



**THE UNREAL WORLD IN THE NOVEL BY MARC LEVY “IF ONLY IT WERE TRUE”**

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**ABSTRACT**

The paper is about the novel “Et si c’était vrai...” translated into English as “If only it were true” by a modern French writer Marc Levy who amazes readers with the extraordinary plot. Mark Levy’s novel “If only it were true” does not fit into the usual literary templates, it is permeated with an atmosphere of fantastic delirium, nightmares, hallucinations. The tragic collision of the novel is already revealed in the plot itself: heaven and earth, life and death. The aim of the article is to discover the real and unreal world in the novel by Marc Levy “If only it were true”. The problem analysis was used in the paper.

The results are the following. The heroes of the novel Arthur and Lauren went

through the faith, hope and love that make up the success in their lives, through the art of love for the world, which they have learned. The strength and feelings of the heroes of the novel are able to work miracles, returning them to a full life, but they would also be powerless before death, if not for their all-conquering love. In the novel one can find not only bitter thoughts about the transience of human life, but also an optimistic faith in eternal renewal, the beauty of nature, love.

To conclude it is necessary to say the value of M. Levy's book "If only it were true" is in high humanism, in the glorification of true beauty, the inner need for love for a woman, male friendship, growing stronger in a common cause for the sake of character's salvation. The spiritual life of the characters is depicted in details; the psychologism of the novel deepens the meaning of the fantastic events that take place.

**Key words:** Marc Levy, "If only it were true", science fiction, psychologism, spiritual life.

## АНОТАЦІЯ

### **Потойбічний світ у романі Марка Леві «Якби це було правдою»**

У статті йдеться про роман «Et si c'était vrai ...», перекладений англійською мовою як «Якби це було правдою», сучасного французького письменника Марка Леві, який вражає читачів надзвичайним сюжетом. Роман Марка Леві не вписується у звичні літературні шаблони, він пройнятий атмосферою нездійсненої фантазії, видінь, химер. Трагічна колізія роману розкрита вже в самому сюжеті: небо і земля, життя і смерть. Мета статті – проаналізувати реальний і нереальний світи у романі Марка Леві «Якби це було правдою». У роботі використано метод проблемного аналізу.

Результати дослідження наступні: герої роману Артур і Лорен пройшли через віру, надію та любов, що становлять успіх у їхньому житті, через мистецтво любові до світу, якому вони навчилися. Сила та почуття героїв роману здатні творити чудеса, повертаючи їх до повноцінного життя, але вони також були б безсилі перед смертю, якби не їхнє всепереможне кохання. У романі можна знайти не тільки гіркі думки про швидкоплинність людського життя, а й оптимістичну віру у вічне оновлення, красу природи, кохання.

У висновках стверджується, що цінність роману М. Леві «Якби це було правдою» полягає у високому гуманізмі, у прославленні справжньої сили

духа і внутрішньої краси, потреби в любові до жінки, чоловічої дружби, що міцніє заради спасіння головної героїні. У роботі детально зображено духовне життя героїв. Психологізм роману поглиблює зміст фантастичних подій, які відбуваються.

**Ключові слова:** Марк Леві, “Якби це було правдою”, наукова фантастика, психологізм, духовне життя

## INTRODUCTION

The modern French writer Marc Levy amazes readers with the extraordinary plot of the novel, in which science fiction is organically combined with philosophical overtones, lyrics and humor. The novel “Et si c’était vrai...” by Marc Levy translated into English as “If only it were true” (Levy, 2000) is deservedly considered a bestseller and has been translated into more than forty languages many times and sold in huge print runs.

Mark Levy’s novel «If only it were true» does not fit into the usual literary templates, it is permeated with an atmosphere of fantastic delirium, nightmares, hallucinations. Arthur, the protagonist of the novel, is in the “stream of consciousness”, which consists of various involuntary associations and memories, with a split consciousness. The tragic collision of the novel is already revealed in the title itself: heaven and earth, life and death. Life is presented in the tension of all its maximum forces precisely because it is faced with the death of the main heroine of the novel.

The film rights to the novel were acquired by Steven Spielberg and the film “Between Heaven and Earth” by Hollywood fashion director Mark Waters was released. The charming Reese Witherspoon played the main role, she herself is a survivor of a car accident. The film turned out to be fascinating, lyrical, believable, convincing, even despite the heroine’s ability to walk through walls, separating from her body part.

All the evidence about the paranormal and experiences in the film is not so important, and Mark Waters did not sensationalize them, but this does not mean that they do not exist due to the very nature of scientific and logical thinking: Lauren could not be far from his body without feeling extreme fatigue (Levy, 2017, p. 271). Masterfully exploring the relationship between religion and art, Mark Levy builds a gripping plot in which genuine human drama is bubbling.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Modern French literature (Kryvoruchko et al, 2021) discuss a lot of issues (Demchenko, 2021). Unfortunately, there are few Ukrainian translations of famous French novels (Kochur, 2008), (Tatura, 2008).

The contemporary writer Marc Levy is quite successful, he has many novels such as “Finding You” (Levy, 2001), “Seven Days for an Eternity” (Levy, 2003), “In Another Life” (Levy, 2004), “London Mon Amour” (Levy, 2006), “Children of Freedom” (Levy, 2007), “All Those Things We Never Said” (Levy, 2008), “The First Day” (Levy, 2009 a), “The First Night” (Levy, 2009 b), “The Shadow Thief” (Levy, 2010), “The Strange Journey of Mr. Daldry” (Levy, 2011), “Replay” (Levy, 2012), “Stronger than Fear” (Levy, 2013), “Another Idea of Happiness” (Levy, 2014), ”P.S. from Paris” (Levy, 2015), “Hope” (Levy, 2016), ”The Last of the Sanfields” (Levy, 2019) etc.

However, the peculiarities of discovering the real and unreal world in the novel “If only it were true” have not yet been the subject of the separate scientific study.

**AIM OF THE ARTICLE** is to discover the real and unreal world in the novel by Marc Levy “If only it were true”.

## METHODOLOGY

The methods of holistic research, images research and problem research were used in the paper. Basically, the problem analysis was used. It was used to analyze the creative structure of the novel by Marc Levy “If only it were true” in close connection with its content. The problem analysis helped to discover and solve different issues as the writer’s creative consciousness, as the literature development of the certain time period.

## RESULTS

As it is known, the famous scientist Emmanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772) investigated the human subconscious and foresaw that in a body in a near-death sleep or coma, inner life is preserved, and that communication between people is possible through the transmission of thoughts at a distance. Let’s not forget that logic and scientific methodology are not once created and since then unchanging systems,

but developing and dynamic processes.

Modernism and conservative art at the beginning of the last century is based on theories of subjective idealism, among which the most fashionable are Bergsonianism and Freudianism. Separating human consciousness from real life, Henri Bergson and Sigmund Freud argued that dark instinctive forces govern human actions, called on thinkers and artists to examine the “subconsciousness” of the life of an ordinary person, revealing a riddle in everyone. A hundred years have passed and mankind finally realized that it too deified scientific and technological progress and too unceremoniously treated the heritage of traditions, starting with the cultural and religious traditions of people and ending with the riches of the nature of mankind.

And now nature and culture are louder and more warningly reminding us that any intrusion into their fragile substance is fraught with irreversible consequences and an ecological catastrophe. The author plunges into the study of the complex spiritual world of a person whose thought is eternally awake in an effort to cognize the truth and achieve absolute perfection here on earth, and not somewhere “out there”. We are convinced that to understand and explain the ongoing events lie in the limitations of our current scientific and logical thinking, and scientists in the future will look at everything from a completely different point of view.

Today to transplant a heart, to make an airplane that weighs three hundred and fifty tons fly, to walk on the Moon, it took a lot of work, but the main thing, imagination (Levy, 2017, p. 233), says Marc Levy. It is difficult to disagree with the author of the book, and the author of the novel pushes us to this conclusion by his belief that life can be beautiful even “between heaven and earth” if imagination is enough. Life returned to normal for 86,400 seconds ... this magic bank is available to each of us, this is the time! (Levy, 2017, p. 273), but the bank can close the account at any time without warning; life can stop at any second, as happened with the heroes of the novel.

By its rhythmic and intonational structure, simple, restrained and at the same time expressive vocabulary, the novel is close to the modernist art of the last century. And no matter how dynamic the action in the novel is (unlike the multivolume epic of Proust “In Search of Lost Time” (1912-1922), or the multivolume narration of “War and Peace” by Leo Tolstoy, a fantastic plot in the novel “The Master and Margarita” by M. Bulgakov, it inevitably grows details, in its flow on the subconscious, intuition, dreams and dreams, visions

invade; lyrical themes are dynamically intertwined in it; before us are colorful descriptions of the abduction from the hospital of the body of thirty-year-old Lauren, the main character of the novel, who is in a deep coma, according to the police – “too beautiful to die”.

Arthur’s time and love brought Lauren back to life, but Arthur faced at least five years in prison for the abduction of her body. Even a close friend, psychologist Pilgez, does not understand the motive of the act itself and the abduction: “why?”, because the price of one body (or individual body organs for transplantation) is not worth such a risk.

To believe in what is happening, Pilgez explains this to himself by saying that it is not enough to be crazy, you have to be a complete nutcase. Doubt demanded a revision of events and phenomena from different points of view: Arthur is not at all crazy (Levy, 2017, p. 299). The abduction of Lauren’s body from the clinic and the return of the body, the search for an old ambulance, life under the supervision of the police, the suspicion of others (some thought he was crazy, others thought that he was a widower who did not want to come to terms with the death of his wife (Levy, 2017, p. 274), the author describes life in a society with consumer morality with maximum accuracy. Arthur appears in the novel as a person who has realized his opportunities, given to him by nature.

The most important thing in Arthur’s character is courage is the dignity of those who act for the good, those who come to the rescue. And Arthur acts exactly at the moment when one should act, and not calculate threats (Levy, 2017, p. 274). The combination of the image of the external appearance and the internal, psychological originality of a person is associated with the unique individual characters of the heroes of the novel, accompanying each step of their actions.

After spending the day in a new apartment, arranging books on the shelves, finishing the arrangement of the kitchen corner, bringing the apartment to an ideal state of cleanliness, which was not very characteristic of him before, awakened to life the irrational, mystical forces that Arthur only felt in this apartment: It seems that I have manic inclinations appear, he confessed to himself (Levy, 2017, p. 39).

The 21st century has shaped modern ideas about what life after death is like and what a person experiences in a coma. For the author of the book, the plot with which he had to work, in contrast to modernist art, is more concrete in sensations, questions, analogies, mysterious phenomena, visions, since the

study of the nature of the dying or comatose state of a person has become a global problem of all mankind, but is presented to the inexperienced reader in playful and fantastic form.

The plot twists and turns of the book are captured from the first pages: a beautiful unfamiliar ghost girl is sure that only Arthur can help her return to the world of the living. In the bathroom in the closet among the hangers, he saw a girl, mistaking her for a whore or as a playful “housewarming gift” (Levy, 2017, p. 41) from Paul’s “bosom” friend. The play of youth, freedom and a smile, reserves of unspent spiritual purity, the desire to show what a loving person is capable of – characterize the protagonist of the novel.

Light, taste, smells, everything is revealed to the reader in all its glory. Arthur often recalled his mother’s words: If you have some kind of power where you are now, open the doors of our world for him (Levy, 2017, p. 188). Most likely, it is our world that is closest to mental states that are far from the rational side of the human soul, the strength of feeling.

His mother taught him to love everything that can be loved by heart and soul: to admire the sunrise, to distinguish the smells of flowers, to contemplate the peace of the beginning of the day, to distinguish the aromas of his favorite roses, aromatic essences, to recognize the leaves of trees, the names of birds, she taught to determine the weather by the clouds and wind, and much more.

Artist Anthony, a family friend whose life was also based on harmony, warmth, and the ability to give, lived nearby and became not only a friend of the family, but also a close man to Lily, filled the void in Arthur’s life after the death of his father, the plane stayed on the stars (Levy, 2017, p. 174), in a poetic manner she explained to the little boy the death of his father.

Anthony outlived Lily for ten years, whom he loved all his life, but Lily, fearing condemnation, could not respond to his feelings: adults are afraid of old age, death, afraid of diseases, sometimes even a child’s gaze: they are afraid that they will be condemned (Levy, 2017, p. 177-178).

The tragic and early death of relatives and people close to him did not leave Arthur indifferent in an attempt to save the one who needed it: from now on, you are responsible for yourself and for those whom you will love. Don’t lose your dignity, his mother instructed him. The writer creates a number of thoughtful psychological portraits (Lillian, Arthur, Lauren).



Relying on an intelligent reader is manifested in the writer's penchant for introducing a very diverse material, reminding that: We are responsible for those whom we have tamed, as Antoine de Saint-Exupéry said.

Why Arthur? Not only because ironically, the lonely architect Arthur bought Lauren's former apartment from her guardian mother, who eventually agreed to the euthanasia of her daughter, but also because family and family values became the most important and defining in the life of a single teenager and young men, and the more freedom there was in Arthur's worldview, the more he received spiritual knowledge in childhood.

True love for the world is manifested only in the presence of freedom, which was filled with Arthur's life. He did not forget the admonition of his mother, with whom he had developed a spiritual relationship: Life sometimes makes us doubt everything. Never give up ... never lose a particle of a child's soul (Levy, 2017, p. 185-186), revealing new correspondences to your inner world.

The mystical plot of the novel is combined with real events in the mischief of fantasy and observation: after the death of Lauren, he remained in prostration for long days and even longer nights ... He wrote letters to the phantom ... (Levy, 2017, p. 278), he became disillusioned with life itself, and close friends fought for his sanity. The art of living largely depends on our ability to overcome our own impotence. This is difficult because powerlessness often breeds fear. It nullifies our strengths, reason, common sense and opens the way for weakness (Levy, 2017, p. 180), says Marc Levy.

It is written about M. Bulgakov's novel "The Master and Margarita" that science fiction encounters pure realism. Science fiction in Marc Levy's novel comes across quite real events and facts that unfold in the summer of 1996 in San Francisco. Lauren's way of life is emphatically real, this reality is special, sharply outlined, like her "old woman triumph" (English car), crashed into the immense window of the "Masiz" store together with the owner.

Like in a movie, but here everything is for real, the parking attendant will say the witness of the accident. The exact time of the accident is indicated: "Quarter to seven". Lauren's pace of work can be summed up in two words: "always in a hurry". Her work in the hospital is quite real, where everyone obeys the orders of the strict Professor Fernstein; Lauren was one of his students and the only one who was not afraid of him.

And Fernstein, violating every conceivable protocol of treatment and

rehabilitation, is trying to bring Lauren back from a deep coma to life. At the same time, the assistants seemed to gradually forget that they were operating on a clinically dead human being for five hours. The idea that we will not be able to fully understand this life until we pay attention to what is happening on the other side of it makes the reader more restrained in the events taking place in the novel: behind the window opening he guessed Lauren, her smooth movements, it seemed to Arthur that it scatters, becomes more transparent (Levy, 2017, p. 279).

He recalled Lillian's admonitions: The most beautiful thing that the earth has given us, that which turns us into human beings, is the happiness of sharing with someone. Anyone who does not know how to share is a cripple, an invalid without feelings (Levy, 2017, p. 181). Lily died of cancer when the boy was ten years old, faded away as gracefully as she lived, left with dignity, without disturbing those whom she loved (Levy, 2017, p. 183). On the morning of her death, the boy read the letter left to him as a "will of love".

In the novel we meet with the phantom of an invisible interlocutor, the living heroine Lauren, who asserts an active, effective attitude to life when she, being in a coma, goes on astral travel. After the accident, Lauren felt the value of every moment, every second of the "magical life".

In the center of the novel are the "eternal" universal human problems of freedom and lack of freedom, love and fidelity, devotion to each other, happiness. And happiness for all the characters in the novel is not a life's luck, but a simple, sincere manifestation of life, even if it is sad and tragic.

The trinity of good, truth and beauty clearly reveal Lauren's spiritual and moral life. Her appearance attracts attention with a combination of hidden, reserved inner kindness (each morning began with the preparation of breakfast for her pet dog Kali). Lauren Kline, an emergency room physician at a San Francisco hospital, had a strikingly beautiful apartment in a trendy, modern design; a dining room, as is customary in America and Europe, combined with a kitchen, the so-called "studio"; the underlined "big frog-shaped fridge magnet".

The detail takes part in creating the image of the heroine and becomes an integral part of the artistic world of the work, and not just a way of expressiveness, but also a way of revealing changes in the life of the heroes of the novel. A bedroom, a living room with a fireplace and a spacious bathroom with a window, all these details and the interior indicated a modern style of furnishings. The apartment is full of joy,



light and music: Peggy Lee sang the trendy “Fever”.

Arthur nearly fainted when he heard the unknown clicking of his fingers to the beat of the music coming from the closet and saw among the hangers a very real girl who sang along to the rhythm of the song. Her room continued to live with Lauren’s “spiritualized” phantom. In the life of Arthur, a strange feeling arises for him, because it is irrational, not subject to reason.

The feeling without an image and a name permeated Arthur’s worldview as a vague fleeting sensation of the human soul after parting with the soul of Lauren: His male body penetrated into Lauren’s soul, and her soul penetrated into Arthur’s body, for a moment of embrace... (Levy, 2017, p. 213), an attempt to explain the author esoteric postulates, when the subtle bodies, without physically touching, entered into interaction at the subtle level.

The strength and feelings of the heroes of the novel are able to work miracles, returning them to a full life. But they would also be powerless before death, if not for their all-conquering love. In a few weeks they became accomplices, lovers and companions in life, gained confidence that consciousness can exist independently of the body: Arthur plunged into the world of emptiness. Emptiness penetrated his veins, reaching to his heart. And the rhythm of the heart became more and more muffled every day (Levy, 2017, p. 277).

Breaking the traditional conventionality of the metaphorical language, the author’s poetic feeling penetrates beyond the bounds of finite things and phenomena into the transcendent mystery of the universe in attempts to study the paranormal phenomenon.

M. Levy, the author of the novel, is an example of a completely real person in his right mind, as if putting on a whole series of experiments, testing the fate of his heroes, the strength of their striving for goodness, beauty and harmony. In the novel one can find not only bitter thoughts about the transience of human life, but also an optimistic faith in eternal renewal, the beauty of nature, love: courage is your strength, but also your weakness ... loneliness is a garden where the soul dries up; the flowers that grow there are odorless. Love tastes wonderful; love. Remember: to receive, you must give; remember that you have to be yourself in order to be able to love (Levy, 2017, p. 186).

Arthur received a good education, after the death of his mother he inherited, a house in Carmel where he grew up, a small city apartment and a letter left in it,

already an adult Arthur: you will walk through the rooms filled with nostalgia, you will open the shutters, letting in the sunlight, which I will miss so much ... in the closet you will find a black suitcase, in it, “the past in the present” (a silver spoon, booties, an airplane, etc.). My mother’s frank confession: All these years we (Lily and Anthony) lived in the shadow of my lies, I was a hypocrite with life, and she did not forgive me for this.

It can be assumed that M. Levy is trying to delve into our self-righteousness of reason, confident that, freed from signs and superstitions, belief or disbelief in the afterlife, he can create a rational arrangement of all human relations.

The episode of the meeting of Lauren’s mother with Arthur was real: the usually shy dog caught up with Arthur and strangely froze in place, sucked in air, wiggling his nose and head. Then she approached Arthur, sniffed the edges of his trousers and immediately lay down, whining ... the animal was trembling with joy and excitement (Levy, 2017, p. 138) and later, when the dog recognized you, dog! I don’t know why and I don’t understand everything, but I owe you so much ... (Levy, 2017, p. 284).

Unreal, a clinically dead body was resurrected, which was impossible, but Arthur could not refuse to realize his intentions to bring it back to life, sitting at Lauren’s bedside for days on end, realizing his intentions quite realistically, creating new ones and changing the ways of their implementation (for hours studying the history of diseases in the library, meeting Loren’s mother, friendship with the dog Kali, etc.).

The heroes of the novel went through the faith, hope and love that make up the success in their lives, through the art of Love for the world, which they have learned (Prykhodko, & Petrusenko, 2021).

## DISCUSSIONS

It is a point for discussion. According to spiritual people, every meeting with ANY thing, phenomenon, event, and especially with a person, is a complex energy-informational interaction ... and there is always an interaction not only on the physical, but also on the subtle level.

We believe, the writer is in no hurry to draw final conclusions. He creates in the novel a subtle artistic atmosphere that opposes its tragic color. All the elements came together here: the funny and the serious, philosophy and satire, parody and



magic fantasy. Improbability of an event, a fantasy or “purely realism”, the perennial problems of human existence in modern society, forward-looking, and his uneasy sense, in an attempt to identify the difference between life and death of man, the eternal fear of death and resurrection for love and life, identically modernist art of the past century.

## CONCLUSIONS

The value of M. Levy’s book “If only it were true” is in high humanism, in the glorification of true beauty, the inner need for love for a woman, male friendship, growing stronger in a common cause for the sake of Lauren’s salvation. Not so much happiness fell to the hero’s lot, he experiences other people’s misfortunes and troubles as his own, and Lauren’s illness makes Arthur wiser, he deeper understands the meaning of life, defending eternal values: home, family and friends.

Thus, M. Levy addresses topical issues of a philosophical nature in the novel, they have many contradictions that reflect the thoughts and searches of the author. In the novel, the writer tries to answer the question: how to overcome the prevailing immorality and violence in the world, how to rise above the dark instincts. Thus, the author creates a detailed symbolic and philosophical picture of the world.

The spiritual life of the characters is depicted in details; the psychologism of the novel deepens the meaning of the fantastic events that take place. The theme of love runs through the whole novel, and it is interpreted as something fatal, mysterious, incomprehensible. It is no coincidence that M. Levy introduces into the fabric of the work many details-symbols that perform ideological and compositional functions.

Indeed, M. Levy’s novel testifies to the complexity and non-uniformity of artistic creativity. Thus, the novel is an expression of the authors’ attitude to global contemporary problems, the desire to raise important issues of personal life, solving life problems deeply, which contributes to the creation of the author’s innovative creative techniques.

The author marks the sharp contradictions of the modern world, deepening the processes of real and unreal. We see prospects for further research in the disclosure of elements of the real and the unreal in other works of the modern French writer Marc Levy.

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