

Andrej Kurkow
The Gardener of Ochakov

Published by Diogenes as *Der Gärtner von Otschakow*
Original title: *Sadownik iz Ocakowa*



The gardener hired by Igor's mother is a mysterious man. He's about sixty years old, pretty sparing with his words, and won't drink a drop of alcohol. And what does the blurred, illegible tattoo on his upper arm mean? With the help of a computer-savvy friend of his, young Igor manages to decipher it: ›Ochakov 1957‹, it reads, and ›Efim Chagin's House‹. The quest to get to the bottom of it takes Igor not only to Ochakov, a seaport on the Black Sea 500 kilometres away from his home near Kyiv, but also to the year 1957... In Andrej Kurkow's fantastical and absurd storytelling, anything is possible – even time travel to a past from which the present can perhaps be seen much more clearly.

Book factsheet

Contemporary Literature
352 pages
11.3 x 18 x 1.9 cm
September 2013

World rights are handled by Diogenes
(except Russian and Ukrainian)

Rights currently sold:

English/UK (Harvill Secker)
French (Liana Levi)
Romanian (Paralela 45)
Spanish/world (Blackie Books)
Thai (Library House)

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
- 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.

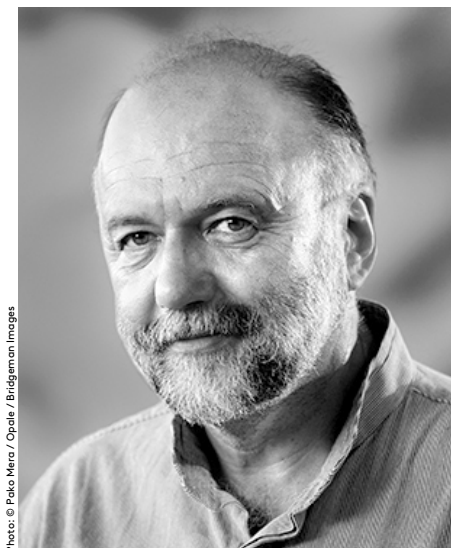
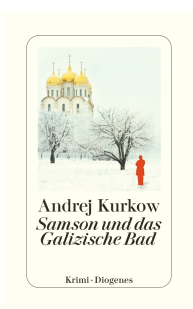


Photo: © Peko Mera / Opale / Bridgeman Images

Andrej Kurkows, 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. Kurkows 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.



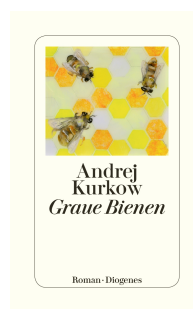
Samson and the Galician Bath
480 pages
2025



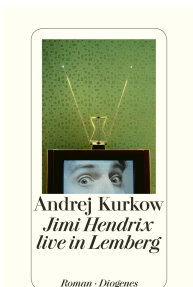
Samson and the Stolen Heart
432 pages
2023



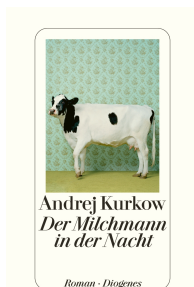
Samson and Nadezhda
368 pages
2022
🏆 Award winner
📌 Bestseller



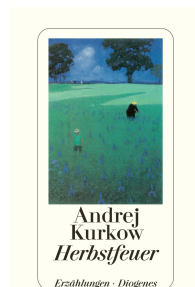
Grey Bees
448 pages
2019
🏆 Award winner



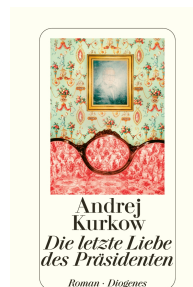
Jimi Hendrix Live in Lviv
416 pages
2014
🏆 Award winner



The Milkman in the Night
544 pages
2009



Bonfire
240 pages
2007



The President's Last Love
704 pages
2005

🏆 Awards (cont'd)

- 1996 Das Drehbuch, basierend auf Kurkows Erzählung *Ein Freund des Verbliebenen*, 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

The Gardener of Ochakov

»This seems like a more serious work by Andrej Kurkows, but don't be fooled. There is so much depth in *The Gardener of Ochakov* that passes readers by almost unnoticed, just like in his previous novel *Death and the Penguin*, as it is above all the power of a voice – and the sense of fun – that make this work stand out.« – El País, Madrid

Andrej Kurkows

»Andrej Kurkows is a master of grotesque humour.« – Brigitte, Hamburg

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

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

»Kurkows 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, Kurkows 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

»Kurkows'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

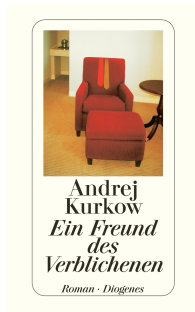
»A post-Soviet Kafka.« – Colin Freeman / The Daily Telegraph, London

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

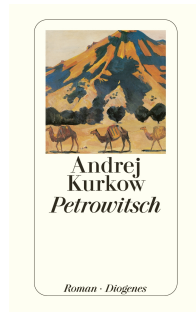
»Andrej Kurkows connects the absurd with the ordinary, the comic with the sordid.« – Isabelle Mandraud / Le Monde, Paris



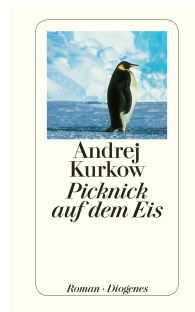
Penguin Lost
544 pages
2003



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)

»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