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## **Mythopoetic Images of Irish Mythology in American Fantasy (the Case of Roger Zelazny's "Chronicles of Amber" - Corwin Cycle) / Мифопоэтические образы ирландской мифологии в американском фэнтези (на материале "Хроник Эмбера" Роджера Желязны - цикл Корвина)**

**Анисимова Ольга Владимировна**

кандидат филологических наук

доцент кафедры "Лингводидактика и перевод", Гуманитарного института Санкт-Петербургского Политехнического Университета Петра Великого

194021, Россия, г. Санкт-Петербург, ул. Политехническая, 19

✉ [lesoleil81@mail.ru](mailto:lesoleil81@mail.ru)**Макарова Инна Сергеевна**

доктор филологических наук

профессор, кафедра иностранных языков, Санкт-Петербургский государственный технологический институт (технический университет)

190013, Россия, г. Санкт-Петербург, ул. Московский Проспект, 26

✉ [inna-makarova@mail.ru](mailto:inna-makarova@mail.ru)[Статья из рубрики "Журналистика"](#)**DOI:**

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**Аннотация:** Предлагаемая вниманию статья посвящена изучению ряда ключевых образов ирландской мифологии, широко используемых в произведениях, созданных в жанре фэнтези, в частности, в американской литературе второй половины XX века. Речь идет об образах корабля, дерева и ворона. Особое внимание уделяется их художественной интерпретации в романах известного американского писателя-фантаста, представителя Новой Волны Роджера Желязны. В работе исследуется этимология указанных образов, истоки их формирования в шумеро-аккадской, иудаистической и

греческой мифологиях, основные символические значения, а также предлагается их интерпретация в центральном для творчества Желязны произведении - романе «Хроники Эмбера». Результатом предпринятого исследования является полевательная характеристика рассматриваемых мифопоэтических образов в древнейших мифологиях и определение их символического значения в контексте первых пяти частей романа американского писателя-фантаста, а именно в цикле Корвина. Так, корабль оказывается связан с ключевым образом всего произведения - Образом, среди прочего символизируя процесс инициации главных действующих лиц. Дерево, в свою очередь, выступает в роли первоосновы вселенной Эмбера, ее многоуровневой структуры. И, наконец, ворон, альтер эго главного героя - принца Корвина - означает предначертанную ему судьбу, наполненную противоречиями и неутрачиваемыми битвами.

### **Ключевые слова:**

мифопоэтический образ, ирландская мифология, корабль, дерево, ворон, научная фантастика, фэнтези, Желязны, американская литература, художественная литература

Celtic tribes, called by Henri Hubert the torchbearers of the Ancient world [\[1\]](#), played an important role in spreading first Greek and later Roman culture on the territory of central Europe and Gallic lands respectively. Celtic Druids considerably promoted enlightenment representing the corporation of severe hierarchy and discipline and having no analogues in either ancient or modern religious organizations [\[2, p. 11\]](#). Caesar mentions that the education Druids gave to young generations mainly consisted of learning a huge amount of verses and could last about twenty years [\[3\]](#). Cvetkov points out the fact that the Celts were carriers of far more archaic knowledge of the Indo-Europeans than the Romans and even overshadowed the latter in their development, though it only considered Druids [\[4, p. 52\]](#). Birckhan writes that both the Greeks and the Romans assumed the Celts as a culturally united group of tribes [\[5, p. 39-40\]](#).

The Celts, once inhabiting a vast territory of Europe, and in particular, their oracles – Druids – are now known as carriers of peculiar traditions and believes all together constituting a unique mythological system – one of the most influential in the modern culturalogical context. Irish monks, who had been collecting and writing down ancient Celts' sagas, were the ones who largely promoted the conservation of their cultural heritage.

In Ireland, sagas were believed to have magic power, so telling them was the best way of protecting home from evil. Among their key images are the ones of ship, tree, and raven which are the subject of this study aimed at highlighting their symbolism and revealing new interpretations on the example of American New Wave novel – a series of books entitled "The Chronicles of Amber" by Roger Zelazny.

To start with, let's first consider the novel through the prism of its strong connection with British mythology. One of the most famous works of an American science fiction and fantasy writer Roger Zelazny "The Chronicles of Amber" is rich in allusions to numerous texts of British fiction [\[6\]](#). Shakespeare's writings, Elizabethan plays, Lake poets' poems are among them. Zelazny also creates his universe using the mythologies of Irish and Welsh Celts. Obviously, the intertextuality of his texts, on the one hand, demonstrates a high level of Zelazny's erudition, while on the other, it points at the existing tradition which serves the

writer as the basis and guideline for his own novel [\[7\]](#).

At first reading, it becomes clear that the nature of the universe of Amber is of mythical origin. In Irish mythology, Tuatha Dé Danann – the ancestors of modern people – inhabit the place known as Sidhe, while Welsh gods live in Annwn. In "The Chronicles", the principal city is Amber; isolated from people, it is inhabited by their predecessors or creators, i.e. gods. All other places, including the Earth, are simply shadows created by this glorious city. It is triune and has two identical reflections – in the sea and in the sky: Rebma and Tir-na-Nog'th correspondingly. Twenty miles to the south from mountain Kolvir, deep in the sea, there is an underwater Amber – Rebma. One can reach it climbing the legendary Celtic stairs Faiella-Bionin. Tir-na-Nog'th is a ghost moon city nightly appearing in the sky. In Irish mythology, this is 'one of the Blessed Isles, lying in the Western Sea, where the sun sets. The name means the Isle of Youth; this place is considered to be the most beautiful of all isles. This is where the tribes of Goddess Danu came from. Those who were killed on that Isle, resurrect the next day healed from their wounds. The Isle is famous for its musicians-fili, so many people dream about getting there to learn to play and rhyme' [\[8, p. 487\]](#).

The cosmology of Amber is based on the binary opposition: Amber (order) – Chaos (disorder). Depending on their origin either from Amber or Chaos, all characters are divided into two groups. Such a division is typical of Celtic myths. The gods of the first group are gods of daylight, life, fertility, wisdom and kindness; the representatives of the second one are daemons of night, darkness, death, barrenness and evil. They are called Fomorians or Gods of Domnu and are supposed to be older than the gods of the first group. Apparently, the creatures inhabiting Chaos in "The Chronicles of Amber" have the Fomorians as their prototypes, while the residents of Amber refer to the gods of Tuatha De Danann.

Coming to the analysis of the images of ship, tree and raven in the context of Zelazny's novel, let's begin with studying the roots of the first of them – the ship. It originates in a famous Sumerian and Akkadian myth that tells about the salvation of a mankind on the board of an Ark of Ziusudra. Through the course of time, it received its new transformation in the Babylonian myth of Atrachasis' ship which, in its turn, was later transformed in the the Judaistic mythology, in the parable of the Great Deluge and Noah's Ark. The life-line of this parable about the mankind saving boat continued in the framework of Greek mythology – in the myth of Deucalion, very popular in ancient times and fixed in various manuscripts of that epoch. However, with the spread of Christianity, it was the Old Testament myth that turned out to be the most competitive and long-lasting, gradually transferring into a full-scale discourse.

In Ireland, famous for its excellent fishermen, experienced sea merchants and professional mariners driving three kinds of vessels, known far from their motherland for outstanding navigating mastery, and having Manannan as their patron, the sea-god with a magic boat gloriously named "Wave Sweeper", we come up with a similar interpretation – the odyssey of a hero floating across the rigorous waves to his destiny [\[9\]](#). It is worth noting that here is observed the link to a new embodiment of the mythopoetic image of ship – the one of the Flying Dutchman which will be later revealed in the works by Apollonius of Rhodes and Homer [\[10\]](#) and then in various legends of the Epoch of Great Geographical Discoveries culminating in the literature of Romanticism [\[11\]](#). Coming back to the Irish mythology, heroic sea voyages made to out islands (the analogue of the travel to the other world) should be taken into consideration. Among the most glorious Celtic seafarers sung in legends are Meldun, Brendan, and Bran.

In Celtic sagas, along with trees and magic pots, a special place is taken by water and ship functioning as key mythopoetic images of classical plots of Celtic mythology. In particular, one of the most famous cults is the one referring to Matres – female goddesses-patronesses of rivers and lakes in Gallia and Ireland. Macculloch highlights the pilgrimage women undertook to springs pleading saints to let them give birth [\[12, p. 169\]](#).

Water played an important part in Celtic beliefs connected with the underworld being associated with emptiness, darkness and monsters [\[13, p. 32\]](#). In his research of Celtic religion, Macculloch writes about the ambivalent attitude of the Celts to sea: on the one hand, it was perceived as a hostile creature warriors were trying to conquer dying in attacking waves but never giving up; on the other hand, the sea had positive influence on people for the seashore was the place of revelation and showed empathy to people's sorrows [\[12, p. 154-155\]](#). Nine waves are of considerable importance in Celtic mythology representing the waves which create the barrier against invasion or plague, also having healing properties [\[12, p. 155\]](#).

A well-known cycle of the Arthurian legend is rich in stories also connected with vessels. Shortly before his death, after a fatal battle with Mordred's army, King Arthur floated in his magic boat to Avalon which was supposed to heal him so that he could come back to his land to fight against the enemy. According to another version, the body of a wounded King was brought to Avalon on board of a black ship by three mysterious ladies responsible for curing him. The legend of another knight's, Perceval, moral challenge, when he came to search for the Holy Grail, narrates about him meeting a mysterious ship with a beautiful stranger aboard.

The Celtic legend of Tristan and Isolde can be rightly considered the apotheosis of the artistic interpretation of the mythopoetic image of ship. As well as in Irish odysseys of Meldun, Brendan, and Bran, the role performed by the ship is close to that the ship plays in Greek mythology, in the poems by Apollonius of Rhodes and Homer, in particular. The ship is in many ways a fatal vessel which outcome is totally in the hands of providence. Particular importance is given to the tragic note of its navigation. Besides, the ship becomes an active participant of the events intruding in the plot development. The historical background connected with the transition period of Early Renaissance, the epoch of active formation of a new image of the European continent, the time of the great transmigration of peoples and formation of new states, had a significant impact on such a shift in the image interpretation. As a result, the events taking place aboard are full of inner dramatism, and the voyage outcome is tragic too.

In fantasy literature, Celtic mythology is traditionally quite popular combining a gripping plot with macabre atmosphere and various fairy characters. The spirit of "dark" Celtic past adopted by Roger Zelazny in his "Chronicles of Amber" is successfully transformed in a sophisticated and gloomy postmodern world. In such a way the ancestor of Amber princes is, on the one hand, Dwarkin, an eccentric bearded sorcerer reminding a mad Celtic Druid Merlin, while on the other hand, it is the Unicorn of the forests of Arden – the ones which surround the Amber Castle and are totally sacred for all inhabitants.

The mythopoetic image of ship is not straightforwardly introduced in "The Chronicles of Amber", for the characters mostly either travel on foot or ride their horses. However, its symbolic content is presented in the Amber universe being embodied, quite unexpectedly, in the image key for the whole series – the one of Pattern. As it is well-known, in science fiction the image of ship is introduced in various forms: from quite a standard spaceship to

the portal carrying people from one planet to another. The latter seems to be the case in "The Chronicles of Amber".

Zelazny's Pattern is sophisticated enough symbolizing both the sea and the ship. Its intricate design reminding the Celtic rune shines blue; it seems to have no horizon; its veils resemble sea waves that every Prince of Amber, if he wants to master his inborn gift, must conquer. In many ways, the Pattern resembles roaring sea which simultaneously tempts with new perspectives and looks dangerous and even deathful thus revealing its ambivalence that is so characteristic of both sea and ship as mythopoetic images.

As for the other symbolic meaning of Pattern – the one of ship, it would be right to say that in "The Chronicles of Amber" the concept of a sea vessel is brought to mind not by the Pattern itself but by the one for whom it is intended – the man who comes to conquer it. The Princes of Amber remind ships that start their voyage across dangerous seas to reach their goal – to alter the matter coming through shades. Alone amidst the open sea of Pattern, Princes like ships keep floating to the other shore for there is no way back. As well as the first storm is a sort of initiation for any ship, the first veil shows Princes who they really are. Overcoming storm by storm, veil by veil, Princes/ships either dye or become masters.

Let's now proceed to the second image – the one of tree that is a common universal archetypal symbol found in many different traditions around the ancient world and reflecting the global picture of the universe in its binary oppositions. Meletinsky in his research of mythopoetics, claims that the most widespread space model competing with the anthropomorphous one or associated with it is the plant model pictured as a gigantic tree which structures the world made from the primal anthropomorphous creature [\[14, p. 213\]](#).

Analyzing the semantics of the Arbor Mundi myth, Benveniste describes this concept in the following way: the world has the centre, in which the tree grows – a so called axis mundi, representing its vitality; the tree is rooted in the underworld of chthonic gods and spirits, the kingdom of the dead; the trunk and the leafage are located in the middle world, i.e. the earth; the upper branches hold the skies – the kingdom of superior gods [\[15, p. 16\]](#).

In the Norse mythology, for example, the Ash Yggdrassil mirrors a vertical cosmic projection of the universe according to which its three levels are closely interconnected: the heaven (Asgard), the earth (Midgard), and the underworld – (hel). There, the World Tree 'became a symbol of the constant regeneration of the universe, and offered to men the means of attaining immortality' [\[16, p. 192\]](#). In the Egyptian mythology, a gigantic golden tree functions as the Axis of Earth: its top touches the sky, precious stones grow at its branches, and goddess Nut sits there. According to the ancient Indian mythology, at the centre of the universe, a sacred fig grows. In ancient China, people worshiped the cult of World Tree in the image of a grandiose mulberry on the top of which a cock and ten suns lived. In pagan religions of the Aryans, there was a popular belief according to which there were three skies located one above another: 1) the kingdom of air and clouds; 2) the bright blue sky; 3) the kingdom of eternal light from which an evergreen fig spread its branches covering under its blessing shade souls of saints and gods [\[17\]](#).

The Celts' perception of the image of tree differs from all mentioned above for they neither shared the idea of one celestial axis growing in the centre of the universe, nor imagined it as having a vertical or horizontal structure, but rather representing a closed system with a rhisomatic form. In Ireland, five sacred guardian trees were worshipped as symbolic centres of five Irish kingdoms: two yews (Eó Mugna and Eó Ruis) and three ashes (Bile Tortan,

Craeb Daithí, and Craeb Uisnig). Interestingly, all those trees combined real and magic properties. Besides, they were mortal, though lived longer than other trees.

In "The Chronicles of Amber" we come up with two trees at a time: the forests of Arden and the tree named Ygg. The forests referring to Shakespearean works, evoke the atmosphere of stability and order, also being home to the Princes' ancestor – the Unicorn. As Corwin calls it, 'a cathedral of enormous trees: It seemed to go on forever and ever. I felt safe in the place' [\[18, p. 36\]](#). Meanwhile, Ygg, met by the protagonist on the border with Chaos, apparently refers to Yggdrasil: 'I am no ordinary tree. He [Oberon] placed me here to mark a boundary. <...> I am the end of Chaos and of Order, depending upon how you view me. I mark a division. Beyond me other rules apply' [\[19, p. 530\]](#). The use of the abridged form reveals the author's irony and the loss of respect to the celestial axis. Thus, the writer introduces the Celtic perception of this image designing his universe not as an axis-centered but rather rhizoma-centred.

At first sight, the Amber universe is designed in accordance with a binary logic. The Kingdom of Amber symbolizes the universal order opposing the Courts of Chaos. The princes of Amber receive the power to change the universe and create their own worlds only after having passed through the Pattern. In their turn, the creatures from the Courts of Chaos get the gift of performing magic after having tamed Logrus (which is anti Pattern).

As Zelazny stated himself, the Pattern is rooted in the concept of the Tree of Life or Sphiroth of Kabbala. As well as taking all the steps of the Tree of Life, starting with the tenth, which in Kabbala symbolizes the way of knowing and self perfecting, passing through the Pattern means overcoming the veil – i.e. the places of the strongest resistance, where each new one is physically demanding though also enduing with force and knowledge.

The last mythopoetic image concerned is the one of raven, which, as it is known, plays a very special role in the world mythology. Its major symbolic meanings are cunning, theft, danger, and death. The latter is widely represented in Egyptian, Babylonian, Ancient, Oceanian and North-Western American myths of a bird-soul or simply bird taking the deadman's soul to the region beyond the grave; in Christianity, this image was transformed into the image of angel. The Gauls worshiped ravens considering them to be gods' companions. In Ancient myths, raven accompanies heroes and gods associated with sky, sun, fertility, war and underworld: Cronos, Apollo, and Athena. In Norse mythology, ravens Huginn and Muninn assist Odin associated with war and death. In Chinese mythology, this bird symbolizes sun.

Raven being the creature of dual anthropo-zoomorphic nature works as a mediator between life and death, nature and culture, water and land, wisdom and foolishness, man and animal, male and female. It plays both the part of a cultural hero, demiurge, and his antagonist – trickster. Meletinsky gives the examples of the mythologies of North-Eastern Paleo-Asiatics and North-Western Indians where a black-feathered bird gets light and spheres pecking the heavens or the shells of the balls, i.e. the sun and the moon [\[14, p. 194\]](#). In Slavic folklore, raven is the wisest of all birds; songs and tales show it as a prophet; its characteristic epithet is 'fortunetelling' [\[14, p. 123\]](#). In his nest, gold, silver and gems are stored; raven can find immortal and dead water as well as apples of youth; it also has the status of a 'rain whisperer' [\[14, p. 123\]](#) bringing new energy and health to people.

Since the Medieval times raven has been connected with evil or even hell. That was a Jewish perception of this image originated in the myth of Flood, according to which all

animals were divided into clean and unclean. Raven was put into the second category having dove, the representative of Paradise, as his antipode. Being unable to find the dry land, raven plays the part of a messenger of bad news; it is associated with vice being often depicted on the top of the Tree of Knowledge; the black-feathered bird symbolizes dark forces destroying human soul as it feeds on dead flesh and thus reminds Devil who devours human souls. The image of raven refers to solitude and the detachment from the fuss of material world.

Raven is a key image of "The Chronicles of Amber" directly appealing to the main character, Corwin, whose name is used in the titles of the first five books. The protagonist's name originates from Latin "corvinus", i.e. having the properties of raven. Corwin's colours, black and grey, remind the bird's plumage. Corwin's trump among other attributes has a black bird in it. In Celtic mythology, raven is a chthonic creature associated with Celtic goddesses of war and fertility Morrighan, Nemayn, and Badb. Having this bird as their mascot, they can assume its likeness. According to Irish tradition, black birds mean darkness and prophetic gift. The raven of battle, Bald, symbolizes war, slaughter, panic and malice. Raven is also Bran's companion whose name is translated from Irish as "raven".

As well as the Celtic goddesses of war, Corwin initiates the fight for the Amber throne. As well as Bran, Corwin is a heroic person, the only one able to fight against chaos and thus bring order to Amber – in this respect his travel to the Courts of Chaos reminds the travel of Bran to the other world. To some extent, the image of Corwin is also connected with one of the most influential gods of Danu's tribe – Lugh accompanied by two ravens: in the last part of the first cycle of "The Chronicles", Corwin fighting against the entropy calls on red and black birds' aid. The red one is 'a crested red bird the size of a raven, its feathers all the color of my blood... Even its eyes were red' [19, p. 500]. The black one has the name – Hugi; Zelazny first introduces him in the scene where Corwin meets the bird on his way to the Courts of Chaos: 'A dark bird was watching me from one of the trees. <...> 'I've been waiting for you since the beginning of Time, Corwin.' 'Must have been a bit tiresome.' 'It has not been all that long, in this place. Time is what you make of it.' [19, p. 531].

Raven is also the symbol of the ambivalence of Corwin's destiny. On the one hand, the prince of Amber causes the destruction of the existing world order, on the other hand, he is supposed to draw a new Pattern thus saving Amber from Chaos. Here we see the way Zelazny brings Corwin together with King Arthur. Once being the ruler of Avalon, the latter comes back to his kingdom. Having drawn a new Pattern, Corwin is invisibly present in Amber looking after its order and protecting it from destruction. According to one of the legends connected with King Arthur, after his death he turns into raven that will always fly over England to protect its boundaries. Similarly to six ravens of Tower, Corwin and King Arthur are defenders of their kingdoms which will stay safe and sound until their rulers are alive.

The story to be continued as Zelazny's "Chronicles" are rich in various allusions and references to Celtic myths and legends, which need to be deciphered thus contributing to better understanding of the author's original idea and the novel's symbolism. Besides, the subject of Celtic culture heritage and strong influence on British and American fantasy writers is of particular importance in terms of other books – by George Martin, Neil Gaiman, Jack Vans and J.R.R. Tolkien among others – also full of allusions and reminiscences to ancient mythologies [20].

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## **Результаты процедуры рецензирования статьи**

*В связи с политикой двойного слепого рецензирования личность рецензента не раскрывается.*

*Со списком рецензентов издательства можно ознакомиться [здесь](#).*

Представленная на рассмотрение статья «Мифопоэтические образы ирландской мифологии в американском фэнтези (на материале "Хроник Эмбера" Роджера Желязны - цикл Корвина)», предлагаемая к публикации в журнале «Litera», несомненно, является актуальной, ввиду рассмотрения особенностей реминисценции ирландской мифологии в американском фэнтези.

Актуальность исследования обусловлена подъемом интереса в американском кинематографе к жанру фэнтези в последние десятилетия, а также обращением к скандинавской, кельтской мифологии.

Статья написана на английском языке.



Статья является новаторской, одной из первых в российском языкознании, посвященной исследованию подобной тематики в 21 веке. Отметим, что в отечественной германистике не проводилось изучение речевой деятельности дискурсивной личности подростка на материале телевизионных сериалов, что и объясняет новизну данного исследования. В статье представлена методология исследования, выбор которой вполне адекватен целям и задачам работы. Автор обращается, в том числе, к различным методам для подтверждения выдвинутой гипотезы. Так, методической основой исследования явились описательно-сопоставительные, контекстуальные и ситуативно-интерпретационные методы исследования дискурса, а также метод количественного анализа для получения достоверных данных.

Структурно статья начинается введением. Однако, традиционным для исследований в области лингвистики является описание во введении проблематики исследования и представления обзора теоретических источников и научных направлений, что позволяет оценить новизну исследования и непосредственно авторский вклад в решение проблемы, который будет представлен в основной части. Однако, настоящая работа отходит от канонов и автор представляет описание кельтов, краткие сведения об истории кельтских племен, что не относится к области языкознания, а, скорее, к области истории. Далее автор пишет «To start with, let's first consider the novel through the prism of its strong connection with British mythology», в связи с чем возникает справедливый вопрос или автор отождествляет ирландскую мифологию с британской, что спорно, или постулируемое автором не коррелируется с заглавием статьи.

Далее автор пишет "The Chronicles of Amber" is rich in allusions to numerous texts of British fiction [6]. Shakespeare's writings, Elizabethan plays, Lake poets' poems are among them. Но упоминание аллюзий на британские произведения в свете рассмотрения ирландской мифологии кажутся странными.

Далее автор указывает «Obviously, the intertextuality of his texts, on the one hand, demonstrates a high level of Zelazny's erudition,...», но с позиции стилистики интертекстуальность не тождественна аллюзии, о которой автор писал выше. Интертекстуальность есть включение фрагментов текстов, взаимопроникновение текстов. Аллюзия, в свою очередь, это намек. Рассматривать эти понятия как тождественные является неверным толкованием работ, в частности И.В. Арнольд или теоретика постструктурализма Ю. Кристевой, работы которых вообще не упомянуты автором.

В основной части автором не описан ход исследования, а также непонятно какие задачи пытался решить автор повествованием, в котором приведены исключительно авторские измышления, не доказанные ни цитатами из первоисточников, ни языковым материалом. Заключительная часть, традиционно содержащая выводы и перспективы исследования, в данном случае таковой не является.

Библиография статьи насчитывает 20 источников, среди которых представлены как теоретические работы на русском языке, так и на английском. БОльшее количество ссылок на ссылки на фундаментальные работы, такие как монографии, кандидатские и докторские диссертации, несомненно бы усилило теоретическую значимость работы.

В ряде случаев нарушены требования ГОСТа к оформлению списка литературы, в части несоблюдения общепринятого алфавитного выстраивания цитируемых трудов, а также смешению трудов на русском и иностранных языках, которые традиционно размещаются после русскоязычных источников.

В общем и целом, следует отметить, что статья написана простым, понятным для читателя языком. Опечатки, орфографические и синтаксические ошибки, неточности в тексте работы не обнаружены. Практическая значимость исследования заключается в возможности использования его результатов в процессе преподавания вузовских курсов по практике английского языка и теории литературы. Статья, несомненно, будет полезна

широкому кругу лиц, филологам, магистрантам и аспирантам профильных вузов. Статья «Мифопоэтические образы ирландской мифологии в американском фэнтези (на материале "Хроник Эмбера" Роджера Желязны - цикл Корвина)» может быть рекомендована к публикации в научном журнале.