



Zombification: Stories from National Public Radio

Andrei Codrescu, National Public Radio

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"The world is undergoing zombification. It was gradual for a while, a few zombies here and there, mostly in high office, where being a corpse in a suit was de rigueur . . . The worst part about zombies raging unchecked is the slow paralysis they induce in people who aren't quite zombies yet."

Never at a loss for a trenchant comment or off-beat imagery, National Public Radio's Andrei Codrescu has long been considered an eloquent if often sardonic expert on the absurdities of American culture. The essays in *Zombification* (all taken from this poet's popular commentaries for NPR) were broadcast during the late 1980s and early 1990s, a period that witnessed the collapse of Communism, radical changes in American politics and society, and the birth of new nations. These large subjects—along with lively riffs on dozens of topics, both timely and timeless, both everyday and strange—are treated with Codrescu's inimitable wit, insight, and candor.

Included here are "Seven Embryos for Seven Lawyers," "Dali in Vegas," "Culture Vultures and Casserole Widows," and other classics.

Zombification: Stories from National Public Radio Details

Date : Published 1995 by Picador (first published 1994)

ISBN : 9780312119331

Author : Andrei Codrescu , National Public Radio

Format : Paperback 307 pages

Genre : Writing, Essays, Nonfiction, Humor, Journalism, Short Stories



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Beth says

I think that if you are not familiar with Andrei Codrescu, and have not heard him read his pieces on NPR, you probably won't find this to be a 4 star book. I think knowing his tone makes the essays more entertaining.

50 Book Challenge #5 (or #6?) is complete for 2009!

Alan says

Old collection of Codrescu's on air commentaries from the 80's and early 90's. Comments on everything from Mardi Gras to the need for Cultural Stamps instead of food stamps. I always like reading his commentaries, but only if I can hear his Roumanian accent in my head. All of the essays are 1-2 pages long, so it's easy to pick it up, read a few and then go do something else.

James says

A collection of essays by this Romanian-born American poet, novelist, and frequent contributor to NPR. These essays are, in fact, commentaries he contributed to NPR in the late 80's and early 90's. Whether writing about international politics, his adopted home of New Orleans, his travels in and out of the United States, or the current events of the day, he is always sharp, insightful, thoughtful, and provocative. Reading it these days, with the fall of communism a distant memory, it serves as an interesting reminder of the pre-9/11 origins and evolution of some of the issues we face today.

Magda says

I enjoyed his NPR audio-essays to the point of staying in the car to hear the end, but these one- or two-page blurbs are disappointingly non-magnetic.

Jon says

Whether you are already a fan of Cedrescu's sometimes hilarious, sometimes poignant anecdotes and rants from NPR, or if you've never heard of the man, I would urge you to snag a copy of *Zombification* and expose yourself to the text version. Filled with many short essays/stories/humorous anecdotes, you can read as much or as little as you want in one sitting and feel equally satisfied either way. But, if you are like me, you'll keep reading and reading until you exhaust the available material. Straight on in a burst or bit-by-bit, you'll have an enjoyable experience and more than likely even have a unique thought or two.

Snail in Danger (Sid) Nicolaides says

This book is a collection of mini-segments that Codrescu wrote for NPR. Some of them seem interesting, but I don't think this is the kind of book I'm in the mood for now.

Ronn says

I really wish I'd read this 20 years ago.

Tom Schulte says

I never really dug Condrescu's NPR bits, but thought maybe his ESL pronunciation was biasing my judgement, so gave this collection a chance - read them in my own voice, as it were. I am still "meh" about the material: it seems like incomplete thoughts lacking punch - all texture without structure and feeling like a draft of a possibly better essay. Still, there were highpoints. I did not know he lived in Louisiana, or at least did during this dated Reagan Era compendium, and I like most his ruminations on that nearest faraway place of this diverse nation. His insights into Roumania are, of course, enlightening. Well traveled he touches on my own Detroit home city with a humble recollection of the 1967 Detroit riot and the persecuted artist Tyree Guyton.

Tracey says

I'm afraid a chunk of this collection of essays is rather dated; compiled in 1994, he discusses the Reagan and Bush I legacies (albeit with several eerie present-day coincidences - see "Family Values* ") and the Bosnia conflict... something we've almost forgotten about 10 years later. In that respect, it reads like a series of snapshots, most in a stark, grainy black and white.

I enjoyed the essays on New Orleans and other places more than the political or sociological ones, as they were not so much on the left-leaning, pessimistic side. I think I prefer Road Scholar over this collection for the same reason - I enjoy his observations about America the Country vs. the People & Politicians. This book has gotten me interested in finding out more about Constantine Brancusi and a book called The New Americans by Al Santoli, so we'll see what becomes of that.

I did find the idea of "culture stamps" intriguing - similar to food stamps: those who can demonstrate a need for art get these stamps, redeemable at any valid cultural event; and just as food stamps can't be used to buy junk food, the culture stamps can't be used for cable TV or at movieplexes. It just might obviate the need for the National Endowment for the Arts... :^)

Recommended to thoughtful readers looking for a jaded examination of recent history, leavened with bitter humour and occasional flights of fancy. Wish there were an audiobook version read by the author.

*"So I don't really know why the Republicans are talking about "family values" when families can't get good value on anything anymore."

FYI: Amazon.com's Statistically Improbable Phrases for this book: casserole widows, culture stamps
