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Evaluating knighthood
through the discourse functions of negation
in *Le Morte DArthur* by Malory

To the world when it was half a thousand years younger,
the outlines of all things seemed more clearly marked
than to us. The contrast between suffering and joy, between adversity
and happiness, appeared more striking.

(J. Huizinga, The waning of the Middle Ages*)*

The paper explores medieval knighthood as a complicated matrix of various cultural, historical, and ethical concepts. We hypothesize that we can access the way people conceptualized the chivalric ideal through analyzing the romances by means of linguistic and conceptual analysis. The justly prominent place among numerous romances is taken by Malory's *Le Morte DArthur* (1485), for it provided solid ground for a detailed classification of knightly virtues and vices in later decades. The present paper displays the role of negation in portraying the opposition of a good and a bad knight. We take into account that this category is realized linguistically on various levels: lexical, morphological, and syntactical. Contrary to the preliminary hypothesis on negation featuring the bad, it allowed the author not only to explicate the bad qualities of a knight, but also to stress the language means evaluating the positive ones. As the linguistic analysis unfolds, negation turns out to be not a logical counterpart of positive utterances, but a powerful tool for featuring knighthood as a socially and ethically important endeavour. Pragmatics of negation in the romance, as well as its role in direct speech of various characters,

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including women, are also considered.

Key words: category of negation; Arthuriana; chivalric discourse; Malory; *Le Morte DArthur*.

1. Introduction: the identity of knighthood in discourse

The knight of the highest nobility, worth, prowess and honour, the 'hero *par excellance'* is an image created in numerous chivalric romances written both on the continent and on the British Isles during and immediately after the Middle Ages. The importance of this image is hard to exaggerate for it has nearly eclipsed all the other possible characters of literature throughout the succeeding centuries. The chivalric romances worked for accumulating, explicating and transmitting the exemplars of knightly virtue. They also prove to be a wonderful material for reconstructing the debate on ideas of what was meant to be good (a knight, the king or a councilor) within the period of political instability and turmoil. It is stressed that "Malory's *Le Morte DArthur* reflects mentalities and ideas which preoccupied fifteenth-century thinking in terms of its intellectual/political debate" (Radulescu 2003: 78).

Thomas Malory's literary representation provides a rich source for building up the constituent elements of what a good knight should be or put more precisely, what construed a complex matrix of qualities for the chivalric identity. On the basis of this romance we are able to outline what could happen to a knight in various gentry adventures or political circumstances, when his identity was evaluated, challenged or in some cases even denied. The figure of a knight turns out to be both: the most illustrious and at the same time the most vulnerable character striving to prove his status, balancing between its social identity (belonging to a distinct class of people) and the personal knightly endeavor in the chivalric discourse. Therefore, the way the chivalric identity was formed in knightly discourse and further disseminated is an issue of particular interest and importance.

By means of a detailed analysis of lexical, grammatical and pragmatic ways pertaining to conceptualizing identity in the romance we get insights into the way people of the Middle Ages conceptualized the chivalric ideal. Since the identity of knighthood is "a total sum of our accumulative knowledge about ourselves" (Komova 2005: 6), their social and cultural status, honour, bravery, prowess and attitude towards religion could be viewed through the prism of identity and scrutinized linguistically. The notion of identity "is a concept that neither imprisons nor detaches persons from their social and symbolic universes, it has over the years retained a generic force that few concepts in our field have" (Davis 1991: 105).

Our approach is quite close to the one expressed by Martin and Nakayama (2000: 116), who noticed that: "the critical perspective is the attempt to understand identity formation within the contexts of history, economics, politics and discourse". We consider the significance of the linguistic insights is determined by the idea that the identity of knighthood is a conceptual category and defined through the notions of conceptualization and categorization – the basic ones for studying into human consciousness. This category is constructed on the basis of language representation for it is well acknowledged that linguistic behaviour "is relatively privileged as a source of information … because it is a type of behaviour which explicitly encodes and transmits conceptual information" (Nuyts and Pederson 1997: 4). Of immediate note, the picture becomes increasingly complicated by the complex nature of medieval literature reflecting various cultural and historical ideas of the time. This intriguing source for the understanding of that period gave P. J. C. Field (1977 [2008]: liv) a reason to mark out, "just as medieval history is unexpectedly like romance, so medieval romance is unexpectedly like history".

Essentially, the paper examines linguistic peculiarities of representing the knighthood identity in chivalric discourse of *Le Morte DArthur* (1485) by Thomas Malory, whose work has justly taken the most prominent place in detailed classification of knightly virtues and proved 'astonishingly enduring' for the readers ever since its first edition. More specifically, we look at negation playing a key role in this process.

2. Defining the framework and the major objectives

Le Morte DArthur was the first among the other four chivalric romances published by Caxton (1485) with a specially articulated intention and implicit programme to heal the contemporary social problems through high ideals and morals promoted in literature (Blake 1969). He also published several chivalric manuals including *The Book of Deeds of Arms and of Chivalry* famously written by Christine de Pizan and translated as *The Book of the Order of Chivalry* (1489). Another equally prominent manual was Ramon Lull's *Order of Chivalry* (1484), which many cases of chivalric instruction in Malory bear resemblance to (Cherewatuk 2000). These books together with romances comprised the vital elements of upbringing and educating a knight and aimed at providing an explicit source of how to become a noble knight for those aspiring. Since the nobility of Middle England owned one or more

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chivalric manuals (Green 1980), to say nothing of romances and chronicles[1] the readers were well acquainted with the special type of didactic discourse they offered and with the ideas which Malory appealed to and sometimes "invited them to question" (Cherewatuk 2000).

Caxton (1485: 1) writes in the Preface to *Le Morte DArthur*:

> And I accordyng to my copye haue doon sette it in enprynte / to the entente ***that noble men may see and lerne the noble actes of chyualrye*** / the ***Ientyl and vertuous*** dedes that somme knyghtes vsed in tho dayes / by whyche they came to ***honour*** / and how they that were vycious were punysshed and ofte put to shame and rebuke.

This explicit verbalization offers some insights into the way the novel was perceived. It is equally possible, however, that being rather a good businessman, William Caxton might have understood that the books connected with chivalry in large and Malory's work in particular would draw he readers' attention and therefore bring prosperity to him as well as secure high patronage (Sutton and Visser-Fuchs 1991).

Thomas Malory depicted how the military unity, which took its knighthood on the tip of the sword and was largely shaped by war, was gradually transformed into a '*hyghe order of Knyghhode*' or at least what it should be. As Malory criticism have indicated, the intentions of the author were much more complicated than 'nostalgia' or compilation of popular Arthurian myth, but he offered "a valid ideal of life" (Pochoda 1971). Moreover, the 15th century England experienced a revival in interest to chivalry and consequently the reevaluation of ideas it was based on (including the ideals of a good knight, curtly love and tournaments[2]). The new ideal knighthood was loyal to the lord, following strict rules of honorable life and finally possessing a set of moral virtues peculiar to a knightly class. The collective identity

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[1] The aristocracy of the period seemed to be particularly interested in history from the point of view of interpreting the social order and the principles the order was based. It is proved by a number of scholars that interpreting Arthurian narrative was fundamentally interpreting and constructing the national identity (Radulescu 2003, Field 1998). "There are at least 221 surviving manuscripts of the *Brut* in French, English and Latin, even more, that is, than the 217 of Geoffrey's *Historia Regum Britanniae*. The vast majority of these — over 166 — are in English, which makes it far and away the most widely-read secular work in the vernacular, beaten only[...]by the Wycliffite translations of the bible" (Riddy 1991: 326).

[2] Here the rule of Edvard IV should be looked closer at. As Richard Barber proves that *Le Morte Darthur* belongs in the context of the renewed interest in tournaments shown by Edward and his circle: in particular, the Woodville family were enthusiastic jousters." (Barber 1996: 30–31).

was shaped through models to aspire as the deeds and actions of individual knights were subjected to constant evaluation and reevaluation in chivalric discourse.

Field (1977 [2008]) provides an explanation of how this system worked: "A knight successful in quests will increase in worship (in the chivalric virtues and the reputation for them), and he may win lands and enjoy himself enormously. But his most important achievement will be establishing justice, without which the rest would be selfishness, more or less high-minded." The need for justice means that a knight ought to undertake quests; and the higher his rank, the greater his obligations (Field 1977 [2008]: lxvii). Thereby, if a knight followed the modeled rules of behavior in order to gain worship and admiration, he was accepted into the community and mapped out as a good one:

(1) *for your Iourney is fynysshed* **with honour & worship** (183[3]).

A knight had to be good whatever this evaluation presupposed. In particular, a knight could be: a good warrior, a good Christian or a gallant courtier (Kennedy 1992). It is easy to notice at first glance that the system of modeled values seems to be shifted towards positive qualities in the text of T. Malory. They are considerably better elaborated and profiled in the discourse, probably due to their exceptional emotional and cultural charge. They conform to the rule put forward by Hans Sperber: "emotionally marked concepts can serve as an onomasiological "center of attraction" for other words to verbalize the "attractive" concepts and, vice versa, serve as a cognitive basis, as a semasiological "center of expansion" for verbalizing other concepts" (cit. Blank 1999: 67). The semantic representations, however, are socially and culturally enriched to represent the category of chivalric identity. Among them the following words could be listed: honour, nobility, prowess, valour, courage, moral, high-minded and courteous behaviour, worthiness, gentility, mercy. They constitute the very essence of chivalric perfection– the ideal of a noble class. The most frequent adjectives in the novel turned out to be *good* (1048) and *noble* (459). Negative members of the opposition are not that fabulous and they do not stand on their own but in vis-à-vis to their affirmative counterparts. It is not only the description of the knightly qualities like *vicious* failing to conform to the noble ideal:

(2) **vycious** *were punysshed and ofte put to* **shame and rebuke** (5),

but also examples bearing the traditional labels of the result of a knight's misbehavior. This negative category is represented by a number of words pertaining to the emotional characteristics of the negative image. Among them we meet the fol-

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3 Here references to the pages of the novel *Le Morte DArthur* are given in brackets.

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lowing nouns: anger, hate, sin, and their derivatives, when a knight is labelled as a coward. It is also represented by positive qualities used in negative contexts. Interestingly enough, some good qualities, i.e. noble, gentle or prowess, are never used in negative contexts at all, probably due to the reason of their special 'markedness' in the social system of knighthood and undeniable positive potential. Still, as some linguistic means expressing positive qualities are used in negative contexts, the only logical tool to depict the negative pole seems to be the grammatical category of negation. It goes without saying that distinctly negative words are used to express the negative pole, but for a text it is not enough and negation specified by its polysemy and multifunctionality in particular contexts is a viable tool for it.

Both positive and negative poles are suggested to be shaped in the mental representation after getting acquainted with the romance. In our analysis, we embrace not only the adjectives being positive and prototypical for the category, but also nouns verbalizing more abstract ideas of chivalry. Justified by the idea of tight interrelation of linguistic and conceptual structures, we consider the semasiological perspective as well as the onomasiological one. The latter is looking more closely at concepts, their architecture "in a group of conceptually related words…" (Geeraerts 1999: 37). We analyzed the words in question and calculated the tokens when they were used in an absolutely positive context or with the grammatical or lexical marker of negation in vicinity. The words with negative meaning themselves are represented to show that the positive pole is balanced with the negative one. The nitty gritty of the data is presented in figure 1. The overall quantitative comparison roughly confirms the hypothesis about the role of negation, yet the closer analysis is needed for in some cases negation was present not in the close context, but further in the sentence or double negation led to the positive ideas being reinforced.

To show more precisely how these qualities of a knight work in discourse, we would like to reveal the role of negation in Malory's writing as manifesting the chivalric ideal. We also aim at outlining the place of the category of negation in narrative extracts about knights and thus pertaining to the sphere of evaluation of knightly qualities. Last but not least, we would like to define linguistic features constituting the chivalric identity in Malory's romance.
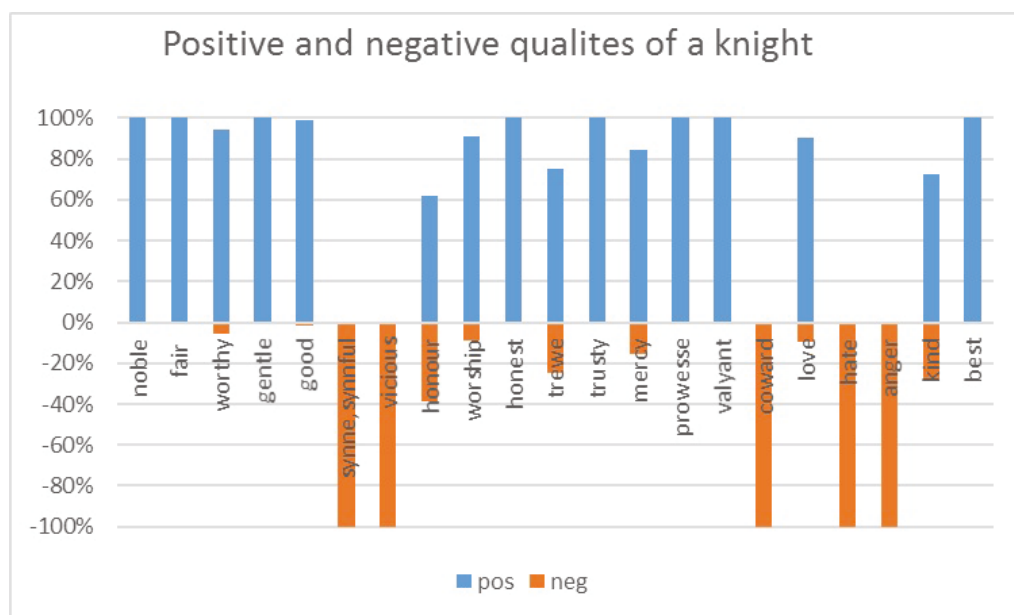
Figure 1: The quantitative representation of the knight qualities in *Le Morte DArthur*

3. The dialectic unity of good and bad in modeling a knight

Before analysing the images of knights in the romance, juxtaposing the good and the bad ones, and revealing the role of negation, first and foremost, we need to understand the intrinsic obscurity of the notion 'a good knight' as anything good at all. Abundant definitions on the subject seem to make the subject even more opaque. What emerges from historical and socio-cultural accounts is that the ideal of knighthood, inevitably lying beneath the concept of identity, had undergone certain stages and was far from being unified and simple (Kennedy 1992; Goff 2002; Huizinga 1954). Beverly Kennedy strongly argued that "If it is a mistake to think that late medieval chivalry was primarily a social phenomenon, the code of manners and ethics of the knightly class, it is equally mistaken to think that there was only one code, to which all knights adhered" (Kennedy 1992: 14–16). Peter Coss also stressed: "knighthood meant different things at different times, and different things at the same time" (Coss 1993: 4). Despite certain inconsistency and incongruity, the axiological system for evaluating a knight could be divided into at least three major types: 1) *the noble warriors* – courageous and skillful in battle and invariably loyal to the lord; 2) *the ideal knight* – the best qualities of whom are piety, chastity, humility and who was characterized as a true Christian,

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and 3) *the knight-courtier* at service for the ruler whose proper "competence in the courtly pastimes" was necessary (Kennedy 1992: 14–16). The ideal identity then comprised and united all these types. Therefore, as a good knight could be good only according to one of three scales, a bad knight could be bad in opposition either to all or to any of these types. To sweep the ground of obvious misconception, we should stress that the representation of a good knight and a bad knight are not drastically distinct, they together form a unity of opposites. Thus, even when the negative pole is represented in a sentence, the positive one is mentally evoked as well, for "negatives set up corresponding counterfactual spaces in which the positive version of the sentence is satisfied" (Fauconnier 1994: 96).

Let us scrutinize the first example from *Le Morte DArthur* in Caxton's version to illustrate the idea:

(3) *For a knyght **withoute** mercy is **dishonoured** Also thow hast slayne a fayr lady to thy grete **shame to the worldes ende** / and doubte thow **not** thow shalt haue grete nede of mercy*… (109).

Introduced at the very beginning of the romance and foreshadowing the forthcoming oath, this prime example conveys the most essential endowment, for the system of knighthood is based on certain criteria.

The author depicts a person on the verge of being disassociated from knighthood. One of the most important qualities necessary for a knight is *mercy*. At those times mercy was a constituent element of the peace-keeping practice and an index of the ethical code. It circles the utterance establishing an interesting case of conceptual parallelism and polysemy – a knight without mercy will sometimes need mercy himself. It turned out to become essential for the period of the Hundred Years' War (1338–1453) – "the war of a new kind" – a trade war "at securing political dominion over Gascony,… and over Flanders…" (Morgan 1986:17) and followed by the War or Roses (1455–1487), in which Malory took part himself and was imprisoned. The idea expressed by him concerned restraining the knights; making killing a knight, especially the one who asked for mercy judicially illegal. It also led to the relationship between the nobility – the king and the vassals – much more regulated. The shift from abstract religious-based conceptions of knighthood Order to more monarchic and therefore inevitably realistic is outlined in some critical works (Reynolds 2006). This important quality is first stressed among the first virtues in the famous Pentecost Oath – the one enacting the order of chivalry:

(4) *to gyff* **mercy** *unto hym that askith* **mercy**, *upon payne of forfiture of their worship and lordship of kynge Arthure for evermore* (119).

This performative act manifesting the new social identity being formed is so explicitly influential that parts of the oath are further repeated throughout the novel in similar contexts. Yet, if this basic quality is absent, the other knightly qualities become equally misbalanced (figure 2): *neuer to refuse* **mercy** *to hym that asketh* **mercy**; *a knyʒt* without **mercy** *is* withoute *worship; our maister is as* **euyll** *beloued for he is* **without mercy;** *a coward shewe* **no mercy.**
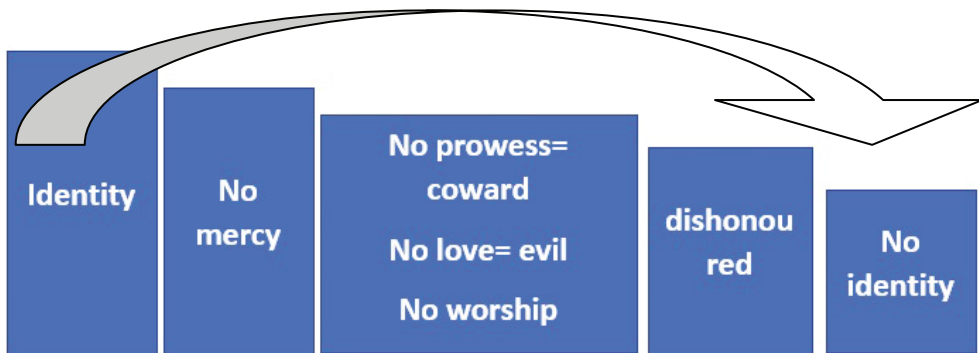

Figure 2: Schematic representation of the lack of mercy as one of the crucial qualities constituting chivalric identity.

The oath serves as the core of understanding worship in the romance. This notion refers to "noble idealism of mind" (Field 1977 [2008]: xlix) as well as the reputation resulting from the appropriate upbringing and behaviour. It is the duty to the fellow knights, duty to the King and to the damsels and the very formulation is very close to "15th century courtesy books, popular at a time when gentry had every interest in educating their children in the spirit of the nobility, wishing to raise the social status of the future generation" (Radulescu 2003: 84). Therefore, **dis**worship leading to shame is feared of and avoided.

The utterance from Caxton's version (3) is also important for understanding how the most essential knightly qualities may be questioned or denied. Morphological negation realized with a negative prefix *dis-* in the deprivative word **dis**honoured is combined with the participle *honoured* interpreted in terms of deprivation of honour. The basic privative meaning of the prefix is proved through the text of Malory, where it is used with other words like *dishonoured, disworship, dysheryt, dis(dys)please*. The examples from the romance feature this prefix in the speech of

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various characters endowed with authority to judge.

(5) *But ye haue done a thynge late that god is **displeasyd** with yow / for ye haue layne by your syster / and on her ye haue goten a chyld / that shalle destroye yow and all the knyghtes of your realme* (68).

The word *dishonoured* points at the result: deprivation of identity.

Both phrases work to enhance each other – they establish the lack of something in the individual identity (***without** mercy)* which further induces the lack in social identity *(**dis**honoured*) and denote the impossibility to be accepted in the community. In this case the category of "a good knight" is taken as a starting point or the universalized prime example to be compared with the description of the presumably negative deeds and behavior. The bad knight therefore could be understood as the knight not achieving honour and lacking the necessary ideal qualities and by this reason pushed out of the world of distinguished people of the knighthood, i.e. The Knights of the Round Table. In this case the society intends to exclude him and take him beyond the borders of the system - the fictional world of aristocracy[4]. A knight without mercy belongs to the opposite pole of the ideal and is dishounoured. And as a result, a dishonoured knight or a knight without worship has no longer right to be called a knight any more. This example sheds light on how a quality of originally personal nature and pertaining to the domain of spiritual life enters the social sphere. This is an important pathway displaying the interrelation between individual and social identity.

Shame is extended and stretches to the very margins of conceived and cognized human world: *a man shalt be **shamed** for euer to the worldes ende*. In the context of the novel it is applied to knights and ladies; the action depicted as *shame* is the worst act for Malory's artistic word. The concept of shame is both important for chivalric world (the word itself and its derivatives are found about 321 times in the text) and very ambivalent in its nature for it is definitely tied with misbehavior and fear of dishonor. No matter it is an acutely painful and highly undesirable feeling, it signifies, that the person may turn from bad to good due to reasonably recognizing and evaluating his behaviour. It was noticed by Mary Flannery (2012: 167) on the basis of late medieval English literature: "Shame is not always a negative concept; indeed, the ability to feel shame is not a negative thing, but is positive, generative,

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[4] While no one would deny that the complexity of medieval issues is excluded from representation in Malory's writing, the same is true of any work of fiction. Representation *per se* implies categorization and, therefore, omission. This omission allowed the author to picture the world of aristocracy in the most detailed way and foreground the issues of kinship and duties of knights and the King.

productive, and crucial to defining one's social status or *identity*." Moreover, it is this negative pole from which "ideas related to honor, disgrace, modesty, and *identity*[5] originate" (Flannery 2012: 167). In a reversed manner this is true: fear and awareness of shame help the knight stay within the accepted rules of behaviour. It is true that the notion of *shame* is personal at the very core. Yet, it also constitutes the identity concept being social, that is the representation of what is up to the reputation or the position of the character within the fictional world of Malory. The inner qualities become socially marked. Merlin prophesies to Arthur:

(6) *I shalle dye a **shameful** deth / to be put in the erthe quyck / and ye shall dye a **worshipful** deth* (68).

The text of Malory is primarily concerned with those knights, that are on their way of acquiring full identity and therefore full worship and honour. Once they achieve it or fail completely, they stop being of particular interest or importance. There are also some knights of the Round Table that were not Christian from the very start and therefore attracted particular attention of other characters and the author. Palomides is the knight 'christened in his heart' but Saracen, who occupied quite a portion of Malory's text until he becomes truly baptised. The lack of balance and the violated group identity of knights of the Round Table is restored and he seizes out of narration becoming just a 'good knight' (cf. Armstrong 2006). A more tragic example is Dynadan, who refuses to fight for ladies and even dares to question the necessity of it, and what is more – he jokes about it. So, he is socially 'killed' by being forced into women's clothes and disappears from the narration as he is killed off-stage. In fact, he did not understand the 'lesson' and since his individual identity is thought to be evil or potentially threatening, he is simply eliminated from the set.

It seems that the opposition paves its way closer to the radial model of core and periphery. First and foremost, stands the idea to what extent a knight conforms to the ideal: the closer he is to the ideal, the higher the worship; but the farther he is from it, the higher is his shame. Negative sentences were proved to be more psychologically complex (Horn 2001) and more context dependent. The general opposition revealing peculiarities of cognitive construal of chivalric identity also leads to determining of properties to a very approximate level. Returning to example (3) we would like to point that the use of morphological, lexical, and syntactical means of negation opposing good and bad qualities in gradation already pointes to a complicated cognitive model lying beneath the narrative cloth.

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[5] Italics added by the authors.

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4. Negation in cognition and discourse

To apply 'the negative prism' to full extent we should outline the major features of negation within the period in question. Negation has long "occupied the crossroads of developments in linguistic theory, psycholinguistics, the philosophy of language and of mind, and the history of ideas" (Horn 2001: xiv) for a valid reason: it is a complicated phenomenon characterized by many functions, which are related to various spheres at once and not the least to the way the world is constructed in human consciousness and more specially to the artistic world construal. It is well accepted that the category of negation cannot and should not be seen in the light of a direct one-to-one logical antinomy of positive and negative. It was already clear for linguistics of the 19th century, that "full negation is not possible. This happens because reality gives only the positive entities to our thought, the expression of negation should be a result appearing in the state of collision of these particular entities in our mind" (Potebnya 1989: 193). Thereby, negation was considered to be primarily biased with the flow of communication, with creating and correcting certain conceptualizations concerning the object or constructing its model in human's mind. It was accepted to be social by nature, for "negation works as some inherent indicator of communicative potential with a canonical function of changing or correcting the view of the addressee about the state of affairs" (Schmidt 1973: 2001–2002).

Based on these general theoretical assumptions the features of negation in Middle English period are to be outlined as well. In the period, preceding Malory's *Le Morte DArthur*, negation was flourishing on the linguistic landscape. Middle English saw the peak and decline of multiple negation, being popular in a plethora of texts and styles. However, the role of negation and its stylistic value should be determined for each text separately as it is one of major typical stylistic tools at the disposal of authors (the others being synonymic condensation and the use of synonyms of different origin[6]). At the time of Chaucer's and a century later – Malory's writing multiple negation was really used as a powerful stylistic device and thus could be analysed as a distinct discourse strategy.

In Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* (1380) negation played a particular axiological role in representing, or rather, underlying knightly virtues: "*He **nevere** yet **no** vileynye **ne** sayde / In all his lyf unto **no** maner wight*" (Prologue). It goes without saying that it is a typical Middle English form, with multiple negation or negative

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[6] A large-scale analysis of loan-words and words of poetic origins in their functional interplay is given in (Volkonskaya 2012).

concord used in one phrase. Still, in the context of the novel and within the imme- diate context, negation stresses the knight's unparalleled behavior. Y. Iyeiri main- tains that multiple negation is much more prominent in some parts of *The Canter- bury Tales* because of its genre complexity and specific style in each part: "The proportions of multiple negation are significantly larger in formal texts such as *The Knight's Tale* and *The Clerk's Tale* than in informal texts such as *The Reeve's Tale*, *The Canon's Yeoman's Tale* and *The Wife of Bath's Tale*" (Iyeiri 1999: 130).

This prominence of negation might be due to a greater precision needed for the particular kind of narrative or it probably agrees with the fact that multiple negation fulfilled stylistic and evaluative function in a text devoid of other language means. Besides that, negation in Late Middle English and Early Modern English[7] has al- ways been a fruitful source for linguistic endeavor explaining the origins of some future language norms or standards. Negation in Middle English was unstable, since the word order was not fixed and Neg-Concord optional for a preceding peri- od (OE) became obligatory. A certain 'bleaching' of the participle *not* led to a whole range of other 'reinforces' – *neither, nomore, nowher* (Mazzon 1994: 55) and the use of French *ne* at the end of the XIV century to disappear in the next XV century.

Ingrid Tieken-Boon van Ostade (1999) compared the earlier version of *Le Morte DArthur* known as the Winchester Manuscript, which is considered to be closer to Malory's own writing, and Caxton's edition of the novel that appeared later. It was demonstrated that despite the presupposed fall of negative utterances both exhibited rather high rates of negation (from 364 to 368 cases) and pointed at similarities as well as many differences. So, negation no matter being gradually disappearing of the English language still retained a substantial proportion and was recognized by the editor as an important tool. Yet, Tieken-Boon van Ostade focused on systemat- ic linguistic transformations the English language had undergone through several decades between Malory writing his manuscript and Caxton bringing it to the con- temporary reader and thus editing it.

It is necessary to mention that besides the stylistic and even rhetorical potential, negative forms served to emphasize the potentially marked notions. For example, in "Middle English Sermons" (1390–1430) they "seem to cumulate exclusively where there is the expression of hostility towards someone and thus the wish to make it extremely clear that the persons in question are not to have access to any bequests" (Mazzon 1994: 165). Consequently, negation may have been used as a

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[7] The transitory period starting from the end of the 15th century and till the middle of the 17th centu- ry.

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stylistic tool to manifest important cultural notions at the period in question including the complex matrix of chivalric identity. Still, the role of negation has to be discussed on a case by case bases, that is it may be determined for each discourse type/genre and even the text separately taken a broad look into the socio-cultural context. The prose style of Malory has been subject of many works including Field (1977 [2008]) and Lambert (1975), who noted that Malory's prose is direct, plain and functional rather that paratactic. Building on this work and we proceed from the premises that given the role negation has always played in literary texts, it possesses some pragmatic potential in the chivalric discourse to be studied. Yet, giving the full account of negation in romances of the period is beyond the scope of the present paper. Malory's *Le Morte DArthur* is taken as the most influential and prime example encompassing and incorporating some basic features of its sources.

5. Negation for picturing a bad knight

The analysis of the text of Malory reveals that the binary model as well as dividing knights into categories works well in discourse to a certain extent, with the help of antonyms pointing to different sets of qualities of the positive or negative content status in the immediate context:

(7) *Whether aske ye Iustes by **loue** or by **hate*** (447)

(8) *here **kyndenes** and myn **vnkyndenes*** (858)

(9) *ye doo your self grete **shame** and hym **no disworship*** (549)

Here sin is juxtaposed to holy deeds, shame to worship, kindness to unkindness, prowess to cowardice. The emotionally charged scenes exhibit particular condensation of the words, verbalizing the opposing poles.

We have already pointed out that words with negative prefixes like *dishonor* and *disworship* constitute the domain of shame – the worst end the knight could meet. In the example (10) negative concord leading to the seemingly affirmative meaning is used though it is not totally equal to *worship* for the pragmatics of the utterance is different. Language, as it is commonly accepted, eliminates non-semantic and non-functional redundancy. In the artistic text the redundancy may be used only on purpose: given that the writer and Caxton as the editor were particularly conscious in the choice of words. "It is clear that he took particular care to reshape his source text into a form that emphasized the narrative coherence of the work as a whole while simultaneously seeking to make it as accessible as possible to his readers" (Archibald and Edwards 1996: xiii). This may be indirectly proved by comparison

between the existing versions: the Caxton edition and the Winchester manuscript found in 1934. The latter is considered to be closer to Malory's original version, containing a larger number of traits of northern dialects (Denton 2003). The Winchester manuscript is considered to be present at the workshop during the work on the edition since it contained some traces of ink peculiar to Caxton's workshop (Field 1998: 128–129, Wheeler and Salda 2000). A full-scale comparison between the versions even including the third one (Wynkin de Worde edition 1498) is presented in (Mukai 2000). As it reads from the comparative studies, Caxton abridged some pieces and adjusted to the contemporary language norm. However, the most interesting case is changing the symbolic beasts in the dream of Arthur to reflect the contemporary stand-off: a bear has been changed into a boar that contradicted the symbolism of royal animals.[8] In Celtic mythology a bear symbolized the royal power as opposed to the spiritual or religious power symbolized by a boar. So, the war between a dragon and a bear was natural for the two animals were of a similar kind, and the war between a dragon and a boar seemed out of symbolic code. Yet, this deliberate change made a straightforward and well-decoded political allusion: "the **boar** was the badge of King Richard III and the **dragon** that of Henry Tudor. The allusion would only have made sense in or just before 1485, and it is difficult to see who could have been responsible for it but Caxton himself**."** (Field 1995: 37).

In the majority of contexts in the romance negation accompanies the socio-cultural markers of chivalry: corresponding to the positive qualities. Positive and negative characteristics and qualities are juxtaposed in contrast, thus allowing each one to become more vivid and emotionally charged.

Thomas Malory is famous for synonymic condensation, when words of the same lexical set are found in one context and become further enhanced by negative participles:

(10) *Also pray hym that he be of **good herte & courage** / for he shalle mete with a ful noble knyghte / but he is **neyther** of bounte / curtosye / **nor** gentylnes / for he attendyth vnto **nothynge but** to murther / & that is the cause I can **not prayse hym nor loue hym** (235)*

---

[8] "Thenne *the dragon* flewe awey al on a hey3te / and come doune with suche a swough and smote the bore on the rydge whiche was x foote large fro the hede to the taylle / and smote *the bore* all to powdre bothe flesshe and bonys / that it flutteryd al abrode on the see" (Caxton 1485: C. IV P 166, l. 83v.) and "Than hym semed there com oute of the oryent a *grymly beare*, all blak, in clowde, and his paws were as byg as a poste. …Than the dreadfull dragon dressyd hym ayenste hym and come in the wynde lyke a faucon, and freyshely strykis *the beare*" (Le Morte: 153. 13–18).

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Positive qualities of knights manifest great linguistic variability used in negative contexts. Besides, "negation turns out to be inevitably context-driven" (Mantieva 2006: 5) through reference to positive entities, though negation is defined as something presupposed and not existing in reality.

The image of a bad knight as an unworthy member of the knightly brotherhood is created throughout a novel with the help of negation. There are various lexicogrammatical ways to express it. One of them runs as follows: a pronoun and the structure *to be+ not+ adj for* used predominantly in the direct speech of knights and ladies. In example (11) some unknown voice addresses Bors standing near the altar where four ladies were praying on the knees:

(11) ***Thow arte not worthy for*** *to be* <u>*in this place* </u>(581).

This example pictures some concrete and enclosed place. Again example (12) corresponds to the particular religious or spiritual place:

(12) *lete vs remeue this body for* ***hit is not worthy*** *to lye in this chircheyerd for he was a fals Crysten man* (629).

This construction with *worthy* is used in the situation when a knight good in earthly deeds and adventures is not equally honoured from moral and spiritual viewpoint. After the battle where Tristram and Launcelot fought together they were given praise and admiration, but as Tristram proved to be stronger in that battle Lancelot agrees:

(13) *I* ***am not worthy*** *to haue this honour* (550*).*

The construction with *not* or *no* and *good* is used predominantly in more socially-biased contexts involving the status of a worldly knight. It may be aimed at expressing opinion concerning the shield, being unarmed, their place and existence in the social world:

(14) *me thynketh your sheld is* ***not good;*** *it is* ***not good*** *we be vnarmed; it is* ***not good*** *that ye goo to nyghe them / for wete ye wel there are two as good knyghtes as nowe are lyuynge* (541).

In the next example we observe the lexical form of a negative pronoun used to compare the knight-errant (a wandering knight ready for adventures) with Lancelot and other outstanding knights:

(15) *Fie, for* ***shame,*** *said the knyght he* ***is none*** *of the worthy Knyghtes* (434)

In this example the mental image is developed on the basis of comparing the knight with the ideal in the category of knights. Here the knight is excluded from the world of the best knights.

The image of a bad knight is entrenched with some deviations from the norm; all the contexts are emotional, for the characters evaluating the deeds of a knight express surprise, pity and disappointment. In the majority of contexts *not* follows the verb, while *no* is used to manifest the absence of the quality in nouns. The knight turning to be bad is devoid of courtesy, as well as mercy, trust, and prowess.

(16) *Soo were ye better said the damoysel / for **trust not** in hym is **no curtosye** but alle goth to the deth or **shameful murther** / and that is pyte / for he is a ful lykely man / wel made of body / and <u>a ful noble knyghte of prowesse and a lorde of grete laundes and possessions</u> / Truly said Beaumayns <u>/ he may wel be a good knyghte / but he vseth</u> **shameful customs** and it is me-rueylle that he endureth so longe that none of the noble knyghtes of my lord Arthurs haue not delt with hym* (237).

The negative meaning is specific for the reedited word *shameful* combined with *murther* (murder) and *customs*. And in this case, the knight possesses nothing that makes him a proper knight, constitutes his inner being. Even his estates and possessions are rejected and his honour is dismissed. It follows from the text that lacking one or several qualities from the set of knighthood makes a knight bad according to categorization of the conceptual domain in classification.

Negation in Malory's text is marked by various ways of the linguistic verbalization and the picture arising from the analysis becomes more diversified than strictly direct opposition upon the analysis unfolding. The majority of contexts with negation playing a significant role are mostly fixed in direct speech of knights and point at the misfortunes of their fellows serving the goal of correcting their behaviour.

6. When good and bad do not exclude each other: an opposition revisited

Attempts to identify an ideally good knight – the prototype for the positive pole – in Malory's text mainly fell short upon Lancelot. He was truly the most valued and worshiped knight, but the one of those the fall of Arthurian kingdom is blamed on. To circumvent this paradox C. S. Lewis (1960) suggested two scales of evaluation – the secular scale and the religious one. Thus, equally seriously and without any inconsistency that Lancelot should be evaluated as good and bad at the same time.

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Links to this possible scale-like evaluation may be found in the early parts of the novel, where a hermit discusses the future of Lancelot with Bors. The latter is seeking advice for a vision of a senser and a spear pointing at future quests of the Holy Grail left him bewildered and uneasy. Besides outlining the undeniably positive qualities of the best knights of the Round Table, the old man discloses the flaws induced by a complicated situation with Guinevere:

(17) *telle hym of this **aduenture** the whiche had ben most conuenyent for hym of al **erthely knyʒtes** / but **synne is soo foule in hym** / he **may not encheue suche holy dedes** / for **had not ben his synne** he had past al the knyʒtes that euer were in his dayes / and telle thou sir launcelot of **alle wordly aduentures** he passeth in **manhode & prowesse** al other But in **this spyrytuel mater** he shalle haue many his better* (580).

This vision is discussed in terms of adventures, which only the pure and moral individual could endure. Here two major oppositions are conceptually evoked: worldly adventures and spiritual matter, sin and holy deeds. This dualism, typical for medieval literature is elaborated by Malory in relation to every knight and his role in the narrative. Negation is used twice in the utterance: with the modal verb and with had. The conceptualization of sin becomes the source for diverging interpretations (Fig. 3) Linguistically drawing a borderline between these entities is supported on the syntactical level: both sentences first picture worldly adventures of the knights good at earthly deeds, then a conjunction *but* follows. A clause either with negation or with a modal verb finites the whole picture. Both serve as expressive means for evaluation.
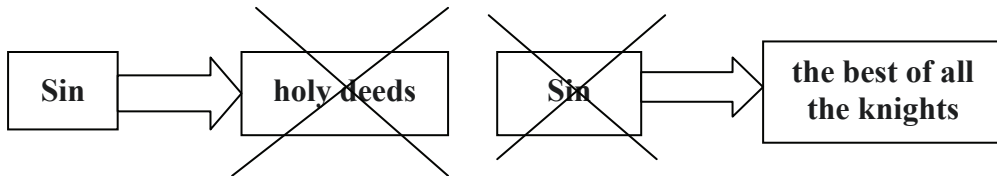

Figure 3: Conceptual representation of the contrastive evaluation of Lancelot

Two drastically different points of view on Lancelot are observed in the final passages of the novel, where Sir Ector – an old knight, who had brought up Arthur, says:

(18) *thou were the **trewest louer** of a **synful man** that euer loued woman* (861).

This phrase seems to converge in a not contradictory manner about his adultery with Guinevere and thus treachery to King Arthur and his exceptional and true love, evaluating him higher. The first casts a shadow on positive perception of

Lancelot, the second circumvents it. In the Quest for the Holy Grail the hermit also evaluates the role and the position for Sir Lancelot in the text.

(19) *For I dar saye as synfull as syre launcelot hath ben sythe he went in to the quest of the Sancgreal / he **slewe neuer man** / nor **nought shalle tyll** that he come vnto Camelot ageyne / for he hath taken vpon hym for to forsake synne / **And nere were** that **he nys not** stable / but by his thoughte he is lykely to torne ageyne / he shold be nexte to encheue it sauf Galahad his sone / but god knoweth his thoughte and his **vnstabylnesse** / and yet shalle he dye ryght an holy man / and **no doubte** he hath **no** felawe of **no** erthely synful man / Sir sayd Gawayne hit semeth me by your wordes that for oure synnes it **wylle not** auaylle vs to trauaylle in this quest / Truly sayd the good man / there ben an honderd suche as ye be / that **neuer shalle** preu-ayle / **but to** haue shame. And whanne they had herd these voyces they commaunded hym vnto god* (672).

The passage is abundant in examples of negation making the narration seemingly complicated, for the reader should evoke the mental model of positive behavior through negative clauses. However, this seems to be a stylistic device picturing an unstable soul of both a perfect sinful man. The noun *stāblenesse* is endowed with religious connotations and could be used in the meaning of "the perseverance in monastic life" [MED] identifying the steady state of mind, peace and virtue. Therefore, its use with a negative prefix *un-* could invoke both ideas: profound psychological insights into the most attractive knight and his evaluation according to the religious scale. In the final scenes he strangely "repents not of the sins he has committed against God, but of the griefs he has caused his lady and King Arthur" (Evans 1985: 39) thus stressing his unstable soul recognizing this dualism between religious and earthly domains.

(20) *Truly sayd syr Launcelot I trust **I do not dysplese** god / for he knoweth myn entente / For my sorow **was not nor is not** for ony reioysyng of synne / but my sorow may **neuer haue ende** / For whan I remembre of hir beaulte & of hir noblesse / that was bothe wyth hyr kyng & wyth hyr / So whan I sawe his corps & hir corps so lye togyders / truly **myn herte wold not serue** to susteyne my careful body / Also whan I remēbre me how by my defaute & myn orgule and my pryde / that they were bothe layed ful lowe that were pereles that euer was lyuyng of cristen people wyt you wel sayd syr Launcelot this remembred of there **kyndenes and myn vnkyndenes** sanke so to myn herte that I **myȝt not susteyne** my self so the frensshe book maketh mencyon* (858-859).

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Kennedy (1992) very much in line with C. S. Lewis' logics explains this evaluative relationship "a forward-looking worldly sort of man might judge Lancelot to be 'good' despite his failure in chastity, whereas a backward-looking, religious sort of man would judge him to be 'bad' because of the same failure' (Kennedy 1992: 96).[9] This extended description of Launcelot shows that the system of binary oppositions no matter useful for heuristic purposes, and identifying the markers of chivalric identity in general does not work perfectly well in real discourse and should be dealt on a case by case basis through the context.

7. Negation and gender in the romance

The knight is constantly evaluated by his fellow knights and knights of higher position. Many instances of the knightly words, especially those belonging to the core of knightly identity, are found in dialogues (e.g. *worship* 309/ at about 200). Besides that, the knight is discussed by ladies of the court, because they teach and guide the budding knights through chivalric upbringing and thus shaping his identity. No matter, the role of damsels in the romances is usually ornamental and minor, still they might have had some power. The famous passage in Charny's *A Knight's own book of Chivalry* (1350? [2013]) reads as follows, directly pointing at the upbringing of a knight: "Thus your ladies will and should be more greatly honored when they have made a good knight or man-at-arms of you" (Charny [2013]: 66). In this context it is worth noticing that, one of the chivalric manuals on just war and the art of warfare so popular in the 15th century was written by a woman: Christine de Pizan's *The Book of Deeds of Arms and of Chivalry* (1410), known to the English-reading public also in Caxton's translation (1489). In this part of the article we are going to proceed to negation as a narrative tool in female discourse of the romance.

We want to stress a crucial role women played for the knightly world. For the first time in chivalric romances the obligation

(21)　*to doo ladyes / damoysels and gentylwymmen* **socour** *vpon payne of dethe* (119)

---

[9] Some other Knights of the Round Table are also subjected to this multifaceted evaluation. Kennedy also marks that: "heroic type of knight, like Gawain, who is loyal to his lord but shows no awareness or appreciation of the courtly virtues or of the political and judicial functions of knighthood, appears to be bad." (1992: 95).

was specially verbalized in Malory in the fundamentally defining the core of chivalric identity – the Pentecostal Oath. This obligation to help ladies as a must for every knight is usually proclaimed to be of paramount importance. In the text, it is mentioned after the mercy. Women become endowed with subtle power to judge and teach knights in their quests and evaluate their deeds – this power is equal, if not greater than that of knights. Cross-romance comparison allowed Ackerman (2002: 8) to conclude that "in addition to its obvious limitations, Malory's chivalric code holds some currently unrecognized advantages for women". Unlike the generally assumed opinion, women did have power in the male centered world of action and "most women exercised some degree of power in the Middle Ages but few of them exercised authority" (Bardsley 2007: 193-200). However, this power was neither in the actions nor in the knightly adventures; it could be illuminated only in utterances expressing advice and reproach, becoming really powerful means in discourse.

The most prominent examples of women exercising this type of power are found in case of quests – the knightly adventure undertaken to enrich in worthies and obtain honour. In these quests a lady could accompany a young budding knight and give him advice or blame the knight for unworthy and unkind deeds. These quests cannot be underestimated for they pertain to the social structure of knighthood and shape the knight's identity. The quest ends with the knight obtaining what he aspired to – tied bonds with the knightly circle and his knightly status approved. To become a true knight noble birth and prowess in battles do not suffice – a knight should become a well-bread man with courteous manners. And here the role of women becomes extremely unprecedented.

A prime example of educating a young person is presented in Malory's chapter *The Tale of Sir Gareth* that challenges the accepted image of a knight: noble and in armour on a horseback. As it is proved, "Arthurian knights share a set of assumptions about a knightly identity: a knight will ask for horse and armour, whereas only a villain will ask for basic things like food and drink" (Radulescu 2003: 91). This a typical story of the so called kitchen knight, who starts his career with service and finally attains "the level of the very best knights in the traditions of epic and Arthurian romance but endure a period of oppression and occupy the status of social inferiors and outsiders" (Gordon 2005: 190). Consequently, the plot of the story could be downplayed and the notion of identity being denied, challenges and then proved comes to be the essence of the it. This tale features Gareth at first as a kitchen servant who tries to hide his lineage and eager to prove his worthiness through his deeds. He wants to use the opportunity of his first quest to prove that he is worthy to be a true knight as Dame Linnet comes to the Arthur's court and asks

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for help – *soccur.* Let us focus on this word and its semantics within the romance. Unlike its neutral synonyms – *help/ aid,* this word was marked by judicial connotations and implied some previous agreement, unmistakenly referring to the Pentecost Oath. Linnet, representing herself as a dame of *high parage,* sees Gareth first helping at dinner addressed by a name of Beawmaynes; she regards this as a personal offence to be accompanied by such an *unworthy* member. However, she didn't have any other choice as to go with him and be a witness of his achievements in adventures. None of his failures or misfortunes stay untouched by her critical and even aggressive comments.

Her speech is extremely emotional and full of examples of negation combined with words of negative connotations: *thou stynkest al of the kechyn; luske; a torner of broches and a ladyl wessher; kechen knaue; vnhappely and cowardly; myshappely; mysauenture.*

She clashes the words from the opposite poles of knighthood:

(22) *Nay truly / for thou slewest hym **vnhappely and cowardly** / therfor torne ageyn bawdy kechyn page* (219–220).

The sentences are short and abrupt; they employ various types of negation combined in multiple clusters. These are negative adverbs (*never*), conjunctions (*never – nor*), morphological derivation (prefixes *un – mis/mys-*), and syntactic accompanied with *but.*

(23) *For the fyrste knyghte his hors stumbled / and there he was drouned in the water / **and neuer it was by thy force / nor by thy mygh**t / And the last knyghte by myshap thou camyst behynde hym and **myshappely thou slowe hym** (221); …yet mayst thou torne ageyne with thy worship / for and thou folowe me / thou arte but slayne / for I see alle that **euer thou dost is but by mysauenture / and not by prowesse of thy handes** (222).*

She wants him to become a real knight, but not a meek and weak person. Her "not typical" speech portrayal gave Gibson (2001) and Zimmerman (2005) credibility to view her discourse educational strategy as more male-like than female or power-endowed as contrasted to powerless. Gibson (2001: 225) considers the whole tale of Gareth (Beawmaynes) and Linnet looking like a carnival reversal of male and female roles and stresses that the overpowering and derisive language of Linnet is characteristic of masculine speech. Analysing the situational context of her speech E. Zimmerman places the status of women within the social paradigm of the knightly world at the basis of categorization, because it is her place that gives her

power to tease and insult the young man. Her role in the narration is not that simple and her speech portrayal is full of nuances of word and mood.

When during the quest they stayed at some knight's castle she didn't appreciate that Gareth dismissed following the rules of organizing the places at the table and agreed to take a higher seat. Rather teasingly she made a comment on the real place of Gareth within Arthur's court. The knight housing them also is given a remark that he had to know where and how to place the guests:

(24) *Fy fy said she syr knyghte ye are **vncurtoys** to sette a kechyn page afore me hym bysemeth better to stycke a swyne than to sytte afore a damoysel of **hyhe** parage* (221).

This episode shows a serious violation of social conventions or even the misinterpretation of her identity, because Gareth had to acquire courtly or refined manners, as well as become well-bred and considerate. His courteous behavior had to be the best in terms of prowess, worthiness and courtesy. In this episode, she teaches both knights the appropriate behaviour through opposing courteous and uncurious manners. It seems sometimes that her speech construes the basis of the anti-world, that it is so bad that it should be avoided as much as possible. Still it is not a logical negative counterpart in its own right, for its main purpose is to warn a knight and prevent him from unworthy deeds and approve the justified manner of being a proper knight.

This unresolved controversy climaxes at the moment when Gareth wins in a battle with the third and the last knight during his quest. Only after that Linnet accepts his new chivalric identity and agrees to view him as a knight of high lineage possessing all the necessary qualities. Interestingly enough, his patience with her being so unkind with him is mentioned among the arguments in favour of accepting the identity:

(25) *O Ihesu merueille haue I said the damoysel **what maner a man ye be** / for hit may neuer ben otherwyse but that **ye be comen of a noble blood** / for soo foule ne shamefully dyd neuer woman rule a knyghte as I haue done you / and euer curtoisly ye haue suffred me / and that cam neuer but of a gentyl blood* (230).

Treating her with noble and refined manners, he proved to be well-bred as well and worthy. This verbalized acceptance indicated that Beawmaynes ceases to exist but Sir Gareth appeared. In other words, the official chivalric identity was acquired: "the most important anchorage to our self-identity throughout life remains our own

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name" (Allport 1961: 117).

8. The many faces of negation

One can't fail to notice that negative qualities no matter associated with the anti-knight are still evoking a positive image. Therefore, we can point out another function of negation in Malory's narrative: reinforcing good qualities and finally creating a positive image especially in some cases of negative concord and multiple negation:

> (26) *I knowe hym wel his name is Selyses and **worship fully** ye met with hym / and **neyther** of yow are **dishonoured** (532); ye doo your self grete shame and hym **no disworship*** (549).

In many contexts of the romance by Malory negation is used to reinforce positive qualities as sentences with negation are much more emotional and connotative. It is used to illuminate one of the aspects of knight's behaviour, for it is "situationally bound and psychologically determined" (Komova 1985). The next example is the Tristan's words about his beloved Isolde:

> (27) *Alle that I haue offended is and was for the loue of la Beale Isoud / And as for her/ I dar say she is pyerles aboue alle other ladyes / and also I proferd her **neuer no dishonour** / and by her I haue geten the moost parte of my **worship** / and sythen I offended **neuer** as to her owne persone* (611).

That is how the category of negation works even for emotional reinforcement of positive qualities of a true and worthy knight at least according to one of the scales within the evaluative system in the romance. In this case, a nominal phrase with an attributive element denoting the quality of a knight focusing on some space is found in the theme of the sentence, while the part with negative particles belongs to the rheme of the sentence:

> (28) *the **worthy knight** in alle this land is **noo better** than ye **nor more of prowesse*** (445).

Positive adjectives serve as socio-cultural markers in this case and anchor the description into the world of knighthood.

Apart from various phrases with *neither, never* and *nomore* complex clauses with conjunction *but* are used to stress and evaluate the positive qualities. Within the context of the novel it is used not only to deny but to bring the positive qualities to the limelight:

(29) *But the custom was suche amonge them that **none** of the kynges wold helpe other **but alle the felauship** of euery standard to helpe other as they might (534); But there afore hem alle ther myghte **none** take it out **but Arthur** wherfor ther were many lordes **wroth** (43).*

It is worth mentioning that negation as well as the category of modality is largely shaped by the so-called presence of a particular person or, we should say, the influence of human factor and, in many examples, of knights promising to keep the oath perfused with modality. Negative examples of love as the most important feelings in general in the romance are used with modal verbs: *I can not love, I may not love, Ye should not love.*

(30) *But **I wille** that ye wete how be it I promysed you largely I **thought none euyl nor** I warne you **none** ylle wille I doo (318); madame ther shal **none** of my subgettys **mysdoo** you **ne** your maydens **ne** to **none** that to yow longen (182).*

Negation then allows the author not only to shape the bad, but also to stress and evaluate the idealistic representation of a medieval warrior. Merlin specially places good qualities of a knight Torre to the forefront, yet finishes the utterance with negation:

(31) *for he shalle preue a noble knyght of prowesse as good as ony is lyuyng and gentyl and curteis & of good tatches and passyng true of his promesse / and **neuer shalle outrage** (114).*

Negation turns out to be not a distinct logical counterpart of positive utterances, but a powerful tool for featuring knighthood as a socially and ethically important endeavour.

9. Conclusion: understanding knighthood identity through language means

In conclusion, we should stress the major hypothesis we started our discussion with is assumed to be true and of heuristic potential for research into linguistics and cultural studies. Knighthood as it was modelled in medieval romances largely depended on a complexity of beliefs, concepts and representations which existed in society of the time. Transformations in society and its structure inevitably influenced the knightly discourse, while literary representations brought up social changes in knights' behaviour, as well as the development of the system of moral values in the forthcoming centuries. The rising number of knighted gentry, the newly aristocracy

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perceived the plethora of chivalric romances varying in form, size and content through their social aspirations and desire to lift the rank of their children not to mention the rising richness of tournaments and more and more elaborated rituals. The ideals presented in literature lead to a "growing sophistication in social and intellectual life" (Barber 1996: 21). Making the ideals and non-material worship the basis for nobility and chivalric identity, "Malory's text displays a high degree of sympathy with the social aspirations of the English gentry" (Peterson 1992), but what is more it provides the cultural basis for social framework. This sharp distinction classically drawn between a socio-cultural fact and fiction was not that sharp for the world of reality and the ideal to aspire were mutually penetrative for "chivalry is a kind of Platonic ideal of knightly life" (Barber 1996: 22). As Boris Ford (1992: 10) noticed: "Literature embodies, but is also embodied in the life of its aristocratic sponsors", who had to be taught on the basis of positive and negative exemplars of knighthood. Chivalric romances fulfilled a twofold function seemingly recognized by the authors and the editor: first to represent the ideal for didactic purposes on how knightly power could be and should be exercised as well as to facilitate the developing system of knighthood as markedly dependent on kingship. The most striking example of literary ideals going beyond the borders of pages is the established monarchical orders of knighthood, that in many a case were modelled according to the Arthurian order of the Round Table (Boulton 1987).

Representations centred around the chivalric descriptions are both social and individual. Individual qualities acquire social significance and vice versa the socially marked qualities deserve particular individual attention. The borderline between social and individual was transparent in chivalric romances, thus forming an interesting case of identity formation. In the article we tried to show that relationships between knights and other people are represented in the identity-centred framework, which proves to be generic for a chivalric romance and helpful in analyzing the controversial and multilayered category of a 'good knight'. In this category two poles of features are found. "Consciousness, so far as we know it, appears to be a rhythm of affirmation and negation, a power of asserting and denying of constituting and deleting" (Kurrick 1979:1). The positive pole and the negative one interact and the logical opposition turns to be a dialectical unity or the broad scope of identity. The proper identity is ensured through the existence of both: the best and the worst exemplars. The former to follow, the latter to avoid.

On the one hand, to be socially effective the identity of knighthood emerges on the basis of qualities that produce prime exemplars evoking the schemata favorable to the best and even ideal knight. An individual conforming to the ideal was identified as a true knight. He is sometimes guided through his journey to true worship

by his fellow-knights, dames of high parage or Merlin himself. The positive identity is clearly formed in various types of narrative within chivalric discourse of Malory, where we can find the representation of knights and direct speech of both knights and ladies. To be a knight meant to try and aspire to the best ideal image hardly reached by any of the Knights of the Round Table. Knighthood in the novel is evaluated through socially and culturally marked notions like *mercy*, *noble* and *worthy*, corresponding to the conceptual sphere of knighthood.

On the other hand, there are knights not conforming to the ideal and thus subjected to criticism and destined to play a role of a bad exemplar. In this case, the knight is pictured as bad through negation of positive qualities making up the chivalric identity or by means of negative concepts. If the positive words are used in with negative forms or in negative contexts they become especially pragmatically charged. Negative concepts like *shame* and *dishonour* make the picture more polarized and shed light on how chivalric literary representations develop and foreshadow early modern approaches to the subject of this illustrious image – the 'knight in shining armour'. The analysis of the contexts, however, revealed the opposition of 'good and bad' to be more complicated with many nuances found in contexts that are revealed through thorough attention to their linguistic form. By and large, it is the conceptualization of identity that shapes the pragmatics of actual use.
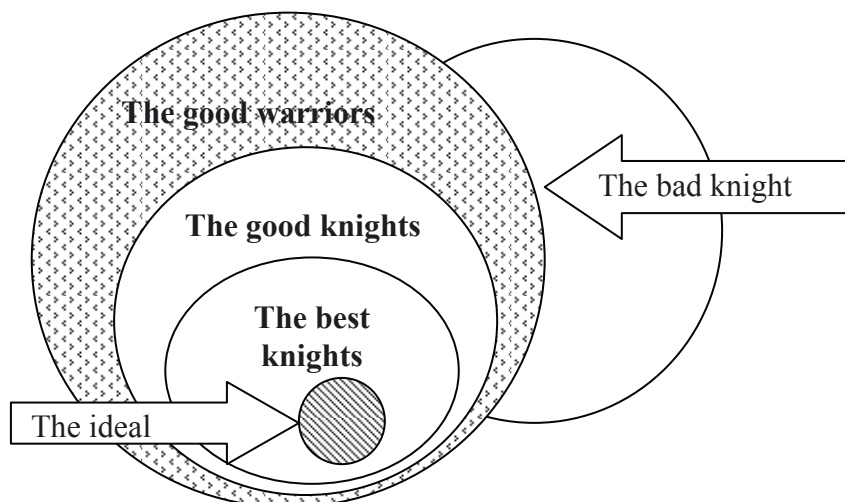

Figure 4: The conceptual model of chivalric identity in Malory's *Le more DArthur*.

The category of negation in Malory's text focuses on moral evaluation of a knight as a representative of noble class. The linguistic analysis of the discourse

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function of negation in *Le Morte DArthur* indicates that opposition in some contexts is more complicated and it could be represented through a scale or a circle: the closer the knight is to the centre the better he is, the farther he is situated from the core, the higher are the risks of being excluded from the chivalric world conforming to the ideal group identity.

The image of a knight is created through the category of negation being linguistically diverse and represented lexically, morphologically, and syntactically. Negation is proved to be context and situation dependent. The analysis also reveals some conceptual structures working in the medieval romances. They tell us much about the medieval époque: the feudal society and its controversies, the interplay of military and Christian ethics, moral norms of behavior and a chivalric quest for an ideal. These issues are of great importance for historians and literary critics, because of the complexity of relations existing between real life and its influence on fiction as well as the otherwise: the impact of fiction on the surrounding world and people consciousness.

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PROSUDBA VITEŠTVA KROZ DISKURSNU FUNKCIJU NEGACIJE
U MALORYJEVU DJELU *LE MORTE DARTHUR*

U radu se istražuje srednjovjekovno viteštvo kao složena matrica različitih kulturoloških, povijesnih i etičkih koncepata. Kreće se od pretpostavke da se jezičnom i konceptualnom raščlambom romanci može steći uvid u način na koji se konceptualizirao viteški ideal. Istaknuto mjesto među brojnim romancama s pravom pripada Maloryjevu djelu *Le Morte DArthur* (1485), zato što ono pruža dobar temelj za detaljnu klasifikaciju viteških vrlina i mana u kasnijim desetljećima. Ovaj rad opisuje ulogu negacije u portretiranju suparništva između dobrog i lošeg viteza. Ta se kategorija jezično ostvaruje na više razina: leksičkoj, morfološkoj i sintaktičkoj. Suprotno prvotnim tumačenjima da negacija označava nešto loše, autorima je ona omogućila ne samo da objasne loše viteške osobine, već i da naglase jezična sredstva kojima se prosuđuju vrline. Što se dublje ulazi u jezičnu analizu, pokazuje se da negacije nije samo logički parnjak potvrdnih izričaja, već moćno sredstvo za prikaz viteštva kao društveno i etički vrijednog pothvata. Također se razmatra pragmatika negacije u romanci, kao i njezina uloga u izravnom govoru raznih likova, uključujući i žene.

Ključne riječi: kategorija negacije; Arturijana; viteški diskurs; Malory; *Le Morte DArthur*.