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MIGRATION TO A CONSUMER SOCIETY: A SHORT HISTORY OF TRACTORS IN UKRAINIAN BY MARINA LEWYCKA

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Yıldıray ÇEVİK**

Abstract

In *A Short Story of Tractors in Ukrainian* (2005), Marina Lewycka analyzes the post-war and post-communism Ukrainian immigrant experiences in Britain drawing Ludmilla and Valentina as representatives of two entirely different generations. Lewycka explores the life of a Ukrainian family of an 84-year-old father, his middle-aged daughters and their families, and the memories of a dead mother who migrated to Britain after the World War II. Their lives are complicated by Valentina's arrival from Ukraine to marry their father in the late 1990s. For Ludmilla and her generation, the primary aim was to survive, and to 'make-do and mend' after years of persecution, deprivation, oppression, fear, and anxiety; however, globalism and growing consumerism have profoundly affected expectations and aspirations of the new generation Ukrainian emigrants like Valentina who fails to survive in Britain despite her painstaking efforts.

Keywords: Multi-cultural, Immigration, Ukrainian-British, Post-war, Post-communism.

In *A Short History of Tractors in Ukrainian* (2005), Marina Lewycka analyzes the experiences of two groups of first generation Ukrainian emigrants in Britain in the post-war and post-communism/post-independence periods, which is rarely featured in literature in English. In her novel, Lewycka explores the life of a Ukrainian family of an 84-year-old father, Nikolai, and his middle-aged daughters, Vera and Nadia, the narrator, who came to Britain in the late 1940s. Their lives are complicated with the arrival of Valentina and his son, Stanislav, from the post-communism Ukraine in 1998. Through a history of tractors that Nikolai is writing, and through his daughters' recollections about their country's history, their family history, and their dead mother, Ludmilla, Lewycka enables readers to compare and contrast the post-war Ukrainian emigrants to the post-communism Ukrainian emigrants whose aims, expectations, aspirations, life styles utterly differ from the formers'. In contrast to Ludmilla and Nikolai who immigrated to Britain after the second-war world to escape from the repressive regime in the Soviet Union, the main motive behind the immigration of the post-communism Ukrainians is the lure of the opportunities offered by capitalism and consumerism in Britain. Therefore, an analysis of the political, social and economic condition of Ukraine in the first and the second halves of the 20th Century is very important to truly understand the reasons and impetus behind Ludmilla's and Valentina's migration to Britain. It is also essential to probe into how the post-war period, which is distinct with 'make-do-and-mend' philosophy, and post-

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independence periods, when consumerism is prevalent, reflect on their expectations, aspirations, life styles, attitudes and behavior in Britain.

Historically, the first half of the 20th Century brought bloodshed, turmoil, civil war, occupation, famine, violence, destitution and pain into Ukraine as it did to most countries in Europe. In the novel, Lewckyia sheds light on the Civil War between the Russian White Army and the Soviet Red Army, the occupation of the country by the Red Army of Soviets, the White Russian Imperial Army, the Polish Army and the German Army consecutively in the 1910s and 1920s; the purges, the Soviet invasion, their seizing of the entire harvest in Ukraine, the subsequent famine and the death of 7-10 million Ukrainians, the Soviet Labour Camps in the 1930s; the World War II, the Nazi occupation, German Labour Camps in the 1940s (Lewckyia, 2005: 45-46, 58-60, 181, 216-217, 245-249). The terror, pain and anguish which came with the occupations and the wars, and the repressive measures of the totalitarian regimes left psychological scars on the Ukrainian emigrants. Ludmilla, Nikolai's late wife in Lewckyia's novel, is drawn as a woman who had to endure and survive all these miseries, and therefore, her lifestyle in Britain was shadowed by unpleasant memories and experiences.

Ludmilla's bitter experiences during the Second World War, Nazi occupation, Stalin's purges, the labor camps, depravation, collective husbandry-kolkhoz, the famine, persecution, terror and destitution led her to life-long providence, frugality and tightfistedness. Especially, Stalin Era had long-lasting pejorative effects on her:

[She] had known ideology, and she had known hunger. When she 21, Stalin had discovered he could use famine as a political weapon against the Ukrainian kulaks. She knew – and this knowledge never left her throughout her fifty years of life in England, and then seeped from her into the hearts of her children – she knew for certain that behind the piled-high shelves and abundantly stocked counters of Tesco and the Co-op, hunger still prowls with his skeletal frame and gaping eyes, waiting to grab you and shove on a train, or onto a cart, or into that crowd of running fleeing people, and send you off on another journey where the destination is always death. (Lewckyia, 2005: 17)

She improved a simple formula of saving and accumulating in order not to face the same troubles in Britain. Her parsimony was so extreme that

She would walk half a mile down the High Street to save a penny off a bag of sugar. She never bought what she could make herself. My sister and I suffered humiliation in homemade dresses stitched up from market remnants. We were forced to endure traditional recipes and home baking when we craved junk food and white sliced bread. What she couldn't make had to be bought secondhand. Shoes, coats, household things – someone else had always had them first, had chosen them, used them, then discarded them. If you had to get it new, it had to be the cheapest money could buy, preferably reduced or a bargain. Fruit that was on the turn, tins that were dented, patterns that were out of date, last year's style. It didn't matter – we weren't proud, we weren't some foolish types who waste money for the sake of appearances, Mother said, when every cultured person knows that what really matters is what's inside". (Lewckyia, 2005: 18)

Ludmilla performed almost miracles at home as a thrifty and industrious woman to make their ends meet after their emigration with her great skills of house-keeping, cooking, gardening, sewing and saving. After years of depravation and hunger, she was extremely careful to save, conserve, and economize:

[She] had a pantry under the stairs stocked from floor to ceiling with tins of fish, meat, tomatoes, fruit, vegetables and puddings, packets of sugar (granulated, caster, icing, and Demerara), flour (plain, self-raising, and wholemeal), rice (pudding and long grain), pasta (macaroni, twirls, and vermicelli), lentils, buck wheat, split peas, oatmeal, bottles of oil (vegetable, sunflower, and olive), pickles (tomato, cucumber, beetroot), boxes of cereals (mainly Shredded Wheat), packets of biscuits (mainly chocolate digestives), and slabs of chocolate. On the floor, in bottles and demijohns, were gallons of a thick mauve liquor made from plums, brown sugar, and cloves ... (Lewckyia, 2005: 16)

Like most people who suffered from the social and political miseries of the 20th century, Ludmilla enjoyed peace, stability, technological developments, innovations, social reforms and economic boom in the years after the war, which materialized in “television sets, refrigerators, washing machines, holiday abroad and other hints of the affluent society [which] were within the reach of many workers in Britain’s booming industries” in the 1950s (Browne, 2000: 140). However, prosperity, comfort and abundance did not come immediately after the war. The ‘do-it-yourself’ was the motto and life style for most people “as part of the culture of post-war construction, domesticity and then late 1950s consumerism; of people building a better world” (Browne, 2000: 131). According to Koning (2005: 1), dozens of tins, cups and boxes of manually prepared food in Ludmilla’s kitchen “conjure an era of make-do-and-mend” before the emergence of consumerism. Browne (2000: 132) agrees with the idea and relates the ‘make-do-and-mend’ motto to the economic crisis during the war:

There were shortages of materials that made home improvers into creative make-do-and-menders. ‘Make-do-and-Mend’ was a slogan for the government’s campaign to salvage all possible materials for the war effort. Launched by the Board of Trade, this initiative remained in effect both during and after the war, increasing domestic morale as well as encouraging practical recycling by getting people to save and to salvage materials, to literally make-do-and-mend”.

In stark contrast to the post-war circumstances, the 1990s were distinct with the transformation of Ukraine from a communist economy to a liberal system as an independent country. Although Ukraine had withdrawn behind an iron curtain in the 1940s, the country began to strive for adapting its monetary and economic systems to those of the Western European countries in the 1990s. Between the reconstitution of Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic in 1945 and Ukraine’s declaration of independence in 1991, emigration from Ukraine to the Western European countries was minimal. The Ukrainian Diasporas mainly consisted of migrants and their descendants who had left the country in the interwar years and after the Second World War as refugees. Emigration gained pace in the 1990s, after Ukraine lifted restrictions on migration and eased the visa regime as a result of the termination of the Cold War, the disintegration of the Warsaw Pact, the Glasnost period, and the subsequent independence. The economic crisis in the country, which culminated in unemployment, underemployment, low wages, and weak currency, was the second reason which pushed economic migrants to other countries. However, the most popular destinations for Ukrainian emigrants were Russia, Poland, Italy, Czech Republic and Portugal, and Britain has never been one of the most favorable countries for Ukrainian emigrants (Cipko, 2006: 117-124). According to Cohen (2006: 185), the increase in the number of migrants has been a global trend because “with the collapse of communism in the Soviet Union and the other countries of the Warsaw Pact, emigration control effectively ended in all but one or two of the world’s 191 UN recognized states”, and the increase in the number of Ukrainian emigrants in the 1990s follows this pattern.

The rise of outward mobility of Ukrainians is in tandem with the globalization and the growing consumer culture which “seems to spread, albeit in new forms, from North America and Europe to other parts of the world” (Solomos, Bamossy, Askegaard, Hogg, 2006: 6), and which easily and quickly trespasses the borders and makes the world a much smaller place. Moreover, “conventional bilateral exchanges between bounded nation-states are being displaced by flows (of finance, trade, emigrants, tourists, media images and information) making certain national and regional boundaries more fluid and open to redefinition” (Cronin, 2000: 164). Cronin (2000: 164) attributes this change to the political and economic developments in the last quarter of the 20th Century such as “the end of the Cold War, the dissolution of the USSR, the war in the former Yugoslavia, and the development of economic networks such as the World Bank, and forms of union like the EU”. Cohen (2006: 181) states that these exchanges lead to interconnections and interdependencies which mean “societies, and their cities and regions, have tended to spread outwards so as to merge and become coextensive with other societies. At the same time, the once clear-cut separation between the sphere of national life and

the international sphere has largely broken down". Commercial, economic, migrant, tourist, data and technology exchanges and imports/exports have

generated the basis for the enormous expansion of cultural flows across the world. Culture in all its forms – as consumer aspirations, pop or rock music, religious, moral and ethnic values or the political ideologies of democracy and socialism – has become the most recent and perhaps most potent addition to globalization. Transmission takes place through different means – through visual images in the mass media, abstract knowledge, or the social milieux created by more varied interpersonal relationships. (Cohen, 2006: p.183)

Consequently, globalization and growing consumerism have come to threaten the idea of citizenship and challenge the concepts of nation and belonging all over the world. Evidently, the flow and exchange of data, goods, ideas, trends, fashion, likes, dislikes and tastes are detrimental to the underdeveloped and developing countries because developing and underdeveloped countries are potentially more vulnerable to the export of the cultural, financial, and social dynamics and values by the economically strong countries. In like manner, after the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the termination of the Cold War, the communist and centrally command economies had to change their ailing and fragile economic systems in order to cope with the liberal economies dominating the markets. However, the transition of economies of the former states of the centralized command and/or communist economies to liberal economies has been an agonizing process because in these "protected and subsidized" economies, "there was a dramatic influx of foreign goods and foreign investment, and national economies experienced a long period of inflation ... [and] consumers' standards of living eroded under the impact of price inflation and the loss of guaranteed employment" (Arnould, Price, Zinkhan, 2004: 52-53). Paradoxically, "the demand for perceived luxury products increased" in these countries due to "by the nonavailability of luxury goods in the past or by the luxury boom gripping the United States, Japan, and other countries" (Arnould et al., 2004: 53). The result was bleak despair, widespread frustration and growing anger on the part of the Ukrainians who were unable to have an access to, possess or enjoy these products of consumer societies in Ukraine. The only possible way seemed to be the Western European countries where ordinary people could find, afford and enjoy these products.

In *A Short History of Tractors in Ukrainian*, Valentina is "a recent economic migrant stereotypically portrayed as a work-permit hunting therefore husband-seeking gold digger" (Lechner, 2010a: 439). Fielding (2011: 211) argues that Valentina, unlike Ludmilla and Nikolai, is "not part of a nostalgic, purified, pre-war Britain" because she "becomes entirely new and threatening; the new immigrant, the representation of the new post-Soviet Eastern Europe and new modes of immigration to the UK". From the very beginning, Valentina is drawn to be representing an absolutely different generation of Ukrainian emigrants of "the Brezhnev era" (1964-1982) who is "prepared to go to any lengths to remain in [Britain]" (Kurkov, 2005: 1). The Brezhnev era was the beginning of the impact of Western-style consumerism in the former Soviet Republics, when "everyone's idea was to bury all gone-by things and to become like in West. To build this economy, people must be buying something new all the time. New desires must be implanted as fast as old ideals must be buried" (Lewcyka, 2005: 155). In sharp contrast to Ludmilla who took refuge in Britain from war-torn and disease-stricken Ukraine, the 36-year-old beautiful Valentina bursts into their lives "like a fluffy pink grenade" (Lewcyka, 2005: 1) to marry their 84 year old father, and thus to acquire "Passport. Visa. Work Permit" (Lewcyka, 2005: 3). Valentina has already fallen prey to the attraction of consumerism and "that is why she is always wanting to buy something modern. It is not her fault; it is the postwar mentality" (Lewcyka, 2005: 155).

Although Valentina and her post-communism generation are immune to the grievances and sufferings Ludmilla and her generation had to undergo, Ukraine is not a heaven and the Ukrainians are still troubled by lack of resources, scarcity of food, fall of hryvnia, national currency of Ukraine, outbreak of cholera, diphtheria, robbery, radioactive disaster, uranium smuggling, and religious abuses (Lewcyka, 2005: 29). It is no surprise that soon after Valentina

moves into Nikolai's house, she starts spending, consuming and wasting as much as she can afford as a confirmation of Verdant's (1997) claim that "consumerism sets each person against him/her self in an endless quest for the attainment of material things" (quoted in McGregor, 2002: 12). Valentina feels the temptation to consume so much that her behavior fits Verdant's (1997) description of consumerism as "economically manifested in the chronic purchasing of goods and services, with little attention to their true need, durability, origin of the product or the environmental consequences of manufacture and disposal" (quoted in McGregor, 2002: 2). She easily succumbs to the charms consumer society offers as she accumulates a great mess in a short time: "There is a chaos of papers, clothes, shoes, dirty cups, nail varnish, pots of cosmetics, crusts of toast, hair brushes, beauty appliances, toothbrushes, stockings, packets of biscuits, jewellery, photographs, sweet wrappers, knickknacks, used plates, underwear, apple cores, sticking plasters, catalogues, wrappings, sticky sweets" (Lewcyka, 2005: 121). In Valentina's drawers, Nadia sees "the jumble of underwear, outerwear, sticky sweet wrappers, bottles of lotions, cheap perfume ... a pair of knickers, a half-eaten ham sandwich, its crusts grey and curled back, the pink dark-dry sliver of ham poking out obscenely (Lewcyka, 2005: 123). What prompts and lures Valentina "to generate so much mess" (Lewcyka, 2005: 198) is incidentally the availability of consumer products in Britain and the consumer society she finds herself in after years of depravation, shortage and scarcity in Ukraine. In her "single-minded pursuit of the luxurious Western lifestyle she dreams of" (Lechner, 2010a: 437), she sticks out with her "obsessive, stylish consumption" (Fielding, 2011: 212) in Britain where she is bombarded by "invitations to open credit card accounts, amazing offers on health and beauty products, and promises of fabulous prizes to be won and waiting to be claimed" (Lewcyka, 2005: 251). Otherwise, it would not be possible to explain 46 tins of tinned mackerel stashed from 'buy one get one free' sales (Lewcyka, 2005: 198).

Ludmilla and her life style symbolize "the peasant past" she rejects (Lewcyka, 2005: 74). Indeed, as Fielding (2011: 211) claims, "Nikolai and his wife identify strongly as peasants, as representatives of an agricultural, pre-modern Ukraine from before the forced collectivization and industrialization initiated by Stalin". Although she painstakingly endeavors to look "as modern, western, and anti-peasant ... insist[ing] on the most prestigious consumer goods ... Everything about her is fake and purchased: she dyes her hair blond, and even the 'superior Botticellian breasts ... [are] purchased" (Fielding, 2011: 212). In contrast to Ludmilla who prepared traditional, tasty, abundant and home-made food, Valentina can only prepare 'ready-cooked chilled meals' and 'boil-in-the-bag food' because of her desire to make "modern cooking, not peasant cooking" (Lewcyka, 2005: 71). Valentina is "too modern, too invested in shopping, too sexualized, too new" (Fielding, 2011: 202). Unlike Ludmilla, she is not a housewifely woman who shows "no interest in housekeeping, parades her lovers through Nikolai's house and taunts his impotence" (Brown, 2005: 1).

Once she is assured that she has a strong foothold in Britain, she sets off to materialize her ambitions and aspirations in Britain "with her deep 'New Russian' love of prestigious western consumer goods" (Fielding, 2011: 207). Her aim is "to make a new life for herself and her son in the West, a good life, with good job, good money, nice car – absolutely no Lada no Skoda – good education for son – must be OxfordCambridge, nothing less' (Lewcyka, 2005: 3). In other words, she is one of the typical consumers who are striving "to become a new person by purchasing those products which support their self-image of whom they are, want to be and where they want to go" (Wisalo, 1999, quoted in McGregor, 2002: 12). She demands a new car: "-not just any old car, either. Must be good car. Must be Mercedes or Jaguar at least. BMW is OK. No Ford please. The car will be used to drive Stanislav to his posh school, where other children are driven in Saabs and Range Rovers" (Lewcyka, 2005: 75). Obviously, she is tempted by the idea of possessing a foreign car which she has been associating with the Western European countries as a confirmation of the idea that

When consumers are making purchase decisions, they may take into consideration the countries of origin of their choices. Researches have shown that consumers use their

knowledge of where products are made in the evaluation of their purchase options. Such a country-of-origin effect seems to come about because consumers are often aware that a particular firm or brand name is associated with a particular country. It's hard to think of BMW or Mercedes except in the context of their being German; a Mini or a Jaguar is linked with Britishness (despite the fact that both brands are now under overseas ownership); and Ferrari is a brand that is Italian before it's anything else at all. (Schiffman, 2005: 437-438)

By redeeming Nikolai's Pensioner's Bond, "they settle on an old Rover, large enough to satisfy Valentina's aspirations, old enough for [their] father to afford" (Lewcyka, 2005: 75). She seems delighted with the Rover initially; however, she displays first hints of her insatiable yearning to possess more as she buys another car, a secondhand Lada. She still coerces Nikolai to buy a third car, a Rolls Royce, which is evidently "the apogee of her dreams of life in the West" so in a short period, Valentina owns "a Lada in the garage, a Rover on the drive, and a Roller on the lawn" (Lewcyka, 2005: 161). However, instead of complying with the legal procedures about the cars, she drives them without having a driver's license and none of their cars is licensed or insured.

Apart from her craving for cars, she also directs her attention on the durables at home. Particularly Valentina's sister's visit spurs new anxieties for her because "she is coming to see for herself the good life in the West that Valentina has described in her letters - the elegant modern house, the fabulous car, the wealthy widower husband" (Lewcyka, 2005: 77). Her first target is the electric cooker on the pretext that "this will not impress [her] sister ... everyone but a fool knows that electricity is not as prestigious as gas. Did not Lenin himself admit that communism was socialism plus electricity?" (Lewcyka, 2005: 78). McGregor (2002: 2) describes consumerism as "a social and economic creed that encourages people to aspire to consume more than their share of the world's resources, regardless of the consequences". Valentina seeks to consume as much as she can and she "demands all the luxuries life in Peterborough has to offer" (Watson, 2006: 238). Nikolai agrees to buy a new one on hire purchase at Co-op at a special offer, but she does not want to buy the specially-priced white cooker. Because "in former Soviet Union all cookers are white. Crap cookers" and she insists on buying the brown one which costs twice as much, saying "for civilized person, cooker must be gas, must be brown" (Lewcyka, 2005: 78). Schiffman (2005: 330) explains the reason why she is so insistent on the brown: "Consumers may purchase certain products because they are favoured by members of their own or a higher social class (e.g. fine French champagne), and they may avoid other products because they perceive them to be lower-class or down-market products (such as a digital wristwatch as a dress watch)". In addition to all these, Valentina does not like the old Hoover, so Nikolai signs another purchase agreement for a new one. Solomos et al. (2006: 15) relate her behavior to the image consumers associate the products with:

One of the fundamental premises of consumer behaviour is that people often buy products not for what they do, but for what they mean. This principle does not imply that a product's primary function is unimportant, but rather that the roles products play and the meaning that they have in our lives go beyond the tasks they perform. The deeper meanings of a product may help it stand out from other, similar goods and services - all things being equal, a person will choose the brand that has an image (or even a personality!) consistent with his or her underlying ideas.

Valentina's sister does not like her house and decides to stay somewhere else. Soon Valentina's sister begins enjoying an exuberant life after getting married with a doctor who has "a good house with good garden and double garage ... In double garage is Jaguar and second car Renault" (Lewcyka, 2005: 169). Her sister's marriage "has fired up in Valentina a new dissatisfaction with her plenty-money-meanie no-good husband and the second-rate lifestyle he has condemned her to" (Lewcyka, 2005: 169). Valentina assumes that she is "slaving at long low-wage shifts in the nursing home, behind the bar at the Imperial Hotel, toiling in [Nikolai's] bedroom" (Lewcyka, 2005: 257) so cars and durables can not quench her thirst to possess more and better. Obviously Valentina and her sister have fallen prey to "rapacious type of early American capitalism" (Lewcyka, 2005: 254) as they "accept unquestioningly everything from

the West" (Lewcyka, 2005: 255). Valentina "turns out to be in pursuit of nothing but a glamorous western lifestyle which the old man is unable to sustain" (Watson, 2006: 237). She is a typical consumer Arnould et al. (2004: 55) describe:

Consumers in many of these economies have described a negative evolution in their experience of Western consumerism. It starts with an immense greed, a kind of fever, a wish to buy everything. Then consumers discover powerlessness and relative poverty. Because of their poverty, many of these consumers view displays of Western consumer goods to be more like exhibits in a museum than the fruits of participation in a marketing economy.

It is no surprise that Valentina cannot be contended with the material possessions she and her husband can afford in Britain, and her frustration grows more. Because "people under the influence of consumerism never feel completely satisfied because owning something cannot help one meet the security of heart and mind, the deeper needs of humanity. Constantly spending and accumulating only gives short time fulfillment and relief from the need to have peace and security in life" (McGregor, 2002: 12). Arnould et al. (2004: 54) agree with McGregor as they claim: "Consumers in transitional economies have been denied things for such a long time that there is a large demand for consumer products".

Valentina does not possess any required skills to have an access to the mainstream of the British society or to survive in Britain other than "her tacky dress sense, her brash manner, her often outrageous language" (Tranter, 2008: 2). She is like "a wild, disorderly growth" (Lewcyka, 2005: 41) trying to grow in an alien soil. She turns out to be a grabby and conniving woman who does not have many moral, ethical, legal concerns about what is right, fair or proper. Therefore, she instinctively uses her "sexuality and ruthlessness" (Lewcyka, 2005: 169) to achieve her aims. At the very beginning, she does not hesitate a second to use her sexual attraction for an 84-year-old man, Nikolai, to marry him. Because marriage with Nikolai provides her with a stepping stone to enjoy the luxuries in Britain and to fulfill her aspirations. Nikolai is so infatuated with her attraction that he agrees to pay 1800 pounds for her breast enhancement operation. On the other hand, she abuses Nikolai's sense of pity as he comes to believe that he is protecting her from the horrors in Ukraine. This is the first time Nikolai has ever felt excited since Ludmilla died as he feels he is "rescuing destitute Ukrainians ... and his energy is all directed towards this woman and her son" (Lewcyka, 2005: 23) and he is assured "he is her last hope, her only chance to escape persecution, destitution, prostitution" (Lewcyka, 2005: 4).

Valentina's proclivities are not limited with abusing. Soon after she comes to Britain, she has affairs with three different men in quick succession while she remains wedded to her husband in Ukraine, or Nikolai in Britain. The result of her promiscuity is a baby, but she immediately tries to reverse the situation to her advantage as she engages herself in a legal process in which she tries to prove Nikolai is the father of the baby so that she can stay in Britain. Rather than conforming to values, norms and rules, she applies cajoling, flirting and exposing whenever she needs them. A police officer drops by to check on Nikolai, but obviously he gets so impressed by Valentina "wearing a Lycra denim mini-skirt and a fluffy baby-pink jumper with a white satin heart for the pocket, is perched on a high-stool, with her legs crossed and her peep-toe mules casually dangling on her bare toes" (Lewcyka, 2005: 135) that he forgets about Nikolai who has locked himself in with fear. A similar incident occurs after Valentina realizes that Nikolai's visit to the psychiatrist results in his favor. She is so enraged that she pushes him and he falls down banging his head (Lewcyka, 2005: 143). He is taken to emergency but the other day, Valentina meets him gaily "Come, holubchik, my little pigeon. My darling" (Lewcyka, 2005: 144). The policemen who escort Nikolai are charmed by her as "They accept her offer of tea and sit around in the kitchen far longer than is necessary, discussing the vulnerability and foolishness of old people and how important it is that they be properly looked after" (Lewcyka, 2005: 144).

Although she promises to look after Nikolai as her own father, Valentina frequently complains to Nadia that "You father buy me nothing! ... No car! No jewel! No clothes! No cosmetic! No undercloth-es ... I buy all! I work! I buy!" (Lewcyka, 2005: 89). She feels more and more frustrated after failing to satisfy her lust to possess the products she has been dreaming of. She also tells Mrs.Zadchuk that "I no time to baking. All day working for money. Buy cake. Buy clothes. Buy car. No-good meanie husband give no money" (Lewcyka, 2005: 91). She has concluded that "Pension no good. What can you buy with pension?" (Lewcyka, 2005: 140). It is not a coincidence that Nikolai and Valentina start rowing soon after her realization that Nikolai's pension will not vent her frustration. Her discontentment grows when her application for leave to stay in Britain is refused because of 'no evidence of a genuine marriage' by the Immigration Service. She takes it on Nikolai and bullies him "You foolish idiot man. You giving all wrong answer. Why you no show her you love letter poem? Why you no show her wedding picture?" (Lewcyka, 2005: 105). When Nikolai does not want to go with Valentina to appeal against the Immigration Service decision, Valentina forces him to come with her.

Unsurprisingly, Valentina enjoys and takes advantage of the British legal system which delays deportation and divorce for some time with several rights for appeal. Valentina starts playing unfairly again during the divorce process as she goes through his mail and so she learns about their annulment plan. She buys a small portable photocopier to copy every document she may need for her immigration appeal and to learn everything about them. Sensing that her "regime of little-pigeon cooing and bosom stroking" (Lewcyka, 2005: 149) will not be able to solve her problems, she places a dictaphone in his room and a baby alarm under his bed in order to listen to their phone talks (Lewcyka, 2005: 175). She strives for proving that Nikolai is ill "too ill to attend a tribunal. Or she may be getting evidence that he is of unsound mind - confused, doesn't know what he's doing" (Lewcyka, 2005: 177). She resorts to another plan at the first court hearing, declaring she can not speak English. Her plan works as the hearing is adjourned two weeks later until "Ukrainian-speaking interpreter can be found" (Lewcyka, 2005: 179). As a last remedy, Valentina sends her son Stanislav to speak on her behalf claiming that his mother is in hospital and Nikolai is the father. Stanislav sheds tears in the court saying that they need money and they have nowhere to live. At the end of the hearing, the judge grants a divorce to Nikolai without any payment. Ms.Carter, Nikolai's solicitor, explains that Valentina has been a nuisance for most solicitors in the city with her self-righteous and arrogant demands without taking their advice seriously as she is obsessed with the idea she is "entitled to half the house ... she should get legal aid to fight for it in court" (Lewcyka, 2005: 266).

Despite the profound differences in the patterns, dynamics and imperatives of their emigration from Ukraine, some parallels can be drawn between Ludmilla and Valentina as far as their emigrations are concerned. The foremost similarity stems from their female identity and their female bodies. Both Ludmilla and Valentina were regarded as dependents on the entry into Britain and their presence in Britain could only be possible by means of a matrimonial bond. Because in most countries, "... women are marginalized in terms of access to national citizenship ... In effect, women can only be addressed in legislation around citizenship and accorded (limited) access to rights through their relation to men and the (heterosexual, nuclear, Western) family, that is, in their roles as wives, daughters, mothers, widows and so on" (Cronin, 2000: 165). Women in most countries are considered as economically inactive and therefore given secondary status. Fraser (1989: 171) argues that

White men are represented as 'economically active' citizens through their engagement in paid work and the contribution of taxes, and therefore qualify as 'social citizens' and consumers. They are therefore positioned by welfare discourses as 'rights-bearers' who are 'entitled' as consumers to welfare should they become unemployed. Yet women are considered economically inactive in what is seen as a 'natural' relation to the household and unpaid work, such as childcare. They are not seen as contributing to the state, and are positioned as 'beneficiaries of government largesse' or 'clients of public charity' rather than rights-bearers. They are dependent recipients of welfare, rather than active consumers of service to which they have a right.

As a result of the sexist and discriminatory practices and legislation, Ludmilla's emigration to Britain was conditional upon her husband's emigration and acceptance in Britain. In like manner, Valentina is desperately seeking an appropriate husband which will give her a right to reside in Britain, which would not be possible otherwise.

Another similarity between Ludmilla and Valentina is the relatively easier and smoother process of moving to Britain like most Caucasian immigrants from the Eastern European countries (Lechner, 2010a: 444). In contrast to most immigrants who had to face restrictive measures in Britain, in the immediate post-war period, Ludmilla and female immigrants from Eastern European countries were "recruited precisely in order that they would intermarry and add to [British] native stock" (Hatton and Price, 1999: 14). In the post-communism period after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact, this rather discriminatory and sexist attitude was replaced by an even worse practice on the part of Ukrainian women who sold their bodies in order to make a living in the other countries. According to Fielding (2011: 214), it is poverty and depravation which "drives poor Eastern European women to prostitute themselves in the West because they cannot support themselves at home". Dubov in the novel voices the same concern: "[their] national export is the sale of [their] beautiful young women into prostitution to feed the monstrous appetites of the western male. It is a tragedy" (Lewcyka, 2005: 256).

The third parallel between Ludmilla and Valentina lies in their great care and concern for their children's future. Both Ludmilla and Valentina came to believe that their children would have better life standards, better education, and thus better future in Britain because of the economic crises and political turmoil in Ukraine in the post-war and post-communism period. In the interview with Lechner, Lewckya said that "it's the dream of all immigrants for their children to do well in the new culture ... it's a very common immigrant thing: We suffered so that our children would have a good life" (Lechner, 2010b: 453). Valentina explains that she is trying to stay in Britain only "For Stanislav. Stanislav must have good opportunity. Is no opportunity in Ukraine ... Is only opportunity for ganster prostitute in Ukraine" (Lewcyka, 2005: 100). Although Valentina behaves as an conniving, abusive, and ruthless gold-digger to pursue her aspirations, she also "emerges a human being, a mother who wants the best for her son, who has nothing to sell but her own body" (Watson, 2006: 238). Lawless (2005: 2) agrees with the idea as he claims "Valentina is awful to her husband, but she does it for the sake of her child. She breaks every law going, but no one could accuse her of being lazy or scrounger - on the contrary, she is exploited herself".

To conclude, both Ludmilla and Valentina have been struggling to secure a better life for their children and themselves in Britain although the war, oppressive regime, and austerity in Ukraine in the late 1940s, and the opportunities offered by the liberal and consumer economies in the 1990s were the major impetuses for Ludmilla and Valentina respectively. The miseries Ludmilla had to undergo overshadowed her entire life with life-long thriftiness, frugality and fear. Her life style, values, beliefs and personality which were shaped due to suffering from bitter experiences before and during the World War II makes a sharp contrast with Valentina's. Because Valentina is the symbol of the new generation Ukrainians who are allured and attracted by the opportunities offered by the capitalism and consumerism in Britain. She is portrayed as a voluptuous and greedy woman who desperately seeks ways to stay in Britain and to exploit the system as a whole. She is very different from the post-war immigrants who proved model and law-abiding citizens who "become exemplary British subject[s]" (Fielding, 2011: 205). The post-war immigrants, Nikolai and Ludmilla, and their daughters, Vera and Nadia, "never broke the law - not even once. They were too scared. They agonized over filling in forms that were ambiguously worded: what if they gave the wrong answer?" (Lewcyka, 2005: 208). Valentina is not concerned with dignity, virtue, and decency at all unlike the post-war immigrants who "feared to claim benefits: what if there was an inspection? They were too frightened to apply for a passport: what if they weren't allowed back in?" (Lewcyka, 2005: 208) because she resorts to cajoling, flirting, marrying, abusing, exposing, fleecing,

bullying or having cosmetic surgery alternately in order to survive in Britain. She has had to fight against two sisters, the legal system, the police, the economic hardships, the moral values, and a senile husband, and in the end she obtains second-hand cars, low-quality dresses, cheap make-up, mongrel language, baby as a result of unsuccessful marriages and affairs during her stay in Britain. Although Ludmilla and her family were able to make a living in Britain, Valentina can not make it in Britain. She can only delay the inevitable return only for a little longer than a year. In the end, she has to return to Ukraine with her baby girl, her son and her husband. "Like a reverse tale of colonization, booby-wife accumulates all the necessary Western loot (Hoover vacuum, Rolls-Royce, even bigger breasts) (Aviv, 2005: 1). Apparently, her struggles to assume a new life style and enjoy a happy life in Britain prove ineffective and futile.

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