AWP 2024 Convention Event Outline
Event V123 [virtual; pre-recorded]

Wednesday, February 7
9:00 -10:00 am Central Standard Time

EVENT TITLE
Writing, Translating, and Publishing Queer Ukrainian Literature

EVENT DESCRIPTION
Russia's war against Ukraine brought a realization that the global literary community had limited knowledge of Ukrainian literature past and present, and also a keen interest to learn more. Obscured by centuries of imperial discrimination and entrenched prejudicial stereotypes, Ukrainian literary voices are finally beginning to be heard. This roundtable spotlights Ukrainian queer literary voices and the challenges of bringing Ukrainian queer texts to English-language audiences.

In the midst of defending itself against brutal and criminal aggression from Russia, Ukraine is experiencing a huge social change, in particular in the acceptance and embrace of LGBTQ+ folks. We are witnessing unprecedented visibility, but also a creative surge. This roundtable brings together Ukranian queer authors, translators, and a publishing representative all committed to advocating social justice in Ukraine and to introducing Ukrainian queer experiences to the international readership.

EVENT ORGANIZER AND MODERATOR

Organizer: Vitaly Chernetsky
Vitaly Chernetsky (he/him) is a Professor of Slavic Languages and Literatures at the University of Kansas. His translations into English include Yuri Andrukhovych’s novels The Moscoviad (2008) and Twelve Circles (2015), a volume of Yuri Andrukhovych’s selected poems, Songs for a Dead Rooster (Lost Horse Press, 2018, co-translated with Ostap Kin), and a volume of poetry by Ostap Slyvynsky, Winter King (Lost Horse Press, co-translated with Iryna Shuvalova).
Moderator: Oleh Kotsyuba

**Oleh Kotsyuba** (he/him) is the manager of publications at Harvard University's Ukrainian Research Institute where he directs the program of publishing scholarly monographs, translations of literary works and documents, and of the peer-review journal *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*.

**EVENT PARTICIPANTS & SHORT BIOGRAPHIES**

**Alex Averbuch** (he/him) is a poet, translator, and scholar. He is the author of three books of poetry. His publications have appeared in the *Manhattan Review, Copper Nickel, Plume, Birmingham Poetry Review*, and *Words Without Borders*. His book *The Jewish King* was a finalist for the Shevchenko National Prize in Ukraine.

**Vitaly Chernetsky** (he/him) is a Professor of Slavic Languages and Literatures at the University of Kansas. His translations into English include Yuri Andrukhovych’s novels *The Moscoviad* (2008) and *Twelve Circles* (2015), a volume of Yuri Andrukhovych’s selected poems, *Songs for a Dead Rooster* (Lost Horse Press, 2018, co-translated with Ostap Kin), and a volume of poetry by Ostap Slyvynsky, *Winter King* (Lost Horse Press, co-translated with Iryna Shuvalova).

**Iryna Shuvalova** (she/her) is a Norway-based Ukrainian poet, scholar, and translator. She authored five award-winning books of poetry and co-edited Ukraine's first anthology of queer writing. Her work has been translated into 23 languages. She holds a PhD in Slavonic Studies from the University of Cambridge.

**Ivan Kozlenko** (he/him), a Ukrainian film scholar, writer, and culture manager, and currently a scholar-at-risk based at Amherst College, was unfortunately unable to join the recording session.

**EVENT PLAN**

**Oleh Kotsyuba** welcomes the audience to the panel and emphasizes the importance of its topic in the context of Ukrainian resistance to Russia’s brutal and criminal war against Ukraine and the role of literature, and culture more broadly, in this context. One of the major developments in Ukrainian literature and culture since the Revolution of Dignity of winter 2013-14 is an unprecedented change in
acceptance and embrace of LGBTQ+ voices in cultural production, including in
literature. As a publishing professional, he remarks on the need for more
publications of the works by queer Ukrainian authors, both dead and alive. He also
stressed that the issue of queer Ukrainian literature deserves a wide scholarly
discussion in formats ranging from conferences to published edited volumes and
monographs.

**Alex Averbuch** discusses theoretical and methodological approaches to studying
queerness in the Ukrainian context. He suggests several aspects, such as its
geographic and linguistic liminality and hybridity, that make Ukraine inherently
queer. He proposes to study Ukraine and its queerness through the lenses of its
post- and decolonial struggle, in historical perspective and with regard to the
current war.

Vitaly Chernetsky discusses some of the milestones of queer presence in the
Ukrainian literary canon, including the lives and creative work of its founding
classic figures, such as Ivan Kotliarevsky and Taras Shevchenko, and a writer
Ukrainian by background who chose to write in Russian, Mykola Hohol/Nikolai
Gogol. He addresses the prominent presence of queer themes/voices in early
Modernist literature, notably in the works of Ukraine’s two leading women writers,
Lesia Ukraïnka and Olha Kobylianska, and in later Modernist writing, notably in
the poetry of Emma Andiievska and the prose of V. Domontovych (Viktor Petrov).
He emphasizes the groundbreaking role, in the context of post-Soviet independent
Ukraine, of the 2009 Ukrainian-language anthology of international queer writing
provocatively titled *120 Pages of Sodom*, for which Iryna Shuvalova was one of
the co-editors. He then focuses on the local and global contexts of the most
important queer novel to come out of contemporary Ukraine, Ivan Kozlenko’s
*Tangier* (2007, rev. ed. 2017), which is he currently translating into English.

**Iryna Shuvalova** discusses the presence of LGBTQI+ voices in contemporary
Ukrainian literature. She remarks that while queer characters have been a constant,
if rather subdued presence, in Ukrainian writing of the post-1991 decades, in recent
literary works, their presence began to shift gradually to the foreground.
Importantly, along with literary fiction, such as Ivan Kozlenko's *Tangier*, this
includes a broad array of genres, such as romance (Iurii Iarema's 2015 *His Warm
Hands*) writing for children (in Larysa Denysenko's 2015 *Maia and Her Moms*)
and young adult literature (in the forthcoming novel *The Almost Nice Boys* by Daria Chaika).

The panel concludes with a follow-up discussion among the speakers.