

# The Negation of *haben* and *sein* in the *Prose-Lancelot* Text

Sofiya Bodnar

*This paper deals with negation in Middle High German, particularly in the first part of the Prose-Lancelot text. In this paper I provide a general overview of negation patterns in Old High German (OHG), Middle High German (MHG) and New High German (NHG) as well as a discussion of previous research on this topic. Not much has been said about negation patterns with auxiliary verbs, whereas the negation patterns with other verbs have been discussed in more detail. The main goal of this paper is to look at the verbs *haben* and *sein* in their functions as auxiliary and full verbs to determine if there is a tendency to negate them with negative concord (NC), bipartite negation or single negation, and to observe the similarities and differences they display compared to full verbs in the text. This study shows that MHG displays competing negation patterns performed by single negation with *nicht* and bipartite negation *ne...nicht*. Previous research on negation has been done by Otto Jespersen (1917) who established three stages of negation. I propose that MHG cannot be assigned to any of Jespersen's stages of negation, but instead, MHG falls under a different stage, according to Meisner et al (2014) and van der Auwera (2009), which functions as an intermediate stage, that allowed the changes into the next stage of negation. In this intermediate stage the free morpheme (*niht*), can either be used on its own or in combination with the preverbal clitic (*ne/en*). While these two strategies are in competition in MHG, they result in the elimination of bipartite negation, which represents the next stage of negation and can be seen in NHG.*

## 1. Introduction

Negation is a basic concept in all human speech. It is expressed differently in different languages. Some languages use a simple system with one negator, while others have a complex system of multiple negators. A negator can be a free negation morpheme, a verbal clitic, or an indefinite.<sup>1</sup> English uses all three negation structures as seen in (1).

---

<sup>1</sup> Indefinites (also sometimes called n-indefinites when referring exclusively to negative indefinites) are pronouns or adverbs, that have an indefinite meaning, they can be used with a positive or a negative meaning; in OHG the negative indefinites are *nioman* 'no one', *ni(o)with* 'nothing' amongst others, in MHG those can be *nieman(d)* 'no one' or *niht* 'nothing' (Fleischer & Schallert 2011, 235).

- (1) a. I am **not** joking.  
 b. I **don't** joke.  
 c. **Nobody** is joking.

In (1), each clause has one negator, either a free morpheme (*not*), a verbal clitic (*don't*), or an indefinite pronoun (*nobody*). A sentence such as *Nobody don't joke* is not regarded as acceptable in the standard language. This, however, is not the case in some spoken varieties of English, where this structure is acceptable. If a clause contains two negators, one is used for emphasis and loses its negative meaning, instead acting as an affirmation (Fleischer & Schallert 2011, 237). This is commonly referred to as double negation,<sup>2</sup> but is more properly termed Negative Concord (NC).

Some languages other than English use NC to express negation. In those languages, several constituents are negated at the same time and the negation does not cancel itself out.<sup>3</sup> Instead, the two (or more) negators express negation of a single constituent unit. NC only negates one constituent of the clause or can also target the whole clause, just like the single negation. NC entails the use of two or more negation particles and/or indefinite pronouns. In these examples negation is expressed by negative particles (marked NEG) and negative indefinite phrases, as given in (2):

- (2) a. Je **ne** rigole **pas**. (French)  
 I NEG kidding NEG  
 'I am not kidding'  
 b. **Ніхто не** сміється. (Ukrainian)  
 No one NEG laughing.  
 'No one is laughing'  
 c. **Nessuno** ha visto **niente**. (Italian)  
 Nobody has seen nothing  
 'Nobody has seen anything'

---

<sup>2</sup> A standard English example for double negation is „This situation is not uncommon“ (= ,this situation is common'). For the purpose of this paper the strict definition of double negation will not be discussed.

<sup>3</sup> In Standard English a phrase like *\*I couldn't not do it* means *I had to do it*. Here the use of multiple negation cancel itself out.

The difference between negation patterns can be seen between (1) and (2), where multiple negation is given in the latter. In (2a), French<sup>4</sup> uses the bipartite negator *ne* and *pas*, which are usually used together, before and after the finite verb, to express negation.<sup>5</sup> Bipartite negation can also be referred to as double negation, it is used with particles and not indefinites, unlike NC. When the verb is inverted, *pas* follows the subject pronoun (French *Ne le parle-t-il pas?*- English *Doesn't he speak it?*). The Ukrainian example in (2b) has one negator (*ne*), which negates the following finite verb, and the other negated unit is an indefinite pronoun *nixmo* 'nobody' (*hi-* 'no' is a negator which cliticizes to the pronoun *xmo* 'who'). In (2c), the Italian example, there are two indefinite negators, *nessuno* 'nobody' and *niente* 'nothing', which express NC.

Looking at the examples provided above and the differences in negation they display, the question arises why and how different languages vary in their use of negation patterns (single or multiple negation, as well as the use of NC). These differences in negation have been investigated by Otto Jespersen for English, French and Danish, who stated the following: "The history of negative expressions in various languages makes us witness the following curious fluctuation: the original negative adverb is first weakened, then found insufficient and therefore strengthened, generally through some additional word, and this in its turn may be felt as the negative proper and may then in course of time be subject to the same development as the original word" (Jespersen 1917, 4).<sup>6</sup> This common diachronic process is now referred to as "Jespersen's Cycle." Over the years more research has come up with competing hypotheses for how negation should be analyzed historically (Frisch 1997, Larriveé 2011, Meisner et al. 2014).

---

<sup>4</sup> This paper mainly deals with MHG. I discuss the languages in examples (1) and (2) only to showcase different possibilities in negation.

<sup>5</sup> This is not always the case for spoken language, where *ne* is often dropped.

<sup>6</sup> A description of Jespersen's Stages can be found on p. 6 of this paper.

For the purpose of this paper, it is important to clearly define the terminology used. In this paper I will be using the term single negation to describe negation that employs either a particle (*ne/en; nicht*) or indefinites (*dhein; kein; nymand*) that appear alone in a negated clause. There are also a variety of ways to express multiple negation.<sup>7</sup> This can either be done by using two negative particles (*ne/en...nicht*), a negative particle and an indefinite (*ne/en...kein; ne/en...nymand; nymand...nicht*<sup>8</sup>), or two indefinites (*nymand...kein*). Double negation executed with negative particles will be referred to as bipartite negation (French *ne...pas*, MHG *ne/en...nicht*). NC will be used when referring to negation done with indefinites (Ukrainian *nixmo*, Italian *nessuno, niente*). This distinction is used because Jespersen's stages of negation refer to single and bipartite negation without indefinites, meaning that NC was not included in his framework.

Previous scholarship on MHG (Behagel 1918, 230, de Boor/Wisniewski 1984, 182, Paul 2007, 389, Jäger 2008, 141) has shown that different verbs tend to have different negation patterns. *Haben* and *sein* can be both used as full and as auxiliary verbs. Jäger states: "Of the auxiliaries *sin/wesen* and *haben* appear with the bipartite negation particle..." (2008, 141). Not much more has been said about negation patterns with auxiliary verbs, whereas the negation patterns with other verbs, like modals and the verbs like *wizzen* 'to know' and *lâzen* 'to let' have been discussed in more detail.

The aim of this paper is to describe and analyze negation in MHG based on the *Prose-Lancelot*, a MHG translation of the Old French *Lancelot propre*. In this MHG text, the verbs *haben* and *sein* will be examined in their function as both auxiliary and full verbs. Since these verbs can function as both auxiliary and complete verbs, they were selected for this study because they offer a useful way to see how negation functions in various grammatical settings. Additionally, their

---

<sup>7</sup> Multiple negation is common in OHG, but not really present in MHG (Jäger 2008).

<sup>8</sup> For the purpose of this paper, I only consider *nicht* to be a negative particle and do not take into consideration its possible role as an indefinite.

high frequency in texts further offers a robust dataset for analyzing negation patterns. While these verbs are not unique to MHG, their syntactic versatility and prevalence make them a key focus for exploring the competition between single and bipartite negation during this linguistic period. This study contributes to our understanding of negation in MHG, particularly as it relates to broader patterns of change regarding negation, such as those described in Jespersen's Cycle. Additionally, other full verbs in the first 200 pages of the text are examined. The questions that will be addressed in this investigation are:

1. How are *haben* and *sein* treated in negated clauses as full and auxiliary verbs?
2. How do *haben* and *sein* differ in their negation patterns as auxiliary and full verbs from other full verbs in the text?
3. What does the negation of *haben* and *sein* in the *Prose-Lancelot* tell us about negation and Jespersen's cycle in MHG?

In order to answer those questions, I will look at the first part of the MHG *Prose-Lancelot* and analyze negated clauses. In Section 2 I will give an overview of negation in Old High German (OHG), MHG, and Modern German (NHG). This is followed by Section 3, where an overview of previous research done on this topic is provided. Section 4 contains the methodology I employed for this paper. The data I collected will be shown in Section 5. After the data description in Section 6, I provide an analysis in Section 7. In Section 8 a conclusion of the paper is given.

## **2. Negation**

### **2.1. Overview of the historical stages of negation**

In order to provide an overview and analysis of negation in German, specifically, I will first give a survey of negation and types of negation particles. I focus on syntactic negation rather than on lexical negation, that is, affixes such as the prefixes *in-* and *miss-*, or suffixes, such as -

*less*. These affixes express a contrast in meaning, create negative forms of words, and do not explicitly negate a clause. Syntactic negation on the other hand concerns the negation of the truth value of a clause or its constituent parts.

Based on previous research, the types of negation used change in different stages of German, varying with each period; in OHG single negation was the prevalent negation pattern (Jäger 2008, 58), which changes in MHG, where an increase in bipartite negation and NC can be observed. This, again, changes in NHG, where bipartite negation is not used. Such changes in the historical stages of negation are described by the Jespersen's Cycle, which accounts for the diachronic process where different languages change in similar ways. This phenomena will be discussed later in more detail. The observations made by Jespersen were made for English, French and Danish but they also hold true for other languages (Jäger 2008). According to him, the development of negation proceeds in a three-step cycle, outlined in (3):

### (3) Jespersen's Cycle

Stage I: single negation – particle/clitic: (Early French) *je ne dis*; (Old English) *ic ne secge*  
Stage II: bipartite negation – weakened particle/clitic + free morpheme: (Middle French) *Je ne dis pas*; (Middle English) *I ne seye not*  
Stage III: single negation – free morpheme: (Contemporary informal French) *Je dis pas*; (Modern English) *I say not/I do not say*

Jespersen's Cycle, as depicted in (4), describes the process where, at the first stage, the cliticized negated particle is attached to the verb. At the second stage, an additional particle grammaticalizes, which leads to bipartite negation. At this stage negation does not include indefinites. At the third stage, the cliticized negation particle from the first stage is no longer used, and the only negation marker is the negation particle which surfaced at the second stage.

Since Jespersen's work in 1917 much research has been done about negation patterns across languages. Larriveé (2011) proposes, based on French, that there was no Jespersen's Cycle, but instead the n-indefinites, as he refers to items like *néant* or *rien*: "... do not undergo the same

syntactic evolution in successive mutual exclusive stages. Rather, each item slides along a pathway of ordered functions and environments” (2011, 16). He does not fully deny that post-verbal negators create an impression of a cyclical development. This is due to their going through an evolution of reinforcement, while going through polarity phases. Larriveé thus argues that it is a non-unidirectional pathway, rather than it being an unavoidable cycle, as Jespersen portrays it.

On the other hand, Meisner et al. (2014) do not reject Jespersen’s Cycle entirely but instead suggest a five-stage cycle to replace the three stages portrayed in Jespersen’s original work. In their work they have the following division:

(4) The Jespersen cycle in five stages<sup>9</sup>

Stage I: neg 1 (free morpheme): *non/ne*

Stage II: variation neg 1 (free morpheme/clitic)(+ neg 2: free morpheme 2): *ne (...pas)*

Stage III: neg 1 (clitic) + neg 2 (free morpheme): *ne...pas*

Stage IV: variation (neg 1: clitic +) neg 2 (free morpheme): *(ne...) pas*

Stage V: neg 2 (free morpheme): *pas*

In their description of the cycle, Meisner et al. (2014) not only depict the three static stages (I, III, V) but also the two stages that display variation (II and IV). These were intermediate stages that allowed the changes from stages 1 to 3 and 3 to 5.

Scholars propose different analyses of why the changes during each stage take place. For Jespersen’s second stage, there is debate on why the preverbal negative particle *ne* weakens and is reinforced with a second element, English *not*, German *nicht* and French *pas*. Regarding this debate Frisch (1997) argues that Middle English, the second stage of Jespersen’s Cycle with the bipartite negator *ne...not*, is not a separate stage. Here the author argues that the bipartite negation *ne...not* is not an independent structure, but instead two separate systems that overlapped during Middle English. Also, *ne* and *not* do not seem to be in grammatical competition here (*not* does not push *ne* out). Instead, *ne* becomes obsolete due to *not* being structurally reanalyzed as a sentential negator.

---

<sup>9</sup> Adapted from Meisner et al (2014, 2).

Van Kemenade (2000) also examined sentential negation in the historic stages of English, from early Old English to early Modern English. She states that the process of grammaticalization, which is the underlying process of Jespersen's Cycle, is "primarily a morphosyntactic change, and shows that long-term development is necessary punctuated by synchronic shifts" (2000, 51). Here she states that *not* in Middle English is used in the same syntactic position as *na/no* in Old English. This negator is weakened in Middle English and allows *not* to take its place in sentential negation. In late Middle English *na/no* fully disappears from use.

For Romance languages, like French and Italian, Garzonio and Poletto suggest that the start of the cycle is due to "a very general economy strategy" (2014, 12). This strategy is employed when speakers reduce the original element if this element is not complex on multiple grammatical levels. The reasons why the cycle started for French but not for Italian is due to the Italian *non* being blocked due to its complexity. In Old French the particle *ne* was weakened and *pas* (meaning 'step') grammaticalized and was used as the second part of the negation marker. In modern French *pas* is the 'true' negator.

Looking at negation beyond Jespersen's Cycle, negation can also be executed by indefinites, which mark negation in a similar manner as negation particles but are not part of the cycle. Indefinites are indefinite pronouns or adverbs that carry a negative meaning like 'nobody,' 'none,' 'nowhere.' Those indefinites can be used as single negation in the clause, without needing a secondary negation, or can also be part of NC. More will be said about indefinites and their role in negation in Section 6.

In the following sections I discuss in more detail how negation was manifested during each of the periods of German (OHG, MHG, NHG).

## 2.2. Negation in OHG

As seen in (3) above (Jespersen's three stages), negation undergoes diachronic development. The first stage of this development for German can be seen in OHG. Here, the most frequently used form of negation is the addition of the negation particle *ni* to the finite verb (Behagel 1918, 229). This observation is confirmed by Jäger (2008), according to whom *ni* is the only negation particle in 77% of negated clauses, and 92% of clauses with two or more negations include *ni* as the negation particle (Jäger 2008, 59). This particle comes from the Germanic *\*ni*, and its cognates are attested in all Germanic languages: Gothic *ni*, Old Saxon *ni*, Old Norse *ne*. In (5), I provide examples of *ni* as the only negation marker in a clause in OHG:

- (5) a. (Ipsis uidelicet iudeis, qui non credunt.)  
bauhmenti dea selbun iudeoliuti, dea **ni** galaubant.  
showing the same Jews who NEG believe  
'showing the same Jews who do not believe' (Isidor I, 7, cited in Jäger 2008,60)
- b. **ni** gíbit uns thaz álta, thaz thiu iúgund scolta  
NEG gives us the old-age that the youth should [have given]  
'Old age does not give us what the youth owed us'  
(Otfried I. 4,54, cited in Jäger 2008,60)

*Ni* can occur on its own, as a single negation as seen in the examples in (5) above, or it can occur with another negation marker. Such markers can be indefinites like *nohein* 'none,' *niowiht/nieht* 'nothing,' *neoman/nioman/neman* 'nobody.' These indefinites constructed with the prefix *ni-* were already fully formed in OHG and did not undergo a syncretic change with the *ni* particle (Behagel 1918, 229). In most cases the indefinite was used along with the negation particle *ni*, but there are a few cases where it occurs as the only negation (Jäger 2008, 61f). The examples in (6) show NC with both indefinites and the negation particle *ni*, and (7) shows an example of the indefinites used in single negation, without the *ni* particle.

- (6) a. (non respondit ei / ad ullum uerbum)  
Inti **ni**antligita imo / zi **noheinigemo** uuorte  
and NEG-answered him to no word  
'And did not answer to a single word' (Tatian 310, 16f, cited in Jäger 2008, 61)
- b. (uide nemini dixeris.)  
thaz thu iz **ni**omanne **ni**-quedes  
that you it n-person NEG-tell  
'that you do not tell it to anyone' (Tatian 82, 30, cited in Jäger 2008, 228)
- (7) (In quo nondum quisquam/ positus fuerat.)  
Inthemo noh nu **ni**oman/ Ingisezzit uuas.  
in-which still now n-person put was  
'in which nobody had been put yet' (Tatian 322, 5f, cited in Jäger 2008, 201)

As seen here, OHG predominantly represents the first stage of Jespersen's Cycle with single negation by the particle *ni*.

### 2.3. Negation in MHG

For MHG, I look at single and bipartite negation particles, as well as NC, as seen in (8) from Jäger (2008, 120) and Dal (1966, 164):

#### (8) Negation Markers in MHG

- a. *En/ne*: This negation particle is the weakened form of the OHG particle *ni*. During the course of MHG this particle decreases in use and eventually becomes obsolete.
- b. *Ni(c)ht* (also *nit* in the *Prose-Lancelot*: From the OHG negative indefinite pronoun *ni(o)uuiht/nieht* ('nothing'). In late OHG it started to be used as a secondary negation adverb and in MHG it is mostly grammaticalized to a full negation particle.<sup>10</sup>
- c. *En/ne + niht*: The use of a bipartite negation particle is a distinguishing feature of MHG which sets it apart from OHG and NHG and is the norm for this period.
- d. *ni+ein and dehein*: From the OHG indefinite *nihein*, the predecessor of NHG *kein*, meaning 'any, no' (Jäger 2008, 12). These, and other indefinites, can be used on their own, as well as in combination with other indefinites and particles.

In the course of MHG, *en/ne* decreased in usage and finally disappeared entirely (Behagel 1918, 246). The examples in (5) and (6) are representative of the majority (90%) of the negated clauses in OHG that include the particle *ni* (Jäger 2008, 59). This is not the case in MHG where the occurrences of *ne* are much lower. According to Jäger (2008, 116), only 26% of the negated clauses

<sup>10</sup> The pronoun is still used with the partitive genitive.

she looked at had *ne/en* as a negation particle (p.116). Some examples of the use of *en/ne* as the only negation particle in a clause are given in (9):

- (9) a. Ich **en**han auch, herre  
I NEG-have too, Lord/master  
'I haven't either, Lord' (Lancelot 990, 4)
- b. Er **en**ist werlich  
He NEG-is reputable  
'He isn't reputable' (Lancelot 1120, 21)

The pronoun *niht*, which was already occasionally used in OHG for emphasis, is used even more frequently than the particle *ne/en* in on average 51% of the clauses analyzed by Jäger (2008). Further, *nicht* is no longer used only as a “negation strengthener” (Lockwood 1986, 207) but fully as a negation particle which stands on its own, are given in the following examples in (10):

- (10) a. Ich han **nicht** getan  
I have NEG done  
'I haven't done' (Lancelot 392, 4)
- b. er ist myn meister **nicht**  
He is my master NEG  
'He is not my master' (Lancelot 252, 20f)

Another form of negation that is possible in MHG is the negation particle *en/ne* and the pronoun *niht* together. This bipartite negation is a representation of the Stage II of Jespersen's Cycle and distinguishes MHG from OHG and NHG, where bipartite negation or NC are not typically used or are not used at all. In (11) below, I provide two MHG examples where the bipartite negation particle *en+nit* is used:

- (11) a. Des **en**hant ir **nit** gethan  
That NEG-have you NEG done  
'You haven't don't that' (Lancelot 204, 9)
- b. Dar **en**ist **nit** ferre  
That NEG-is NEG far  
'That is not far' (Lancelot 1162, 32)

Another possible pattern for negation in MHG is the use of indefinites like *kein (dhein)* and *nymand*. These indefinites can be used on their own (12a) to express negation or in combination

with the negation particles *ne/en* (12b), *nicht* (12c), or with another indefinite (12d). These examples are given in (12).

- (12) a. der uch **keyn** gut mag gethun  
 the one also NEG-Ind good may do  
 ‘who also may do no good’ (Lancelot 20, 14)
- b. Da **enwart nymand** konig  
 there NEG-was NEG-Ind king  
 ‘There was no king’ (Lancelot 12, 30)
- c. das **nymand** daroff **nicht** clagete  
 that NEF-Ind about that NEG complaint  
 ‘that no one complained about that’ (Lancelot 58,24)
- d. das **nye keyn** steyn off dem andern beleib  
 that never NEG-Ind stone on the other stays  
 ‘that no stone stayed on top of the other’ (Lancelot 14, 12)

So, as can be seen above, MHG has a large variety of possible negation patterns, which changed over the course of the MHG period, with more cases of *ne/en* used on its own or in combination with *nicht/nit*, to a later stage, where *nicht/nit* was used more frequently and even on its own.

#### 2.4. Negation in NHG

NHG marks Stage III in Jespersen’s Cycle, where negation is marked by a free morpheme. This free morpheme is the only negation marker, and thus NHG only displays single negation. The negation particle *ne/ne*, which was already used much less frequently in later MHG, has disappeared entirely. Negation can be carried out by either using the negator *nicht* or indefinites. NC is perceived as ungrammatical in Modern Standard German. Here, just as in English, NC is permitted in some dialects, as seen in (13).

- (13) a. *Bavarian*  
**Koa** Mensch is **ned** kema.  
 NEG person is NEG come  
 ‘No person came.’ (Weiß 1998, 167, )
- b. *Low-German*  
 Hebbt se dat noch **nie nich** sehn?  
 Have you that yet NEG-Ind NEG seen  
 ‘Have you never seen that yet?’ (Appel 2007, 91)

The negation in the dialects presented above is expressed by negative concord, instead of the bipartite negation, which is typical for MHG. These dialects seem to have developed from the MHG stage but not in the same way standard German has, where it has entirely lost the second negator.

### 3. Previous research on MHG

As seen in the previous section, MHG used bipartite negation and is considered to represent the second stage of Jespersen's Cycle. Jäger (2008) conducted a study of negation in MHG in which she looked at the first 100 negated sentences in the *Nibelungenlied* (1190-1200, South Bavarian), the *Prose-Lancelot* (before 1250, Low Franconian), and in the sermons of Berthold von Regensburg (1275, Bavarian).

Her investigation showed that the number of clauses that contain bipartite negation in her corpus of MHG is rather small. Most clauses have *nihht* but no preverbal negative clitic, which is a feature of Jespersen's third stage. Only 27% of negative sentences were found to contain bipartite negation in the *Prose-Lancelot*, 13% in the *Nibelungenlied*, and 4% in the sermons of Berthold. The majority of the negated sentences already show the next stage of the Jespersen cycle in which *nicht* is the only negation marker: "..., there are more cases of Stage III with only a verb-independent, adverbial-like neg-particle than of Stage II with a bipartite neg-particle" (Jäger 2008, 144). The other clauses in the corpus are negated with indefinites.

In very few clauses, only the negation particle *ne/en* was used to convey negation – 7% of the clauses in the *Nibelungenlied* are negated only with *ne/ne*, 2% in the *Prose-Lancelot*, and 3% in Berthold. This is a remnant of Stage I. According to Paul (2007), *en/ne* only occurs in specific context as the only negation (without *nicht*) after the twelfth century: "Seit dem 12. Jh. wird die

Verneinung durch *ne* allein auf bestimmte Typen des verbalen Ausdrucks eingeschränkt [...].“<sup>11</sup>  
(p. 399)

As mentioned before, a large number of clauses in the MHG corpus examined by Jäger (2008) already show Stage III where *niht* is the only negator. This is the case in 35% of clauses in the *Nibelungenlied*, 28% in the *Prose-Lancelot*, and 45% in Berthold’s sermons. Even though *niht* seems to occur in a large number of clauses in the corpus, it very rarely occurs with indefinites; the reason for this could be that *nicht* is also an indefinite itself. Jäger also states that indefinites mostly are used as the only negator in a clause and do not co-occur with particles like *ne/en*, *nicht* or other indefinites (2008, 122). However, *en/ne* do not seem to have any limitations in that regard. Here, the negation is realized by a free-standing morpheme when used with modals (*dürfen* ‘to be allowed,’ *können* ‘to be able to,’ *mügen* ‘to be able/like to,’ *suln* ‘should/to have,’ *türren* ‘to dare,’). In her research, Jäger (2008, 141) points out that “Of the auxiliaries, *sin/wesen* and *haben* appear with the bipartite negative particle ... Main verbs co-occur with simple *en /ne* or with *en/ne...niht*”.

Based on these data, MHG cannot be considered a Stage II language, because it shows some remnants of Stage I, a few cases of Stage II, but most cases correspond to Stage III of Jespersen’s Cycle (Jäger 2008, 122).

## 4. Methodology and Corpus

### 4.1. Methodology

The following sections of this paper will discuss my own research done on the *Prose-Lancelot* text. In Section 4, I will discuss my methodology, in Section 5 I will present my data, which I discuss further in Section 6.

---

<sup>11</sup> “Since the twelfth century the negation by only *ne* was restricted to certain types of verbal phrase”.

In order to carry out an analysis of negation with the verbs *haben* and *sein*, I chose to look at the first part of the *Prose-Lancelot* called “Lancelot and Ginover I” (see Sections 4.2-4.3 below). This text was specifically chosen for this study because it presents a unique case for analyzing negation in MHG. While it originates as a translation of the Old French *Lancelot propre*, the text underwent significant editorial modifications, resulting in the use of distinctly German negation patterns. This makes it particularly valuable for examining the transitional negation structures characteristic of MHG without undue influence from French negation conventions.

In previous literature (Jäger, 2008), only the first 100 sentences with negation were examined (which included up to page 52). However, this study builds upon Jäger’s findings by exploring additional aspects, including a larger dataset (this paper includes 261 negated clauses with *haben* and *sein* and an additional 439 negated clauses from other verbs) and a comparative analysis of auxiliary and full verbs. For the present analysis I used Kluge (1995), which is a digitized version of the physical book, and searched for occurrences of the verbs *haben* and *sein*. For the auxiliary and full verbs *haben* and *sein* I searched the whole first part of the text. I performed the search by entering the desired verb forms into the search bar of the online file. Since there were several forms of the target verbs in the text, I searched for the following forms: *hant, haben, hat, hatt, habent, hant, habt, hatten, bin, sy, ist, sint, warn, waren, was*. I examined the first 200 pages, which yielded 439 examples. These searches gave me all the desired forms of the verbs that were present in the text.

#### **4.2. Summary of Part I of *Prose-Lancelot***<sup>12</sup>

This section of the prose text of the MHG *Prose-Lancelot* describes the beginning of Lancelot’s life. He is abducted as a child and grows up with the lady of the sea until he turns

---

<sup>12</sup> This summary was loosely adapted and paraphrased from Bumke 2000: 224-225 and translated into English.

eighteen when he is knighted at King Arthur's court and becomes the knight of the queen after proving himself as a good fighter and being victorious in many battles. Lancelot and his friends travel together to assist King Arthur in his battle against the Saxons. While Lancelot is searching for the kidnapped king, a witch takes the place of his beloved Ginevra. After realizing the displacement Lancelot attempts to find the queen. Lancelot endures an embarrassing journey until he arrives in the land of Gorre, where his beloved is kept. There he defeats the kidnapper and rescues the queen.

### **4.3. Translation and transmission**

The German *Prose-Lancelot* is a translation of the French Prose cycle *Lancelot propre* of the second part of the thirteenth century. The French text has been transmitted in more than a hundred manuscripts. It is generally agreed that the MHG version is not a direct translation of the French text; rather, it passed through an intermediary stage of Middle Dutch (Voß 1970, 3; Bumke 2000, 225). However, this theory cannot be proven since such a Middle Dutch text has not been located.

Ruberg (1985) states that the *Prose-Lancelot* seems to be a faithful translation of an old French prose novel, instead of an attempt to create an original story. "The text suggests the activities of different translators; their names, intentions or clients are not explicitly revealed" (1985, 532).<sup>13</sup> The history of the other parts of the cycle is not as well researched.

When looking into manuscript transmission of MHG texts, it is well established that editors of the MHG texts have heavily interfered with the original texts in an attempt to standardize them. This is especially apparent for negation in MHG: the editors inserted the bipartite negation into the text even in cases where the original manuscript does not retain this feature. An extreme example

---

<sup>13</sup> „Der Text läßt auf die Tätigkeit verschiedener Übersetzer schließen; explizit über deren Namen, Intentionen oder Auftraggeber gibt er nicht preis.“

for such editorial intervention is the negation in *Erec* by Hartmann von Aue. In the earlier editions the preverbal particle *ne/en/n* is inserted in the edition where there are none present in the manuscript. An example is given in (14) as taken from Fleischer & Schallert (2011, 65).

(14)	Manuscript (Cod. Vindob. Ser. Nova 2663,30r,c) <i>Jr seyt nicht weyse leute</i> Ihr seid nicht weise Leute “You are not wise people”	Edition (Erec 88, ed. Gärtner 2006) <i>ir <u>ensît</u> niht wise liute</i> ihr NEG=seid nicht weise Leute “You are not wise people”
------	--	---

In contrast to earlier editions where the editorial changes are less marked, the later editions have fewer unmarked editorial changes and also do not deviate from the manuscripts as much. For this paper I am using the edition of Kluge/Steinhof (1995). In this edition the editorial changes are marked in cursive and then explained in the second volume. Based on those markings no preverbal particles were inserted in the clauses I used for this paper.

## 5. Data

In this section I will describe the data I collected in the first part of the *Prose-Lancelot* text. The first two subsections describe *haben* and *sein* as auxiliary and full verbs in the entire text, while the last, third section, depicts the data collected for lexical verbs in the first 2 sections of the text.

### 5.1. *haben*

The search revealed that the negation of *haben* as an auxiliary verb coincided with the results Jäger (2008) found in the first 100 sentences, where bipartite negation only occurs in a small number of examples. The data suggests that the use of bipartite negation is not the preferred way to negate the auxiliary verb. In the 43 examples where *haben* occurs as an auxiliary verb, only 10 were negated using bipartite negation. This data is provided in Table 1 and Table 2 below.

Table 1. Negation without indefinites with auxiliary *haben* <sup>14</sup>

Type of negation	Example	Number of occurrences	Percentage
Single NEG	nicht/nit/enhan	15	60%
Bipartite NEG	enhan+nit	10	40%
Total		25	100%

Table 2. Negation with indefinites with auxiliary *haben*

Type of negation	Example	Number of occurrences	Percentage
IndefPron	kein/nymant	15	83%
NC	enhan+niemant/kein	3	17%
Total		18	100%

Most of the examples where negation was used were negated with the bipartite negation *en+haben* in addition to the particle *nicht/nit*. *En+haben* is only used in one case with an indefinite, provided in (15a) below. The other two clauses with NC (15b and 15c) use two indefinites. The examples are given below in (15).

- (15) a. Mir **enhat niemand nicht** gethan  
to me NEG-have NEG-Ind NEG done  
‘no one has done this to me’ (Lancelot 768, 13)
- b. wir hant **keyn** sorg vor **dheynem** wercke  
We have NEG-Ind worry from NEG-Ind work/doing  
‘We are not worried about any doings’ (Lancelot 34, 3)
- c. so herlich das nye **kein** man **dheyn** beßers gesehen hett  
such good that never NEG-Ind man NEG-Ind better has seen  
‘so wonderful that no one has seen anything better’ (Lancelot 352, 22)

Looking at *haben* as a full verb, there are 70 cases of negation, of which 35 use indefinites. Those data are provided in Table 3 and Table 4 below.

<sup>14</sup> All percentages were rounded to the nearest whole number.

Table 3. Negation without indefinites with auxiliary *haben*

Type of negation	Example	Number of occurrences	Percentage
Single NEG	nicht/nit/enhan	16	46%
Bipartite NEG	enhan+nit	19	54%
Total		35	100%

Table 4. Negation with indefinites with *haben* as a full verb

Type of negation	Example	Number of occurrences	Percentage
IndefPron	kein/nymant	14	40%
NC	enhan+niemant/kein	21	60%
Total		35	100%

According to the data above, bipartite negation and NC are far more frequent when *haben* is used as a full verb than when it occurs as an auxiliary. With full verbs, the bipartite negation accounts for 54% and 60% in clauses with NC. However, when *haben* is used as an auxiliary verb, the percentages are only 17% and 40% with and without indefinites, respectively. When *haben* is used as an auxiliary verb, the proportion of bipartite negation is 23.26%, which is significantly greater than 5% ( $z = 2.83, p < 0.01$ ). This indicates that bipartite negation, while less common compared to other forms, is not negligible. The use of bipartite negation displays the second stage of Jespersen's Cycle, as seen in (16a) and NC is displayed in (16b).

- (16) a. des **enhant** ir **nit** gethan  
 this NEG-have you NEG done  
 'You haven't done this' (Lancelot 204, 9)
- b. wir **enhant** uch **dheyne**n willen arg zu thun  
 we NEG-have you NEG-Ind desire evil to do  
 'we don't have a desire to do evil to you' (Lancelot 206, 23)

### 5.2. *sein*

Compared to *haben* in its function as an auxiliary verb, *sein* has a much smaller corpus of tokens in the first part of this text; *sein* only occurs 8 times as a negated auxiliary. Bipartite negation occurs two times and single negation five times. There is only one example of *sein* as an auxiliary

verb negated with an indefinite and that example has NC. The examples of negation for *sein* as an auxiliary verb are given in (17).

- (17) a. ich bin herre **nit** komen zu dingen off dißen tag  
I am here NEG come to think about this day  
'I did not come here to think about this day' (Lancelot 886,5)
- b. wir sint herre **nicht** komen zu teydingen  
we are here NEG come to fight  
'We did not come here to fight' (Lancelot 184, 26f)
- c. Sie ist **nit** gegeben allen den die sie gern sehent zu sehen  
She is NEG given all those who her like see to see  
'She is not given to see to all of those who wanted to see her' (Lancelot 388, 32f)
- d. durch des konigs willen dar **nicht** warn komen  
through the king's will there NEG were come  
'because of the king's will they did not come there' (Lancelot 538, 10)
- e. der ritter **enist** noch **nit** geborn der Sigurates uberwinden möchte  
the knight NEG-is yet NEG born who can overcome Sigurat  
'the knight who can overcome Sigurat is not yet born' (Lancelot 862, 30f)
- f. So **enwart nie** man geborn  
So NEG-was NEG-Ind born  
'In this was no one was born' (Lancelot 108, 13)
- g. der **enwas** nochda **nit** komen  
that one NEG-was then Neg come  
'He did not come then' (Lancelot 1286, 25)
- h. dem truchseßsen was **nit** vergeßsen  
to the steward was NEG forgotten  
'the steward was not forgotten' (Lancelot 28, 6f)

There are far more cases of negated *sein* being used as a full verb than as an auxiliary. The information on the prevalence of *sein* in this context can be seen in Table 5.

Table 5. Negation without indefinites with *sein* as a full verb

Type of negation	Example	Number of occurrences	Percentage
Single NEG	nicht/nit	35	37%
Bipartite NEG	ensy/enwas+nicht/nit	59	63%
Total		94	100%

The distribution of single and bipartite negation, as seen in Table 5, shows more tokens with bipartite negation (63%) than with single negation (37%). A one-sample *z*-test confirms that the proportion of bipartite negation (63%) is significantly greater than the baseline comparison value of 5% ( $z = 14.07, p < 0.001$ ), which serves as a minimal expected frequency threshold to assess whether bipartite negation is meaningfully present. Here bipartite negation occurs in the majority of clauses.

When looking at the patterns of negation, there were only 4 tokens in which *haben* is used as a full verb with single negation in the form of the preverbal clitic *ne/en*, which is similar to *sein* as a full verb, where there are five examples in the corpus, which are provided in (18).

- (18) a. ich **en**weiß ob irs sint oder **ens**int  
 ich NEG-know if you-it are or NEG-are  
 ‘I don’t know if you are or are not it’ (Lancelot 574, 19)
- b. es **ensy** doch ettlich teyl ware  
 it NEG-be but any part true  
 ‘But none of it is true’ (Lancelot 82, 15)
- c. es **enist** ritter in der welt einer noch zwen noch dry die iuch da von helffen mochten  
 it NEG- is knight in the world one or two or three who also there help want  
 ‘there is neither one knight nor two or three in the world who want to help’ (Lancelot 350, 13)
- d. Also **enist** er auch von dem mynen  
 So NEG-is he also is from the mine  
 ‘he also isn’t one of mine’ (Lancelot 770, 1)
- e. Er **enist** werlich  
 He NEG-is reputable  
 ‘He isn’t reputable’ (Lancelot 1120, 21)

Just as in the data with *haben*, this type of negation constitutes only a minor portion of the corpus.

When looking at negation with indefinite pronouns, the number of such examples shows that there are far fewer singly negated sentences with an indefinite and *sein*, as seen in Table 6.

Table 6. Negation with indefinites with *sein* as a full verb

Type of negation	Example	Number of occurrences	Percentage
IndefPron	kein/nymant	11	24%
NC	ensy+niemant/kein	35	76%
Total		46	100%

As the data above show, *sein* has a significantly smaller number of tokens than *haben* in the first part of the *Prose-Lancelot* in its function as an auxiliary verb. The distribution of bipartite and single negation for *sein* shows that there are many more tokens with bipartite negation and NC than single negation with or without indefinites. Statistical analysis supports these observations: NC occurs in 76% of cases with indefinites, a proportion significantly greater than 5% ( $z = 14.90$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Bipartite negation also appears in the majority of clauses with *haben* as a full verb without indefinites. In clauses where *haben* is used with indefinites single negation is more prevalent (60% with single negation and 40% with NC).

### 5.3. Other verbs

To compare how *haben* and *sein* compare to lexical<sup>15</sup> verbs in the first part of the *Prose-Lancelot*, I looked at the first 439 negated verbs in the first 200 pages. The data from these examples are given in Table 7 and Table 8 below.

Table 7. Negation without indefinites with other verbs

Type of negation	Example	Number of occurrences	Percentage
Single NEG	ne/en/nit/nicht	153	55%
Bipartite NEG	ne/en...nicht	127	45%
Total		280	100%

<sup>15</sup> The lexical verbs I refer to here are all other verbs in the text excluding *haben* and *sein*.

Table 8. Negation with indefinites with other verbs

Type of negation	Example	Number of occurrences	Percentage
IndefPron	kein/nymant	60	37%
NC	ne/en...nymant/keyn nymant/kein...nicht	99	63%
Total		159	100%

As can be seen in the tables above full verbs that are negated without indefinites have a larger number of single negations. Examples are given in (19).

- (19) a. Und thete ich des **nicht**  
and do I that NEG  
'and if I didn't do that' (Lancelot 38, 26)
- b. und ob er uch **nit** wil helffen  
and if he you NEG want help  
'and if he does not want to help you' (Lancelot 20, 2)

Even though the number of negated clauses with single negation is larger (at 55% of the clauses), the number of clauses with bipartite negation is not insignificant (at 45%). Statistical analysis further supports this claim: the proportion of bipartite negation is 45.36%, which is significantly greater than 5% ( $z = 13.57, p < 0.001$ ). Compared to the auxiliary verbs *haben* and *sein*, there is a much larger amount of bipartite negation with lexical verbs, whereas full verbs *haben* and *sein* also behave like the other full/lexical verbs in this corpus.

When looking at negation with indefinites, NC (20) appears in a significantly larger number of clauses than single negation with indefinites (21). Statistical analysis confirms this observation: the proportion of NC with indefinites is 62.26%, which is significantly greater than 5% ( $z = 14.90, p < 0.001$ ). The larger number of NC with indefinites seems to be the case across this corpus.

- (20) a. des **endarff nymands** zwyveln  
that NEG-allowed NEG-Ind doubt  
'No one is allowed to doubt that' (Lancelot 56, 12)
- b. das mir **nymant keyn** ubel thú  
that to me NEG-Ind NEG-Ind evel do  
'That no one does evil things to me' (Lancelot 226, 29)
- (21) a. Er wolt auch **nymant** sagen  
he wanted also NEG-Ind say  
'He didn't want to say that to anyone' (Lancelot 198, 31)
- b. das **nymand** daruß mög komen  
that NEG-Ind from there may come  
'that no one may come out of there' (Lancelot 64, 17)

## 6. Discussion

### 6.1. Overview of Findings

A total of 261 clauses with negated *haben* and *sein* were examined, with a summary of the data presented in Table 9.

Table 9. Summary of negation for *haben* and *sein* in the corpus

Category	Negation Pattern	Occurrences
Auxiliary Verb	Bipartite Negation ( <i>haben/sein</i> )	10/2
	Negative Concord (NC, <i>haben/sein</i> )	3/0
Full Verb	Single Negation ( <i>niht/nit, haben/sein</i> )	23/35
	Bipartite Negation ( <i>haben/sein</i> , no indefinites)	19/59
	Negative Concord (NC, <i>haben/sein</i> , with indefinites)	21/35
Clitic	Clitic ( <i>en/ne</i> ) ( <i>haben/sein</i> )	8/5

The negation clitic *en/ne* appears only 13 times as the sole negation marker, accounting for just 5% of negations, aligning with Jäger's (2008, 118) findings, where she reports 4% in her dataset. This suggests that *en/ne*, once dominant in OHG, had largely disappeared by MHG. The data also confirm that full verbs *haben* and *sein* are more frequently negated by bipartite negation when no indefinites are present (54% for *haben*, 63% for *sein*). When indefinites are included, negative concord (NC) is predominant (60% for *haben*, 76% for *sein*). However, when *haben* and *sein* function as auxiliary verbs, bipartite negation and NC occur much less frequently, with single negation being the dominant pattern.

Among single negations, *niht/nit* is the most frequent negator (58 occurrences), whereas *en/ne* appears in only 13 cases, reinforcing its status as an archaic remnant from OHG. Compared to Jäger's data, where only 2% of negations contained *en/ne*, my findings show a higher percentage (18%). When negation involves indefinites, it is mostly achieved through negators like *keyn (dhein)* and *nymant*, as indefinites historically evolved from negative prefixes. The predominant bipartite negation pattern is *ne/en...niht/nit* (90 cases), followed by *ne/en* with an indefinite (60 cases). Only one instance of triple negation appears in the dataset, reflecting a rare but notable usage in MHG.

The distribution of negated verbs shows that *sein* appears more frequently than *haben*, mostly as a full verb. When *sein* is a full verb without indefinites, bipartite negation is preferred (59 instances) over single negation (35 instances), and NC occurs more often (35 instances) than single negation with indefinites (11 instances). As an auxiliary verb, however, *sein* is most often negated with single negation without indefinites. The pattern for *haben* mirrors this, with bipartite negation and NC preferred in full verb contexts.

For the 439 other full verbs in the text, single negation without indefinites is the most frequent (153 instances, slightly over 50%). In cases with indefinites, NC dominates (99 instances,

63%), with both *en/ne...NEG-Ind* and *NEG-Ind...NEG-Ind* patterns attested. These findings reinforce the conclusion that bipartite negation and NC were prevalent with full verbs, while single negation was preferred for auxiliary verbs.

## 6.2. Comparison with Previous Research

Overall, when *haben* and *sein* function as full verbs, bipartite negation occurs as frequently as single negation, challenging Jäger’s (2008, 121) assertion that bipartite negation was not a dominant pattern for sentential negation. While this study aligns with Jäger’s findings in some areas, such as the decline of clitic *ne/en* in MHG, it reveals notable differences. In particular, Jäger (2008) reports a relatively low frequency of bipartite negation (27%), whereas this study finds a higher reliance on it for *haben* and *sein* as full verbs (31%). This discrepancy underscores the need to consider genre, dialectal variation, and corpus size when analyzing negation patterns. Table 10 provides a direct comparison of these findings with Jäger’s data.

Table 10. Comparison of negation patterns in Jäger (2008) vs. current findings

	% of negation in Jäger (2008)	% of negation with auxiliary <i>haben/sein</i> in this paper	% of negation with all full verbs in this paper	% of all negation in this paper
Single negation	30% (2% <i>en/ne</i> ; 28% <i>niht</i> )	39% (6% <i>en/ne</i> ; 33% <i>niht</i> )	31% (4% <i>en/ne</i> ; 27% <i>niht</i> )	32% (4% <i>en/ne</i> ; 28% <i>niht</i> )
Bipartite negation	27%	20%	31%	31%
IndefPron	**	20%	13%	14 %
NC	** <sup>16</sup>	21%	25%	23 %

<sup>16</sup> Jäger does not provide percentages for indefinites, so I am unable to report separately on single negation with an indefinite vs. NC with an indefinite. However, combined they total 43% of negation in the text.

The results in Table 10 indicate similarities between this study and Jäger's research but also highlight key differences. The distinction between negation patterns in full vs. auxiliary verbs is particularly important. For auxiliary *haben* and *sein*, bipartite negation is far less frequent than single negation, where *nicht* dominates. However, for full verbs, bipartite and single negation occur at nearly equal rates, with bipartite negation (31%) surpassing negation with *nicht* (27%). These findings contradict Jäger's claim that single negation with *nicht* is the predominant pattern in *Prose-Lancelot*.

Furthermore, the lack of specific percentages in Jäger's study regarding negation with indefinites makes direct comparison difficult. However, this study finds significantly more instances of single negation with indefinites in auxiliary verb contexts than in full verb contexts. For auxiliary verbs, NC and negation with an indefinite alone occur at similar rates (21% and 20%, respectively). For full verbs, NC appears almost twice as frequently as negation with an indefinite (25% vs. 13%). In both cases, NC is the most common pattern. Given the larger number of negated clauses examined in this study, the findings highlight crucial differences between negation patterns in full and auxiliary verbs, reinforcing the need for a broader perspective when analyzing MHG negation.

### **6.3. Interpretation in Light of Jespersen's cycle**

It has been suggested that MHG is not in Stage II of Jespersen's cycle because bipartite negation only takes up a small number of the negated clauses. When looking at the data in this paper, it is true that for auxiliary *haben* and *sein* and also for full verbs that are not *haben* and *sein*, bipartite negation only takes up 20% or 29% of the text, whereas single negation with *nicht* (which would be the third stage of Jespersen's cycle), can be found in 33% and 31% of clauses. Jäger suggests in her research that MHG represents the third stage of Jespersen's cycle, but even in her research the numbers between single and bipartite negation are not significantly different at 28% for single

negation with *niht* and 27% with bipartite negation. With these numbers in mind I propose that MHG cannot be clearly assigned to either the second or third stages of Jespersen's cycle. Instead, following Meisner et al (2014) and van der Auwera (2009), MHG falls under their Stage IV, which functions as an intermediate stage that allowed the changes into Stage V (Jespersen's third stage). Following the Meisner et al (2014) and van der Auwera (2009) model, the free morpheme, in this case *niht*, can either be used on its own or in combination with the preverbal clitic *ne/en*. These two strategies, in competition at the time of MHG, eventually result in bipartite negation being eliminated as a suitable negation pattern and single negation with a free morpheme becoming the only negation pattern, representing Jespersen's Stage III. Having two competing negation strategies can be observed in multiple languages, like Brabantic Dutch of 1650, as mentioned by Auwera (2009, 38), where declaratives mostly used *en...niet*, but in prohibitives *niet* is used much more frequently than *en...niet*. Also in modern languages, multiple acceptable strategies can be observed, like modern English with *not* and the cliticized *n't*, which is only acceptable for auxiliary verbs, or in written and spoken French where *ne* can be left out in spoken French but in writing both parts of the bipartite negation *ne...pas* have to be present. Based on Meisner et al. (2014) and van der Auwera (2009), modern French would be positioned in the fourth stage, which is the transitional stage between using the bipartite negation (Jespersen's second stage) and only using the free morpheme (Jespersen's third stage).

The argument has been made that Jespersen's stages, specifically his Stage II, is not a separate stage that represents an independent system where a clitic and a free morpheme appear together, but instead functions as a transitional stage, where the clitic and free morpheme are two separate systems that overlap during a certain time period has been made. As mentioned before, this is the position of Frisch (1997) for Middle English. This could also hold true for MHG, where

the clitic *ne/en* was already significantly weakened and the free morpheme *niht* was present in a majority of clauses not only as part of the bipartite negation but as the sole negator.

Another reason to consider the possibility of two negation strategies being in direct competition with each other in MHG is the data for *haben* and *sein* as full verbs, where the majority pattern is bipartite negation. Here, it is not only evident that negation in MHG still employed bipartite negation, thus could not be exclusively Jespersen's third stage, but also that the auxiliary and full *haben* and *sein* were marked differently and thus distinguished in their functions.

When looking at the negation of indefinites with auxiliary *haben* and *sein*, NC is much more prevalent than single negation with an indefinite, which is a stark difference from Modern German, where NC is not used in the standard variety. The difference between single negation and NC is only 1%, whereas NC is much more commonly used with full verbs, both *haben* and *sein* and others.

#### **6.4. Broader Linguistic Implications**

In modern English auxiliary verbs often act differently with negation than full verbs. Here, only auxiliary verbs can undergo V-to-Neg-to-T movement. Pollock proposes that *not* is a Spec of a NegP with an empty head, thus auxiliary verbs may raise through the empty head but main verbs cannot (1989, 385). As for the clitic *-n't*, it is often assumed that it starts out as sentential *not* before it cliticizes to a preceding auxiliary. Here *-n't* is an alternate realization of the negative feature selected by [+tense] and with this feature it can either take *not* as its Spec or is inflected with *-n't*. This is not the case for full verbs in English but can be observed in other languages like French, where all verbs can undergo that V-to-Neg-to-T movement.

Other verbs like modals and *wizzen* and *tuon* also differ from the way main verbs are used. In MHG these verbs are typically used with single negation *en/ne*, instead of being used with

bipartite negation or *niht*. Auxiliary *haben* and *sein* in this text do not tend to be negated with single negation; only a small percentage of the data shows this negation. This is typical for MHG, where negation with only *en/ne* is not the prevalent negation pattern.

## 6.5. Final Summary

In previous research (Behagel 1918, 230, de Boor/Wisniewski 1984, 182, Paul 2007, 389, Jäger 2008, 141) the question was posed how certain verbs tend to be used with different negation patterns. I set out to answer the question for how *haben* and *sein* are treated in negated clauses as full and auxiliary verbs. Jäger mentioned that in her research *haben* and *sein* as auxiliary verbs were used with bipartite negation and full verbs were used with both bipartite and single negation. Partially those observations hold true, but overall the majority of negation with *haben* and *sein* as auxiliary verbs is performed by single negation with *niht*, and the second most common pattern being NC. With *haben* and *sein* as full verbs, the majority is done by bipartite negation with 37% of all clauses, which is nearly double compared to the auxiliary verbs with 20%.

Regarding the second research question, how *haben* and *sein* differ in their negation patterns as auxiliary and full verbs from other full verbs in the text, the differences between *haben* and *sein* as full verbs and other full verbs are notable, particularly in their higher reliance on bipartite negation (37% compared to 29%) and lower use of single negation (24% compared to 35%). The data supporting this analysis are presented in Table 11.

Table 11. Percentage of Negation Across *haben*, *sein*, and other verbs

	% of negation with auxiliary <i>haben/sein</i>	% of negation with <i>haben/sein</i> as full verbs	% of negation with other full verbs
Single negation	39% (6% <i>en/ne</i> ; 33% <i>niht</i> )	24% (5% <i>en/ne</i> ; 19% <i>niht</i> )	35% (4% <i>en/ne</i> ; 31% <i>niht</i> )
Bipartite negation	20%	37%	29%
IndefPron	20%	12%	14%
NC	21%	27%	22%

Based on the data in Table 8, 24% of negation with *haben/sein* as full verbs is performed with single negation, whereas 35% of negation with other full verbs have single negation. These numbers for other full verbs are similar to Jäger's data. Here, *haben* and *sein* as full verbs do not act the same way as other full verbs in this text. The main difference between *haben* and *sein* and other full verbs in the text are that the percentage for bipartite negation is smaller for other full verbs compared to *haben/sein* as full verbs but larger than the auxiliaries. The difference with single negation is also rather large for *haben/sein* as full verbs versus other full verbs but not when comparing the auxiliaries to the other full verbs.

## 7. Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to describe and analyze negation in Middle High German (MHG) based on the *Prose-Lancelot* text. In this MHG text, the verbs *haben* and *sein* were examined in their function as both auxiliary and full verbs, in addition to other full verbs. The main questions addressed in this investigation were [1] how *haben* and *sein* are treated in negated clauses as full and auxiliary verbs, [2] how *haben* and *sein* differ in their negation patterns as auxiliary and full verbs from other full verbs in the text and [3] what the negation of *haben* and *sein* in the *Prose-Lancelot* tells us about negation and Jespersen's cycle in MHG. In order to answer those questions,

I analyzed the clauses that contain the verbs *haben* and *sein* in the first part of the *Prose-Lancelot* text as well as other verbs in the first 261 clauses (200 pages). This study situates MHG within an intermediate stage of Jespersen's Cycle, where single negation with *niht* and bipartite negation coexist. In German, Jespersen's Cycle evolves from single negation (*ni* in Old High German) to bipartite negation (*en...niht* in Middle High German) and, finally, to single negation again (*nicht* in New High German). The results indicate that MHG represents a transitional phase rather than fitting neatly into Jespersen's third stage, as previously suggested. The prevalence of bipartite negation, particularly with full verbs like *haben* and *sein*, highlights the coexistence of remnants of Stage II alongside emerging Stage III patterns.

By analyzing a larger dataset and distinguishing auxiliary and full verbs, this study provides new insights into the diachronic evolution of negation in German. These findings refine our understanding of MHG negation and illustrate the complexities of linguistic evolution during this transitional period.

Based on the data collected, bipartite negation is the prevalent negation pattern with *haben* and *sein* as full verbs in the text (37%, compared to 24% for single negation, Table 10). For *haben* and *sein* as auxiliary verbs, single negation (39%) is much more common than bipartite negation (20%). However, for other full verbs in the text, the percentages for single negation (31%) and bipartite negation (29%) are very similar. This contradicts Jäger's (2008) findings (Table 11), that bipartite negation only occurs in a small proportion of the negated sentences and that MHG mostly implicates the third stage of Jespersen's cycle. Due to the significant number of clauses with bipartite negation, I consider the claim that MHG represents Jespersen's third stage as questionable. In my opinion, it is more fitting to say that MHG is a transitional phase, where bipartite negation and single negation with *nicht* stand in competition (see also Frisch 1997 and Auwera 2009).

When considering negation with indefinites, NC is found in the majority of cases with indefinites. There is a clear difference between usage of different negation pattern between *haben* and *sein* as auxiliary and full verbs and between other verbs in the text. When *haben* and *sein* are negated with a bipartite negation, the present study has shown that the predominant form used is *ne/en...niht/nit*. When single negation is used, *nit/niht* is used most frequently; this is the main negation pattern in NHG.

This paper contributes to the discussion by offering a more nuanced interpretation of MHG's position in Jespersen's Cycle and broadens the scope of analysis by including a larger dataset than Jäger's study. It also highlights the differing behaviors of auxiliary and full verbs in negation patterns, underscoring the transitional nature of this linguistic period. Suggestions for future research include investigating the role of negation in additional MHG texts to ascertain whether the patterns observed here are consistent across genres and dialects. Furthermore, a diachronic analysis comparing earlier and later stages of MHG within Jespersen's Cycle could illuminate the process by which bipartite negation receded and single negation became dominant.

The inclusion of tense as a factor in the analysis of auxiliary verbs offers an additional avenue for exploration. Coding for tense could reveal whether specific tenses influence the preference for single versus bipartite negation or affect the interaction between negation and auxiliary verbs. This might provide deeper insights into the syntactic and semantic roles of auxiliary verbs in the transitional stage of MHG.

## 8. Bibliography

### Primary sources

*Lancelot und Ginover I. Prosalancelot I. Nach der Heidelberger Hs. Cod. Pal. germ. 147.* Reinhold Kluge (ed.), Hs. Ms. allem. 8017–8020 Bibl.de l'Arsenal Paris. Hans-Hugo Steinhoff. Frankfurt/Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1995.

*Die lateinisch-althochdeutsche Tatianbilingue Stiftsbibliothek St. Gallen Cod. 56.* Achim Masser (ed.) Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1994.

*Der althochdeutsche Isidor. Nach der Pariser Handschrift und den Monseer Fragmenten.* Hans Eggers (ed.) Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1964. TITUS text entry by P. Fernández Alvarez et al. TITUS version by J. Gippert, Frankfurt/Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1997–2000.

*Otfrid von Weissenburg: Evangelienbuch.* Wolfgang Kleiber (ed.) Vol. 1. Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2004.

### Secondary Sources

Appel, Heinz-Wilfried (2007). *Untersuchungen zur Syntax niederdeutscher Dialekte: Forschungsüberblick, Methodik und Ergebnisse einer Korpusanalyse.* Frankfurt am Main: P. Lang.

Behagel, Otto (1918). „Die Verneinung in den deutschen Sprachen“. *Wissenschaftliche Beihefte zur Zeitschrift des allgemeinen deutschen Sprachvereins* 5 (38/40): 225-252.

Bumke, Joachim (2000). *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur im hohen Mittelalter.* München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag.

Dal, Ingerid (1966). *Kurze deutsche Syntax auf historischer Grundlage.* 3rd edition. Tübingen: Niemeyer.

de Boor, Helmut & Wisniewski, Roswitha (1984). *Mittelhochdeutsche Grammatik.* 10th edition. Berlin/New York: Mouton de Gruyter.

Fleischer, Jürg, & Schallert, Oliver (2011). *Historische Syntax des Deutschen eine Einführung.* Tübingen: Narr.

Frisch, Stefan (1997). “The change in negation in middle English: A NEGP licensing account”. *Lingua*, 101(1-2), 21-64.

Garzonio, Jacopo, & Poletto, Cecilia (2014). “The dynamics of the PF interface: Negation and clitic clusters”. *Lingua*, 147, 9-24.

Jäger, Agnes (2008). *History of German negation.* Amsterdam: J. Benjamins.

- Jespersen, Otto (1917). *Negation in English and other languages*. Copenhagen: Høst.
- Larriveé, Pierre (2011). *Is there a Jespersen cycle?* In: Pierre Larriveé, & Richard P. Ingham. (Eds.). *The evolution of negation: Beyond the Jespersen cycle*. Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter.
- Lockwood, William Burley (1968). *Historical German Syntax*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Meisner, Charlotte & Stark, Elisabeth & Völker, Harald (2014). Introduction to the special issue: “Jespersen revisited: Negation in Romance and beyond”. *Lingua* 147, 1-8.
- Paul, Hermann, Klen, Thomas, Solms, Hans-Joachim, Prell, Heinz-Peter, & Wegera, Klaus-Peter (2007). *Mittelhochdeutsche Grammatik*. Tübingen: Niemeyer.
- Pollock, Jean-Yves (1989). “Verb Movement, Universal Grammar, and the Structure of IP”. *Linguistic Inquiry* 20, 365-424.
- Ruberg, Uwe (1985). “Lancelot” (“Lancelot-Gral-Prosaroman”). In: Wolfgang Stammer & Karl Langosch (Eds.) *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters: Verfasserlexikon*. Band 5:530-546. Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter.
- van der Auwera, Johan (2009). *The Jespersen Cycles*. In: Elly van Gelderen (Eds.). *Cyclical change continued*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- van Kemenade, Ans (2000). *Jespersen’s cycle revisited: Formal properties of grammaticalization*. In: Susan Pintzuk, Georges Tsoulas, Anthony Warner (Eds.). *Diachronic syntax: models and mechanisms*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Voß, Rudolf (1970). *Der Prosa-Lancelot: Eine strukturanalytische u. strukturvergleichende Studie auf der Grundlage d. deutschen textes*. Meisenheim am Glan: Verlag Anton Hain.
- Weiß, Helmut (1998). *Syntax des Bairischen. Studien zur Grammatik einer natürlichen Sprache*. Tübingen: Niemeyer.