

WHAT IS AN ARCHIVE IN A DIGITAL ERA?

Andre Codrescu, *Bibliodeath: My Archives With Life In Footnotes*. Antbookclub, 2012.

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Bibliodeath is not a writer's autobiography. Instead, it is the autobiography of a writer's vexed relation to his corpus—physical body and body of writings—as the author encounters rapid transformations in writing technologies. Through *Bibliodeath*, the noted Romanian-American poet, memoirist, editor, translator, and National Public Radio commentator Andrei Codrescu (b. 1946) envisions the self amidst shifts in media production, distribution, and, through the transition from paper to virtual archives, conservation. “This is the story of a writer fast-tracked by the zeitgeist from the awakening of his mind in calligraphy to its maturity through a half-century of quickly morphing technologies of keyboards and memory” (v.). Since Codrescu associates corpse and corpus, and textual composition with self-making, he interprets the fate of print culture as a crisis of personal survival.

In *Bibliodeath*, Codrescu regards poetry and memoir as what he calls an “Unarchive.” Skeptical about the traditional definition of historical memory as locatable in an official depository (or, more recently, in hyperspace), Codrescu considers his writings an “Archives of Amnesia.” The phrase refers to the “history of the vanquished, written out of the Official Archives,” that exists only in its erasure. Should the awful history be told, Codrescu prophesizes, the narrative might do more harm than good for survivors because of the “inevitable anger, horror, and helplessness that follows the restoration” (21). In an earlier memoir, *An Involuntary Genius In America's Shoes (And What Happened Afterwards)* [2001], Codrescu states that amnesiac forgetfulness serves an aesthetic function. Selective memory shapes inchoate experience into scenes.

[A]mnesia is more important at art than total recall. Amnesia shapes the few remembered or misremembered scenes into whatever you're going to make. The kind of remembering that interests me is amnesia, which is an intense flashback. Such a flashback is generally devoid of facts because it has room only for feeling. Outfitting these feelings with facts like a grandmother with chicken feathers is a job I like very much. (14)

As in Walter Benjamin's “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” Codrescu's “Unarchive” attends to the “barbarism” of historiography. Archival inscrip-

tion is itself a catastrophic site. Influenced by a youth spent in Nicolai Ceausescu's Romanian Stalinist state from 1946 to 1966, his stated goal is to "sabotage the narratives of Archives in ways that would allow the Archives of Amnesia to pour through into the present."

Codrescu attends to the nature of archives—and especially to how archives may be curated via the World Wide Web—because he was engaged, after 1986, in depositing his vast paper collections—"I was drowning in my own manuscript archive and books at home" (*Bibliodeath*, 85)—at his home institution, Louisiana State University (LSU), and later at the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana (U of I). At this time, curators were redefining archival space from brick and mortar libraries towards virtualization through digital mediation and the cloud. He is not sanguine about the preservation of cultural memory in the Internet age.

Even as *Bibliodeath* records his insecurity about archival memory, Codrescu's project in poetry and memoir is to resist assigning residence of history in a single archive, traditional paper or digitalized version. I will argue that *Bibliodeath's* skepticism towards the electronic archive—"The machine will be holding all of humanity's memory hostage" (93)—as a post-modern, market oriented, and deceptively enjoyable version of surveillance culture is deeply influenced by his experience as a subject of Ceausescu's government. "We live now in an Internetic Police State that can feel quite pleasant, very unlike the clunky old one I was born in" (124). At the same time, Codrescu's heritage included a robust literary, religious, and scholarly endowment that emphasized occult practices through Hasidism and Christian Orthodoxy, as well as in the poetry of Lucien Blaga and Ion Barbu, and explorations of the sacred in the writings of Mircea Eliade. Codrescu thus views the Internet archive as a postmodern repetition of Ceausescu's Orwellian state, but also as a shaman, a mystical conduit of global consciousness that exceeds repository containment.

A product of late 20th century U.S. education and culture, it is difficult for me to regard poetry as an ideologically charged site of conflict for anyone outside a small cadre of aficionados, but that is the context into which Codrescu first wrote and shared his lyrics. In *An Involuntary Genius*, Codrescu recalls sitting in a Romanian café with poetry friends:

The fact is, said Pradu [a gynecologist interested in literary matters], that poetry has a certain kind of power in this country...All the bureaucrats are intellectuals...every single book of poetry is sold out...When I go out of the abortion room, no one waits for me to shake their hand...when you read a poem, there is always a reaction....Walking home [Codrescu] thought about poetry. It was truly the only medium people could criticize their government in. This is why it

is so popular. (85).^{1]}

Codrescu's attraction to poetry, books and paper, and to handwriting on lined or unlined notebooks, as well as an anarchist sensibility that revels in derangement of senses—originally defined by Rimbaud—of Romanian Dadaist Tristan Tzara—subject of his *The Postmodern Dada Guide: Tzara & Lenin Play Chess* (2009)—are formative occurrences. From age fourteen he will understand poetry, not as belles lettres or a career path such as one finds in today's MFA driven culture in the United States, but, as for other Eastern Bloc authors such as Milan Kundera, resistance to groupthink. Poetry represents an imaginative space of private defiance and expressions of spiritual yearnings to counteract allegiance to Kitschy social realist allegiance to the worker:

[A]s soon as I was in possession of my communist-bookstore-originating-unlined notebook, I proceeded to write in it thoughts and verses that were filled with religiosity, decadence, disobedience and profanity—things that defied the ethos of communism as we were taught it. (2)²

Given his association between irreverent self-expression and the lost unlined notebook, one can appreciate why archives held at LSU and U of I of Codrescu's half century of participation in the U.S. avant-garde would recall his primal scene of poetic origination. Because a considerable amount of his paper holdings have vanished, a robust archive can never be reproduced:

Some of my paper matter was inevitably lost during my moves, because it fell off trucks, dropped from shoulder bags, was lost in the mail on exploding planes, burnt for warmth in cold rooms, given away to drunks in generous moments, lost in the snail-ways of the cumbersome zags of the old means of

1. In *An Involuntary Genius*, Codrescu recalls how he got into trouble with party officials for a poem called "The Eagle" in which he stated the sad histories of famous Romanian poets, including those who had syphilis and those who had killed themselves or been put in jail (78). Codrescu must criticize himself before party leaders, but news of John F. Kennedy's assassination in November 1963 diverts attention from his need to self-criticize (79). The Kennedy assassination represents the first television show he sees via satellite. It is a rare window into another world: "American cities, cars and people. There were building he could not believe existed...Amazing incomprehensible things written in ten meter letters on the walls." (80).

2. He continues:

I got drunk with my literary inclined gang...in a lowly tavern called The Golden Barrel, when we displayed defiance by reciting out loud poetry, both bawdy and philosophically inaccessible, to the smelly crowd of bitter alcoholics in their oil-stained work overalls. (5)

transport, and modified in unpredictable ways by climate. (88-89)

Further, given the poet's links his early literary project with resistance to hegemony, the web archive represents for Codrescu a bitter submission to a postmodern repetition of centralized control.

In *Bibliodeath*, Codrescu offers a footnote that extends over six pages concerning a Red Star literary workshop he attended as a young man in Sibiu. It was presided over by “judges,” five communist party officials who set up rules of decorum. Special attention was paid to observing “unswerving loyalty to the working class and the Communist Party” (6).³ Defying “unswerving loyalty,” Codrescu describes “Socialism” in one poem as “being like a milk pail emptied into the stomachs of people” while the “Cow of Mother Nature is turning red” (*Involuntary Genius*, 83). The secretary reprimands Codrescu, but admires the lyric's dialectical logic. Perversely, Codrescu learned two lessons about poetry and book culture when disciplined and praised for penning the rebellious poem about the sterile cow. He realized Communist officials took seriously the printed word and writing could bring him notoriety:

That poets were valued and watched by the authorities did not escape me. I hoped to be valued and watched (and hopefully punished) for my poetic transgressions. The communists and all intellectuals, were book people. The ideology itself had spread from dank underground print shops through inflammatory pamphlets. The founders' pamphlets, now books gilded and bound, were required furniture for party apparatchiks. The Communist party employed censors and monitored an index more extensive than the Vatican's. Children's first outing was to the library, and while the Bible and lots of other books were forbidden, the object itself was worshipped. (12)

Struggling against censorship via dissident lyrics, Codrescu regards other Romanian poets such as Blaga and Barbu and scholars of mysticism such as Eliade as “totems” for his “mental altar” (47). As a young man, he memorized poems to counteract amnesia, historical lies, and a self that must be split to adhere to party doctrine. Romanians must smile and cheer, he notes, while crying inside. “[C]itizens [were] required to participate in mass manifestations of official optimism about a future that everyone, including the overseers, didn't believe in. My notebook—soon full of religion, decadence and profanity—contained these violations chaotically, not in any sensical

3. Codrescu also tells the story in *An Involuntary Genius*. He notes that a Party Secretary critiqued him for being arrogant and uncontrollable, for keeping his collar up as Bohemian resistance to conformity. (83)

order” (4).

A secular Talmudist, Codrescu not only footnotes his main script in *Bibliodeath*, but he becomes an aficionado of “marginalia” (47). “I had no qualms about undermining, writing on the margins, making symbolic marks” (47):

I remember some of my notes as very good and concise pro or con arguments against something or other, but others were unconnected to the passage, being just something that occurred to me in some remote connection... Sometimes I copied my notes, especially early on, and I often used both marked passages and notes for some writing in progress (47).

A *mise en abyme* referring the reader back to “marked passages and notes”—mediation, not authenticity—copied remarks thus become fodder for Codrescu’s writing in progress. Understanding reading as rewriting, he footnotes himself in *Bibliodeath*, recasting stories told in prior versions of his life story such as *An Involuntary Genius in America’s Shoes* (2001) and *The Hole in the Flag: A Romanian Exile’s Story of Return and Revolution* (1991). Even his handwriting becomes an iconoclastic personal archive related to Romania’s history as a political football kicked about and conquered, first by Germany, then Russia. “My German-learned calligraphy tried to make itself legible to my American students, but my attempts to imitate handwriting taught in the US ended up as a hybrid of lower-case printing” (48).

Bibliodeath registers Codrescu’s skepticism that a web (or cloud) archive could provide scholars with anything like a complete account of an author’s literary remains. Exiled for over twenty years from Sibiu, the peripatetic author argues that electronic archives fail to encompass a history that includes notebooks Codrescu lost during his journey from Europe to the United States. Two key stories in *Bibliodeath* focus on seminal, but misplaced, hand-written documents. One story involves an unlined “ur” notebook he lost at a Greenwich Village café upon arriving in New York in 1966. Representing Codrescu’s resistance to communist repression, the mislaid notebook, ironically, spurs the author, then a poor young bohemian living on the fringe of New York’s art world with only broken English, to create multiple personae.

By then I carried a cloth satchel full of notebooks. Each notebook served a different function, according to a vast and now mostly forgotten plan to create poetic personae who looked at the world in different ways, and in different languages. I think that I was writing a sort of novel in verse, trying our characters for my new American life” (19).

In New York between 1968 and 1970 his “alternative” diary mixes different versions of experience, one containing mundane occurrences, another using “Catholic high school girls” passing by the plate glass windows of Blimpies, a sandwich shop, as characters “featuring sexy encounters” (54). “I intended to re-read in ‘the future,’ twenty years hence, say, both the imaginary and the real journals, to see if I could tell the difference. I was convinced that I wouldn’t be able to.” (54). Because the notebooks, upon which Codrescu based memoirs and poems, were themselves often fictional, interpreting them from an archival perspective as historical ground for creative musings, Codrescu argues, misunderstands the unstable relation between notebook and subsequent poems and stories. Codrescu enacts the creative process as a palimpsest of interwoven creative compositions.

As notebooks multiply, self-creations morph. Those who observed the notebooks “saw instead the infinite process of the making, splintering, remaking, expanding, shrinking of my morphing ‘self.’” (22). In *An Involuntary Genius*, Codrescu recalls the period in Bucharest just prior to his exile in New York, when, no longer a math student at university, he was ineligible for deferral from military service. To protest former friends and students who had become party bosses, he imagines himself in writing as other identities, including a female lesbian poet named Maria Parfensie (109). He writes poems under her name and in her persona. Identity change served to throw Romanian officials off course as they searched to enlist him into the army:

Andrei conceived the following simple idea: if it was that man’s business to be an informer, it was Codrescu’s business to put him on the wrong track. If power was the game, Codrescu was against power. If power, brutality, the army and the Party represented reality then he was against reality. He decided to disguise himself, disappear, fight dirty, be insidious, change identities (108)⁴

4. In *An Involuntary Genius*, Codrescu elaborates on his fictive, metamorphic identity as he transitions from Europe to America in 1966. In chapter 19, “A Letter” (addressed to his first wife, Kira), he notes how his identity is officially (and illegally) changed when a mystic Gypsy named Willy provides him with a false Persian passport. “It is a phenomenal thing. Between these thick covers, printed with letters I don’t understand, is my freedom from bureaucracies. I can go anywhere except, of course, to Persia. When I asked Willy about the price, he merely waved his hand in the air and said it was a gift from one wanderer to another. The photograph on the document is, by the way, my Lyceum graduation picture. I had no other” (122). He adds: “I felt so brash, in fact, I wished that a policeman would stop me so I could pull out the document and present myself in this new form, a form without history. Looks like I am doomed to forever changing identities” (122).

In a manner reminiscent of the late Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook* (1962), Codrescu combines factual information and fictive versions of the self in a series of notebooks.

Further, Codrescu notebooks represent seminal texts that even the most robust digital archive will never access:

This notebook became everything to me: it was the archive of my young mind taking to a path that would lead, I well knew, sigh, as Wordsworth had warned but which I conceived of at the time as the only possible *modus vivendi* in a society as repressive, repressed, provincial (and boring) as ours. (5)

The other story in which Codrescu loses touch with early writing concerns a poem, drafted in the Romanian language while he was in Italy en route to the United States around 1966. In Italy he jots down notes and poetry “around the print” of a book by Renata Pescanti Botti “in the wide vacant spaces around Renata’s poems” (19). Codrescu receives the book many years later when an unusually astute Emory University librarian suspects Codrescu as author of marginalia on the Botti volume donated to Emory.

Renata Pescanti Botti’s refound book brought back the memory of my first notebook (the *truly* lost one), it returned to me my first history, the specific ambitions of poetry in that long ago time. The first notebook, to continue with the geometrical metaphor, was the beginning of my orbit, the start of my moving around the fixed center of poetry. When I deliberately abandoned the lined notebook something inside me erased borders, it blurred the boundary between the austro-hungro-calligraphic border of my schooling and the soviet border I ironically crossed to get the unlined notebook. In the decades that had elapsed, the Renata *objet* had not moved with me; it had no history, it had been lost. But now that I was found and published, my journey in English pointed me back to my start in Romanian. (37).

Stories of the vanished unlined notebook and of the long lost, but eventually recovered, Codrescu poem scribbled on the Botti volume, illustrate the author’s skepticism about a virtual archive that claims blanket coverage. Ur-texts are often unrecoverable, but even if only missing, as in the Botti example, Codrescu regards them as irrelevant to his personal archive. Because dissociated from what has happened to him since leaving Europe, he considers the poem found in Botti’s book from a position of estrangement. It is as if another person had written it. For Codrescu, poetry is the “fixed center” around which subsequent compositions of self—or selves—orbit. He remarks, however, that the “fixed center” exists as a figurative black hole, an absence inscribed in the unrecovered notebook. Given his identification

of poetry, black holes, identity, and memory, archival resources will inevitably lead researchers on a fool's errand because the creative center is for Codrescu a subterranean realm of mystery and forgetfulness, not the bedrock of historical fact.

In *Bibliodeath*, Codrescu associates texts with absence, but, ironically, he also unites archival material with human remains. In the case of the Pacific Northwest counter-cultural author Richard Brautigan's final manuscript, the archive quite literally reveals what Philip Roth called the human stain. Brautigan's archive becomes for Codrescu a gruesome, extremely literal example of bibliodeath in which corpse and corpus are coterminous. Codrescu retells the story, conveyed to him by J.J. Phillips, former archivist at The Bancroft Library, of the novelist, best known for *Trout Fishing in America* (1967), who committed suicide by blowing "his brains out all over pages of his last manuscript" (117).

I've handled them, archived them, touched his brain matter on numerous occasions, though at first I had no idea what I was touching because TBL said nothing and even denied what became all too apparent after I eliminated the other possibilities of what this strange stuff could be (117)...I see what's on these pages as something of a completely different order than coffee stains, cigarette burns, the tomato seeds Josephine Miles idly spit onto her mss., even drops of spit, blood, semen, boogers, and the like. With Brautigan, these are the actual physical remnants of brain tissue, blood splatters, and cerebral fluid of the very brain that created the ideas he had and the words he wrote, now creating its own narrative on top of those words, and of course that act insured he'd never think or write another word. Those pages constitute both a palimpsest and something incomprehensibly more. The two 'expressive' mediums, the mingling of flesh and word made flesh, merge into one unbelievably complex and believably simple text of death (117).

In retelling Phillips's narrative of Brautigan's stained archive, Codrescu sets up a binary distinction between traditional paper and digital archives. He associates paper archives with traces of embodiment, fluids, eroticism, the human, the animal, the partial, aura, material, and individual authorship. He connects digital archives with machines, perfection, the flat, the total, the virtual, social networks, and the computer generated.

Codrescu conceives of autobiography as a process of shaping and reshaping a Stevensian "man made out of words." Emphasizing gaps in his historiography, he also believes unrecorded aspects of personal and social histories, as well as his "ur" lost notebook, may be more revealing than what is preserved, making archival knowledge partial, a "hole shaped exactly like myself" (23):

It is possible also that in ‘making a hole’ I was only unveiling the dark twin of the history buried in the Archives of Amnesia, what came out of those holes were the figures of my murdered kin. There is no technology for digging deeper than that. Beyond the figures of ones erased self there is nothing. (23)

Certainly his childhood experience, as a Jew in anti-Semitic Romania—even his culture heroes Barbu and Eliade were affiliated with the Fascist Iron Guard—, and born on the heels of World War Two, informs his repulsion to archival knowledge as an episteme of factual certitude. His memoirs are littered with tales of disappearing or disappeared people. One involves his father, a womanizer who gained renown for resisting Nazis in the 1940s only to be assassinated as a counter-revolutionary in a purge once the Soviets came to power. Other stories involve Hungarian relatives lost to Hitler and Auschwitz.⁵ A background of amnesiac forgetting of lost relatives enhances Codrescu’s suspicion of optimistic appraisals about state or corporate driven technologies of image control:

Only school children like myself moved forward without the terror of windowless black vans following them, and only a clueless Jew like myself (and there were only three of us in Sibiu in 1963) could absorb the optimism of brotherly love propaganda without noticing that all my friends’ families had missing members and a diffuse suspicion of foreign-language speakers. I had no father, but mine had evanesced for psychological reasons, not evaporated by history like the fathers of my friends. On the other hand, or side, all my grandmother’s sisters and children were seized by Hungarian authorities and exterminated at Auschwitz. (21)

In “Orwell: History as Nightmare” from *Politics and the Novel*, Irving Howe notes how “the destruction of social memory becomes a major industry in Oceania” (244). Howe continues:

Orwell was borrowing directly from Stalinism which, as the most ‘advanced’ form of totalitarianism, was infinitely more adept at this job than was fascism. (Hitler burned books, Stalin had them rewritten.) In Oceania the embarrassing piece of paper slides down memory hole—and that is all (244).

5. In *An Involuntary Genius*, Codrescu tells the story of his father’s assassination: “The random story of his father came slowly in romantic pieces. During the war he had led a small partisan detachment against the Nazis by blowing up trains and shooting German officers. The detachment was really what was left of the Romanian anarchist movement. When the Communists came to power on the turrets of Russian tanks, his father was awarded the Third Order of Stalin and a highly honorary job in the new government. During the first purge in the new power structure, his father was eliminated” (46).

Like Orwell and Howe, Codrescu does not regard state media as serving to protect human images. What distinguishes Codrescu from Orwell and Howe is that he extends his critique of “the destruction of social memory” to postmodern archival practices:

Storing my archive in an [Electronic] Archives was a comforting thought, but hardly the cure for the bad (good?) luck of being born at such a momentous time of transition between flesh and machine. Would any archive survive so much archiving? It remains to be seen. The crash of each of my hard drives was hard on me, made even worse by the certainty that a truly burnt drive can never be recovered, whereas for a lost notebook there is always the hope that thieves and time might return it. One of my darker thoughts about the new technologies of storage and production is that they are designed to contain the record of the past (under the guise of preserving it) in order to destroy it. (88/89)

In *Bibliodeath*, Codrescu further illustrates his suspicion of archival certainties by recounting the subject of a lecture about the “creative ambiguity of the typewriter” (90) delivered by a poet and friend, the late David Franks. Like Charles Bernstein in “Lift Off,” Franks based his work on slides of Correct-o-Type tapes. “[H]e developed a theory of mistakes as a language of the subconscious misdirecting the typing hand almost as authoritatively as a Ouija Board” (90). Franks’ interpretation of typos as traces of the unconscious via slips, and Codrescu’s subsequent rant against Spellcheck, are of a piece with his thesis that electronic archives, paradoxically, may not be an ideal repository for cultural memory precisely because they reproduce information on a total scale. For Codrescu, the transition from pen to typewriter to digital increases authorial distance from marks of erasure, mixed mind, marginalia, cover ups, and cover overs—the ambivalent mess of creative mishaps, failures, forgetting, and holes—that he deems essential to creativity. Codrescu understands poetry as a medium associated with anarchy, subterfuge, movement, possibilities, and novelty. He believes such qualities contradict the archival tendency to centralize, conserve, order, store, and contain art, music, and literature.

Codrescu’s identification of poetry with defiance to groupthink is only one reason why his childhood influenced his privileging of books over new media. His region of Romania “housed one of the oldest printing guilds in Europe, contemporary with Gutenberg,” his mother worked in the printing trade as a color separator, and, although the Bible was Gutenberg’s first printed book, a pamphlet concerning Vlad Dracul was the second:

The Dracula pamphlet with its vivid woodcuts had a phenomenal and instant impact: it was translated in many countries, including Russia, where it inspired

Ivan the Terrible. Gutenberg's second printed book was the world's first best-seller (14).

Further, his reading of Romanian poets such as Blaga and Bardu, and of scholars such as Eliade, who, Codrescu notes, believed all religions "had in common Paradise, the center of the world (Axis Mundi), and The Tree of Life," taught him to view poetry as an exploration of the sacred (42). From Eliade he came to believe "[l]ife itself was possible because of the memory and practice of one's beliefs in these symbolic places" (42). Codrescu expresses his fascination with exalted knowledge.⁶ In the tradition of mystics, his project involves lifting the veil of a diurnal "virtual reality." Mystical and occult practices, once hidden, became democratized through Hasidism and Christian Orthodoxy in Romania. Informed by his reading in Romanian mysticism, he also views the Internet as a shaman, a mystical conduit of global consciousness that exceeds management by curators.

Contrary to his prior linkage of the Internet with an Orwellian surveillance state, Codrescu imagines the Internet as surpassing a totalizing regime capable of organizing all that has been thought and known. "My spiritual real estate is vast and nonspecific, I am the archive of everything I've known and everywhere I've been, as Walt Whitman might have put it" (34-35). How can archives account for the ineffable, the erased, the imagined, the marginal, the realms of fantasy, spirit, and bodily fluid that Codrescu regards as the warp and woof the poet calls upon to resist totalizing regimes? Given his skepticism about archives as a forum to recover history, does Codrescu believe any genre can assist the author in recovering the truth about the past? For Codrescu, poetry is the genre because it represents a site to write a counter history to demolish archival certainties.

Bibliodeath surpasses a Luddite's screed lamenting the threat to books in a new media context. Codrescu challenges humanist identifications of self on page as an immediate reflection of a living "voice." Regarding identity as mercurial, multiple, and textual, he critiques, even parodies, his elegiac view of print culture as a repository for an embodied self. Codrescu acknowledges that he was—nearly literally—buried in the print archive he lugged around with him from country to country and state to state in crates, boxes, and rental trucks. He recalls cartons of now valuable little magazines and rare avant-garde titles tumbling off trucks, lost forever as the archetypal wandering Jewish exile travels from Romania to Italy, Israel, New York, Detroit,

6. In *An Involuntary Genius in America*, Codrescu recalls taking a "little white pill" and entering an hallucinatory drug trip in Italy where he has a Whitman-like experience in which he feels "this kind of joy" an "I LOVE EVERYONE ALIVE!" He adds: "There was no death... the whole amazing universe was vibrating, alive..." (124)

Northern California, Baltimore, and Baton Rouge. Far from a woe-is-me page poet intimidated by a technology he fears because he doesn't understand, Codrescu engages with the web by, for example, taking his esoteric journal *Exquisite Corpse* online. He offers the "resolutely dark ('opaque') idea that computers store things in order to destroy them" (89), but also notes that he "quit handwriting and typing on typewriters, and took to the new computer keyboards as if they'd always been there. All my records after the mid-Nineties were keyed in and logged into machines" (89). He was an early operator of the Kaypro 4 computer, using WordStar and floppy disks for word-processing. *Bibliodeath* is Codrescu's autobiography of the representational manifestation of himself across continents, seismic ideological shifts during the Cold War and post Cold War periods, and through to the Post Gutenberg Revolution of the Virtual Web world in which we now live, write, publish, and perish.