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Faith in C. S. Lewis's and Marek S. Huberath's eschatological fiction

Wiara w utworach eschatologicznych C. S. Lewisa i Marka S. Huberatha

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Słowa kluczowe
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Abstract
The article compares selected texts by C. S. Lewis and Marek S. Huberath which have afterworld as part of their setting and which raise issues of faith. The main argument of the article is that there is a radical difference between the role faith plays in the afterworlds envisioned by either author. Scenes from C. S. Lewis are analysed to show how his characters can deny the supernatural even as they find themselves in a supernatural world. By contrast, Huberath's characters who come into the afterworld have to acknowledge it as real. Interpreting the difference, the article tentatively suggests that Lewis's afterworlds are tools for talking about life on earth, whereas Huberath's are similar to scientific models in that they are attempts at understanding afterlife.

Abstrakt
Celem artykułu jest porównanie wybranych utworów C. S. Lewisa i Marka S. Huberatha, których fabuła osadzona jest w zaświatach i które poruszają kwestie wiary. Teza artykułu głosi, że w zaświatach wykreowanych przez obu pisarzy wiara odgrywa diametralnie odmienną rolę. Analiza utworów Lewisa poka-

zuje, że jego bohaterowie mogą negować nadprzyrodzoność, nawet znajdując się w świecie nadprzyrodzonym. Natomiast bohaterowie Huberatha zmuszeni są uznać realność zaświatów, w których się znaleźli. Interpretacją tej różnicy jest ostrożna sugestia, że u Lewisa zaświaty są narzędziem służącym do mówienia o życiu doczesnym, natomiast u Huberatha przypominają one modele naukowe, to znaczy są próbami zrozumienia zaświatów jako takich.

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When looking at the literary output of C. S. Lewis and Marek S. Huberath, one cannot fail to notice certain common traits. For one thing, both authors, in some of their fictional works, use the afterworld as a considerable part of the setting, and it is for them not a mere backdrop, but a crucial factor impacting the construction of the plot, the choices made by the characters etc.; in other words, it is afterworld treated seriously. For another thing, religious – and especially Christian – context provides an important, not to say indispensable, interpretative framework when one wants to understand either author's works. Both above-mentioned analogies are, of course, closely related to each other.

They are not the only ones, though; there are also some minor but nevertheless curious links, namely certain particular ideas that Huberath evidently borrowed from C. S. Lewis for his latest novel *Portal zdobiony posągami* [*A Portal Adorned with Sculptures*]. One of these "borrowings" is a concept from medieval theology called *gumphi subtiles*, literally "tiny little nails,"[1] that were believed to connect soul to the body. Being medieval, this concepts is of course in no way Lewis's own; however, it is quite likely that Huberath has read and taken inspiration from *The Discarded Image* where Lewis mentions, among numerous other things, this very concept. What suggests that Huberath drew on *The Discarded Image* for his novel is the fact that when he uses the Latin phrase *gumphi subtiles* in his book, he uses it in its inflected form, *gumphis subtilibus*, i.e. exactly the same form in which it appears in Lewis's *The Discarded Image*[2], even when it is not grammatically justified.

Given these facts, it is only natural to propose a comparative analysis of C. S. Lewis and Marek S. Huberath's works. Of course, such an analysis cannot encompass all of the two author's oeuvre even if we limit the discussion to their fictional works; otherwise it would grow to gargantuan proportions. One criterion that will limit the scope of the present analysis suggests itself almost immediately: the above-mentioned afterworld setting provides a neat delimitation. Another criterion is the characters: we will be only interested in

1 C. S. Lewis, *The Discarded Image*, Cambridge–New York–Melbourne–Madrid–Cape Town 1964, p. 60, [in:] *Google Books* (accessed 11 Jul 2020). *Gumphus* is one of the various forms of the noun *gomphus*; see *Gomphus*, [in:] https://elexicon.scriptores.pl/pl/lemma/GOMPHUS#haslo_pelny (accessed 11 Jul 2020).

2 C. S. Lewis, op. cit., p. 60.

those texts in which human characters (living or dead) take part in the events in the afterworld. Angels and devils do not count on their own.

Based on the above criteria, we can select three texts by Lewis and five texts by Huberath that will be of immediate interest to us. Peter Schackel lists two images of heaven and four images of hell in C. S. Lewis. The former can be found in *The Chronicles of Narnia* (Aslan's Country) and in *The Great Divorce* (the grassy plain with the mountains on the horizon). The images of hell, in turn, can be found in *The Screwtape Letters* (bureaucratic institution), *The Pilgrim's Regress* (the black hole and Limbo), *The Chronicles of Narnia* (Aslan's shadow in the last scenes of *The Last Battle*) and *The Great Divorce* (the grey city)[3]. One must add to these two other kinds of hell that can be found in *The Last Battle*: being taken away by Tash and being in heaven without seeing it as the Dwarfs are. Out of these, *The Screwtape Letters* will not be of interest here because the book is almost exclusively focused on the devils' strategies of temptation; hell as such is only glimpsed through occasional allusions and people in hell are only briefly mentioned. Also, C. S. Lewis does not describe what happens to characters who go into Aslan's shadow or are carried away by Tash: these forms of hell are therefore naturally excluded from our discussion.

Neither are we going to consider what might be called earthly paradises, such as the world of Perelandra in the novel of the same name (notwithstanding the fact that it should be properly named a Venusian, rather than an Earthly, paradise). The reason for this exclusion is that this kind of spaces are neither eschatological nor "afterworldly". They can be found within the timespace of the fictional material world, as opposed to eschatological conceptions, which are situated outside the material world. Moreover, such places are not the abode of the dead and hence they do not constitute an afterworld. For these reasons we must distinguish Aslan's Country as shown in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, *The Silver Chair* and *The Magician's Nephew* from the heavenly Narnia as shown in *The Last Battle*. The precise distinction between the two realms would require a thoroughgoing research; however, for the purposes of the present article, we will provisionally assume that Aslan's Country is a sort of earthly paradise (though it is to be found in Narnia, not on Earth as we know it) and that the heavenly Narnia in *The Last*

[3] Schackel, discussing the images of heaven in *The Last Battle* and in *The Great Divorce* also observes that part of what Lewis describes in these books is not "deep heaven" but "outskirts of heaven". By analogy, it would be appropriate to say that the Grey City in *The Great Divorce* is the "outskirts of hell"; however, this will not be the concern of the present article. P. Schackel, *Heaven and Hell as Idea and Image in C. S. Lewis*, [in:] https://www.cslewis.com/heaven-and-hell-as-idea-and-image-in-c-s-lewis/ (accessed 5 Jun 2020).

Battle is a truly eschatological reality. Out of the two, we will therefore be only interested in the latter.

Out of Huberath's oeuvre, we shall be dealing with two novels, *Miasta pod Skałą* [*Cities under the Rock*] and *Portal zdobiony posągami* [*A Portal Adorned with Sculptures*], and three short stories: *The Greater Punishment*, *Trzeba przejść groblą* [*A Causeway to Walk Across*] and *Balm of a Long Farewell.* While some of the protagonists in these texts are souls of the dead and some are the living visiting the realm of the dead, at any rate a considerable part of each of these texts is set in some form of afterworld. We will discuss the setting of these texts, insofar as it is necessary, as we go along. Let us only note now that many parts of Huberath's afterworlds are in fact "outskirts" of heaven and hell and in-between places (between heaven and hell, between earth and afterlife, or both at the same time). As with analogous phenomena in C. S. Lewis, we will not be concerned here with their classification, definition etc. since that would be far beyond the scope of the present article.

This article argues that there is a striking contrast between Lewis's conceptions of afterlife, in which he stresses the importance of faith, and Huberath's analogous conceptions, in which questions of faith seem all but irrelevant. The main part of the article will be devoted to analysing Lewis's and Huberath's eschatological texts one by one, with a focus on those scenes which are related to faith. We shall see that Lewis's characters are capable of an unbelief so persistent that it prevents them from noticing they have entered heaven or hell. On the other hand, we shall see that Huberath's characters (living or dead) who enter the afterworld usually initially react with disbelief or doubt at phenomena that defy rationality but their reluctance to believe is sooner or later overcome in one way or another. Towards the end, I will attempt to explain the difference between the two authors as a result of their different approaches to describing afterworld in fiction. I will then suggest that Lewis's approach is less literal and therefore closer to a metaphor, while Huberath's is slightly more (though by no means fully) literal and therefore closer to a model.

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Let us start by observing how the relevance of faith is shown by C. S. Lewis in his visions of after-world. Towards the end of *The Last Battle*, there is a memorable scene involving the Dwarfs. Peter Schackel thus recapitulates some of the last scenes of the novel:

> As the battle, pitting the outnumbered forces of King Tirian (with two children, Eustace and Jill, among them) against impossible odds, nears its end, the Calormenes begin seizing the Narnians and throwing them into a stable,

> thinking they were giving them as sacrifices to their fearsome god Tash. The door, however, becomes a symbol of death and a portal to another world. When the Narnians go through it, they find themselves not in a smelly, dark stable, but in a huge land of light and joy[4].

The dwarfs who have refused to take either side in the last battle between Narnians and Calormenes are also finally captured by the latter and thrown into the stable as offering to the evil god Tash (to be precise, they enter the stable before the children and the Narnians). Unlike the Narnians and the children, however, they do not notice the heavenly landscape of the world they arrive in, still believing themselves to be trapped inside the stable: they can see only darkness. Even when Aslan comes and provides a feast for the Dwarfs,

> they began eating and drinking greedily enough, but it was clear that they couldn't taste it properly. They thought they were eating and drinking only the sort of things you might find in a stable. One said he was trying to eat hay and another said he had a bit of an old turnip […]. And they raised golden goblets of rich red wine to their lips and said "Ugh! Fancy drinking dirty water out of a trough that a donkey's been at! […]"[5].

Needless to add, they also fail to notice Aslan himself. As the dwarfs said earlier, refusing service to king Tirian: "We're on our own now. No more Aslan, no more Kings, no more silly stories about other worlds. The Dwarfs are for the Dwarfs"[6]. It is their disbelief (coupled, no doubt, with their self-centredness) that prevents the poor wretches from enjoying the delightful surroundings. Paradoxically, they experience hell even as they find themselves in the midst of heaven. Lewis's theology that gave rise to this striking scene is perhaps best explained by a line from *The Great Divorce*: "Hell is a state of mind; Heaven is reality itself"[7] – in this way George MacDonald (the fictional one, created by Lewis) clarifies the difference between heaven and hell to the narrator. In C. S. Lewis's universes, heaven is more real than the material world: one may not wish it into or out of existence by believing or not believing in it; however, one may prevent oneself from enjoying it by holding fast to an erroneous belief (or disbelief).

In the above-mentioned story *The Great Divorce,* we can find another, and subtler, version of the same phenomenon, i.e. of disbelief that prevents a person from enjoying heaven. At some point, the narrator observes a con-

4 P. Schackel, op. cit..
5 C. S. Lewis, *The Last Battle*, London 1997, p. 139.
6 Ibidem, p. 72.
7 Idem, *The Great Divorce: A Dream*, New York 2001, p. 70.

versation between an Episcopal Ghost and a Solid Spirit addressed by the former as Dick. Dick and the Ghost were once theologians who succumbed to what the Ghost calls "liberal theology" – a "current fashion […] of thought"[8] that rejected any literal belief in the supernatural – and, in consequence, effectively lost their faith. Dick, who returned to his former faith before his death, tries to persuade the Episcopal Ghost to do the same: "Having allowed oneself to drift, unresisting, unpraying […] we reached a point where we no longer believed the Faith. […] I have been talking of the past (your past and mine) only in order that you may turn from it forever […]. Will you, even now, repent and believe?"[9]. The irony is that the Ghost claims that he "still believes" – but only "in a spiritual sense"[10], which for him evidently means treating God and other objects of faith as metaphors, not as reality. He even refuses to admit that the Grey City he now lives in is hell (or purgatory if he decides to leave it) and the grassy plain where he meets Dick is a vestibule of heaven[11]. To make the matters even worse, the Ghost prefers doubt – something he perceives as mature and sophisticated – to certainty, which he considers crude and simplistic. While Dick offers to lead him where he can find final answers and absolute facts, the Ghost refuses, preferring "the free play of inquiry"[12] to knowing the truth[13].

In *The Pilgrim's Regress*, we also find an echo of the phenomenon described above. The equivalent of hell featured in this book, the black hole, is only briefly described and we know nothing of the activities or views of people confined to it. However, we are told of the character Wisdom – a personification of absolute idealism – who spends eternity in Limbo, which is

8 Ibidem, p. 37.

9 Ibidem, p. 38–39.

10 Ibidem, p. 34.

11 Ibidem, p. 34–35.

12 Ibidem, p. 41.

13 David C. Downing notes a similarity between the Episcopal Ghost and the character of Mr. Broad from *The Pilgrim's Regress*. C. S. Lewis, *The Pilgrim's Regress: Wade Annotated Edition*, ed. D. C. Downing, Grand Rapids–Cambridge 2014, p. 117. Downing also explains: "In the heading, Lewis identifies Mr. Broad as «Broad Church, modernizing, 'religion,'» those who would seek to «de-mythologize» Christianity, respecting its moral traditions but setting aside theology, especially anything regarding the supernatural or the miraculous". Based on one of Lewis's letters, Downing identifies the proponents of this trend as "Liberals and Modernists." Ibidem, p. 116. As Steven J. J. Lovell observes, "Lewis was especially opposed to any liberal theology motivated merely by the desire to accommodate Christianity to the sensibilities of the age". S. J. J. Lovell, *Philosophical Themes from C.S. Lewis*, Sheffield 2003, p. 167.

described as "the twilit porches of the black hole"[14]. The attitude of Mr. Wisdom is not entirely unlike that of the Episcopal Ghost and the Dwarfs:

> Very few live there [in Limbo], and they are all men like old Mr. Wisdom – men who have kept alive and pure the deep desire of the soul but through some fatal flaw, of pride or sloth or, it may be, timidity, have refused till the end the only means to its fulfilment; t a k i n g h u g e p a i n s , o f t e n , t o p r o v e t o t h e m s e l v e s t h a t t h e f u l f i l m e n t i s i m p o s s i b l e. […] it is their doom to live for ever in desire without hope[15].

Like the Episcopal Ghost and like the Dwarfs, the denizens of Limbo do not enter heaven because they persist in the erroneous belief that no such thing is available to them. There is, of course, also a parallel between the black hole and the prison of the Giant in the same book. However, the situation of the Giant's prisoners seems to be less an allegory of hell as such than an allegory of a "Freudianised" state of mind: the inability to think other than in terms of psychoanalysis[16].

* * *

When we compare the aforementioned texts by Lewis, emphasising the importance of faith so strongly, with Huberath's novels and short stories, we will note immediately the radical difference between them. For in Huberath's visions of afterworld – and there is a considerable number of them in his literary output – faith does not seem to be an issue of much significance. Apparently, and in fact quite logically, Huberath assumes that afterworld is not a place where it is possible to doubt any more, and so belief is taken as a matter of course. This attitude is expressed in passing by the narrator of *Portal zdobiony posągami* [*A Portal Adorned with Sculptures*]:"[…] one does not lose faith here […]"[17]. But let us examine Huberath's eschatological texts one by one. In the dream-like short story *Trzeba przejść groblą* [*A Causeway to Walk Across*], the question of believing or not believing in God or the supernatural is not raised because, for the most part, the character does not realize that he is dead. When the truth is revealed to him in the end, he does

[14] C. S. Lewis, *The Pilgrim's Regress: Wade Annotated Edition*, ed. D. C. Downing, Grand Rapids–Cambridge 2014, p. 184.

[15] Ibidem. Emphasis added.

[16] Ibidem, p. 59.

[17] "[…] wiary tu się nie traci […]". M. S. Huberath, *Portal zdobiony posągami*, Lublin 2012, p. 399 (translation mine).

not question it, either; he simply accepts the facts: "He wasn't amazed: after all, he could have expected something like this"[18].

Huberath's landmark short story *The Greater Punishment*, set in a hell/purgatory modelled on a concentration camp, is another eschatological text in which faith is not much of an issue. True, it might seem that the infernal reality is somehow dependent on the main character's beliefs. In the opening scene, we are given an extremely graphic, retrospective account of the tortures that the main character, named Rud, has just undergone; whereas in one of the last scenes Rud's interrogator, Neuheufel, explains to him that the tortures were not quite real: Rud perceived his punishment as physical pain and mutilation of his body, even though, in fact, he has no body now[19]. However, this phenomenon has arguably less to do with faith, understood as accepting or rejecting certain facts and ideas, than with the manner in which Rud perceives reality. The character realizes that he is dead and that he is being punished – these facts are never denied. But Rud's perception transforms the spiritual reality into a seemingly physical experience (which, by the way, coincides neatly with the fact that sensuality was not least of his sins on earth).

In the lyrically surreal short story *Balm of a Long Farewell*, the main character, Lorenzo, makes several visits to the Isle of the Dead to say goodbye to his recently deceased young wife before she departs from that in-between place to the afterworld proper[20]. Initially, Lorenzo reacts with incredulity when he is told about the alleged possibility of visiting the dead on the Isle of the Dead. However, he decides to try to get there and succeeds. There is no questioning of the island's reality then; neither can other people doubt that Lorenzo has indeed been to the Isle of the Dead because each time he comes back he bears tangible effects of his stay in the realm of the dead: much weakened and exuding a corpse-like stench, he is almost dead himself and needs to be taken care of. Admittedly, there are some passages that could be construed as a suggestion that Lorenzo's travels to the Isle of the Dead might be happening in his imagination alone. During his come back from his first trip to the Isle of the Dead, Lorenzo experiences the mixing of dream and waking: "The silence made him drowsy. He forced himself to keep rowing. Sleep

[18] "Nie czuł zdumienia, mógł się przecież spodziewać czegoś takiego". Idem, *Trzeba przejść groblą*, [in:] idem, *Balsam długiego pożegnania*, Kraków 2006, p. 450 (translation mine).

[19] Idem, *The Greater Punishment*, [in:] *The Dedalus Book of Polish Fantasy*, ed. W. Powaga, New York 1997.

[20] On the spatial setting of the story *Balm of a Long Farewell*, see my article *The Space of Death in Selected Short Stories by Marek S. Huberath*, [in:] *Space in Literature: Method, Genre, Topos*, ed. U. Terentowicz-Fotyga, Berlin 2018, p. 233–252.

imperceptibly worked its way into waking. […] Two sleepless nights were taking their toll on his mind"[21]. Lorenzo's next trip is compared to a dream by the narrator: "The voyage, as in a dream, seemed to last forever"[22]. Setting out on his last voyage, the protagonist very briefly considers the possibility that his travels might be unreal: "The voyage fell into its usual rhythm. «It's always the same,» he thought […]. And wondered, «Is this voyage in my mind?»" – only to reject the idea in the next sentence: "«No,» he remembered then, «because one time we couldn't sail, the *bubocco [wind]* prevented it.»"[23]. On the whole, given the above-mentioned tangibility of Lorenzo's experience and given the fact that other people repeatedly bear witness to Lorenzo's corpse-like condition on return from his travels, one must conclude that any doubts as to the actual status of Lorenzo's travels are meant to encourage the reader to an allegorical reading of the story: not nullifying its literal meaning but taking the interpretation to a different level. Treating the story as an allegory of mourning can thus enrich the literal interpretation rather than replace it.

In Huberath's two major novels – *Portal zdobiony posągami* [*A Portal Adorned with Sculptures*] and *Miasta pod Skałą* [*Cities under the Rock*] – the question of believing or not believing in the supernatural is not absent but it seems to be less important in them than the question of reconciling faith with reason. Both novels are set in in-between worlds on the outskirts of afterworld, though each of them is very different. In both novels, the protagonist experiences considerable doubts as to the reality of the extraordinary and apparently inexplicable phenomena that he is confronted with. The protagonist of *Miasta pod Skałą* [*Cities under the Rock*], professor Humphrey Adams strays into the underworld through a forgotten gate in the Vatican Wall. Wandering in an underground maze beneath Vatican, he experiences a series of fantastic dreams that mingle with reality. In those dreams he talks and fights with robot-like sculptures and kills a unicorn-pegasus. Finding a different exit from the tunnels, Adams goes through a portal between worlds that defies geometry: the exit from the maze is at the same time a hollow in a tree. Stepping out of the hollow, the protagonists finds himself in an eerie, alternative version of Rome. One of the most striking characteristics of this infernal city is the practice of turning human corpses into everyday articles and works of art, such as monuments. Over the course of the plot Adams is faced with still more wonders – most of them on the macabre side – but it would be useless, of course, to list all of them. The ones I mentioned are only a few examples from the initial part of the novel but they indicate sufficiently

[21] M. S. Huberath, *Balm of a Long Farewell*, [in:] https://www.wordswithoutborders.org/article/balm-of-a-long-farewell (accessed 27 Jul 2020, trans. M. Kandel).

[22] Ibidem.

[23] Ibidem.

how overwhelmed the protagonist must feel, confronted with the supernatural reality.

Vittorino, the protagonist of *Portal zdobiony posągami* [*A Portal Adorned with Sculptures*], also has to deal with phenomena that defy common sense. He takes part in an academic conference devoted to the Last Judgement in fine arts; the conference lasts rather long, but initially we are not told how long. Much later, it is revealed that the conference centre is the afterworld (actually, one of the afterworlds), Vittorino is dead and other inhabitants of the building are either other dead people or demons in human form or, less frequently, angels. Before learning all this, however, Vittorino witnesses a series of inexplicable phenomena. First, he has several extremely vivid dreams, each of which seems to be correlated with a lecture he attends the following day. Then one night as he goes to the bathroom, he discovers that it has disappeared: behind its door, there is no floor and no walls, just a black void. The next day, however, the bathroom is there again: the disappearance is temporary and repeats itself at irregular intervals. On another day, Vittorino discovers that the cars parked in front of the building have turned into fake cars and their wheels are seamlessly merged with concrete pavement. When the phenomenon wears off and the cars are real again, Vittorino takes his car and drives with his friend Eleonora along the only way that goes away from the building and into the woods. On their trip, they encounter another strange phenomenon: the straight road going away from the building leads them, without forks and bends, back to the building they left. Given all this, one must conclude that Vittorino, like Adams, has every right to feel overwhelmed and confused.

The main characters in both novels question the reality of what is happening to them. Adams's strategy in confrontation with the supernatural and the surreal is staying calm and adopting a researcher's attitude: "he tried not to wonder […], carefully gathering facts to identify overall regularities"[24]. However, regardless of this approach, the protagonist keeps wondering if all his adventures are real or if he is dreaming or dead. Shortly after Adams has found himself in the City under the Rock, the narrator says (in free indirect speech), "he's never had such a vivid dream before. Only those from the underground maze could match it"[25]. On the other hand, not much later Adams thinks that "this needn't be a dream. He's never had such an intense sense of

[24] "Starał się nie dziwić […], bacznie kolekcjonował fakty, by wyłowić ogólne prawidłowości". Idem, *Miasta pod Skałą*, Kraków 2005, p.51.

[25] "Nigdy dotąd nie miał tak realistycznego snu, mogły się z nim równać tylko te z labiryntu w podziemiach". Ibidem, p. 50.

reality in a dream" [26]. Then again, after some time, Adams decides that he is dreaming and that he can shape the reality around him: "Since he realized he was dreaming, he acted more resolutely. After all, it was him who formed the reality around him and determined all that happened"[27]. Nevertheless, he also allows for the possibility that he might be dead: "A dream that won't end is death. Perhaps I'm dead by now…"[28].

Vittorino questions the reality around him too. Initially, he suspects that he might have gone mad:

> [It was] as if the world around him was sewn together from tightly fitting fragments but when the tacking came apart, the holes showed […]. Perhaps they were no holes in reality but his delusions, more and more of them? The world's remained as it was, the conference of art historians goes on and it's only [Vittorino] that's drifting further and further away from reality? The unchanging rhythm of conference activities provokes the unruly self to wildest guesses and suspicions? Or perhaps the strong stress before his own lecture triggered a psychological breakdown?[29]

Vittorino finds reassurance in the fact that he's not the only one to have noticed strange phenomena. His friend Quent reveals to him that he too has had strangely vivid dreams and introduces Vittorino to a small group of conspirators that explore the strange reality around them. "[Vittorino] took a different outlook on the world around him. He stopped suspecting himself of madness. The oddities he'd noticed indeed took place and there were some people here who tried to explain them"[30]. At this stage, the protagonist does not even guess that he might be dead, so there is no question of believing or not believing the reality of the afterlife.

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[26] "To nie musi być snem. Nigdy we śnie nie miał tak mocnego poczucia rzeczywistości". Ibidem, p. 51.

[27] "Odkąd uświadomił sobie, że śni, działał śmielej. Ostatecznie, to on formował otaczającą rzeczywistość oraz decydował o wszystkich wydarzeniach". Ibidem, p. 92.

[28] "Sen, który się nie kończy, to śmierć. Może już umarłem…". Ibidem, p. 96.

[29] "Jakby świat otaczający go pozszywano z dobrze dopasowanych fragmentów, ale gdy fastryga się rozsuwała, ukazywały się dziury […]. Może to nie żadne dziury w rzeczywistości, ale jego urojenia, coraz więcej urojeń? Świat pozostał, jaki był, konferencja historyków sztuki trwa dalej, tylko Ioanneos [Vittorino] coraz bardziej oddala się od realności? Niezmienny rytm zajęć konferencyjnych prowokuje niesforną jaźń do najdzikszych domysłów i podejrzeń? A może to silny stres spowodowany własnym referatem doprowadził do załamania psychiki?". Idem, *Portal zdobiony posągami*, Lublin 2012, p.168–169.

[30] "Ioanneos [Vittorino] innymi oczyma patrzył na świat otaczający. Przestał podejrzewać siebie o szaleństwo. Zauważone przez niego osobliwości faktycznie miały miejsce, a byli tu tacy, którzy próbowali to wytłumaczyć". Ibidem, p. 207.

After some time, however, both protagonists are simply forced to acknowledge the reality of the fantastic happenings. Adams stops claiming that he must be dreaming after receiving electroshocks:

> Such an intense pain would wake a dead man. Neither could dream logic account for all the happenings. Similarities and reflections of Adams's own thoughts that he'd been desperately trying to detect in other people turned out to be random at closer scrutiny […]. One must accept the facts and acknowledge that reality turned out to be different than what he knew from everyday experience and different than what he'd been taught. Somewhere under Rome a passage led to an unusual part of reality[31].

Philosophically, pain may not be the perfect argument against solipsism but it works for the character: his incredulity stops and he accepts the morbid and surreal underworld as a fact. Vittorino does not need such drastic measures to be convinced of the truth about his surroundings: he merely accepts the argumentation of his friends that they are all dead and that the conference centre building is the afterworld – a kind of vestibule of hell, with an occasional access to the earthly world. This conception provides a consistent, if strange, explanation of the phenomena he has been observing and there is nothing that would either contradict that explanation or provide a better alternative.

The (almost) undeniably real status of the supernatural in Huberath's fictional universes results in a shift of stress from faith as a choice to faith as one part of a person's worldview that must somehow be reconciled with other, seemingly incompatible, parts of that same person's mindset. If the protagonists have to accept certain facts willy-nilly, it follows that in Huberath's afterworlds, faith is no longer a matter of choice. The supernatural is confirmed as a virtually undeniable part of reality and the problem of believing or not believing is rather unequivocally resolved. What remains then is the aforementioned problem of reconciling faith with reason, or perhaps it would be better to say: the supernatural with the rational. In the present discussion, however, we are not interested in the particulars of this issue. A more extensive analysis of Huberath's take on the problem of faith versus reason can be found in the doctoral dissertation *Space and Epistemology in the Works of*

[31] "Takie natężenie bólu przebudziłoby umarłego. Logika snu też nie tłumaczyła wszystkich wydarzeń. Podobieństwa i refleksy myśli Adamsa, desperacko wyszukiwane w innych ludziach, po staranniejszej analizie okazywały się przypadkowe […]. Trzeba pogodzić się z faktami i uznać, że rzeczywistość okazała się inna, niż znał ją z codziennego doświadczenia, i inna niż to, czego go uczono. Gdzieś pod Rzymem wiodło przejście do niezwykłej części rzeczywistości". Idem, *Miasta pod Skałą*, Kraków 2005, p. 100–101.

Marek S. Huberath by the present author[32]. Here we are merely concerned with the issue of faith as such in either writer's works.

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A question naturally suggests itself, what is the source of such a pronounced difference between the two writers? We have noticed that, on the one hand, in C. S. Lewis's texts, afterworld is a place where characters can still choose to believe or disbelieve: the reality of heaven and hell does not impose itself on them. On the other hand, in Huberath's texts the reality of afterlife is usually either taken as a matter of course or it forces itself on the characters with inexorable solidity so that even if a character initially questions the reality he observes, he has to acknowledge the existence of the supernatural world. (This of course leaves considerable room for doubt and speculation as to the afterworld's exact status, the laws it's governed by etc., but there is rather little room for questioning its existence as such). Authors' statements about their own literary output are, of course, by no means conclusive in that respect; that is, they do not provide ultimate, "correct" interpretations. Nevertheless, they can be extremely helpful as a source of potential clues; after all, it is not unreasonable to assume that the different role of faith in Lewis's and Huberath's afterworlds stems from the two writers' different creative strategies. Let us examine two quotations: a fragment of Lewis's preface to *The Great Divorce* and Huberath's comment on *Portal zdobiony posągami* [*A Portal Adorned with Sculptures*] taken from an interview about that novel. C. S. Lewis insists:

> I beg readers to remember that this is a fantasy. It has of course—or I intended it to have—a moral. But the transmortal conditions are solely an imaginative supposal: they are not even a guess or a speculation at what may actually await us. The last thing I wish is to arouse factual curiosity about the details of the after-world[33].

Huberath in turn thus comments those parts of his above-mentioned novel which are devoted to heaven:

> It's an attempt to understand what heaven might look like. People usually complain that hell looks so cool in literature, while heaven is kind of hopeless: people are standing there, singing – and what's the point? I tried to create a model to help you imagine something phenomenal, rich, mind-blowing. I don't mean to say that heaven looks like this but I'm offering a model which

[32] K. Chojnowski, *Przestrzeń i epistemologia w twórczości Marka S. Huberatha* (accepted for publication).

[33] C. S. Lewis, *The Great Divorce: A Dream*, New York 2001, p. X.

> could help you imagine it. It's like in science: the truth of a model and the truth of the thing itself…[34].

Comparing the above quotations, one can immediately spot a crucial difference between the two authors' approaches to depicting afterworld in fiction. While both Lewis and Huberath make the qualification that their conceptions of the supernatural world should not be taken literally, Huberath nevertheless seems to be rather closer to literalness than C. S. Lewis.

In light of the above, it is tempting to suggest that the treatment of faith by C. S. Lewis makes his conceptions of afterlife closer to m e t a p h o r, while the treatment of faith by Marek S. Huberath makes his conceptions of afterlife closer to a m o d e l. Encyclopedia Britannica defines scientific modelling as:

> the generation of a physical, conceptual, or mathematical representation of a real phenomenon that is difficult to observe directly […]. Although modeling is a central component of modern science, scientific models at best are approximations of the objects and systems that they represent–they are not exact replicas. Thus, scientists constantly are working to improve and refine models[35].

The problem of defining scientific models is of course much more complex than that; Frigg and Hartman note that "the class of things that are referred to as models contains a heterogeneous collection of different things," which causes some researchers to doubt the possibility of providing "a meaningful answer" to the question "what are models?"[36]. However, it is not the purpose of the present article to analyse these ontological quandaries; the simplified definition quoted above is quite sufficient for our purposes.

Arguably, Lewis's afterworlds, especially the one depicted in *The Great Divorce*, are a pretext to talk about the decisions we make here on earth. As we have noticed before, in C. S. Lewis's afterworlds, faith is a matter of choice, and an extremely important choice at that, and unbelief is still possible. This

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[34] "To próba zrozumienia, jak może wyglądać niebo. Na ogół się narzeka, że piekło tak fajnie wychodzi w literaturze, a niebo to jest takie beznadziejne: stoją, śpiewają i co z tego? Próbowałem stworzyć model, żeby można było wyobrazić sobie coś fenomenalnego, bogatego, rozsadzającego. To nie jest tak, że niebo tak wygląda, natomiast ja podsuwam model, jak można by sobie je wyobrażać. Tak jak jest w nauce: prawda modelu i prawda istoty…". M. S. Huberath *„Każdy z nas jest jedną liczbą". O „fizyce wyobraźni"*, an interview by D. Kuśmirek-Wrzos [in:] http://baza.fantasta.pl/autor.php?id=101# (accessed 27 Jul 2020, translation mine).

[35] K. Rogers, *Scientific Modelling*, [in:] https://www.britannica.com/science/nuclear-model (accessed 29 Jul 2020).

[36] R. Frigg and S. Hartmann, *Models in Science*, [in:] https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/models-science/ (accessed 25 Jul 2020).

suggests that Lewis speaks not so much of literal afterlife as of life on earth, where such choices are still possible. Discussing the conversations between dwellers of heaven and denizens of hell in *The Great Divorce*, Hsiu-Chin Chou observes that:

> These encounters are indeed fantastic— extra-terrestrial, trans-mortal and thus quite surreal and yet also very real especially regarding the conversational issues all about human affairs and mindsets which are in direct connection with earthly lives, such as different kinds of personal relationships and various self-aggrandizing or self-snaring "businesses" of theology, art, sensualism and so on[37].

Indeed, the researcher's analysis focuses on what C. S. Lewis says about moral choices in our lives rather than on what he says about heaven and hell as such.

Huberath in turn seems to take the approach of a researcher and tries to u n d e r s t a n d afterworld. The fact of its existence goes without saying once the characters are there. But it is a challenge for people in our world to imagine the unimaginable beyond: Huberath's fiction can be perceived as a series of attempts to conceptualise that unfathomable realm. And such conceptualizations can indeed be compared to scientific modelling as they provide an "approximation" of something it is impossible "to observe directly"[38]. One might add that this approach is in line with Huberath's overall interest in cognitive issues[39].

In fact, on looking more closely, the issue of metaphor vs. model in the depiction of afterlife is more ambiguous with both authors. There seem to be elements of both model and metaphor in both C. S. Lewis's and Marek S. Huberath's afterworlds. If I claim that Lewis's conceptions are closer to metaphor and Huberath's to models, it should be taken to mean that one of these modes seems to dominate, not that it excludes the other. Moreover, it must be stressed that this conclusion is very tentative indeed and therefore it should be treated solely as a working hypothesis for further research; for of course the issue requires much additional, in-depth analysis.

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37 H.-C. Chou, *The Problem of Faith and the Self: The Interplay between Literary Art, Apologetics and Hermeneutics in C. S. Lewis's Religious Narratives*, Glasgow 2008, p. 121.

38 K. Rogers, op. cit.

39 For a thoroughgoing discussion of cognitive issues in Huberath's oeuvre, please refer to my doctoral dissertation, *Przestrzeń i epistemologia w twórczości Marka S. Huberatha*.

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