies once the retrospective appears, such as ***Between C and D*** (1988) and Edmund Carpenter's and Marshall McLuhan's ***Explorations** in Communication* (1960).

Other self-retrospectives are paperback expansions of books initially appearing in hardback, so that *Hightlights of One Hundred Twenty-Five Years of the **Atlantic*** (1983) adds several selections to *One Hundred Nineteen Years of the **Atlantic*** (1977) without even mentioning the predecessor. My collection includes retrospective volumes from art magazines, such as *Umbrella* and *Artforum*, the pioneering architectural magazine *Archigram*, and such music magazines as *Perspectives of New Music* and *High Fidelity*. I have selections from political magazines, such as the Socialist *Voices of **Dissent*** (1958) and *Twenty-Five Years of **Dissent*** (1979), the pacifist *Seeds of Liberation* (1964), and the conservative ***Modern Age**: The First Thirty-Five Years, a Selection* (1988), in addition to *Echoes of Revolt: **The Masses** 1911–1917* (1966...



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