



The Lubetkin Legacy

Marina Lewycka

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Hilarious new novel from the bestselling author of *A Short History of Tractors in Ukrainian*.

North London in the twenty-first century: a place where a son will swiftly adopt an old lady and take her home from hospital to impersonate his dear departed mother, rather than lose the council flat.

A time of golden job opportunities, though you might have to dress up as a coffee bean or work as an intern at an undertaker or put up with champagne and posh French dinners while your boss hits on you.

A place rich in language - whether it's Romanian, Ukrainian, Russian, Swahili or buxom housing officers talking managementese.

A place where husbands go absent without leave and councillors sacrifice cherry orchards at the altar of new builds.

Marina Lewycka is back in this hilarious, farcical, tender novel of modern issues and manners.

The Lubetkin Legacy Details

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Author : Marina Lewycka

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From Reader Review The Lubetkin Legacy for online ebook

Aoife says

3.5-4 stars

The Lubetkin Legacy follows Berthold Sidebottom and a young woman called Violet who are both residents in a council flat in London. Their lives become somewhat connected as they mingle with the different types of people found in the apartment block and they both struggle to figure out what they want to do in life - all the while Bert pretends an elderly Ukrainian woman living with him is his recently deceased mother so he won't be kicked out of the spacious flat he's lived in his whole life.

This was a bit of a weird one. It didn't follow a particular plot per se and seemed to go in a different direction every time I felt like I knew where it was heading. But while I saying that, I did enjoy the book. I definitely got what Lewcyka was trying to show us - the absolute diversity that is living in a city like London. The flat had English, Ukranian, Romanaian, African and all sorts of other people, cultures, traditions within it, yet while everyone seemed a bit different on the outside, they were all more or less the same on the inside.

I think I warmed to Bert more than Violet, I felt while Violet grew as a character, there was a bit more life and humor to Bert's story. I did like him but there were times he would think certain things that made him turn into a complete creep and I'd inwardly groan (like calling his penis 'the beast'). He also had a mild obsession with George Clooney. I felt like I didn't quite get enough out of Violet's story, I think I would have liked another chapter or two with her at the end.

Justine says

2.5. Readable but plot was weak, lots of inconsistencies

Laura Spira says

Berthold Sidebotham is an out of work actor. Due to a family tragedy he has ended up living back with his mother in a North London block of flats designed by the architect Lubetkin, after whom Bertold was named and who may or may not have had a relationship with his mother. His mother's dying words to him are "Don't lose the flat!" The book's plot centres on his attempts to follow her instructions. Berthold, in a state of constant puzzlement, haunted by George Clooney and white vans, is swept along by a tide of eccentric characters. Marina Lewycka brilliantly evokes the precarious lives of a cast of fundamentally well meaning people who often grapple with physical and mental impairments, bureaucracy and poverty. The story is both funny and touching and I enjoyed it thoroughly.

(thanks to Netgalley for an advance copy)

Stephen Clynes says

Follow Berthold and Violet who are neighbours in a block of flats in North London. This book alternates in each chapter from Berthold's point of view to Violet's and back again. Berthold is however the main character in this modern day novel.

Do not expect an entertaining EastEnders style of reading from this book. The whole story is rather dull and I did not develop an empathy for unemployed actor Berthold. Violet is written in to tease but Stacey will steal her spot.

I was disappointed by The Lubetkin Legacy which is a shame because I so enjoyed Marina's second novel Two Caravans which I read in 2009 and blogged...

I enjoyed this book and I vote it a HIT. It explores the economic realities of migrant workers here in the UK. Marina clearly has her finger on the pulse. This novel shows the ugly face of capitalism and the characters in this book are the victims, not the heroes. There is romance in this book which is written in the style of a thriller. Marina is a clever writer and her book shows the other side of the coin.

...But The Lubetkin Legacy for me FAILS. It is in a similar mode but is very WEAK. There is no sharpness to this story and my reading experience was DIM. It is NOT a novel to turn new readers ON. Yes, it shows promise but it does not fulfil.

I did like the way Marina worked foreign accents into her text, for example when Inna refers to "Indunky Smeet" who is clearly the present Secretary of State for Work and Pensions in the UK Parliament (Iain Duncan Smith) commonly called IDS, not to be confused with IBS.

The plot of this story is rather tame and has as much thrill as a garden make-over programme on television. Much focus is made of everyday tasks like making hot drinks but even that is sloppy as Marina writes...

He looks confused. 'My leccy got cut off last week. I should be all right when I start my job.'

...Yet a few paragraphs later on, Marina continues...

The kettle boils and she makes four cups of tea. Len adds a saccharine tablet and sips slowly, which seems to perk him up a bit, though he still looks pale.

...There is also some mild humour, for example...

The agency that found her this flat in Madeley Court specialises in student lettings, and it is furnished with seven narrow beds, seven desks, seven wooden chairs, seven small chests of drawers, and a small round table in the kitchen. How did seven people squeeze into here? Maybe they were dwarves?

...So there you have it, I found The Lubetkin Legacy a disappointment and consider it a POOR read that I will vote just the 2 stars.

Thanks to NetGalley and the publisher Fig Tree for giving me a copy of this book on the understanding that I provide an honest review.

John Martin says

This is another winning novel from Marina Lewycka.

The novel took me on a rollercoaster ride. It hit the peaks with some laugh-out-loud humour and then took me deep into pathos.

Lewycka is a masterful creator of characters. I marvel at the way she brings them to life. As an L Plate writer, I look and learn and try not to be overawed.

When one of the main characters in this book, Berthold Sidebottom, first meets Inna in the hospital, and hears her coughing, sees her spitting phlegm into a cardboard receptacle on her bedside table and shakes her hand which is as "bony as a bunch of twigs", I am right there.

When Bert, a one-time Shakespearean actor, has to dress as a coffee bean to make ends meet, I can picture it and feel for him.

I don't think any thinking person could ignore the social commentary that underpins this book. It's a bit Steinbeckian in that way.

There's a quote at the beginning of the book from architect Berthold Lubetkin, who is central to the book: "Nothing is too good for ordinary people."

Well, times have moved on in North London in this book. This is austerity England, which no longer puts ordinary people on such a high pedestal. I had to keep telling myself that Legless Len, one of the tragic characters in the book, is just a fictional character.

The other main player in this book is Violet, a part Kenyan.

Bert's story is told in the first person, hers in third person in separate chapters, which to a student of writing, is a really interesting way of doing things. Only a skilled writer like Lewycka could pull it off, so you probably shouldn't try it at home, kids.

Bert's and Violet's lives intersect and the differing point of views give the reader a he-said/she-said effect which I found very satisfying and not the least bit grating.

They both have different agendas. Hers take her to Africa where a corrupt business man buys cheap plastic buckets in China and sells them for mighty, murky profit in Kenya.

When I finish most books I'm done with them, no matter how much I enjoyed them. But I suspect this is one of those books that will inhabit my thoughts for some time.

Gem BookEater says

Marina Lewycka is best known for writing *A Short History of Tractors in Ukrainian*. This book, already shortlisted for the annual Bollinger Everyman Wodehouse prize (which the *Short History* won back in 2005) might beat it into the shadows!

It's set in North London in modern day. Berthold Sidebottom (named for the architect Berthold Lubetkin who his mother hints might be his real father) invites an old Ukrainian lady to move into his mother's flat with him, after his mother befriended her in the hospital as she lay dying.

This might sound like a mad thing to do but grief makes you mad – as does the chance you might lose your council flat!

His next door neighbour Violet is discovering that her new job in International Wealth Preservation is not as

glamorous as it sounds, in fact she feels rather dirty helping ridiculously rich people profit from the poor and avoid paying taxes. When their flats are threatened by a new development Violet galvanises the residents into action, even the greiving Berthold.

This book is so clever and so so funny. It is multi-layered with a host of multi-faceted characters. It is a love letter to a London that is fast vanishing and a persuasive missive to everyone to commit to community spirit. It's a kaleidoscope – with every twist and turn it shows a different pattern created by the colourful characters, and you're never sure what pattern will be revealed next.

There are mysteries, drama's, romances, crimes, humour, pathos and victories in this book. I fell in love with Victoria and with Berthold's mum pretty much as soon as I met them, and my creeping sympathy for Berthold grew stronger with every struggle he faced.

Grab yourself this book now!

NB I received a free copy of this book through NetGalley in return for an honest review. It appeared first on The BookEaters Blog - <http://www.thebookeaters.co.uk/the-lu...>

Lynn Brown says

I don't really like farces and misunderstandings, which even though they are obvious, no one seems to care about. So I wasn't sure I was going to like this book. I requested it on the basis of Marina Lewycka's first book, which I never got around to reading and everyone raved about.

The plot is rather far fetched in fact it is probably further than out than that! I decided to just go with it and see what happened.

Berthold invites Inna to live with him and pretend to be his dead Mother. I must say that Inna was a fabulous character. It took me a while to understand her dialect - as she urged everyone to "it it" which I worked out to mean "eat it".

Inna played the part of Mother very well, despite being confused about who she was meant to be, in fact maybe she isn't confused at all but rather astute. Then there is the council official who she must convince that she is Berthold's Mother, can she do it?.....

In amongst all of this are other characters with microcosms of life being displayed and dissected by the author. Each of the stories plays out on its own, but comes back to be a part of the story of Berthold and Inna.

A very clever book which has more depth to it than you maybe realise when reading it. Only afterwards did I look back and truly appreciate how insightful it was, whilst also being entertaining.

Oh and those misunderstandings - seems some of them knew all along and were just going along with it so that helped with my need for order.

I am giving this book 4 out of 5 stars.

My thanks go to Netgalley for a copy of this book to review.

Jennifer says

so... the farcical elements of this novel made the book silly for me, instead of funny and engaging. it was all a bit over-the-top, which would have worked had the story been weighted down a bit more solidly. the characters were caricatures, instead of a fully fleshed out cast. marina lewycka is a fine writer and i totally enjoyed *A Short History of Tractors in Ukrainian*. unfortunately, *the lubetkin legacy* was a disappointment for me.

this review in *the guardian* sums up how i felt: <https://www.theguardian.com/books/201...>

Wal.li says

Die Hinterlassenschaft

Seine geliebte Mutter stirbt plötzlich und natürlich ist der unbeholfene Berthold Sidebottom untröstlich. Die letzten Worte seiner Mutter lauteten: „Lass sie nicht die Wohnung kriegen!“. Berthold ist zwar schon über fünfzig, doch nach dem Tod seiner kleinen Tochter, an dem auch seine Ehe scheiterte, ist er nicht wieder richtig auf die Füße gekommen. Ein alternder Schauspieler, der stottert, und der mit George Clooney wahrlich nur das Geburtsdatum gemeinsam hat. Und dann gibt es da diese Abgabe für zu große Sozialwohnungen. Um dieser zu entgehen und dennoch nicht ausziehen zu müssen, bittet Berthie eine Bett Nachbarin seiner Mutter, die Rolle seiner Mutter gegenüber den Behörden zu übernehmen.

Welche Verwicklungen sind da vorprogrammiert. Bertholds Begegnungen mit den Nachbarn, seine Ersatzmutter, die beim Lügen manchmal zu viel und manchmal überhaupt keine Phantasie entwickelt, die junge Nachbarin Violet, die es Berthie angetan hat und natürlich seine Sozialarbeiterin Eustacia Penny, die er eigentlich nur von Weitem sehen möchte, schließlich könnte gerade sie ihn obdachlos machen. Ein echtes, wenn auch makabres Highlight ist die Bestattung von Bertholds Mutter. Und Innas Akzent ist unnachahmlich, auch wenn sie nicht gerade die ideale Ersatzmutter ist, ihre Kochkünste sind doch bemerkenswert.

Vor dem Hintergrund der alten Sozialwohnungen in London entfaltet Marina Lewycka wieder eine ihrer speziellen Welten, in denen ukrainische Einwanderer häufig eine tragende Rolle einnehmen. Der gescheiterte und vom Leben gezeichnet Berthold unternimmt etliche fast schon waghalsige Klimmzüge, um in seiner Wohnung bleiben zu können. Es gibt genügend Anlässe zum Schmunzeln, doch manchmal bleibt einem das Lachen beinahe im Halse stecken, wenn man mit der rauen Wirklichkeit konfrontiert wird. Man möchte Berthold schütteln, weil er nicht mehr Initiative aufbringt. Man möchte ihn beschützen, wenn die Behörden ihm auf die Pelle rücken. Man möchte ihn als Mittelpunkt in seiner Nachbarschaft sehen, als Retter der Kirschbäume. Doch Berthie ist nur Berthie, der auch etwas Glück verdient hat, das ihm vielleicht eher durch Zufall ereilt oder durch das weise Fäden-ziehen einer Frau.

Marina Lewycka hat einen warmherzigen Roman geschaffen, in dem sie mit einigen köstlichen Szenen aufwartet. Auch wenn man in einigen Momenten nicht ganz nachvollziehen kann wieso Berthold so durch sein Leben schlurft, fühlt man schließlich doch von der Welt, in der Berthold lebt, umarmt.

Paromjit says

This is a book which I adored. Aside from the fact that so much of it is bonkers, the underlying theme is the parlous state of its many vibrant and eccentric characters. Bertold, an unemployed actor, tries to ensure that he fulfills his dying mother's wish that he must not lose the flat. The flat is part of a block of flats designed by Lubetkin after whom Bertold is named.

So to ensure that the flat remains his, he brings home the delightful Inna to live with him. That way he hopes to avoid the bedroom tax. The story revolves around the diverse range of characters trying to save the communal gardens. There is a deeper social commentary underpinning much of the humour, It is an entertaining read, my first from Marina Lewycka and I think it is great. Many thanks to the publishers for an ARC via netgalley.

Annette says

The Lubetkin Legacy by Marina Lewycka was a goodreads win

I loved the cover of the book, bright and cheerful – a block of flats, ribbon wrapped; a parrot; a one legged pigeon and cherry blossom.

The block of council flats were designed by Berthold Lubikin and one flat was allegedly promised to Lily for herself and children. Lily had a complex marital history, which resulted in various people coming forward to claim the flat when she died. Her dying wish was for her son Bertie Sidebottom to keep the flat.

Bertie has a past life which contained a wife and child, which is now lost. He moved back to live with his mother, now she has died and he cannot find work.

Government policy is against him. To avoid the one bedroom tax, he invites an old lady, Inna, whom Lily befriended in hospital to come and live with him. He is an aspiring actor, passionate about Shakespeare, but has to accept a job which entails dressing as a coffee bean, in order to continue with his job seekers allowance. Building policy will probably destroy the cherry trees on the communal land by the flats – so even the one legged pigeon is not safe! His one legged neighbour is having his disability allowance evaluated, with devastating consequences.

The book is full of colourful characters of many nationalities. Inna is of some Eastern European origin. She is described as 'A crone with long silver hair and hands as bony as a bunch of twigs'. She speaks several languages, but has not fully mastered English, so her utterings are very amusing e.g hysteria instead of austerity. When her story emerges it is one of displacement and hardship due to war and its aftermath. This is echoed in the book when a group of migrants turn up and camp under the cherry trees. They are seeking a new, better life, but have nowhere to go.

Violet is of African origin. She has come to England to better herself, but is devastated to realise that new job in finance involves shady deals and corruption.

The book is written in a crisp, amusing manner, but underneath there is a poignancy. The flats represent a

place of belonging and community which is falling apart – how will it all end?

miss.mesmerized mesmerized says

Als Bertholds Mutter stirbt, wirft ihn das nicht nur emotional aus der Bahn: seine Wohnung ist bedroht, denn diese subventionierte Unterkunft war nun einmal an Lily geknüpft. Das Amt muss also überzeugt werden, dass diese doch noch lebt und kurzerhand zieht Inna ein. Was die quirlige und bisweilen verwirrte Ukrainerin alles durcheinanderwirbeln wird, ahnt der erfolgs- und arbeitslose Schauspieler da noch nicht. Bald schon steckt er inmitten größter Scherereien. Auch in der Liebe will es nicht so klappen, aber vielleicht gibt es doch noch Hoffnung.

Einmal mehr ein hochgradig skurriler Roman von Marina Lewycka. Wie auch schon in anderen Romanen besticht dieser durch unbeschreibliche Charaktere, die liebevoll bis ins letzte Detail durchdacht sind und ihre Rollen durchgängig überzeugend ausfüllen. Dies ist eine der ganz großen Stärken des Romans. Daneben bestechen der Wortwitz und insbesondere der Sprachenmix, der immer wieder zu Missverständnissen und herrlichen Dialogen führt, so dass das Lesen eine reine Freude ist. Leider bleibt die Handlung etwas auf der Strecke. Insgesamt passiert wenig, der gesamte Handlungsstrang um Violet war zwar interessant, aber letztlich mit der Haupthandlung nicht in Zusammenhang zu bringen und am Ende fast überflüssig. Auch hatte ich den Eindruck, dass hier unterschwellig zu viele Widererkennungen aus anderen Romanen sind – etwas mehr Innovation wäre gut gewesen.

Für den Roman als solches bleiben für mich nur 3 Sterne, für die unglaubliche Sprachakrobatik leg ich noch einen drauf.

Breakaway Reviewers says

A farcical take on the Bedroom Tax and much more.

Oh dear! I absolutely loved *A Short History of Tractors in the Ukraine* and when I was offered this book to review I was so excited and felt sure that it would once again show Marina Lewycka as a brilliant, funny and very clever author but unfortunately, it has failed miserably to make me even give a half-smile.

I know that Marina Lewycka likes wacky characters, one of the reasons *A Short Story of History of Tractors in the Ukraine* was such a success and possibly I could have grown to like Berthold Sidebottom (is this last name supposed to make us smile?) who is desperate to hold onto his council flat after his mother's passing. He is an actor, not just any actor but a Shakespearian actor, who is "resting" (except that he's been "resting" for years). And to help him tell his story of trying to cling to this flat, we have people like Inna (an elderly lady who Bertie meets as she's his mother's neighbour in hospital. I can understand that we're going to meet other equally eccentric people, but seriously Marina, did you have to include that she is "an ancient crone with grey, wrinkled skin, was clearing her throat with a horrible outpouring of phlegm into a cardboard receptacle" (which then starts overflowing!) And that's when I realised that no matter how the rest of the story panned out, I would not be able to enjoy the story any further.

I was looking forward to reading a light-hearted, funny book filled with characters who would make me laugh, but unfortunately, this did not happen!

Treebeard

Breakaway Reviewers received a copy of the book to review.

Nigeyb says

Any book that celebrates the modernist architect Berthold Lubetkin must have something to recommend it, however ultimately *The Lubetkin Legacy* is a confused and confusing book. Two concurrent stories, with little to link them, is an unnecessary contrivance, along with numerous, pointless plot digressions. The clichéd comedic elements consistently misfire: foreigners with funny accents who get their words wrong, a talking parrot, resting actors, buxom sex-starved women etc.

It's a shame as there are some interesting ideas and some good characters, and I am sympathetic to the book's politics which are angry about the death-by-a-thousand-cuts dismantling of the postwar consensus (bedroom tax, privatisation, buy to rent etc etc).

A missed opportunity.

2/5

Margitte says

I did not have much time to read lately, but had this book on the nightstand for several weeks, reading a paragraph or two whenever time permitted.

I loved the author's other book *A Short History of Tractors in Ukrainian*.

A dry, dark humor, tunnels through the lives of immigrants and born citizens of London, bringing alive a contemporary social palette of people, cultures and commentary. A delightful experience. I actually enjoyed this book more than *Tractors*, although both books was a deeply satisfying experience.

Some quotes from the book:

What a trog. He goes on like that for ten minutes in a voice like a dentist drill.

and

That stony adversary, belligerent fruitcake, venomous God-botherer, over-coiffed old cow.

Dark humor, with a semi-happy, hopeful ending. A great read! I actually felt left out in the cold when the book ended. Did not want it to end. There was a sort of cliffhanger ending, but it was okay anyway.

