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Cosponsored by IWU's Sheean Library
Poet Andrei Codrescu Slated to Visit IWU, Feb. 3

BLOOMINGTON, Ill.—A Rumanian-born poet, writer, and journalist—who was expelled from the University of Bucharest for criticizing the communist government and fled his homeland before being drafted into the army—will discuss poetry in an Illinois Wesleyan University English class next month.

Andrei Codrescu will visit the IWU campus Feb. 3 (Thursday). He will discuss American poetry from 9:25-10:40 a.m. in Room 218, Joyce Eichhorn Ames School of Art Building, 302 E. Graham. His presentation will take place in an American poetry course, "Make It New," taught by James McGowan, professor of English. The discussion is open to the public, free-of-charge.

Codrescu, who was born in 1946, is a professor of English at Louisiana State University and a frequent commentator on National Public Radio's "All Things Considered." He is coeditor of "The Exquisite Corpse," a cyber-literary magazine (www.corpse.org).

Codrescu will make other appearances in Bloomington-Normal:

- On Feb. 1, he will read from his works of poetry at the Bloomington Public Library, 7-8:30 p.m. He will be joined by local poets. Original artworks will be provided by the McLean County Arts Center. Codrescu will sign books after the poetry reading.
- On Feb. 3, Milner Library at Illinois State University will host "An Evening with Andrei Codrescu," at the Bone Student Center's Circus Room, 7-8:30 p.m. He will sign books after the program.

IWU's Sheean Library is cosponsoring Codrescu's appearances, contributing \$1,000 toward his visit.

After fleeing Rumania, Codrescu traveled to Rome, Paris, and finally the United States, where he arrived penniless in 1966 and unable to speak English.

The Village Voice, a New York newspaper, reported Codrescu "hooked up with John Sinclair's Artist Workshop, and learned . . . the American language via the street, hippies, radical poets, rock records . . ." and others. Within four years, he was writing poetry in English. His first collection of poetry was "License to Carry a Gun," which was hailed by many critics who recognized Codrescu's promise.

Codrescu is "considered by many writers to be one of this country's most imaginative poets," wrote Thomas A. Wassmer "with talents similar to those of Walt Whitman and William Carlos Williams."

A distinctive feature of Codrescu's poetry is his interest in and perspective on American English. The New York Review of Books pointed out that Codrescu's "greatest strength lies in his outsider's appreciation for the succulence of American idioms. Where language is reinvented daily on billboards, it offers liberation from the chains of connotation."

Codrescu's poetry and autobiographies ("The Life and Times of an Involuntary Genius" and "In America's Shoes") illustrate his criticism of bureaucracy in his adopted homeland as was the case in his native Rumania. Another New York Review of Books article observed Codrescu's "focus on a pet theme, oppression, is as much concerned with the private as with the public."

In his work, "Comrade Past & Mister Present," Codrescu compares East and West through poetry, while in "The Disappearance of the Outside: A Manifesto on Escape," he discusses the issue in prose.

"He addresses here," according to a biographical sketch, "such subjects as the mind-numbing effects of television and mass marketing, the sexual and political implications that are a part of language, and the use of drugs and alcohol."

The Washington Post Book World noted that Codrescu's "tastes run to the whimsical, the surreal (about which he writes with great understanding), even the perverse. He means to provoke, and he does. His ideas are worth thinking about."

Among Codrescu's collections of poetry are "Secret Training," "A Serious Morning," and "Diapers on the Snow." His other writings include: "The Hole in the Flag: A Romanian Exile's Story of Return and Revolution," and "The Repentance of Lorraine," a novel.

Codrescu's programs in Bloomington-Normal are sponsored by Friends of Bloomington Public Library, Milner Library (Illinois State University), Sheean Library (Illinois Wesleyan University), the Friends of the Normal Public Library, McLean County Arts Center, WGLT, the Post Amerikan, and an American Library Association/Live At The Library grant. Live At The Library is an initiative of the American Library Association with major support from the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund and an additional support from the National Endowment for the Arts.