

Awardee: Yurii Andrukhovych

Writer, poet, essayist and translator, Ukraine

Yurii Andrukhovych is a Ukrainian writer, poet, essayist and translator. He is considered one of the most important intellectual voices of Ukraine and is part of the critical, creative scene that reflects and advances civil society processes after the Maidan revolution. Yurii Andrukhovych is a staunch supporter of Ukraine on its way to Europe and makes efforts to bring about convergence between Western and Eastern Europe. His texts have been translated and published internationally.

Yurii Andrukhovych was born in 1960 in Ivano-Frankivsk (formerly Stanyslaviv), Western Ukraine. He studied journalism in Lviv and literature in Moscow and was a member of the significant literary “Eighties Generation” in Ukraine, whose members initially wrote their literary texts for the underground. Not until the mid-1980s, when Perestroika and its liberalization began to influence social life even in Ukraine, did they have the opportunity to publish their writing and organize live events. In 1985 Yurii Andrukhovych was a co-founder of the literary performance group Bu-Ba-Bu (short for burlesque, balagan, and buffonada), who used their Dadaist poetry to break taboos in the spirit of modernism. He has been a staunch supporter of Ukraine on its way to Europe since the early 1990s and makes efforts to bring about convergence between Western and Eastern Europe. With his criticism of reticent European policies, he is just as uncomfortable for Germany and many western states as he can be for Ukraine with his criticism of the political status-quo there.

Yurii Andrukhovych is closely linked to Germany due to several scholarship residencies: In 1992 and 2001 he was a guest of the international artists’ house Villa Waldberta near Munich; in 2005 he took part in the Berlin artists’ programme of the DAAD. He was also at the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin in 2008 and 2009. Yurii Andrukhovych has been a member of the German Academy for Language and Literature since 2006. He held a visiting professorship at the Institute of Slavic Studies at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin in 2014. He has also rendered outstanding services to the German language as a literary translator. Among others, he translated poems by Rainer Maria Rilke and prose works by Robert Walser into Ukrainian. In addition, Yurii Andrukhovych translates from the Polish, Russian and English, including the latest Ukrainian translation of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* and *Romeo and Juliet*. In recent years, he has received many awards from German institutions, including the 2006 Leipzig Book Award for European Understanding and the 2014 Hannah Arendt Prize for Political Thought. Going beyond his literary successes, for years Yurii Andrukhovych has been in demand in the German media landscape as an expert on the political situation in Ukraine.

Yurii Andrukhovych’s poetry, which has been published in five volumes, creates a bizarre carnival-like circus world where the boundaries between the physical and metaphysical are blurred. Three of his novels written and published during the 1990s have gained the greatest public responses: *Rekreaciji* (1992), *Moscoviada* (1993, German edition 2006) and *Perverzion* (1996, German edition 2011). In addition, Yurii Andrukhovych writes screenplays and literary essays. In 2004 a German translation was published of *My Europe* (with Andrzej Stasiuk), the

result of a journey together through the unknown European east. The essay collection *Majdan! Ukraine, Europa*, edited by Yurii Andrukhovych in 2014 gives voice to writers, historians, sociologists and political scientists, many of whom are also activists.

Quotes by Yurii Andrukhovych

“Literature, if it is to be taken seriously, acts on the threshold of the future.” (Quote by Andrukhovych in the article “Vorausgehende Uhren” by Gerald Schmickl, *Wiener Zeitung* of 16.4. 2016)

“In a panel discussion, a German writer recently declared that European literature now has only two major themes – Alzheimer’s and cancer. Tragedies and suffering will no longer exist. This can and should be contradicted, but I think the very fact that such an idea is formulated in Europe is significant, thus showing the internal perspective. It thus contains at least a grain of truth, which is still completely alien to us Ukrainians.” (From his speech at the opening of the International Book Fair in Vienna, 2014)

“During my performances I almost exclusively was a re-translator of a single, actually not so absurd idea: we, too, are in Europe. The last five words are a quote, they were written in the late 19th century, 110 years ago. There is still a need to retranslate this solution – it has actually grown. I therefore tried to speak of it at every opportunity, because your assistance for this accursed country in whose language I write and declare myself is vital to me. And it would not be so fantastically difficult to provide this assistance. It would consist of only one thing: to formulate nothing that eradicates hope.” (From his acceptance speech for the Leipzig Book Award for European Understanding, 2006)

Quotes about Yurii Andrukhovych

“Andrukhovych presents a ‘post-carnivalistic version’ of the present, by contrast, with passages from his novel *Perverzion* whose German translation by Sabine Stöhr he deems better than the original, as he emphasizes three times. In fact, the novel is given lyrical thunder, which tells of Venice in an incredibly inventive and humorous way without being dominated by Thomas Mann’s *Death in Venice*.” (Thomas Linden, “Bloß keine Lyriker als Freunde!” *Kölnische Rundschau* of 29.1.2016)

“Yurii Andrukhovych is a virtuoso of all styles; he skilfully borrows from historicizing tableaux and ballads, from a rock sound and flippant confessional litanies. He cleverly sets some poem titles in parentheses or – as in the *Songs for the Dead Rooster* – chooses English titles, not at a loss for playing with references and citations. But the (postmodern) luddism does not become his shtick. Throughout it all, a poetic self is asserted with an unmistakable voice that touches us especially where it addresses another.” (Ilma Rakusa, “Songhaft virtuos,” review of the poetry book *Werwolf Sutra*, *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* of 8.12.2009)

“With his brilliant essays, Yurii Andrukhovych conveys an important contribution to the discovery of an almost unknown region in enlarged Europe.” (From the explanation of the awarding of the special prize of the 2005 Erich-Maria-Remarque-Friedenspreis of the City of Osnabrück)

Publications in German (selection)

2003 *Das letzte Territorium*, essays. Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main.

2004 *Mein Europa, zwei Essays über das sogenannte Mitteleuropa*, together with Andrzej Stasiuk. Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main.

2005 *Zwölf Ringe*, novel. Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main.

2006 *Moscoviada*, novel. Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main.

2007 *Engel und Dämonen der Peripherie*, essays. Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main.

2008 *Geheimnis: Sieben Tage mit Egon Alt*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main.

2009 *Werwolf Sutra*, poems. Wunderhorn, Heidelberg.

2011 *Perversion*, novel. Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main.

2014 *Euromaidan: Was in der Ukraine auf dem Spiel steht*, edited by Yurii Andrukhovych. Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main.

Awards

2001 Herder-Preis of the Alfred-Toepfer-Stiftung, Hamburg

2005 Special Prize of the Erich-Maria-Remarque-Friedenspreis of the City of Osnabrück

2006 Leipzig Book Award for European Understanding

2006 Angelus Central European Literary Award, Wrocław, Poland

2014 Hannah Arendt Prize for Political Thought