J. R. R. TOLKIEN'S MYTHICAL *"LEAF BY NIGGLE"* AS CHRISTIAN PARABLE OF EUCATASTROPHE

ჯონ რონალდ რუელ ტოლკინის მითიური „ნიგლის ფოთოლი" როგორც ევკატასტროფის ქრისტიანული პარაბოლა

Diana Sisakyan
PhD Student, Lecturer, Brusov State University,
Yerevan, Tumanyan Street 42, 0002, Armenia
+37494934554 diana_sisakyan96@yahoo.com,
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7480-5667

დიანა სისაკიანი
დოქტორანტი, ლექტორი, ბრუსოვის სახელმწიფო უნივერსიტეტი
ერევანი, თუმანიანის ქუჩა 42, 0002, სომხეთი.
+37494934554 diana_sisakyan96@yahoo.com,
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7480-5667

აბსტრაქტი . ჯონ ტოლკინის ნამუშევრებში განსაკუთრებულ ინტერესს წარმოშობს პირდაპირი და არაპირდაპირი ინტერტექსტუალური პარალელები კათოლიკური ეკლესიასთან, რადგან მისი შრომები წარმოადგენდა სწორი მისი კათოლიკური მრწამსის პროდუქტს. წინამდებარე ნაშრომის მიზანია წარმოადგინოს ახლებური მიდგომა მის ნამუშევრებში „ღვთიური" ელემენტის ძიებს. ეს ხელნაწერი ნათელს ჰფენს იმას, თუ როგორ უნდა გავიგოთ ინტერტექსტუალობის კვალი სხვადასხვა „ხმებს" შორის ტოლკინის ნაწარმოებში, რომელიც წარმოაჩენს მას ინტერტექსტუალურობის მუსიკალურობის ფონზე.

ამ კვლევის ძირითადი მიმართულებაა გარკვეული მუსიკალური ტერმინების შესწავლა და მათი გამოყენებადობა ლიტერატურათმცოდნეობის სფეროში. ამ კვლევის მიზანია გააფართოვოს არსებული ცოდნა მრავალხმიან სისტემაში არსებული რთული დიალოგური ურთიერთობებისა და ინტერტექსტუალურობის რიზომატური ხასიათის, ტოლკიენის თვითინტერტექსტუალობისა და მწერლის შემოქმედებაზე კათოლიკური გავლენის შესახებ. და ბოლოს, ინტერტექსტუალურობის მუსიკალურობის შესახებ განსხვავებული თეორიების გამო, ეს ნაშრომი მიზნად ისახავს ეფექტური გადაწყვეტის აღწერას სამიზნე ტექსტში არსებული ქრისტიანული და ავტორისეული „ხმების" აღმოსაჩენად და ჰიპერტექსტუალურობის გაფართოებას, სადაც ჰიპოტექსტი არ არის. ეს არ არის ერთი ტექსტური წყარო, მაგრამ კათოლიციზმი მთლიანობაში აღებულია, როგორც მრავალჯაჭვიანი ფართო წყარო.

საკვანძო სიტყვები: *ინტერტექსტუალურობა, ჰიპოტექსტი, მრავალხმიანობა, კონტრაპუნქტი, კონტრაფაქტუმი, განსასწმენდელი, ევკატასტროფა*

Abstract. An intriguing aspect of J. R. R. Tolkien's legendarium is its implicit and often times explicit Catholic intertextuality as Tolkien's entire worldview was molded by his Catholic faith. The goal of this paper is to present a novel approach in finding the 'holy' in his works. This manuscript sheds light on how to understand the intertextual tracings among the different 'voices' within Tolkien's work presenting it in the light of the musicality of intertextuality.

The primary focus of this research is the examination of certain musical terms and their applicability to the domain of literary studies. The purpose of this research is to broaden the current

knowledge about the complex dialogic relationships within the polyphonic system and the rhizomatic character of intertextuality, Tolkienian self-intertextuality and the multi-core nature of the Catholic influence on the work of the writer. And finally, by dint of different theories on the musicality of intertextuality, this paper aims at the description of an effective solution for the discovery of the Christian and authorial 'voices' present in the target text and at the expansion of hypertextuality where the hypotext isn't a single textual source but Catholicism in toto taken as a multi-stranded spacious source.

Keywords: *intertextuality, hypotext, polyphony, counterpoint, contrafactum, purgatorial, eucatastrophe*

Introduction. Several studies have put forward the interdisciplinarity of musical terminology in regards with language studies and literature, in particular vis-à-vis the phenomenon of intertextuality. For several years, linguists and philologists have been focusing on the polyphonic nature of texts. In an attempt to understand and disclose the peculiarities of the relations of 'voices' within a single text, researchers borrowed from the musical sphere such terms as *leitmotif, polyphony, motet* etc.

When we tackle the problems of intertextuality, we primarily focus on the Bakhtinian dialogism and the spatialization of the literary discourse which Kristeva later explicates by means of the horizontal and vertical axes. In addition, studies by Gasparov, Genette, Ángeles-Ruiz and others have led to a profound understanding of musicality of intertextuality, i.e. the very cross-disciplinary approach where the multitude of 'voices' or the textual polyphony is the object of attention particularly from the perspective of contrapuntal relations. Furthermore, only a handful of studies in literature demonstrate the intertextual relations between sacred and secular texts explicated by dint of similar musical phenomenon.

Albeit there are several studies consistent with the aforenamed approach, no study has till date examined the aforementioned polyphonic peculiarities in the works of J. R. R. Tolkien. To fill this gap in literature, this paper aims at the examination of the Christian elements in the mythical short story "Leaf by Niggle" by J. R. R. Tolkien that turn this masterpiece into a Catholic contrafactum.

Several studies have hypothesized the Christian message in Tolkien's works, however in order to reveal the concrete elements that make his writings Catholic we employed the conceptual, literary, descriptive, comparative and interdisciplinary methods in the analysis of one of his lesser-known works called "Leaf by Niggle".

In recent years, there has been considerable interest in the Catholic intertextuality of Tolkienian legendarium and in his short stories in particular. Needless to say that, if desired, some concepts and elements inspired by Tolkien's Catholic faith and theological reflections can be found in his other and lesser-known works such as his other short stories, however the mythical tale "Leaf by Niggle" most eloquently and revealingly testifies to his Christian worldview and thus, stands out among the rest of his 'smaller' writings. One can't help but compare J. R. R. Tolkien, the devout Catholic, to the great thinkers and artists of the Christian West. The last few years have seen a huge growth in the number of studies dedicated to the discovery of the rhizomatic core of the writings of the father of fantasy. Verily, some of his 'sub' creations are absolutely monumental, and the author's Catholic value-system and ideology are celebrated in them to an unparalleled perfection.

This paper constitutes a relatively new area of research which has emerged from the crisscrossing of music and literature where with the help of application of musical terminology to the literary sphere we attempt to reveal, understand and interpret the intertextual tracings present in J. R. R. Tolkien's "Leaf by Niggle" and to present the latter in the light of the sacred-secular exchange of texts.

Birth of Contrafactum from Contrapuntal Nature of Intertextuality

Since the period of post-structuralism, the question of intertextuality has been linked to the problem of "deconstruction" of human consciousness. The latter calls forth the will to overcome the limits of the individual linguistic understanding and enter the world of the previously written or the "déjà-dit" texts, the never-ending realm of intertextual chains where the borders among several texts

are blurred, if not obliterated. Consequently, the concept of "decentralization" of textual structure emerges where several non-identical but at the same time semantically equal units coexist.

In other words, the creation of such linguistic structures as "text within a text" or "text about a text" is linked to the dialogic inclination of the author of the text, which allows him/her to step out of his/her subjective understanding and at the same time introduce new subjects of the utterances that are bearers of various literary systems. Thus, a plurality of voices comes to light which Bakhtin called "textual polyphony", i.e. the copresence of several "voices" in the text.

In this respect, the concept of textual "polyphony", due to its musical nature, is directly connected with the concept of "counterpoint". This term derives from Latin "*contrapunct*", meaning "punctum contra punctum", i.e. "point against point" or "note against note" and later "melody against melody".

Hence, when we speak about intertextuality, we assume that there are "voices", two or more, that are present in the given text, i.e. polyphony. In fact, these two concepts are synonymous yet different. *Polyphony* is the presence of voices within the text, their aggregate. *Counterpoint*, on the other hand, is the very independence between two or among more voices that move, however, in harmony. These are different voices singing differently yet simultaneously.

The musical term "counterpoint" has the following meanings:

1. A combination of two or several independent melodies or voices moving together simultaneously.
2. A melody composed and layered on the given melody.
3. The same as "polyphony".
4. Invertible counterpoint, i.e. a way of composing two or several melodies or voices interchanging the order of melodic lines and their intervals.

All the aforementioned definitions of "counterpoint" can be explicated and implemented with regards to intertextuality, thus the insufficiently explored question of the organization of temporal aspects in the intertextual relations may be disclosed. In fact, when at least two texts "come together" within a given text and one of them precedes the other based on the time of its creation two temporally distinct authorial voices emerge where the voice A sort of outraces the voice B in the synchronized semantic coexistence.

Bakhtin in his analysis of Dostoevsky's writings argues that "essentially, from the perspective of philosophical aesthetics contrapuntal relations in music are merely a variety of broadly understood dialogic relations." (2002, стр. 26) Bakhtin emphasizes that the comparison between Dostoevsky's novel and "polyphony" is a graphic analogy. Indeed, in the domain of intertextuality the musical terms *polyphony* and *counterpoint* draw attention to the dialogic nature of the given text, just like in music where they designate the aggregate of voices or melodies and their independence within a single composition.

According to Gasparov the novel "Doctor Zhivago" (1957) written by B. Pasternak is based on the concept of "counterpoint". In his analysis of this novel Gasparov writes, "The concept of "counterpoint" i.e. the combination of several relatively independent timelines that flow simultaneously in accordance with which the text develops […]. Non-simultaneous and irregular entrance of multiple lines and various speed of their flow create an endless diversity of tapestry where any separate lines of development either diverge or fuse for a certain period of time into one centaur. […] Due to the simultaneous perception of these different linear flows of time the reader is able to step out of the unidirectional, homogeneous and irreversible march of time, thus to commit the symbolic act of defying its linear flux, hence, the act of "*defying death*"." (1993, стр. 244-245)

Gasparov underlines that the effect of nonlinearity or polyphony to a certain extent is distinctive of all art forms, however we should note that the phenomenon of "counterpoint" is best-defined in the sphere of music, however its cross-disciplinary aspect is a powerful form-building tool when it comes to the study of intertextual patterns. It is no accident that the works of prominent writers and thinkers of modern era were strongly influenced particularly by musical patterns and its compositional forms. Hence, intertextuality may be actualized by dint of contrapuntal relations of the "voices" present in a text that belong to different time periods yet coexist within the "literary word"

which Kristeva defines as "an intersection of textual surfaces rather than a point (a fixed meaning), as a dialogue among several writings". (1980, p. 65)

Expounding the theory of spatialization Kristeva puts forward the three-dimensional "space of texts" where there are two axes of intertextuality: the horizontal axis indicates that "the word in the text belongs to both writing subject and addressee" whilst the vertical axis specifies that the word is associated with the "anterior and synchronic literary corpus", (1986, p. 36) i.e. the urtext (from the German word "*urtext*" where *ur-* means "original", the original or earliest version of a text approved by linguists based on later versions of existing texts) or the "hypotext" which is an earlier written text that serves as a source for another literary work. "By hypertextuality I mean any relationship uniting a text B (which I shall call the hypertext) to an earlier text A (I shall, of course, call it the hypotext), upon which it is grafted in a manner that is not that of commentary." (Genette, 1997, p. 5)

Hence, in other words, the horizontal axis or surface concerns the writing subject-addressee or author-reader dynamic relationship; meanwhile the vertical axis or surface refers to the intertwined and mutually permeating texts, as well as contexts. Hence, to quote Kristeva "any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another" (1986, p. 37)

Similarly, in music the concept of "counterpoint" implies the independence of voices that move together harmoniously in the polyphonic flow of sounds or melodies. Despite the fact that each and every linear voice stands on its own, there is a dynamic relation or, in this context, "motion" which relies on the harmony when the voices are concurrent. For that reason, similarly to the axes of intertextuality, the horizontal and vertical dimensions of music should be considered simultaneously.

The contrapuntal relations of the authorial voices are manifested in a related cross-disciplinary phenomenon of "contrafactum". As stated by Helen Deeming, the writing of new words for an existent song, i.e. *contrafactum*, brings into being a "virtual polyphony" in the consciousness of the audience as "the new text never fully displaces the old". (Hagen, 2015, p. 729) Anna Maria Busse Berger and Jennifer Saltzstein give insight to the modes of polyphonic and trouvère[1] composition that bring into play the literate and verbal memory alongside with intertextuality and quotation to produce an authorial portrait. Tamsyn Rose-Steel studying a single motet illustrates how "visual, textual, and musical facets of a written page [produce] a chorus of voices that impacts upon the attentive reader" (2015, p. 729).

The term "contrafactum" is a Latinism (plural *"contrafacta"*, English *"contrafact/s"*, *"contrafacture/s",* later also "*counterfeit"*, German "*Kontrafaktur*") that first appeared in the Middle Ages and may be defined as:

1. In the Middle Ages the lack of contrast between *sacred* and *secular* types of music.
2. The action of borrowing a song from one sphere and adapting it to the other by means of substituting the text.
3. The same as *counterfeit*.
4. The same as *parody; sacred parody or anti-parody.*

Thus, "contrafactum" is present in the sphere of music as well as in literature. The intertextual and contrapuntal nature of this phenomenon can be found in the practice of borrowing a text (be it a song, a poem, a novel, etc.) and creating a new text based on the former, and in the case of a rewriting a song, the author keeps the melody but changes the words of the song, i.e. the lyrics. Howbeit, the key principle here lies in the "sacred-secular" as well as "secular-sacred" transitions. In simple terms, the difference between "counterfeit" and "contrafactum" is that the former, as stated by Rolf Breuer, "is only a loosely related 'equivalent' and thus eschews certain problems concomitant with sequels and completions […]. Examples range from Edward Bond's *"Lear"* through Ulrich Plenzdorf's *"Die neuen Leiden des jungen W."* (with Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *"Leiden des jungen Werthers"* as its reference work) [..] perhaps even to James Joyce's *"Ulysses"* (Homer)" (Ángeles-Ruiz, 2008, p. 56), thus, the action of rewriting of a text and transforming it by detaching it from its historical context and conveying it into the respective present context, hence creating a new text or a hypertext

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[1] *Trouvère* or *Trouveur*, a school of poet-composers who lived in the north of France in the XI-XVI centuries. Their works were the result of a combination of traditional themes and the use of established patterns in order to express them through clichés that the audience enjoyed rather than the poet's creative originality.

based on the given and famous hypotext. However, albeit the term "counterfeit" is used as a synonym to *contrafactum*, the former is commonly defined as "copying", "forging", "plagiarizing" and hence has a negative connotation. The word "counterfeit" derives from French "contrefaire" which is equivalent to the English verbs "to falsify", "to fake" or "to fraudulently modify".

On the other hand, *contrafactum* involves the religious-profane/profane-religious intertextual relationship where the hypertext B is the secularization of the hypotext A, which is a sacred text, e.g. a religious song, or the other way round. In the sphere of music *contrafactum* functions in either of these two directions: by composing pious lyrics for a secular song, or profane lyrics for religious song. According to Wardropper *contrafactum* "is a literary work - sometimes a novel or a drama, but usually a lyric poem of short extension - whose profane sense has been substituted for a sacred one instead. Then, this is about reshaping or recasting a text. Sometimes, the recast text preserves metrics, rhymes, and even - as it doesn't contradict the divinizing purpose - the thought... Just a few times it is got a *contrafactum* so plain and so perfect." (2008, p. 53)

In some cases, *contrafactum* is literally synonymous to "parody" as it can offer certain variations of the original song lyrics, but also there may be a loose contrast in regards with the content between the two given songs, or, moreover, no evident link between them. "The absence of such contrast can be shown simply by the observation that a secular song, if given a set of sacred words, could serve as sacred music, and vice versa. Only recently has it been recognized how frequently such interchange took place, and the more we learn about medieval music the more important it becomes." (Bukofzer, 1960, p. 108) In literature, "parody" is the imitation of a writer's/writers' style and manner. It is commonly considered to have a negative intention drawing attention to the overused or clichéd style of a particular author or school of writers and often ridiculing them. However, parody can be constructive in intent, or similarly to imitation it can be an expression of flattery and admiration, and be considered an "anti-parody" or "sacred parody" ("in Italian it is said *rifacimenti* or *travestimenti spirituali*; in French *travestissements spirituels* or *imitations pieuses*; […]; in German - the most accurate: *die gesistliche Kontrafaktur*" (Ángeles-Ruiz, 2008, p. 53)) if the hypotext-hypertext intertextual relationship deals with the *profane-religious* or *religious profane* interchange.

Based on the *sacred-secular* intertextual tracing, Christian contrafactum may be found in a multitude of literary pieces, e.g. F. Dostoevsky's "The Brothers Karamazov", H. Melville's "Moby-Dick", C. S. Lewis' "The Great Divorce", J. Milton's "Paradise Lost", W. Faulkner's "Absalom, Absalom!" and myriads of other coups de maître. For all these masterworks The Bible, or more broadly speaking, Christianity is the hypotext, and for the above-mentioned authors the holy scripture served as fundament and inspiration to compose their works by communicating the Christian message with the help of profane words.

Catholic Contrafactum[2] in the Story "Leaf by Niggle" by J. R. R. Tolkien

The mythical *Leaf by Niggle* is a fantasy short story by eminent writer and poet, philologist and translator, essayist and distinguished professor at the University of Oxford J. R. R. Tolkien. Initially named "The Tree", this story is a coalescence of Christian thought, metaphysical motifs of Plato, Thomistic philosophy and biographical references. This purgatorial tale is the fruit of Tolkien's potent intellectual venture as he wrote in one of his letters, "…I was anxious about my own internal Tree, *The Lord of the Rings.* It was growing out of hand, and revealing endless new vistas - and I wanted to finish it, but the world was threatening." (H. Carpenter, 1981, p. 340)

Leaf by Niggle, originally published in *The Dublin Review* in January 1945, was later found in a number of Tolkienian collections. "Although the story was composed earlier, it was sent off in 1944 in response to a request from the editor of *The Dublin Review* as a short story that might express 'Catholic Humanity.' Tolkien responded quickly." (Boyd, 2019).

Despite the fact that *Leaf by Niggle* is one of the little-known works of the father of fantasy, this mythical story is of paramount importance as it gives insights into the peculiarities of the

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[2] The term *contrafactum* in the Spanish variant "contrafactura" was first introduced to the context of intertextuality and Tolkien's legendarium by Pedro Ángeles-Ruiz in his paper "*Catholic 'Contrafactura' of Myth in Some J.R.R. Tolkien's Writings*".

authorial portrait, his creative endeavour and, in particular, the Tolkienian concept of 'sub-creation' which echoes the major Christian principle of 'Creation' and more.

We commence with "*a little man called Niggle who had a long journey to make*" (p. 217).

From one perspective Niggle is the "everyman", however Tolkien poured into Niggle's character so much preciseness and self-contempt that it mimics Tolkien himself. According to the Oxford Learner's Dictionary "niggle" means "a slight feeling, such as worry, doubt, etc. that does not go away", e.g. a niggle of doubt, "niggling" means "not important", e.g. "niggling details". "Niggling" is synonymous to "trifling away". In Catholicism this word clearly refers to the concept of *accidie* in the light of *hope vs accidie* struggle. "Accidie" derives from the same Middle English form which comes from medieval Latin "accidia" or "acedia" meaning "sloth" or the state of "torpor", i.e. one of the vices or evils with which hope wrestles. Niggle, similarly to Tolkien, desperately fights against the distractions in a hopeless attempt to fully focus on his creation, which in case of Tolkien was his epic trilogy. Tolkien feared he would never complete it, as well as had the clear understanding of the fact that he was endlessly niggling over the minute details of narration and wasting his time on academic duties at the university of Oxford.

Although Tolkien isn't explicitly referring to Thomas Aquinas' *Summa Theologica*, "The medieval saint's influence had so permeated Catholic moral theology in the early twentieth century that it would have been difficult for him to avoid Thomistic accounts of the virtues and vices. Alison Milbank notes that "Tolkien was not only brought up as a Catholic and thus sat through sermons by those trained in Aquinas, but owned a copy of the *Summa* which has some marginal notes" (Boyd, 2019). According to the Thomistic philosophy *despair* (from Latin *de-sperare*) find their roots in *sloth* and stands against the Thomistic virtue of 'hope', "Despair's linked to its 'root', the capital vice of sloth" (DeYoung, 2015, p. 829).

'The carriage was ordered long ago. It has come at last. It's waiting. You start today on your journey, you know'" (p. 224).

In the course of the story it becomes definite that the *journey* Niggle has to make is his own *death*. A kind of journey which all mortals have to make. While Niggle is protesting against the idea of using his canvas to fix the house of his neighbor Parish, the Driver who came to take Niggle for his long-awaited journey appears at his door and is the allegory of the *arrival of death*. Niggle is at sea for his is completely unprepared and startled as he didn't manage to pack anything for the journey but a paint-box and his sketchbook which he loses on the train as *"The Driver gave him no time to pack, saying that he ought to have done that before, and they would miss the train"* (p. 224) The reference to Niggle's journey of death can also be found in the beginning of the story. Later, in the last book of "The Lord of the Rings" Bilbo's final voyage to the 'Undying Lands' and the 'Grey Havens' will echo Niggle's last journey to the "Workhouse" which is the allegory of Purgatory.

"*Niggle felt very ill, and fainted on the platform. They put him in an ambulance and took him to the Workhouse Infirmary*" (p. 224)

The platform where Niggle arrives before being taken to the Purgatory is reminiscent of Dante Alighieri's "ante-purgatory" (Bernthal, 2014, p. 74). In the *Workhouse Infirmary* which is a prison-like hospital Niggle undergoes the process of healing and becomes busy with completing tasks he couldn't keep up to complete before as he could never properly manage his time. This Workhouse-Purgatory is where Niggle starts to care less about the trivialities and focuses on his daily labor. Niggle who passed out and is taken to the Purgatory is stepping into a different dimension, i.e. the first 'station' of his spiritual journey where he must heal and recover and go farther even though at first, he is almost certain that the Workhouse is the final destination.

"He did not like the <u>treatment</u> at all. The <u>medicine</u> they gave him was <u>bitter</u>" (p. 225).

The *treatment* in the form of *bitter medicine* is the allegory of confession. Niggle's life is flashing before his eyes; each and every thing that he has done as well as what he hasn't managed to complete. This process is akin to the beginning of the Catholic mass which starts with a confession, the very awareness of one's sins and the admission of *bitter* truth.

"It was more like being in a <u>prison than in a hospital</u>. <u>He had to work hard</u>, at stated hours [...] They kept him in the dark for hours at a stretch, '<u>to do some thinking</u>,'" they said" (p. 225).

Here Tolkien expresses the very tradition of the teaching of Catholic Church about the possibility of posthumous purification for those who die, albeit directed to the 'good' and 'righteousness', but without having corrected all the consequences of their sins. In this story Tolkien sheds a special light on the Catholic tradition of Purgatory. As Niggle arrives at his "luggage free" destination, he ends up at the *Workhouse Infirmary* which is the allegory of *Purgatory*. Here the purgatorial image is not considered primarily a place where souls suffer as a form of punishment for their sins but a place of *treatment*, a journey of healing, albeit by hard work and by "doing some thinking". Also, this vision of posthumous and purgatorial purification of sins is much closer to the Eastern theological tradition than the approach often attributed to the Western Church, which sees the sufferings of Purgatory as punishments for sins. This is again in parallel with the ending of "The Lord of the Rings" when the ringbearers, i.e. Bilbo and Frodo set off to the 'Undying Lands' to get a spiritual and psychological rather than physical healing for their wounds caused by the ownership and burden of the One Ring.

The suffering that Niggle goes through at the *Workhouse Infirmary* is channeled precisely into correcting the shortcomings of his personality that did not allow him to achieve perfection in life. By "doing some thinking" he comes to rethink his actions and understand the deeper understanding of their essence. Thus, Niggle's labor isn't a punishment but rather a transformation. His heart keeps expanding, step by step he begins to have a different understanding of time, and by rethinking his past and analyzing his actions he starts to become magnanimous, "The closest candidate for a natural or acquired virtue of hope, for Aquinas, is the virtue of magnanimity" (DeYoung, 2015, p. 831).

Tolkien himself called the whole story 'purgatorial', "I might say that in my myth I have used 'subcreation' in a special way (not the same as 'subcreation' as a term in criticism of art, though I tried to show allegorically how that might come to be taken up into Creation in some plane in my 'purgatorial' story *Leaf by Niggle* (Dublin Review 1945)) to make visible and physical the effects of Sin or misused Free Will by men" (H. Carpenter, 1981, p. 210).

"...and when he looked at Niggle's pictures (which was seldom) he saw only green and grey patches and black lines, <u>which seemed to him nonsensical</u>" (p. 220).

In contrast with kindhearted, imaginative, though *"a very ordinary and rather silly little man"* (p. 219) Niggle, Parish is stingy in saying words of appreciation, is very practical and commonsensical. Thus, we have *The Pragmatist vs The Dreamer* conflict where the former considers Niggle's painting merely a "*green and grey patches and black lines*" (p. 220) and finds Niggle's art *"nonsensical"* (p. 220). Parish is a gardener who's only concerned about the repairs of his house roof and illnesses, "A further contrast between art and life occurs when Parish asks for wood and canvas (another word pair) to patch up his battered home. Parish's wife's illness and Parish's bad leg (a further duality) force Niggle to go off on his bicycle to fetch the doctor" (Gorman, 1995, p. 4).

The importance of imagination is indeed one of the cornerstone ideas in Christian philosophy. Not only is imagination the gift of God but also a glimpse of the image of God. According to the Christian Convention imagination is the source of empathy, the very ability to wear "thy neighbor's" shoes. In this case Niggle is misunderstood and fully neglected by the society as he, the Subcreator

who is only trying to create *the Tree* following the act of the Creator, *his Tree* which according to Tompkins is of *"no practical or economic use"* (p. 235) Howbeit, according to Christian teaching imagination allows one to "rejoice with them to do rejoice, and weep with them that weep" (Romans 12:15, 1978, p. 1180). Jesus also asks for an act of imagination, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Matthew 22:39, 1978, p. 1019).

> *"He was the sort of painter who can paint <u>leaves</u> better than <u>trees</u>. He used to spend a long time on a single <u>leaf</u>, […] Yet he wanted to paint a whole <u>tree</u>"* (p. 217).

On the one hand, the symbol of *tree* is obviously at the very core of Christian tradition. In the book of Genesis Adam and Eve eat the forbidden fruit from the Tree of Knowledge and are exiled for the sin they committed. The tree that Niggle is dreaming to paint can be interpreted as a reference to the Tree of Knowledge as the protagonist has merely managed to paint a picture of a single leaf from that very Tree however in vain as despite the efforts of Atkins who preserves the painting, "*Most of it crumbled; but one beautiful leaf remained intact. Atkins had it framed*" (pp. 237-38) the fragment is destroyed because of the descendants of Adam and Eve as we all suffer from the effects four parents' original sin.

On the other hand, in Middle Ages the cross of the crucifixion of Christ was often considered synonymous to the Tree of Life as according to the medieval representations the cross on which the Lord was crucified was constructed from the wood of the Tree of Life. Also, the Tree of Life is frequently depicted in the medieval portrayals of Paradise. Niggle's leaf represents a fragment of the Tree, and the incompleteness of the leaf represents the artist's failure to realize the divine vision, however the ideal leaf which appears in Paradise symbolizes the reward which is later offered to him in the form of permission to enter Niggle's Country which stands for Paradise.

> *"Before him stood <u>the Tree, his Tree, finished</u>. […] <u>'It's a gift!'</u> he said."* (p. 230).

Niggle's leaf representing the Tree of Life is of no use and is neglected in this world but is perfectly understood and completed in Paradise where Niggle's tree beautifully grows in accordance with the vision that was planted in his heart by God. The vision that wasn't ever realized on Earth is made real in Paradise. During his life Niggle, distracted by the "*tremendous crop of interruptions*" (p. 219)*,* kept tweaking his painting over and over again, never completing it, often times because of his own idleness and lack of concentration. However, in Paradise his Tree is finished. This echoes the very Christian belief that God can do things that radiate through eternity just like the "gift" which Niggle beholds. This "gift" is offered, received, transformed and made new by the Lord.

According to Tolkien's theory of 'eucatastrophic tale' (from Greek prefix '*eu*', i.e. '*good' or 'well'* and the word '*catastrophe*' meaning *'calamity', 'disaster'*, again in Greek) the story, the tale, the myth should have a 'happy ending'. However, this isn't the popular 'happy ending' which we see at end of Hollywood films. This happy ending is equal to the 'good news' of Resurrection, the one that can be found at the end of a Gospel and in the words of Tolkien, "For it I coined the word 'eucatastrophe': the sudden happy turn in a story which pierces you with a joy that brings tears (which I argued it is the highest function of fairy-stories to produce)" (H. Carpenter, 1981, p. 116). The *eucatastrophe*, a neologism coined by Tolkien, is at first glance a paradox term but only not in Christianity where happiness and sadness walk hand in hand. This marriage of joy and sorrow is best manifested at the end of a Christian mass. Eucatastrophe which echoes "Eucharist", refers to the triumph of the creation of God, His ultimate goal, i.e. the *happy ending*. "The Birth of Christ is the eucatastrophe of Man's history. The Resurrection is the eucatastrophe of the story of the Incarnation" (Tolkien J. , 2008, p. 80).

Niggle's exclamation "*It's a gift!*" is an expression of eucatastrophic emotion. And as stated by Tolkien "…the Resurrection was the greatest 'eucatastrophe' possible in the greatest Fairy Story - and produces that essential emotion: Christian joy which produces tears because it is qualitatively so like sorrow, because it comes from those places where Joy and Sorrow are at one, reconciled" (1981, p. 116).

"As they <u>worked together</u>, it became plain that Niggle was now the better of the two at ordering his time and getting things done. Oddly enough, it was <u>Niggle</u> who became most absorbed in building and gardening, while <u>Parish</u> often wandered about looking at trees, and especially at the Tree" (p. 232).

Here Tolkien rephrases the worldly battle between one's soul and body which is in the heart of Christian belief. Niggle and his neighbor Parish represent the two aspects of mankind that are bound to clash with one another. However, at the end of the story they eventually collaborate when Parish and Niggle find themselves in the afterworld and enjoy their harmonious collaboration. According to one perspective this earthly conflict can be found in the etymology of the names 'Niggle' and 'Parish'; where the name 'Niggle' does represent his "ineffective obsession with details" whereas the name " 'Parish' […] again in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, refers not necessarily to the charge of a bishop or presbyter but also to a county subdivision used for civic and local government, that geographical area dependent upon the work of its governing officials. If 'Parish' personifies the practical and economic needs of geographical area, then 'Niggle' personifies the earthly failure to supply those needs" (Chance, 2001, p. 89). In case of Niggle, this interpretation may be valid as Tolkien's choice for the protagonist's name wasn't arbitrary, and the author here is implicitly and ironically referring to himself, however Tolkien didn't put any particular meaning or implicit massage into the name of Niggle's neighbor, "The name proved convenient, for the Porter's joke", writes Tolkien in one of his letters, "but it was not given with any intention of special significance. I once knew of a gardener called *Parish*. (I see there are six *Parishes* in our telephone book.) Of course some elements are explicable in biographical terms (so obsessively interesting to modern critics that they often value a piece of 'literature' solely in so far as it reveals the author, and especially if that is in a discreditable light)" (H. Carpenter, 1981, p. 340).

In the title "Leaf by Niggle" two major implications manifest the key motifs of the story. On the one hand, the title refers to the ripped piece of the unfinished canvas created by Niggle where only leaf-fragment survived. The latter, however is burnt down with the museum where it was kept symbolizing the insignificance of the material things and how fragile they are in the face of calamities of the primary world[3]. On the other hand, the title is a reference to the Niggle's wish to create the perfect leaf, and thus - the tree; a dream which he fulfils after he leaves the 'Workhouse' and is taken to the secondary world, i.e. Paradise. Here the Neoplatonic concept of the other world of the perfect and unchanging "idea/s" emerges:

"All the leaves he had ever labored at were there, as he had <u>imagined them rather than as he had made them</u>" (p. 230).

"'Now the Niggle case,' said <u>a Voice</u>, a severe voice, more severe than the doctor's.
'What was the matter with him?' said a <u>Second Voice</u>, a voice that you might have called gentle, though it was not soft - it was a voice of authority, and sounded at once hopeful and sad'" (p. 226).

At the end of his purgatorial treatment Niggle is resting in the dark when he hears two Voices speak, "*There seemed to be a Medical Board, or perhaps a Court of Inquiry*" (p. 226) They are discussing Niggle's case. The first voice sounds severe and is presenting his case against Niggle meanwhile the second voice speaks in Niggle's defense especially when he brings up his last arguments, i.e. Niggle's "*wet bicycle-ride*" (p. 227). The Second voice puts stress on that and eventually proves Niggle to be worthy of the Gentle Treatment. According to some interpretations these two voices stand for God the Father and God the Son. However, in fact this interpretation has nothing to do with the Christian tradition as the Persons of the Holy Trinity cannot be separated, they are regarded as one Godhead. Here the voices represent the two aspects of the Judgment of God, i.e. *justice* and *mercy*. These aspects are equally inherent in all the Persons of the Holy Trinity. The case ends with the First Voice addressing the Second, "*But you have the last word. It is your task, of*

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[3] The reader's/viewer's real world as opposed to the 'secondary' world, i.e. imaginary world of fiction. Both terms were coined by J.R.R. Tolkien in his essay "On Fairy-Stories" (1947).

course, to put the best interpretation on the facts. Sometimes they will bear it. What do you propose?"
(p. 228), This is a reference to the Christian hope for Divine Mercy, without which, even the righteous
would not have stood in the face of Divine Justice. "And enter not into judgment with thy servant: for
in thy sight shall no man living be justified" (Psalms 143:2, p. 682) However, the final verdict
depends on Niggle and him alone.

When both Voices, discussing Niggle's fate, turn to him, instead of asking for a better fate for
himself, as if inappropriately, Niggle talks about his neighbor Parish, asking for him, "'*Could you tell
me about Parish?' said Niggle. 'I hope he is not very ill? Can you cure his leg? It used to give him a
wretched time. And please don't worry about him and me. He was a very good neighbour, and let me
have excellent potatoes, very cheap, which saved me a lot of tim*e' " (p. 228) Due to this gesture, we
see that as a result of "doing some thinking" Niggle comes to realize the significance and value of
another person, his neighbor. This plays a decisive role in the verdict. The path of "purification" in the
proper sense of the word for Niggle is completed, and the path of "ascension" is at hand.

"This place cannot be left just as my private park. I need help and advice" (pp. 231-32).

When Niggle is wandering in his country (the Paradise) thinking about finishing the landscape,
he remembers about Parish. Here Niggle realizes that the Tree and the landscape, everything that he
dreamt of and beholds doesn't belong merely to him. He thinks of his neighbour Parish who was a
good gardener and calls his name. Parish appears and together they complete the Tree and the forest,
however now we notice that these two neighbors change roles, *"Oddly enough, it was Niggle who
became most absorbed in building and gardening, while Parish often wandered about looking at
trees, and especially at the Tree"* (p. 232). Niggle and Parish depend on one another, and Niggle's
subcreation is Parish's doing too as it is manifested in the greater divine Creation. And "help and
advice" are at the heart of any creation according to the Christian tradition. Niggle can't do it alone,
just like Frodo in "The Lord of the Rings" who is the ringbearer however only thanks to the
contribution of his friend Sam and the entire fellowship he is able to destroy the ring and complete the
quest. The subcreation of Niggle and Parish redounds to God's creation and His glory as we share in
the Lord's creativity which makes us creative too.

*"They saw a man, he looked like a shepherd; he was walking towards them, down the grass-
slopes that led up into the Mountains"* (p. 234).

After all, Niggle leaves the "eternal" creation to ascend to God's Kingdom, i.e. Heaven, which
he only envisioned from afar. He is led and accompanied by a shepherd, an image associated in the
Christian mind with a clear allusion to Christ the Shepherd who takes Niggle to the Mountains.

From Mount Sinai to Mount Tabor, mountains are very often mentioned in the Bible where
they symbolize the wonder, majesty and greatness of God who makes use of them for His purposes.
The Mountains in the Heaven of Niggle where the Shepherd leads him echo in particular the
following lines from the New Testament, "And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his
brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, And was transfigured before them: and his
face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light" (Matthew 17:1-2, 1978, p. 1011).

*"But eventually the Museum was burnt down, and the leaf, and Niggle, were entirely forgotten
in his old country"* (pp. 236-37).

Thus, Niggle's work turns out to be, despite all its incompleteness and personal shortcomings
of the artist, of eternal value, included in God's Plan. Moreover, this value does not depend on the fact
that on earth Niggle's work was not accepted and eventually, *forgotten* as at the end of the story in the
primary pragmatic world the Museum is *burnt down*. This can be interpreted as a reference to Saint
Peter's words, "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens
shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the
works that are therein shall be burned up" (2 Peter 3:10, 1978, p. 1265). Tolkien, of course, knew that
everything on earth someday would burn and turn into dust, everything he created would be gone just
like Niggle and his leaf. However, parallelly, in Heaven the leaf turned into the Tree and the

landscape is completed. In this regard Tolkien wrote in one of his letters, "There is a place called 'heaven' where the good here unfinished is completed; and where the stories unwritten, and the hopes unfulfilled, are continued. We may laugh together yet..." (H. Carpenter, 1981, p. 64)

In the gospel parables of Christ, we can find patterns akin to this mythical story, like the parable of "The Rich Man and Lazarus". Such story-parables have a remarkable "applicability" in the words of Tolkien (H. Carpenter, 1981, p. 282) i.e. they express truth. Hence, Tolkien's "Leaf by Niggle" can also be attributed to the genre of gospel parables.

Conclusion

The main achievements of this paper can be summarized as the applicability of the musical term *contrafactum* in the interpretation of intertextual relations that establish the link between the holy and the sacred. These findings are in accordance with the Bakhtinian theory of polyphony and the theory of Gasparov on the contrapuntal links among the polyphonic system of intertextuality.

The results of our analysis demonstrated that J. R. R. Tolkien's "Leaf by Niggle" can be regarded as a Catholic contrafactum.

In the course of our research we revealed the contrapuntal essence of intertextual tracings found in the hypertext "Leaf by Niggle" that trace back to the hypotext, i.e. Catholicism as a whole. These results are consistent with the approach of such Tolkien scholars as Boyd, Bernthal, Ángeles-Ruiz, Gorman and others.

Firstly, in our analysis we 'unmasked' the semantic peculiarities of certain word-concepts in the "Leaf by Niggle":

- The name *Niggle* refers to the concept of *sloth* in Thomism,
- *Niggle* and *Parish* refer to *the Dreamer* vs *the Pragmatist* clash,
- The word *journey* refers to *death*,
- Niggle's *tree* represented in his wish to create the *leaf* stands for:
    - *The Lord of the Rings*,
    - *Subcreation*,
    - *Tree of Knowledge*,
    - *Crucifix,*
    - *Tree of Life,*
    - Neoplatonic concept of *the other world*.
- *Driver* symbolizes the *arrival of death*,
- *Platform* stands for the *ante-purgatory*,
- *Workhouse* is the allegory of *Purgatory*,
- *Treatment* allegorizes *Purification*,
- *Bitter medicine* allegorizes *Confession*,
- *Voices* refer to *the Holy Trinity*,
- *Shepherd* is an allusion of *Christ*,
- M*ountain* is a reference to *Mount Tabor*,
- *Imagination* represents the *neighborly love*,
- *It's a gift*! represents the *eucatastrophe*.

Secondly, the aforementioned elements turn the mythical tale "Leaf by Niggle" into a gospel parable due to its elucidating and evangelizing function encompassed in its 'lesson of truth' and 'applicability'.

The applicability of musical terms in the sphere of literary studies and, in particular intertextuality, has shown promising results and thus could be a powerful method for the examination of literary elements as it could provide new insights into the interpretation of texts.

We believe that J. R. R. Tolkien's legendarium merits further research to explore the peculiarities of intertextual patterns that connect the books of the father of fantasy to the holy scripture providing unlimited potential for future scholars' contribution.

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