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Historical and Social Aspects of Migration in Marina Lewycka's *A Short History of Tractors in Ukrainian*

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This article analyses migration as a modern-day phenomenon and discusses the most common reasons for emigration out of Ukraine, as described in the novel *A Short History of Tractors in Ukrainian* (2005) by the contemporary British author Marina Lewycka (b. 1946), a descendant of post-Second World War Ukrainian immigrants. The novel alludes to many historical facts that reveal Ukraine's painful past and represents the lives of Ukrainian immigrants in the UK. Its close examination of a Ukrainian family reveals characteristics typical of post-Second World War migrants from eastern Europe. The article also discusses the history of the emigration of Ukrainians into the UK, dwells on different periods and types of migrants, and focuses on the cross-cultural problems of migration described in Lewycka's novel.
Keywords: migration, immigration, emigration, displacement, Ukrainian history and culture, cross-cultural communication.

Different historical periods have exhibited different reasons for migration grounded in a variety of push and pull factors. The aim of this article is to analyse them with a particular focus on the lives of migrants in the United Kingdom as represented in Marina Lewycka's novel *A Short History of Tractors in Ukrainian* (2005). Reading the novel analytically will help explain the variety of reasons for migration and the ensuing variety of Ukrainian immigrants in the United Kingdom in the twentieth century and later times.

Marina Lewycka (born in Kiel, Germany, in 1946) is the author of seven novels. Her first novel, *A Short History of Tractors in Ukrainian*, became popular immediately after its publication and is winner of many prizes; her other novels are *Two Caravans* (2007), *We Are All Made of Glue* (2009), *Various Pets Alive and Dead* (2012), *A Shorter History of Tractors in Ukrainian with Handcuffs* (2013), *The Lubetkin Legacy* (2016), and *The Good, the Bad and the Little Bit Stupid* (2020). Since 2018, Lewycka has been suffering from cerebellar ataxia, a neuro-degenerative disease, the symptoms of which she shared with her readers in her touching news update in March 2020 (Lewycka, "What's New March 2020").

A Short History of Tractors in Ukrainian, a humorous and slightly autobiographical novel, is based on a story about a Ukrainian immigrant family, the Mayevskyjs, living in the United Kingdom. Alongside the description of migrant life, the novel discusses post-war feelings, emigration, ageing, family bonds, the clash between eastern European and western European values and lifestyles and examines problems of cultural difference that every immigrant family encounters.

Migration is one of the defining aspects of contemporary society.As Caroline B. Brettell and James F. Hollifield observe, "the last half of the twentieth century has been an age of migration" (1). While

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decolonization, technological advancement, and the processes of globalization are the most widely cited reasons for us to live in the "age of migration," Jessica Hagen-Zanker states that the reasons for migration have a wide historical range "from better employment possibilities to persecution" (4-5). Different reasons for migration have produced specific types of migrants in the contemporary world. Rosemary Sales presents the main classification of migrants as follows: voluntary, "including labour and family migrants," and forced, or "those who migrate as a result of conflict, persecution and natural disaster" (29). In addition, she emphasizes the reasons and outcomes of forced displacement (Sales 29). Accordingly, the factors determining migration can be divided into two categories: push and pull factors. Push and pull factors fall into three major subcategories: socio-political factors, demographic and economic factors, and environmental factors (European Parliament "News"). Push factors are those that force people to leave their native countries: political and religious persecution, racial tensions, the war factor, and others (European Parliament "News"). Pull factors may be the following: good health care, the possibility to get a job (or to earn more for the same work), good living conditions, education, climate, protection, family reunion and others (European Parliament "News"). Naturally, people try to escape difficult or dangerous situations; thus, migration may turn out to be the only possible solution. Political processes often influence the scope of migration and result in changes in the social structure of many countries.

The United Kingdom represents a multicultural society with a diverse ethnic composition where the number of immigrants is constantly increasing. As Hatton and Price notice, "international migration has been an important phenomenon in Great Britain. During the last fifty years migration in general and immigration, in particular, has become a key policy issue" (113). Although often referred to as a conservative country, Great Britain remains an extremely attractive destination for many people from other parts of the world, especially eastern Europe. *The EU-UK Withdrawal Agreement*, which "entered into force on 1 February 2020, after having been agreed on 17 October 2019," halted free movement to and from the United Kingdom and imposed a new visa regime (*The EU-UK Withdrawal Agreement*). However, the country is still a tempting destination for many migrants. In addition, the current situation in Ukraine in 2022 is held responsible for the increased inflow of war refugees from Ukraine, a process legitimized by different acts, ensuring protection for Ukrainians in the UK (*UNHCR-UNHCR UK*). The UK government has developed two major schemes to support Ukrainian nationals to come to the UK: the Ukrainian Family Scheme and the Homes for Ukraine Scheme (*UNHCR-UNHCR UK*). As a result, within just five months, February 2022 – June 2022, a total of 190,537 visa applications were submitted along all UK visa routes by Ukrainian nationals ("National Statistics on Ukrainians in the UK"). The country's on-going support for war refugees will undoubtedly result in the significant enlargement of the Ukrainian community in the UK.

Four main waves of Ukrainian immigration into the United Kingdom occurred from the end of the nineteenth century until the beginning of the twenty-first century. According to Roman Krawec, "the earliest migrants arrived in the 1890s, from the eastern (predominantly Ukrainian) part of the Austro-Hungarian province of Galicia" ("First Wave" 1). It was a period when scientists and writers would enter the United Kingdom for better education opportunities. The First World War reduced the number of Ukrainian immigrants in England, as many Ukrainians chose other destinations. The second group came between 1920 and 1930. Most of them were fighters in the Ukrainian independence wars in 1917–1920, and were forced to leave their native country; however, "the UK was only marginally affected by this wave" (Krawec, "Ukrainians in the United Kingdom"). Some politicians and students migrated into the UK to settle down, but many Ukrainians also opted for North and South America during the same period. The period of 1930–1933 was especially stressful in Ukraine: Ukrainians had to survive the Soviet genocide of the *Holodomor*, the Great Famine of 1932–1933. Many people died of starvation during that time, and the survivors were trying hard to procure the most basic means of existence, which prevented many of them from making plans to emigrate. The third wave of emigration lasted from 1940 up to 1954, and during this period "around 34,000–37,000 people came to the UK, some of whom later emigrated to other countries" (Krawec "Ukrainians in the United Kingdom"). Agnieszka Kubal, Oliver Bakewell, and Hein de Haas state that "[a]fter the Second World War the Ukrainian diaspora in the UK was significantly enlarged by refugees from the displaced persons camps in continental Europe, who were recruited to

come to work under the European Volunteer Worker scheme between 1946 and 1951" (28). Strong push factors during this period of emigration can be observed: people fled from the Soviet regime, having only two choices – exile or emigration. Marina Lewycka's family belongs to the latter group: she was born in a British-run refugee camp in Kiel, Germany, in 1946 and, a year later, the family was allowed to emigrate to the UK, the permission being granted on account of Marina Lewycka's maternal birthplace: a western part of Ukraine, which then belonged to Poland.

After the Second World War, the number of Ukrainian immigrants into the UK increased considerably. This enhanced mobility was largely due to economic reasons. It began at the end of the 1980s and continued until 24 February 2022, when Russia declared war against Ukraine, the latter date signalling a distinct change in the push factors of Ukrainian emigration with millions of people becoming war refugees. This landmark date has frequently been referred to as the beginning of yet another stage in the process of migration: "the Russian invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, marks the start of a new displacement crisis" (Sandvik and Garnier). However, this recent and on-going process of Ukrainian emigration is obviously posterior to the publication of Marina Lewycka's novel *A Short History of Tractors in Ukrainian* (2005), which problematizes Ukrainian emigration into the UK during the second half of the twentieth century by attempting to juxtapose contrastively post-war refugees and late twentieth-century economic migrants.

A more detailed account of the wider context of this comparative study can be found in the fourth edition (2009) of Orest Subtelny's book *Ukraine: A History*, where he states that since the collapse of the Soviet Union, "over 2.5 million Ukrainians [have been living] outside the border of the Soviet Union" (559). Naturally, the processes of emigration during the first two decades of the twenty-first century and the disastrous escalation of hostilities in 2022 must have considerably increased the number of Ukrainian immigrants in the UK. Since 1991, independent Ukraine has witnessed large-scale departures as it became easier to leave the country. As Kristin Sandvik and Adèle Garnier observe, "Ukraine experienced economic crisis from the late 1980s until the late 2000s, engendering high outward migration" (*Forced Displacement from Ukraine*). Roman Krawec likewise states that "between 1998 and 2007, a total of 6,350 Ukrainian citizens were granted indefinite leave to remain in the UK" ("Immigration from Ukraine Since 1991"). Until Russia's invasion of the Crimean Peninsula and its subsequent annexation in 2014, Ukrainians emigrated in search of better living conditions, employment opportunities, and family reunions. Many Ukrainians would also consider permanent settlement and apply for citizenship. In their study of Ukrainian migration, Martin Hofmann and David Reichel discuss the economic, demographic and general welfare effect of Ukrainian emigration (4–5). According to the *Migrants and Refugees* website, "the annexation of Crimea and military actions in Donbas caused huge waves of internal and external involuntary migration in 2014–2015. After an initial peak, the number of Ukrainian asylum seekers in EU countries gradually declined in 2018 ("Country Profiles: Ukraine"). In "Ukrainians in the United Kingdom," Krawec distinguishes three groups of Ukrainian immigrants of the second half of the twentieth century, classifying them according to "significant differences with respect to their socio-economic and demographic characteristics, and their involvement in organized Ukrainian community life": "post-World War II immigrants, descendants of post-World War II immigrants, and migrants from independent Ukraine." Every single migrant group came to the United Kingdom for their own reasons and goals. The group of post-Second World War immigrants consisted mostly of soldiers and people from refugee camps. At the end of the 1940s, most Ukrainian immigrants lived in agricultural areas, though later almost all of them migrated to industrial areas: a process which resulted in the largest Ukrainian communities appearing in Manchester, Bradford, Nottingham, and London. Krawec states that most of these post-Second World War immigrants were from twenty to thirty years old ("Ukrainians in the United Kingdom"). Few of them held certificates of secondary education because war had disrupted the process of their education, or they had been deprived of education due to deteriorated living conditions. During the same period, the intelligentsia, former officers and graduates of British universities, who had fled from the Soviet regime, formed another distinctive migrant group. The latter possessed their own homes, which was an important breakthrough for Ukrainian immigrants and was symptomatic of a tangible improvement in their standard of living.

The Second World War caused a significant disproportion in the ratio of Ukrainian men and women, as soldiers, politicians, and other persecuted people were mostly men. The post-Second World War period brought about further complications in migrant life: immigrants had to adapt to new traditions, laws, rules, and language, all of which caused misunderstandings and stress. Although a law was issued that allowed immigrants to apply for British citizenship "after residing in the UK for 5 years," only some of the post-Second World War immigrants were willing to apply: the majority were convinced that since they were native Ukrainians, it was their duty to return to their homeland (Krawec, "Ukrainians in the United Kingdom"). In the course of time, it became obvious that independence would never take firm roots in Ukraine, so "the post-war Ukrainian immigrants created a diverse network of community organizations" (Krawec, "Ukrainians in the United Kingdom"). The preservation of the Ukrainian national identity bound families together as an utmost necessity: family members spoke Ukrainian, the communities organized various activities and meetings. Ukrainians cherished their homeland and wanted to protect their national heritage and pass it on to their children. But as the descendants of post-Second World War immigrants had to further relocate throughout the country because of their studies, employment, or marriages, the role of the Ukrainian communities was significantly weakened as the numbers of active members went down. Many descendants obtained higher education as their parents eagerly encouraged them to study at universities and colleges. This was a significant step forward in the process of acculturation which aided their better and faster integration into British society. Most of the newcomers to the United Kingdom during the 1980–2000 period and in later times were young people with a strong motivation to succeed. The diaspora was thus more elastically connected to the source culture and less likely to adopt national identification as a prerequisite of effective self-location. Multilingualism was a significant asset that enabled the new generation of migrants to integrate more successfully into the host culture.

Krawec observes that "recent migrants tend to rely on their own informal social networks, with a minority becoming members of newly established organizations" (Krawec, *Ukrainians in the United Kingdom*). The first Association of Ukrainians in Great Britain (AUGB) was established in 1946; now it has an official website and encompasses 28 branches all over the country, with the mission "to develop, promote and support the interests of the Ukrainian community in the UK" (AUGB 1). The community team provides services for new immigrants, organizes camps and meetings, celebrates important events, broadcasts radio and television programmes, etc. The AUGB is a member of the Ukrainian World Congress (UWC) and the European Congress of Ukrainians (EKY). Many other associations are active in the UK, such as the Association of Ukrainian Women, the Association of Ukrainian Teachers and Educators, and the Ukrainian Youth Association.

Against this background, Marina Lewycka's novel *A Short History of Tractors in Ukrainian* (2005) follows the life of a Ukrainian immigrant family through the lens of many historical events of the twentieth century while some definite biographical facts transpire in the plot: for instance, the fictional family has the same structure as Lewycka's own family, and they arrive in the UK under similar circumstances (Moss). In one of her interviews, Lewycka states that "many of the events started in autobiography, but as the characters took on a life of their own, and became distinct from the people in my life, so they created their own stories" (Lawless 1). Another coincidence is that the novel's narrator is the Mayevskyjs' younger daughter: Marina Lewycka is the younger of two daughters in her own family. In addition, Lewycka admits that she is very different from her elder sister and that she thought "it would be fun to use those differences as a basis for the terrible arguments between the characters Vera and Nadezhda" (Lawless 1). In this way, the author creates easily recognizable characters, who are second-generation immigrants. The sister characters in Lewycka's novel possess certain typical second-generation traits that may be observed in "real-life" immigrant families with eastern European antecedents. The author of this article can easily recognize the features of both the parents (first-generation immigrants) and the daughters (second-generation immigrants) in her own family members residing in the United States of America. In addition, the communication between the sisters, as described in Lewycka's novel, can be considered typical of second- and third-generation eastern European migrants in different countries. This pattern of representation is further clarified by Ludmilla A'Beckett (see her "The Theme of Migration").

In many interviews, Lewycka confesses that she feels Ukrainian in the United Kingdom and British in Ukraine, and there is "the rhetorical question of whether she is British or Ukrainian" (Moss). These factors may have inspired her to write this particular novel and describe different types of Ukrainian migrants: post-Second World War immigrants in the UK, their children, and immigrants from independent Ukraine. In addition, through the portraits of immigrants and the heart-breaking processes of their adaptation to the lifestyle and social norms of the host country, Lewycka represents the traumatic experiences of earlier migrants, discusses historical and political processes in Ukraine and other countries over different time periods, and brings to her readers' attention key cross-cultural aspects of migrants' lives.

The focus of the novel is the life of the Mayevskyjs: Ludmilla, Nikolai, and their elder daughter Vera, who came to the United Kingdom in 1946. The family is representative of the post-Second World War migration wave in the 1940–1954 slot. Before coming to the UK, they spend some time in a refugee camp in Germany, which is an unusual destination for Ukrainians since after the war, unlike the Poles, who were allowed to stay and settle down in western Europe, the Ukrainians had to return to the USSR, where most of them were persecuted and exiled to Siberia. In the novel, Ludmilla possesses a birth certificate which indicates that her birthplace is Novaya Aleksandria, formerly a part of Poland, and Nikolai has some German work papers that allow him to enter the United Kingdom. The newcomers "were model citizens. They never broke the law—not even once" (Lewycka, *A Short History* 228). They try to do their best and not even apply to the local government for help because they fear deportation:

> They agonized over filling in forms that were ambiguously worded: what if they gave the wrong answer? They feared to claim benefits: what if there was an inspection? They were too frightened to apply for passports: what if they weren't allowed back in? Those who got up the nose of the authorities might be sent off on the long train journey from which there was no return. (Lewycka, *A Short History* 228)

Moreover, Nikolai is frightened every time he hears police sirens or if somebody mentions any government official: "He catches his breath. He is scared of the police, the local council, even the uniformed postman" (Lewycka, *A Short History* 35).

The novel's narrator provides details about the past of the Ukrainian characters which shed light on the causes for their fears. Ludmilla and Nikolai were born in 1912 and lived through a highly critical historical period comprising the First World War, the Civil War, the Great Famine of 1932–1933, the Second World War, and the ensuing tribulations of migration. The two world wars caused mass deaths and destruction around the world, but things were made even more difficult for Ukrainians insofar as their country was almost destroyed by the Soviet genocide and the *Holodomor*. According to Andrew Gregorovich, "estimates of the total deaths vary from 5 to 10 million, but 7 million is the accepted figure. This was almost one-quarter of the population of Ukraine" (3). Ludmilla tells her daughter how they managed to survive: her grandmother "made watery soup from grass and wild sorrel that they gathered from the fields. They were saved by the remoteness of their *khutor* (settlement): "if anyone thought about them at all, they probably thought they were dead" (Lewycka, *A Short History* 66). The novel offers a historical and political explanation of the period: "Stalin had discovered he could use famine as a political weapon against the Ukrainian kulaks" (Lewycka, *A Short History* 19). The narrator speaks about the *Holodomor* as the darkest period in Ukrainian history when some of the starving people resorted to cannibalism: "In the next village, there was a woman who had eaten her baby" (Lewycka, *A Short History* 66). Such representations make the novel a significant contribution to the understanding of European history, while the portrayal of Ukrainian resilience can be best understood in the light of what is happening nowadays.

Like all novels, *A Short History* is a work of fiction. Critics have repeatedly drawn attention to the element of social satire in it (see Lechner 437–449). It is also a fiction of memory, or rather *postmemory,*[1] since the novel's narrator Nadezhda is the Ukrainian family's "peacetime baby" (52) and can only re-live the traumatic events of Ukraine's history vicariously, through her parents' stories about them and the study of historical texts. The novel also provides valuable insights into migrant life insofar as it

[1] For a commentary on postmemory, see Rosanne Kennedy, "Trauma and Cultural Memory Studies," especially pp. 57 – 58.

dwells (albeit with some irony) on family relationships, links within the Ukrainian community, regained happiness and self-confidence, newly acquired self-esteem, and respect for ethnic traditions and values. It is possible to state that the sisters, Vera and Nadezhda, have been successfully integrated into British culture but have never lost their distinctive Ukrainianness.

Ludmilla, their mother who dies in 1994, is the most significant figure in the immigrant family's life as she mediates between her husband Nikolai and her daughters. Ludmilla's role is, indeed, important as there is always some tension between Nikolai and his daughters, as well as between the daughters themselves. Although she seems to be the only person in the family who is able to solve their problems, she never imposes her opinion on the others. Typically, she does not make an effort to adjust to life in the United Kingdom; instead, she creates her own "little Ukraine" in the United Kingdom and inhabits it for the rest of her life. Ludmilla's reaction to migrant life, which she tends to view as life *in exile*, is a typical reaction among many first-generation immigrants, who settled in the UK after the Second World War. In his analysis of the novel, Dmytro Drozdovskyi states that

> The immigrants did not become the members of the new society in European countries, and they live with a traumatic desire to be with Ukraine and the fear that makes this desire impossible in real life. The immigrants are ready to help those who live in Ukraine now, but they do not know how to rebuild the economy of the country and they have the inner fear of any close contacts with Ukrainians. (300)

This statement points to an ever-existing mental bond with the lost homeland, but Drozdovskyi also notes the disorientation caused by the growing challenges of newly independent Ukraine. In addition, many immigrants may encounter problems with understanding and accepting their identity. As Lewycka has often admitted, on her visits to Ukraine she was torn between her two identities, British and Ukrainian. This split identity must have been one of the reasons for her rather controversial discussion of the contemporary situation in Ukraine (Lewycka, "What Does It Mean to Say You Are Ukrainian?").

After Ludmilla's death, Nadezhda acknowledges that their "little exile family, long held by [their] mother's love and beetroot soup, has started to fall apart" (*A Short History* 11). Ludmilla is the "guardian" of Ukrainian identity in their family who attempts to implant these values in her daughters. She tells them stories that portray Ukraine as an idyllic place: "the sky blue-blue, and cornfields like a sheet of gold stretching as far as eye could see" (Lewycka, *A Short History* 52). Thus, as the tradition goes in many immigrant families, until her death, Ludmilla sees her role in the family as the keeper of the domestic world bound by the spirit of national identity, while, at the same time, she represents the type of immigrant who is unable to immerse completely in the host culture. Her harsh wartime experiences and memories of the Great Famine, her unwillingness to step beyond family boundaries, and the language barrier of her linguistic self-location prevent her from integrating completely into the host culture.

Nikolai, Ludmilla's husband, was born into a family of *intelligentsia* (his grandfather was Minister of Education in Ukraine). This may explain his obsession with writing a history of tractors, which he ardently takes up at the age of eighty-four. Nikolai is a sensitive person; he writes poems and speaks with nostalgia about Ukraine. However, he undergoes acculturation more easily than his wife does: having a permanent job, he enjoys many opportunities offered by the host country. And yet, he is haunted by nostalgia for his homeland which is expressed in his idealistic reminiscences and desire to help everybody from Ukraine. Thus, he thinks that it is his obligation to take care of all his relatives: "there was once a plan to track down members of the family whom he had not seen for half a century and bring them all over to Peterborough" (Lewycka, *A Short History* 26)). This attitude explains his interest in helping Valentina, a young new-type immigrant from Ukraine, and her son — because they remind him of the lost homeland: "he sighs, breathing in the remembered scent of mown hay and cherry blossom" (Lewycka, *A Short History* 1). However, he remains an idealist who does not realize that his homeland and its people may have changed. Nostalgia, so frequently manifested in the lives of many immigrants, also explains the strenuous work that he takes up—to write a history of tractors or, rather, his own version of Ukraine's history.

The daughters, Vera and Nadezhda, represent the descendants of post-Second World War immigrants. Vera was born on the eve of the Second World War, and Nadezhda is a second-generation child born in the UK. The novel's narrator describes them as "War Baby" and "Peacetime Baby" (Lewycka, *A Short History* 313). Thus, they represent two different types of descendants: one is self-confident and enjoys the benefits of the western lifestyle; the other rebels against the norms of the consumer society, but is sensitive to the feelings and opinions of other people. Both sisters are stubborn in proving their own truths, which is often the reason for their arguments. Nadezhda is the one who is keen on finding out about the family history, but she has to re-arrange the pieces of the stories told by her family members to reconstruct it.

The differences between the sisters and the arguments they frequently have reveal many of the problems immigrants have to face. Nadezhda, for instance, stands for the generation of new social movements of the 1960s and the 1970s: "the Beatles, the demonstrations against Vietnam, the student uprising of 1968, and the birth of feminism, which taught me to see all women as sisters" (Lewycka, *A Short History* 239). Vera is more conservative and appreciates order and justice in the United Kingdom: "They [the British] have a natural sense of discipline and order. They have a perfectly preserved class system, in which everyone knows where they belong" (Lewycka, *A Short History* 241). However, at the end of the novel, after the sisters learn to accept the past and put up with each other's personalities, they finally make peace. Thus, Nadezhda's reassessment of the family's past history echoes processes in the lives of many post-Second World War immigrants: some memories must be blocked so that they can adapt to life in a different country and its culture. The conflicts between the sisters point to the clash between different cultures and identities; the discussion of these arguments may aid in the interpretation of tensions that many immigrants face, while paving the way for conflict resolution.

In many interviews, Lewycka has expressed her opinion about new immigrants: those who arrived in the UK between the late 1980s and the 2000s. The writer has confessed that at first it seemed amusing to describe Valentina, a new type of immigrant, but later she found it even tragic that a woman had to make the desperate choice of marrying an elderly widower to legitimize her status in the UK. The novel's narrator does not approve of Valentina and repeatedly draws attention to small but nevertheless telling details as she paints an ironic portrait of the newcomer. Thirty-six-year-old Valentina has divorced her Ukrainian husband in an attempt to build a new and better life for herself and her son: "with good job, good money, nice car ..., good education for son" (Lewycka, *A Short History* 2). The exaggerated portrait matches the stereotypical images of new-type immigrants from eastern Europe and emphasizes Valentina's difference from other characters in the novel. Heather Fielding notices both the controversial and stereotypical aspects of Valentina's character: on the one hand, the author creates this character to represent a new Ukraine where people have no "backstory," but, on the other, she contrasts representatives of different waves of immigration (19). Valentina's plan is to marry the eighty-four-year-old Nikolai in order to get a passport and work permit, and to remain in the United Kingdom. Valentina, an intruder into Nikolai's family, is not accepted by the daughters and other members of the Ukrainian community; thus, at the end, she is rejected by both British society and the Ukrainian community: her disregard of social norms and traditions and her shockingly egoistic behaviour make it impossible for her to integrate into either of these entities, and at the end of the novel she is expelled from the country. The ironic description emphasizes her inability to function in British society and shows her as a person who belongs to a different culture. Some of the novel's readers might expect a more elaborate portrait of Valentina and her problems and might be disappointed by her humorous portrayal in the text.

To conclude, three major types of twentieth-century migrants are represented in Lewycka's best-known novel: post-Second World War immigrants, the descendants of post-Second World War immigrants, and new-type, post-Independence immigrants. The novel sheds light on different aspects of immigrants' lives and discusses many facts of European history. It dwells on problems connected with immigrants' integration into British society, describes the difficulties of cross-cultural communication, examines significant aspects of ageing, discusses relationships between immigrants, and explores immigrants' social statuses in different historical periods. Many themes related to migrant life are discussed in the novel, such as the fear of being deported, the inability to communicate, lack of cultural knowledge,

past experiences and memories, adjustment to different social norms, lifestyles, and cultural characteristics, and the preservation/modification of national identity. *A Short History of Tractors in Ukrainian* demonstrates how a literary text can provide valuable insights into the European past and thus help readers make sense of it.

The last decades have witnessed a renewed interest in the history of eastern European countries. In the case of Ukraine attention has repeatedly focused on the *Holodomor*, opposition to the Soviet regime, and the period of regained independence. In addition, there has been an intensive discussion of different forms of Soviet genocide, in the period of 1932–1933, the 1940s–1950s, and in later times, in Ukraine, the Baltic countries, Belarus, Poland, and elsewhere in eastern Europe. Although much evidence (documents, statistics, and recorded reminiscences of survivors) has been collected and various representations, such as documentaries, feature films, and works of literature, have been produced, still the genocidal acts of the Soviet past have not received adequate political and judicial evaluation worldwide. That this should be done is imperative at present in view of the Russian Federation's war against Ukraine which is building up tension and is undermining the stability of the world. The inability of western countries to acknowledge the traumatic experiences of eastern European countries may have been among the factors that led to the present situation. The renewed interest in Marina Lewycka's novel *A Short History of Tractors in Ukrainian* suggests the necessity of urgent re-consideration of the plight of migrants throughout the world and a sober re-assessment of the reasons for their migration.

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