



# A Short History of Tractors in Ukrainian

By *Marina Lewycka*

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## **A Short History of Tractors in Ukrainian** By *Marina Lewycka*

With this wise, tender, and deeply funny novel, *Marina Lewycka* takes her place alongside *Zadie Smith* and *Monica Ali* as a writer who can capture the unchanging verities of family. When an elderly and newly widowed Ukrainian immigrant announces his intention to remarry, his daughters must set aside their longtime feud to thwart him. For their father's intended is a voluptuous old-country gold digger with a proclivity for green satin underwear and an appetite for the good life of the West. As the hostilities mount and family secrets spill out, **A Short History of Tractors in Ukrainian** combines sex, bitchiness, wit, and genuine warmth in its celebration of the pleasure of growing old disgracefully.

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## **A Short History of Tractors in Ukrainian** By *Marina Lewycka* Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #306833 in Books
- Brand: *Lewycka, Marina*
- Published on: 2006-03-28
- Released on: 2006-03-28
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 7.73" h x .55" w x 5.08" l, .45 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 304 pages

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### Editorial Review

#### From Publishers Weekly

The premise of Lewycka's debut novel is classic Viagra comedy: a middle-aged professor's aging and widowed father announces he intends to marry a blonde, big-breasted 30-something woman he has met at the local Ukrainian Social Club in the English town where he lives, north of London. It is clear to Nadezhda and her sister, Vera, that the femme fatale Valentina is only after Western luxuries—certainly not genuine love of any kind. Smitten with the ambitious hussy, their father forges ahead to help Valentina settle in England, spending what little pension he has buying her cars and household appliances and even financing her cosmetic surgery. In the meantime, Nadezhda, a socialist, and Vera, a proud capitalist, confront the longstanding ill will between them as they try to save their father from his folly. Predictable and sometimes repetitive hilarity ensues. But then Lewycka's comic narrative changes tone. Nadezhda, who has never known much about her parents' history, pieces it together with her sister and learns that there is more to her cartoonish father than she once believed. "I had thought this story was going to be a knockabout farce, but now I see it is developing into a knockabout tragedy," Nadezhda says at one point, and though she is referring to Valentina, she might also be describing this unusual and poignant novel.

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#### From *The New Yorker*

In this comic first novel, two estranged sisters living in England discover that their addled elderly father, a Ukrainian war refugee and expert on tractors, is planning to marry a young, enormous-breasted woman who sees his modest pension as her ticket to capitalist comfort. The sisters put aside their differences, and embark on a spirited campaign to save him from boil-in-the-bag dinners, slovenly housekeeping, and such extravagant purchases as a broken-down Rolls-Royce. In the midst of these machinations—which include long-winded letters to solicitors, venomous gossip, and all-out spying—Lewycka stealthily reveals how the depredations of the past century dictate what a family can bear.

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#### From *Bookmarks Magazine*

Much of the comedy in this first novel comes in the form of Viagra jokes. But add in a mix of Ukrainian history, World War II drama, and the classic strife between the Old and the New, and overall it succeeds. Lewycka draws on her Eastern European roots in order to incorporate a believable social history into this typical sitcom formula. A few critics found the novel too corny, too weak, and too predictable to recommend, but most were won over. A good Viagra joke will do it every time.

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##### **Jamey Ainsworth:**

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**Maria Forshee:**

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