Diogenes

Book factsheet

Andrej Kurkow & Jurij Nikitin (Ill.)
Samson and Nadezhda

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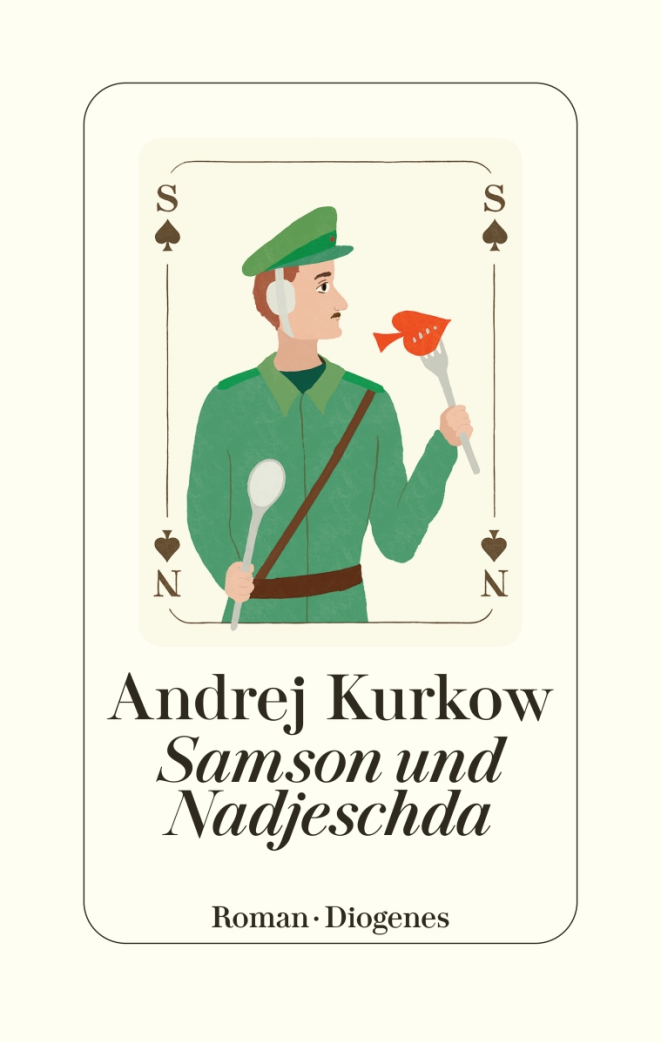
Original title: *Samson i Nadežda*



In the tumultuous wake of the Russian Revolution, the young, recently orphaned Samson finds himself almost accidentally signed up to the new Soviet police force in Kyiv. His first case is a perplexing mystery involving a severed ear, a bone made of pure silver and a decidedly unusual suit tailored from fine English cloth. Luckily, Samson meets the ingenious Nadezhda, who aids him in his investigation.

Contemporary Literature, Crime Fiction
368 pages
11.6 × 18.4 × 2.5 cm
August 2022

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Portuguese/PT (Porto)
Romanian (Paralela 45)
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Turkish (Siren)

Bestseller

Spiegel Bestseller

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

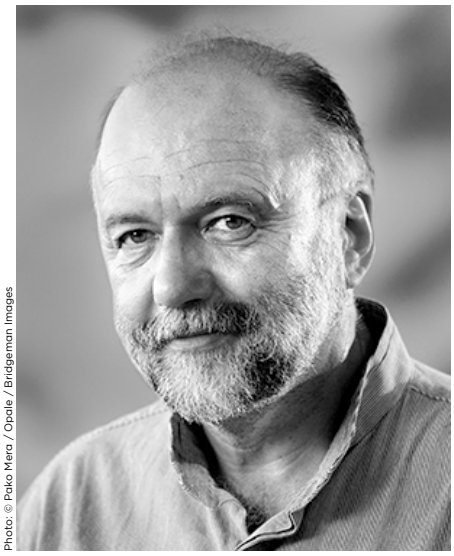
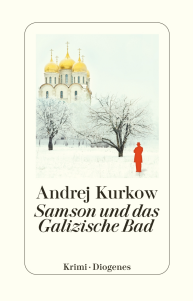
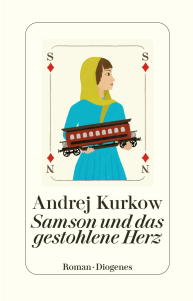


Photo: © Pako Mera / Opale / Bridgeman Images

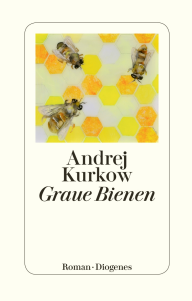
Andrej Kurkow, born in 1961 in what was then Leningrad, has lived in Kyiv since his childhood. He studied foreign languages and became a newspaper editor and screenwriter. Since his novel *Death and the Penguin*, he has been considered one of the Ukraine's most important contemporary authors. His work 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.



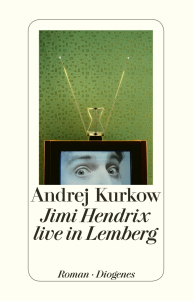
Samson and the Galician Bath
480 pages
2025



Samson and the Stolen Heart
432 pages
2023



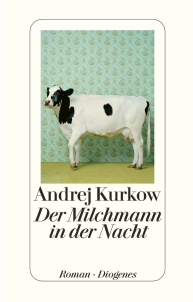
Grey Bees
448 pages
2019
Award winner



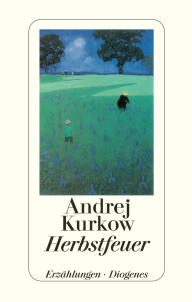
Jimi Hendrix Live in Lviv
416 pages
2014
Award winner



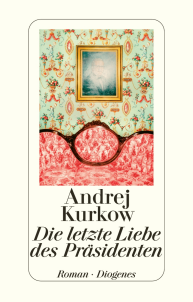
The Gardener of Ochakov
352 pages
2012
Award winner



The Milkman in the Night
544 pages
2009



Bonfire
240 pages
2007



The President's Last Love
704 pages
2005

Awards (cont'd)

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
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

Samson and Nadezhda

»He proves that satire must be written and also read, most importantly in times of war.« – Cornelius Wüllenkemper / Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Frankfurt

»Reactionary and progressive things are inseparably intertwined ––an incredible, sometimes even fairytale-like composure characterizes the people, with which whom Samson interacts.« – Fritz Göttler / Süddeutsche Zeitung, Munich

»Kurkov paints vivid pictures of the characters in his novel. First and foremost honest Samson, who believes in a better future.« – Johannes Alles / Nürnberger Nachrichten, Nuremberg

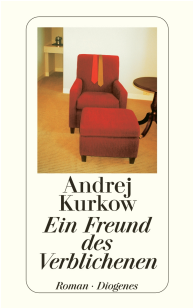
»Samson deserves a sequel.« – Christian Schröder / Der Tagesspiegel, Berlin

»Andrey Kurkov, who wrote this picaresque novel, is said to be one of the best authors in Ukraine – and rightly so!« – Freundin, Munich

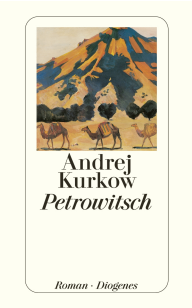
»Andrey Kurkov's novel *Samson and Nadezhda* reads like a parable on the current situation in Ukraine and yet is a look into the past.« – Sabine Tholund / Kieler Nachrichten, Kiel



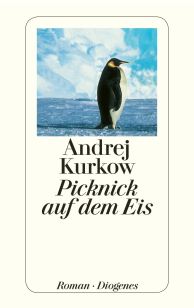
Penguin Lost
544 pages
2003



A Matter of Death and Life
144 pages
2001
Award winner



The Good Angel of Death
448 pages
2000



Death and the Penguin
288 pages
1999

Praise (cont'd)

»Andrey Kurkov unites realism and imaginary elements with ease and creates a veritable undertow in this book.« – Peter Mohr / Abendzeitung München, Munich

»Kurkov finished the book before the war, reading it now induces a double bellyache.« – Meike Schnitzler / Brigitte, Hamburg

»Kurkov has written a true pageturner.« – Stephan Ozsváth / Inforadio rbb, Berlin

»One thing is for sure: Kurkov is being read, and popular historical tales are far more influential than the studies of academic historians.« – Uli Hufen / WDR3, Cologne

»This is a trippy, funny, very absurd novel, and one that's a great deal of fun.« – Johannes Kössler / ORF, Vienna

»A page-turner that has you hoping the author will swiftly write more.« – Jochanan Shelliem / NDR Kultur, Hannover

»Kurkov's writing does not skimp on humorous, paradoxical, and surreal traits, as in the tradition of so much Russophone literature of the past three centuries. This ear that lives a life of its own, disseminating secrets and truths, descends directly from the nose of Gogol who goes for a walk around the city.« – Giancarlo de Cataldo / La Stampa, Torino

»*Samson and Nadezhda* revives the first Ukrainian People's Republic. Relishable.« – Le Monde des Livres, Paris

»The diverse personae of that time move through the story, giving it the colours of a social fresco in times of war.« – Le Figaro Littéraire, Paris

»After this delightful read, Kyiv and its inhabitants are even dearer to us.« – Télérama, Paris

»*Samson and Nadezhda* retraces a revolutionary transition with sharp-edged humour.« – Lire, Paris

»Andrey Kurkov is often called Ukraine's greatest living writer, and it is a gift for crime fiction fans that he writes in this genre.« – Sarah Weinman / New York Times

»Translated from the Russian by poet Boris Dralyuk, Kurkov's prose is brisk but capacious, with a quiet flair [. . .] And though it is clear-eyed in its depiction of war's sheer senselessness, *The Silver Bone* has an unusual poetic lightness too.« – Financial Times

»[*The Silver Bone* is a] fascinating series launch [. . .] the finely drawn characters and harrowing descriptions of daily life in 1919 Kyiv leave a far more lasting impression than clever genre tricks ever could. With its earthy prose and stunning attention to detail, this stands apart.« – Publishers Weekly (starred review)

Praise (cont'd)

»A gripping whodunnit with surrealist flourishes [. . .] Kurkov brings to life an overlooked and much-contested episode in Ukrainian history, capturing the brutality with which Soviet forces first attempted to establish control over the city.« – Washington Post

»The first of his Kyiv Mysteries, set in a world turned upside down, where nothing is certain but uncertainty, is told with black humour and great narrative brio.« – The Sunday Times

»Witty and enjoyable, Boris Dralyuk's translation is playful and subtle [. . .] It promises rich storytelling in future instalments.« – Telegraph

»A very intriguing and atmospheric novel by a highly accomplished writer. [. . . *The Silver Bone]* is a fascinating read in the light of contemporary events.«
– Alexander McCall Smith / (Bestselling author of The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency)

»Rich and compulsive, a modern classic in the making.« – Anna Bailey / (Author of Where the Truth Lies)

»Original and intriguing. Relocates the historical crime novel somewhere between Kafka and *The Twilight Zone.«* – Frank Tallis / (Author of Death in Vienna and Vienna Blood)

»In the tradition of Philip Kerr's Bernie Gunther [. . .] Kurkov sets crime-solving against the chaos of a turbulent era -- for his Samson Kolechko, the upheaval of Ukraine in 1919, when Cossacks, the Red Army and their White opponents, and even Chinese Communists battled in streets of a Kiev darkened by power failure [. . . *The Silver Bone]* poses haunting moral questions about defending order in perilous days, questions that reverberate a century later in Ukraine and around the world.« – David O. Stewart / (Award-winning Historian and Author of The Lincoln Deception)

»An atmospheric police procedural whose protagonist battles personal tragedy and a tangled system to solve his first case.« – Kirkus Reviews

»Mix[ing] elements of grim humor and surrealism [. . . *The Silver Bone is]* a winning offbeat crime novel that begs for a sequel.« – Library Journal

»A delightfully dark novel - refreshing, unique, comical.« – Historical Novel Society

»The Silver Bone is a masterpiece, and well deserving of the accolades it is bound to receive.« – The Lady Magazine

»As you read this novel, magic prevails over sorrow and anger.« – Wolfgang Schütz / Augsburger Allgemeine, Augsburg

»A historical thriller, yet one that also brings the reader closer to understanding modern-day Ukraine.« – Kristina Toussaint / Aachener Zeitung, Aachen

Praise (cont'd)

»Kurkov is such an excellent prose writer that *Samson and Nadezhda* offers not only suspense but also pure literary reading pleasure.« – Tommi Melender / Helsingin Sanomat, Helsinki

»A humorous but also cynical breath of fresh air amidst the grim realism of war stories during this horrific time—not just for Ukraine.« – Ronald Bos / Literair Nederland, Brummen

»Wildly enjoyable . . . A glorious aural portrait of a city in dangerous flux . . . I finished *The Silver Bone* wishing to read more.« – The Guardian, London

»Kurkov demonstrates that portraying societal upheavals in literature can be highly effective when a pure-hearted protagonist is set in contrast with a system that has become a travesty of its own ideals.« – Tommi Melender / Helsingin Sanomat, Helsinki

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

»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

Praise (cont'd)

»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