



The Disappearance of the Outside: A Manifesto for Escape

Andrei Codrescu

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This cultural-literary-social critique examines why, when a society moves from a repressive system of government wrought with censorship and oppression to a free state representing unlimited possibilities, the art once created and treasured by that population is taken for granted. Taking into account his own exile from Stalinist Romania, as well as the plights of such greats as Garcia Marquez, Breton, the Dadaists, Kundera, and Milosz, Codrescu issues a call for those living in a free society to reach beyond a benign reality founded in technology and commercialism by tapping into their imaginations and striving for a better, evolutionary existence.

"One day I had a revelation. There had been hints for some time that certain books had better not be discussed. Our next-door neighbor had a German Bible hidden at the bottom of an old sea chest. Her son Peter, who was a year older than me, showed it to me in secret one afternoon after making me swear that I would never reveal its existence to anyone. . . . It emitted a dark, pungent odor of darkness, monks, time, Gutenberg, sea journeys, incense, and last rites. Peter told me there were other books like this, some old, some new, all of them containing secrets so awesome we would be put in prison for merely mentioning them." From this point in his Romanian childhood, Codrescu became acutely attuned to the meaning of literature in the progress and movement of societies, both free and oppressed. "The police have arrived everywhere: in [Eastern Europe] they are uniformed police. In the West they are the invisible police of image manipulation."

Andrei Codrescu, an essayist, poet, *All Things Considered* commentator, and MSNBC columnist, has published numerous books, including *Road Scholar* and *The Devil Never Sleeps*. Born in Romania, he came to the U.S. in 1966, and currently teaches at Louisiana State University.

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Thomas Woods:

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