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**Mythological Consciousness Transformation in Terms of the Modern Society**<sup>1</sup> Gaukhar I. Issina<sup>2</sup>Natalya P. Serebryakova

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**ABSTRACT.** This article investigates the certain concepts of mythological consciousness as an important component of the national world view in terms of development and operation of mythologems in the general cultural and specific national context of the English language world view.

**Keywords:** Mythologem; concept; lower devildom; representation; mythological consciousness; language world view; national consciousness; language, thinking.

**INTRODUCTION.**

Mythologems are crucial units of linguistic consciousness, product of collective unconscious kept in the national memory of the ethnos. Their evolution in a certain culture reflects the specific character of their interpretation in a linguistic world view. A myth, as a structural component of mythological world view, is a form of integral mass experience and interpretation of the reality through sensual-visual images, which are considered to be independent phenomena of reality. A myth is syncretic and harmonious; it has no distinctions between the natural and the unnatural, the objective and the subjective.

**MATERIALS AND METHODS.**

The research was made on the example of "Harry Potter" by J.K. Rowling. Besides, the scientific methods of induction and deduction, analysis, synthesis, generalization and systematization, logical and semantic analysis, comparative methods, transformation procedures, interpretation and elements of component and etymological analysis were used in the study.

**DISCUSSION.**

The modern myths are so diverse and many-sided that they resemble a kind of an assembly-line production in the scope of mass culture. Mythologems can be created artificially, by request; they can be distributed through mass media and become a part of a mythological sphere of concepts. In such cases, it is difficult to draw a borderline between a traditional mythologem and an artificial one. The mythological character of ordinary thinking makes it possible to use traditional mythologems not only for their adaptation to the modern conditions but also for creating new cult heroes which reflect the stereotypes formed by the media world and mass culture.

In the modern society, a myth rather gets a form of a ritual or a cult, and changing of the semantics of the unnatural happens as a result of the society technicalization. Alongside with the so-called social norms setting, there is technicalization of sensors (sense organs), processors (memory), effectors (model), and means of communication. It creates a basis for semantic changes [1; 211]. In other words, cognitive memory and the linguistic conceptual model of the conscious and the unconscious are transformed.

The mythical structures of images and behavior are widely used by mass media to affect the society as well as certain groups. They represent modern versions of mythological and folk heroes which embody the ideals of the public at large. According to G. Pocheptsov, myths characterize mythological communication because the audience does not realize mythological structures clearly. They cannot be rejected owing to isolation of the existence that does not depend on a single man, and they are also easy to understand. A simplified version of the reality easily seizes mass audience. Usual events are described in a modern myth often basing "on certain non-typical situations implemented in the present reality" [2; 340].

The simplicity of the modern myth against the background of a bright event assists its heroes turning into myth characters, and formation of the mythological environment which forms the mythological component of the mass consciousness. The modern myth becomes established in the mass consciousness in completely new conditions. It represents the spatio-temporal relations in a new way. The spatial frame has broadened so greatly that it is possible now to speak about the globalization of mythological environment. Spreading time of the modern myth has shortened to such extent that it allows stating the instantaneity of its creating and spreading and also the participation of each representative of the society in its formation. Changing the spatio-temporal components of the mythological environment or situation has become real due to the development of mass media and, particularly, television, new global communication systems, such as the Internet.

Recently, one can observe appearance of new modernized notions connected with myths. For example, in the late XX century, the term of an Internet legend appeared, and it is being actively used. As an opposition to the traditional interpretation of a legend, an Internet legend often has an author, a certain time of creation, and its audience. An Internet legend is characterized by its own distinctive features represented by plenty of imperative constructions, a chain or continuous presentation of a text, attracting more and more readers with such sentences as "Having read the sentence, immediately inform your friends and acquaintances of it". An Internet legend is a kind of reaction of mass consciousness to incomprehensible and dangerous events (spreading of computer viruses, appearance of white idiogenetic powder resembling anthrax, selling of low-grade products, undetected serial murders, etc.). A modern legend is by right considered to be an urban one, because it appears and exists in the space limited by a city and its suburbs. An Internet legend, as a variation of an urban legend, lives as long as the danger reflected in it exists. Therefore, it is shorter-lived and more diverse owing to the collective author and possibilities of new means of communication.

The capsule review of the modern myths makes it possible to state a complex and branched system of mythology which keeps traditional mythologems and transforms them in new conditions. Mythological sphere of concepts mirrors the diversity of the reality and projects in myths, those pain spots of existence which can be described from the positions of a rational approach. Mythological character of thinking in the present period is actively used by ideology and mass culture for generation, preservation, and development of stereotypes in ordinary consciousness.

The "Harry Potter" novel by J. Rowling which is the material for the analysis of the modern English sphere of concepts in this research is based on mythological clichés. In some way or another, the whole fairy-fantasy literature is based on mythological clichés. Even though an author tries to create a unique world, the archetypal images existing in her subconsciousness have a certain effect on her. It is no coincidence that in "Harry Potter" one can find allusions to many heroes mentioned in other novels of the fantasy genre, such as "The Lord of the Rings" and "Star Wars". It can be explained by the fact that the authors who grew up on the same fairytales have a collective unconscious (according to C. Jung).

The whole stratum of ancient myths is hidden under the latter strata. Showing up in the collective unconscious of a separately taken ethnic group, it represents the so-called "national color". In the works of J. Rowling this national color is Celtic culture. Against the background of more recognizable medieval values, such as a philosopher's stone or a basilisk, a Scandinavian paradigm accepted by Anglo-Saxons and developed in runes and the ubiquitous classic mythology of ancient Greece, early Celtic mythology disappears. However, it is early Celtic mythology that had a bigger impact on J. Rowling as a representative of the Western European culture.

Mythology is a complex heterogeneous system, conventionally divided into higher and lower mythologies. The higher mythology is characterized by a limited number of supernatural creatures,

which are distant from a human and completely determine his fate due to their divine status. The lower mythology includes such mythical creatures as demons and spirits, represents a considerable stratum of mythology, and reflects the specific national character of an ordinary consciousness. In our case, we are interested in the representatives of the lower devildom that is greatly represented in J. Rowling's works.

English lower devildom is a complex system of composite transitive appellative words specifying various generalized names of supernatural creatures existing in the unreal world. At present, the greatest part of the English devildom represented by Celtic names and word combinations emphasizes the known conservatism of the English-speaking population of the British Isles. So, such concept of mythological consciousness as "a banshee" has come to the modern English from Celtic mythology. As it has an Irish background, one can suppose why one of the personages of the "Harry Potter" novel, Seamus Finnigan, who has an Irish origin, is most of all afraid of a banshee represented as a witch with long hair and a green face.

*... Crack! Where the mummy had been was a woman with floorlength black hair and a skeletal, green tinged face—a banshee. She opened her mouth wide and an unearthly sound filled the room, a long, wailing shriek that made the hair on Harry's head stand on end ... [3; 158].*

In Irish mythology, a banshee is a ghost witch whose moans and yells are the omen of death. Traditionally banshees are described as thin women with snow white faces, long hair, and eyes red of tears. In other sources a description of a banshee as an ugly old woman can be found. Their most terrifying feature is an awful scream calling living people to the world of the dead. According to Irish beliefs, the scream can only be heard by those who are fated to death. However, if the one who must die is some great national hero of Ireland, the banshee's scream can be heard by almost whole country. There is still a belief in England that if a cat suddenly wakes up, raises its head, and pricks up its ears, though it is completely silent around, it has heard a banshee and someone has died.

It is interesting to note that the "banshee" mythologem has become a part of the semantics of such idiom as "to scream like banshee out of hell". By all appearance, this concept was the reason for the appearance of the name Banshee in the modern mass culture, with the meaning of a music video player with an open source code for the Linux and Mac OSX operating systems.

An example of representation of the "banshee" mythologem in the modern English world view is the existence of such a comic-strip character as *Banshee*, a superhero of Marvel Comics and one of the members of the X-Men team. This character is of Irish origin and has the ability to reproduce supersonics of any length, sometimes imperceptible for a human ear. In the nickname of this personage one can clearly observe an allusion to the analyzed mythologem.

Let us consider the next representative of the bestiary, a leprechaun, a sub kind of an elf possessing the priceless treasures hidden under the earth. In the books of J. Rowling, the leprechauns are the creatures who have a lot of gold which usually disappears at a certain time.

*Harry, who was on a top bunk above Ron, lay staring up at the canvas ceiling of the tent, watching the glow of an occasional leprechaun lantern flying overhead, and picturing again some of Krum's more spectacular moves.*

*For a split second, Harry thought it was another leprechaun formation. Then he realized that it was a colossal skull, comprised of what looked like emerald stars, with a serpent protruding from its mouth like a tongue [3; 132].*

According to J. Rowling, a leprechaun is a talisman of the Irish team in the Quidditch World Cup. They are portrayed as tiny bearded flying men in red sleeveless jackets and with a golden or green lamp in their hands.

In the modern English linguistic world view, the image of a leprechaun has appeared not so long ago but has already assumed stable associations. It is said that leprechauns have come to the celebration of St. Patrick's Day quite recently. The companies that sold postcards for this holiday needed a nice character to represent him on the pictures. A severe, though kind preacher, St. Patrick was not quite suitable for this role. Nowadays the celebration of St. Patrick's Day (the 17<sup>th</sup> of March) in all English-speaking countries cannot do without a carnival, and its main hero is that mythical personage. Initially, this holiday was a religious feast. Today it has become the celebration of everything that is connected with Ireland using the green color – the traditional color of this country. In Ireland the image of a leprechaun is used for popularization of tourism in the country. In honor of leprechauns and St. Patrick's Day, the smallest park in the world was opened (with a diameter of 0.61 m and 0.292 km<sup>2</sup>). It is called Mill Ends Park and was opened exactly on St.

Patrick's Day.

A linguistic allusion to a leprechaun can be found in using an expression "pot of gold", which means the illusiveness of an expected reward: 1. *a container filled with gold, as in myth guarded by a leprechaun*; 2. *Fig. an imaginary reward. Whoever gets to the porch first wins a pot of gold* [4].

In the books by J. Rowling, the images of house-elves do not have analogues at all. They are house-elves who serve only one family till their last day. They can get freedom in case their masters award them with it in the form of presenting some clothes.

*"Come, Dobby. I said, come."*

*But Dobby didn't move. He was holding up Harry's disgusting, slimy sock, and looking at it as though it were a priceless treasure. "Master has given a sock," said the elf in wonderment. "Master gave it to Dobby."*

*"What's that?" spat Mr. Malfoy. "What did you say?"*

*"Got a sock," said Dobby in disbelief. "Master threw it, and Dobby caught it, and Dobby—Dobby is free" [5; 274].*

In the novel, an elf is a kind of a hybrid of a pixie (in the appearance), a brownie (in the sphere of the activity), and an artificially created slave servant, similar to a homunculus that can be destroyed as a punishment or if there is no need in it any longer. However, in contrast to the first ones, house-elves live together with human wizards in their world. In contrast to the second one, who has the power over the people that are afraid of his displeasure and who demands them to please him, house-elves obey people completely and have no ability to use magic. They are not allowed even to use magic wands. At last, in contrast to the third one, they are not a man's creation but represent an independent "race" of the magic world.

Perhaps, the most famous image of an elf in the modern England is connected with Christmas, the most popular holiday beloved by both adults and children. To be more precise, it is connected with the image of fairy-tale characters that make this holiday possible. We are talking about Santa-Claus and Christmas elves – his assistants. It is them in the modern culture who are responsible for every child on the Earth getting his/her deserved Christmas present. The "elf" mythologem has so greatly consolidated in the minds of people as the essential attribute of this holiday, that on this basis several cartoons illustrating the role of these creatures were created ("Arthur Christmas", "Elf", "The Nightmare Before Christmas", etc.).

This character was not left unnoticed in the layer of the English language vocabulary. It got the reflection in the semantics of some set expressions: "elf arrows" – a pile of stones, "elf shot" – bewitched. The expression "elf-lock" (tangled hair, a mat) demonstrates an unambiguous allusion to the ability of elves to harm people, upsetting and mixing up all their plans and intentions [6].

As one can see, mythologems in national cultures have specific characteristics in compliance with the nation-wide mythological tradition and specific linguistic realization. However, alongside with the national-cultural peculiarities, mythologems of the modern period are characterized by standardized character and common international qualities established by mass media, mass culture, and stereotypes assuming the global form.

Basing on this analysis, a conclusion can be made that a mythologem is not a frozen phenomenon of a language. Representations of the unnatural in a language are not created once and for ever. Conceptualized mythologems tend to adapt to the conditions of the changing reality, become society linked, lose old and assume new meanings. They can become ideologized and turn into an ideologem or be demythologized, transformed, and reconsidered. The modern reality represents semantics of the unnatural at different levels. It is reflected in the language of political, religious, and even linguistic myths of mass consciousness, and also at the level of an ordinary individual consciousness.

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**К вопросу о трансформации мифологического сознания в реалиях современного общества**

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**Аннотация.** В данной статье представлено исследование репрезентации отдельных концептов мифологического сознания как важной составляющей национальной картины мира с позиций развития и функционирования мифологем в общекультурном и специфическом национальном срезе английской языковой картины мира.

**Ключевые слова:** мифологема; концепт; низший демонарий; репрезентация; мифологическое сознание; языковая картина мира; национальное сознание; язык; мышление.