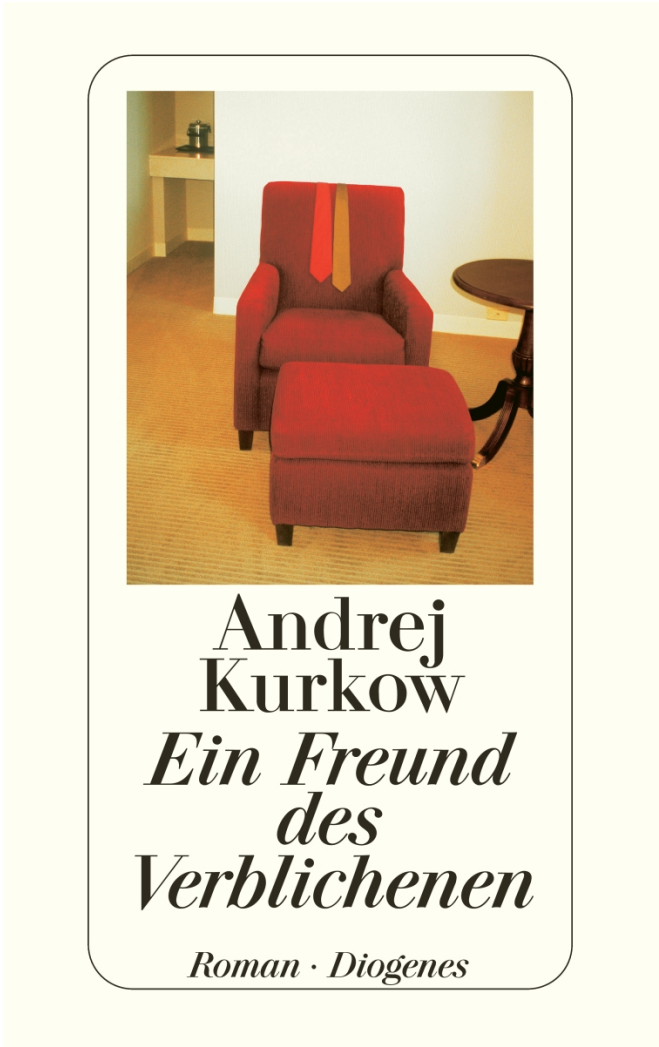
Diogenes

Book factsheet

Andrej Kurkow
A Matter of Death and Life

Published by Diogenes as *Ein Freund des Verblichenen*
Original title: *Milyi drug, tovarisc pokojnika*



To Tolya, life is no longer worth living: his wife is being unfaithful to him. Tolya would really like to kill himself, but he can't bring himself to do it. Then he meets Dima, a former classmate who works in a kiosk where spirits are sold. They drink to their old friendship and tell each other about their lives, and Tolya asks Dima casually whether he knows anyone who could carry out a »very special mission«. Dima, who believes that Tolya wants to kill his wife's lover, promises to help. He knows a man called Kostya who is out of work and has just become a father, and who needs money so urgently that he will organise just about anything. All Tolya has to do is to put a photo and the necessary information about where to find the person in question into an envelope. Tolya does as he is told and goes to his favourite café to wait for the killer. But evening comes and the killer has still not turned up. Tolya, now drunk, goes home, and on the way he picks up a young prostitute with whom he spends the night and the following day. Next day, the young woman insists that Tolya calls her by her real name, Lena, and refuses to take money from him. Suddenly, Tolya no longer wants to die … but the mission is already under way.

Contemporary Literature
144 pages
11.6 × 18.4 cm
August 2001

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Translation rights currently sold:
English/UK (Harvill Secker)
Finnish (Otava)
French (Liana Levi)
Greek (Kastaniotis)
Norwegian (Cappelen Damm)

Awards

2026 Andrej Kurkow erhält den ›Orwell Prize‹ in der Kategorie *Spezial Prize*

for 'one of the finest bodies of work in contemporary literature'

2024 Englische Übersetzung von *Samson und Nadjeschda* auf der Longlist des ›International Booker Prize‹

2023 Italienische Übersetzung von *Samson und Nadjeschda* für den ›Premio Strega Europeo‹ nominiert

2023 englische Übersetzung von *Jimi Hendrix live in Lemberg* auf der Longlist des ›International Booker Prize‹

2023 Als ausländisches Ehrenmitglied (Foreign Honorary Membership) in die ›American Academy of Arts and Letters‹ aufgenommen

2022 ›Geschwister Scholl Preis‹ für *Tagebuch einer Invasion*

2022 *Graue Bienen* nominiert für den ›Prix du meilleur livre étranger‹

2022 *Graue Bienen* auf der Shortlist des ›Prix Fémina‹

2022 ›Prix Médicis étranger‹ für *Graue Bienen*

2022 ›The Halldór Laxness International Literature Prize‹

2021 ›Fulbright Visiting Scholar-Stipendium‹ in San Diego, Kalifornien, USA

2014 Ernennung zum ›Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur‹ durch den französischen Präsidenten François Hollande

2012 ›Prix des lecteurs‹, Frankreich, für *Der Gärtner von Otschakow*

2012 ›Premio Gogol‹, Rom

2009 Jurymitglied für den ›Man Booker International Prize 2009‹

2008 Writer in Residence in Innsbruck

2005 Nach Einschätzung der Zeitschrift *Lire* ist Andrej Kurkow einer der 50 wichtigsten Schriftsteller der Welt.

2002 Preis ›Schriftsteller des Jahres 2001‹, den Buchhändler anlässlich der Buchmesse in der Ukraine vergeben haben

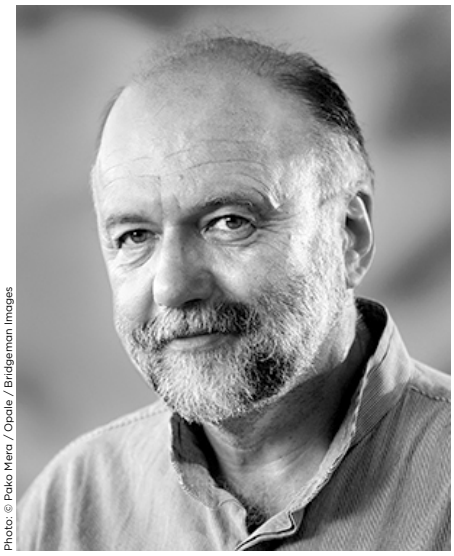
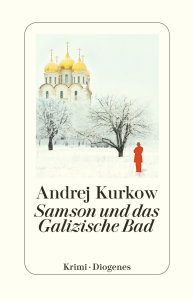
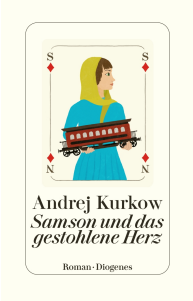


Photo: © Pako Mera / Opale / Bridgeman Images

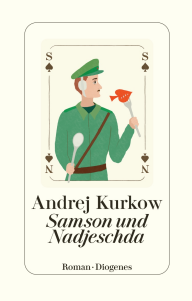
Andrej Kurkow, born in 1961 in what was then Leningrad, has lived in Kyiv since his childhood. He studied foreign languages and became a newspaper editor and screenwriter. Since his novel *Death and the Penguin*, he has been considered one of the Ukraine's most important contemporary authors. His work has been translated into forty-five languages. Kurkow lives with his family in Ukraine as a freelance writer. In 2023, he was made an honorary member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters.



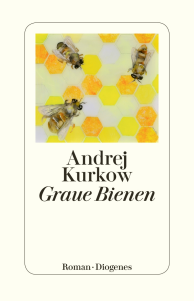
Samson and the Galician Bath
480 pages
2025



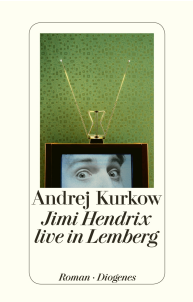
Samson and the Stolen Heart
432 pages
2023



Samson and Nadezhda
368 pages
2022
Award winner
Bestseller



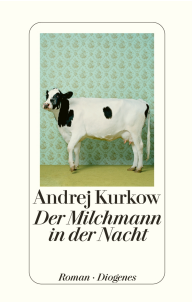
Grey Bees
448 pages
2019
Award winner



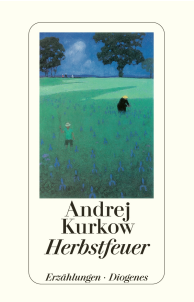
Jimi Hendrix Live in Lviv
416 pages
2014
Award winner



The Gardener of Ochakov
352 pages
2012
Award winner



The Milkman in the Night
544 pages
2009



Bonfire
240 pages
2007

Awards (cont'd)

2001 In der Ukraine als Künstler des Jahres 2001 mit dem Preis ›Mann des Jahres‹ ausgezeichnet
1997 Sein Drehbuch *Ein Freund des Verblichenen* wird für den ›Felix‹-Preis in der Kategorie ›Bester Europäischer Drehbuchautor des Jahres‹ nominiert.
1996 Das Drehbuch, basierend auf Kurkows Erzählung *Ein Freund des Verblichenen*, erhielt ein Stipendium vom französischen Kultusministerium, wodurch der Film teilfinanziert werden konnte. *Priyatel pokoynika* wurde 1997 eim Filmfestival in Cannes gezeigt.
1994 Stipendium der Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung für seine Erzählung *Liebeslied eines Kosmopoliten*
1994 Nominierung des Romans *Bikfordov mir* für den Russischen Booker Prize

Praise

A Matter of Death and Life

»Kurkov's eye for the absurdities of Ukrainian life is as sharp as ever.« – Christopher Tayler / Telegraph, London

»A brilliant little black comedy.« – Katie Law / Evening Standard, London

»An original, powerful voice.« – Matthias Matussek / Der Spiegel, Hamburg

Andrej Kurkow

»Andrey Kurkov is a master of grotesque humour.« – Brigitte, Hamburg

»With Kurkov, one is guaranteed entertainment of the highest order.« – Wiener Zeitung

»Andrej Kurkows knows how to make a story entertaining and amusing.« – Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung

»Kurkov writes short, sly, page-turners that specialize in what we might call absurdist noir.« – John Powers / NPR's Fresh Air, Washington D.C.

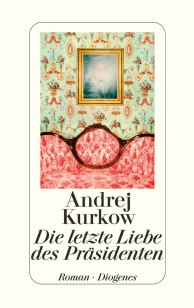
»Armed with the hilarious animal metaphors that populate his books, Kurkow depicts a humorous and scathing satire of the post-Soviet world, and of a Ukrainian society rediscovering itself, independent and riven by mafia, chaos and corruption.« – Laurent Rigoulet / La Chronique, Brussels

»Kurkov's style is spare and effective, drawing us with deception ease into a dense, complex world full of wonderful characters.« – Michael Palin / (author)

»A latter-day Bulgakov [. . .] A Ukrainian Murakami.« – Phoebe Taplin / The Guardian, London

»A post-Soviet Kafka.« – Colin Freeman / The Daily Telegraph, London

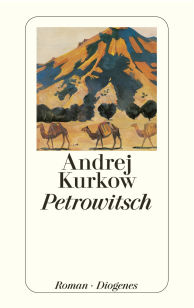
»A kind of Ukrainian Kurt Vonnegut.« – Ian Sansom / The Spectator, London



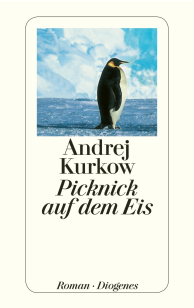
The President's Last Love
704 pages
2005



Penguin Lost
544 pages
2003



The Good Angel of Death
448 pages
2000



Death and the Penguin
288 pages
1999

Praise (cont'd)

»Andrey Kurkov connects the absurd with the ordinary, the comic with the sordid.« – Isabelle Mandraud / Le Monde, Paris

»He works with such imaginative power, which nothing seems to be able to quench, with a humorous and tender tone, with protagonists who don't have their fate in their hands, yet are saved by goodness and kindness.« – Alain Guillemoles / La Croix, Montrouge

»His prose marked by humour and a contagious humanity evokes magical realism and the absurd.« – Jorge Ferrer / El Mundo, Madrid

»Andrey Kurkov's writing style moves between the unexpected, the beautiful and the hilarious –– a tone that permits him to tell a tragedy without renouncing the paradox and the satire.« – Karina Sainz Borgo / ABC, Madrid

»It is no surprise that Kurkov began his literary career as a joke writer during the Soviet era. His humour is sharp and precise, but never cynical. As long as there is laughter, there is also hope, even within a rotten system.« – Tommi Melender / Helsingin Sanomat, Helsinki