

FORMS OF SENTENCE NEGATION
IN A 14TH-CENTURY FRENCH TEXT:
A COGNITIVE/FUNCTIONAL ANALYSIS

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1. INTRODUCTION

As is well-known, older stages of French were characterized, among other things, by variability in the expression of sentence negation. In this paper, I will pursue the hypothesis, previously formulated in Hansen (fc) and Hansen & Visconti (fc), that the observed variation was structured by discourse-functional constraints relating to the cognitive status of the negated proposition or its underlying positive variant. While those previous papers took a diachronic view of the topic, comparing data from four different periods of Old and Middle French with a view to accounting for the eventual grammaticalization of *ne...pas* as the sole form of “canonical” sentence negation in standard French, the present paper is strictly synchronic in scope, proposing a form/function analysis of all tokens of sentence negation in a single 14th century text, *Le Miracle de l'enfant donné au Diable*.

2. BACKGROUND: JESPERSEN'S CYCLE

The diachronic evolution of standard negation in French is frequently cited as a textbook example of what, following Dahl (1979: 88), has become commonly known as Jespersen's Cycle, whereby

[t]he original negative adverb is first weakened, then found insufficient and therefore strengthened, generally through some additional word, and this in turn may be felt as a negative proper and may then in the course of time be subject to the same development as the original word. (Jespersen, 1917: 4)

Thus, at what we may call Stage 1 of Jespersen's Cycle, Old French is presumed to have used a simple preverbal *ne* (< Latin NON) to mark clause negation, following the pattern inherited from Latin. At a subsequent, but

clearly very early, stage of Old French, however, it became possible to reinforce this *ne* by a variety of markers, most commonly *pas*, *mie*, and *point*, originally nouns denoting minute quantities of something, and which can therefore be assumed to have originally been introduced as negative polarity items (Winters, 1987; Price, 1993; Detges & Waltereit, 2002: 176; Eckardt, 2003: ch.4). In the earliest extant French texts, we therefore already find variation, within one and the same text, between the plain negative *ne* (1) and reinforced forms of negation ((2)-(4)), the most common of which were clearly grammaticalized as negative elements proper already in Old French, as evidenced by the fact that they can be found to co-occur with non-grammaticalized negative polarity items, as in (3):

- (1) *Carles li reis, nostre emperere magnes, / Set anz tus pleins ad estet en Espagne:*
/ *Tresqu'en la mer cunquist la tere altaigne. / N'i ad castel ki devant lui*
remaigne; (Roland, vv. 1-4)
'Charles, the King, our great emperor, / Has been in Spain for a full seven years:
/ All the way to the sea did he conquer the high country. / There is not a castle
that resists him;'
- (2) *Dist Clarien: " Dame, ne parlez mie itant! "* (Roland, v. 2724)
'Clarien said, "My Lady, don't talk [*mie*] so much !"'
- (3) *Tuit vo Franceis ne valent pas meaille. (Louis, v. 2433)*
'All your Frenchmen are not [*pas*] worth a dime.'
- (4) *La vostre gent ne puet il point amer. (Louis, v. 830)*
'Your people he cannot [*point*] love.'

This stage of variation persists for several centuries, until, at the end of the 17th century, we reach Stage 3 of Jespersen's Cycle, where *ne...pas* finally ousts plain *ne* as the canonical way to express clause negation.

In two previous papers (Hansen, *fc*, Hansen & Visconti, *fc*), I have defended the hypothesis that the variable use of *ne...mie/pas* in Old and Middle French, i.e. at Stage 2 of Jespersen's Cycle, was not random, but was governed by discourse-functional constraints, which were gradually loosened, allowing the transition to Stage 3 of the Cycle, viz. the obligatorification of the postverbal negator. The present paper presents further support for the erstwhile existence of the proposed constraints, by applying them to the analysis of sentence negation in a single Middle French text.

3. DISCOURSE CONSTRAINTS ON NON-CANONICAL NEGATION IN OTHER ROMANCE LANGUAGES

I take my point of departure in observations that have been made in the literature about the pragmatics of reinforced negative forms in certain contemporary Romance vernaculars which, unlike Modern Standard French, canonically express clause negation by a single preverbal negative particle, namely Italian, Catalan, and Brazilian Portuguese.

Several studies have linked to the use of Italian *non...mica* (a cognate of Old French *ne...mie*), Catalan *no...pas* (a cognate of French *ne...pas*), and Brazilian *naõ...naõ* to the notion of presupposition (e.g. Bernini & Ramat, 1996; Espinal, 1993; Schwegler, 1988; Zanuttini, 1997), suggesting that the reinforcing markers in question are restricted to occur in contexts where the proposition being denied is presupposed or otherwise part of the common ground. In fact, Schwegler (1988: 41 ff) suggests that the use of Old and Middle French *ne...mie/pas* was subject to a similar constraint. According to Zanuttini (1997: 61), for instance, in Italian only (6) below would constitute a felicitous exchange with the addition of *mica*, whereas (5) would not:

- (5) A. *Chi viene a prenderti?*
 B. *Non so. Ma Gianni non a (*mica) la macchina.*
 ‘A. Who’s coming to pick you up?
 B. I don’t know. But Gianni doesn’t [*mica*] have the car.’
- (6) A. *Chi viene a prenderti – Gianni?*
 B. *Non so. Ma Gianni non a mica la macchina.*
 ‘A. Who’s coming to pick you up – Gianni?
 B. I don’t know. But Gianni doesn’t [*mica*] have the car.’

While not rejecting these proposals, Schwenter (2006) observes that they are not quite accurate as they stand. For one thing, the notions of presupposition and common ground are not clearly defined in any of the studies cited. Secondly, prior belief in the corresponding affirmative proposition is not a necessary condition for the felicitous use of these reinforced forms of negation. Catalan *no...pas* and Italian *non...mica*, for instance, may be found in confirmatory contexts like (7):

- (7) A. *La Maria non viene a quest’ora.*
 B. *Effettivamente, la Maria non viene mica a quest’ora.*
 ‘A. Maria won’t be coming this late.
 True, Maria won’t [*mica*] be coming this late.’

Based on examples from Brazilian Portuguese similar to (5)-(7), Schwenter instead proposes two constraints on the discourse status of “non-canonically negated” propositions: (1) that proposition or its underlying positive variant must be “discourse-old”, as defined by Prince (1992), and (2) it must be contextually activated in the sense of Dryer (1996). Based on Birner (2006), Hansen (fc) has suggested a refinement of Schwenter’s model, which, as it stands, cannot account for all the observed uses of reinforced negation in Old and Middle French.

4. THE NOTION OF DISCOURSE-STATUS

Prince (1992) classifies discourse entities along two intersecting parameters, viz. “discourse-old” vs “discourse-new” and “hearer-old” vs “hearer-new”, as in Table 1 below. Discourse-old entities are defined as having been explicitly evoked in prior discourse, and they are therefore also hearer-old. Discourse-new entities, on the other hand, may be either brand-new to the hearer or part of his¹ encyclopedic knowledge store:

Table 1: Prince’s (1992) taxonomy of given/new information.

	Hearer-old	Hearer-new
Discourse-old	Previously evoked	N/A
Discourse-new	Not evoked but known	Brand-new

There is, however, a problem with Prince’s taxonomy, namely that the status of inferrable information remains unclear, a fact noted by Birner (2006: 17), who suggests defining discourse-old information in terms of inferential links rather than prior mention. Inferential links can work in a “forward” manner, being automatically invited by a given trigger, such as the link from the trigger *exams to grades* in (8) (this type of inference is also referred to in the literature as “elaborating inferences”). Alternatively, they can be “backward”, or “bridging”, inferences, like the link from *vacation to in Spain* to *day trip to Gibraltar* in (9); that is, hearers will not automatically infer that a vacation in Spain entails a day trip to Gibraltar, but once mention is made of such a day trip, they will typically establish textual coherence by assuming such a connection:

¹ As a matter of convention, I choose to refer anaphorically to speakers as feminine, and to hearers as masculine, except when commenting on authentic (i.e. non-constructed) examples.

- (8) Jane passed all her exams this semester. Some of her grades were not terrific, though.
- (9) We had a good vacation in Spain. The day trip to Gibraltar was fun.

As elaborating inferences may be inferences of identity, information that has been explicitly mentioned in the previous discourse is accommodated by this category, while the existence of bridging inferences allows Birner (2006: 25) to fill in the missing cell representing the intersection of discourse-old and hearer-new in Table 1, as seen in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Birner's revised taxonomy of given/new information.

	H-old	H-new
D-old	Evoked: Identity/Elaborating Inferable (inferentially linked and known to hearer)	Bridging Inferable (inferentially linked but not known to hearer)
D-new	Unused (not inferentially linked but known to hearer)	Brand-new (neither inferentially linked nor known to hearer)

As argued in Hansen (fc), Birner's model of information status, whereby discourse-old information may be not only previously evoked, but also backwards inferable, provides a better account of the use of reinforced negators in older stages of French, and is thus the one that will be retained here.

When the notion of given- *vs* newness in discourse is extended to cover propositions, as it must be when the object of study is clause negation, the issue of belief is raised. This is where Dryer's (1996) notion of activation comes in. For Dryer, a proposition can be given in two distinct senses: it may be "activated", i.e. present to the attention of the hearer at a given stage of the discourse, or it may be "presupposed", i.e. part of the common ground, the set of propositions that the speaker believes and assumes the hearer to believe, as in Stalnaker's (1991[1974]: 473) definition. Clearly, the two are independent – although of course not mutually exclusive – properties. In view of examples such as (7) above, what is important for the (non-)use of reinforced negators must be activation of, not belief in, a given proposition. However, some of the Old and Middle French examples of reinforced negation adduced in Hansen (fc) posed problems for a requirement that the proposition be fully activated in the hearer's mind at the time of utterance, in as much as they represent bridging inferables, and I proposed, therefore, that to accommodate this type of example, Schwenter's activation constraint must be weakened to a requirement that the proposition be accessible on the basis of already activated information. Such a

weakening is, of course, fully in line with Birner's (2006) revised definition of "discourse-old" entities.

5. THE USES OF REINFORCED NEGATORS IN OLD AND MIDDLE FRENCH

Hansen (fc) and Hansen & Visconti (fc) presented detailed analyses of the contexts in which clause negation using either *ne...mie/pas* or plain *ne* was found in four different texts spanning three centuries.

In terms of their discourse-functional status, the examples of reinforced negation in that data base could be sub-classified according to the perceived degree of givenness of either the negative proposition itself or its underlying positive proposition. The two types of cases appeared to be fairly evenly distributed across the four texts, supporting the observation made by Schwenter (2006), according to which prior activation of the corresponding *affirmative* is not a constraint on the use of reinforced negation in Romance. The following four broad classes of examples were discerned:

- a) Examples where the *ne...mie/pas*-marked clause represented a denial or rejection of part of the preceding text (10);
- b) Examples where the *ne...mie/pas*-marked clause represented a repetition or paraphrase of part of the preceding text (11);
- c) Examples where the *ne...mie/pas*-marked clause represented either the expression or the denial/rejection of a (pragmatic) presupposition (12);
- d) Examples where the *ne...mie/pas*-marked clause represented either the expression or the denial/rejection of another type of inference warranted by the previous text (13).

(10) "Jo irai, par vostre dun !..." [...] "...Vos n'irez pas uan de mei si luign..."
(*Roland*, vv. 246, 250)

'I'll go, by your leave!... [...] "...You shall not [*pas*] this year go so far away from me..."

(11) *S'il le redote, nuls n'en deit merveillier.* [...] *S'il le redote, ne fait mie a blasmer.*
(*Louis*, vv. 675, 686)

'If he fears him, no-one should wonder. [...] If he fears him, he's not [*mie*] to blame.

(12) «Sire, coment avez vos non, ... - « *De mon nom, fet il, ne puez tu mie savoir : ...*
(*Graal*, p. 29)

"Sir, what is your name,..." - "Of my name, says he, you cannot know [*mie*],..."

- (13)...*si lor avint si merveilleuse aventure qui tuit li huis dou palés ou il mengoient et les fenestres clostrent par eles en tel manière que nus n'i mist la main ; et neporquant la sale ne fu pas enmuble ; (Gaal, p. 7)*
 '...then there occurred the most marvellous event namely that all the doors and the windows of the palace where they were eating closed themselves without anyone touching them; and yet the hall was not [*pas*] dark;'

It was observed that the borders between these categories was sometimes fuzzy, in that some of the examples falling within in categories (a)-(c) might nevertheless involve some degree of inference.

In contrast to the two reinforced forms, the plain *ne* was shown in Hansen (fc) to be used to mark new information in the large majority of cases. That it was also sometimes used to mark given information, in discourse-functional contexts similar to those described above, does not invalidate the hypothesis argued for: given that the sole *ne* was the unmarked form of negation at that time, it would in principle be capable of covering both the domain of new information, in contrast to the reinforced negators, and the domain of given information, also covered by the latter. Nevertheless, upon closer inspection, the contexts in which plain *ne* occurred in clauses expressing given information revealed a tendency to have special semantic features downplaying the discourse salience of the information they contained. Thus, plain *ne* was found principally in irrealis contexts of various types, including conditional constructions (14), deontic, maxim-like statements (15), and negations of modal verbs (16), as well as in non-declarative (16) and non-referential contexts (18). In many cases, several of these features would co-occur in one and the same *ne*-marked sentence.

- (14)*Se cest' acorde ne volez otrier ; / En Sarraguce vus vendrat aseger ; (Roland, vv. 475-76)*
 'If you will not consent to this agreement, He will come and besiege you in Saragoza;'
- (15)*Car, ce dit li saiges, on se doit assemer en robes et en armes en tel maniere que li preudome de cest siecle ne dient que on en face trop, (Joinville, P38)*
 'For, so says the wise man, one must equip oneself with clothes and arms in such a way that the serious men of this world shall not say that one is overdoing it;'
- (16)*Li empereres li tent sun guant, le destre ; / Mais li quens Guenes iloec ne volsist estre. (Roland, vv. 331-32)*
 'The emperor holds out his glove, the right one, to him; but Count Ganelon would rather not have been there.'

(17) “Pourquoy ne prenez-vous ce que nos gens vous offrent ?” (Joinville, P58)

“Why don’t you accept what our people are offering you?”

(18) *Si i acorrent li un et li autre en tel maniere qu’il ne remest chevalier en tot le palés qui la ne venist.* (Graal, p. 11)

‘Thus they come running from various places in such a way that there was no knight left in the whole palace who didn’t come there.’

6. SENTENCE NEGATION IN *LE MIRACLE DE L’ENFANT DONNÉ AU DIABLE*

The remainder of this paper will analyze the uses of plain *vs* reinforced negators in a 14th-century miracle play, written in verse. The play is the first of a cycle consisting of 40 such miracle plays, known as the *Miracles de Nostre Dame par personnages*, which were performed over a period of as many years (one each year) by the Parisian brotherhood of goldsmiths in the mid-14th century, the text under analysis here dating from approx. 1339.

Le Miracle de l’enfant donné au Diable is 1527 verses long, and contains a total of 108 tokens of sentence negation. In terms of the forms used, it is a conservative text, as Table 3 shows: thus, we find 80 tokens of plain *ne* (74.07%), 15 tokens of *ne...pas* (13.8%), 11 tokens of *ne...mie* (10.18%), and 2 tokens of *ne...point* (1.85%), and while the plain preverbal *ne* is used almost equally in independent/main clauses and in subordinate clauses, the reinforced negators are used almost exclusively in the former syntactic environment. Diachronically, the reinforced forms *ne...mie* and *ne...pas* were shown in Hansen (fc) and Hansen & Visconti (fc) to have gradually spread from independent to subordinate clause types, as is typical of grammaticalizing elements, whereas the use of preverbal *ne* alone increasingly became confined to the more conservative syntactic environment of subordinate clauses.

Table 3: Syntactic status of negated clauses.

	plain <i>ne</i>	<i>ne...pas</i>	<i>ne...mie</i>	<i>ne...point</i>
Independent/main clause	42	14	10	2
Subordinate clause	38	1	1	0

Precisely because this *Miracle* is conservative in its use of sentence negators, it is well-suited for testing the synchronic hypothesis laid out above concerning the discourse-functional difference between plain and reinforced negation.

One factor that makes the text a less than ideal testing ground is the fact that it is not only in verse, but in rhymed verse. While plain *ne* always occurs inside a verse due to its position immediately preceding the finite verb, a number of tokens of the three reinforcers, *pas*, *mie* and *point*, are found at the end of a verse, rhyming with either the preceding or following verse, as in (19):

(19) *Belgibus, Ile Diable: [...] Et si vueil l'enfent gaaignier // Qu'il engendreront en ce cas.*

Le premier Diable: Amis doux, or ne t'en fain pas, (vv. 76-78)

'Beelzebub, 2nd Devil: [...] and thus will I win the child // That they will then beget.

The first Devil: Sweet friend, don't [*pas*] lose courage now,'

Altogether 5 tokens of *mie*, 4 tokens of *pas*, and both tokens of *point* are found at the end of a verse, which means that we cannot be sure whether these reinforcers were used principally for their pragmatic import, or rather to facilitate a rhyme. As we will see, however, the tokens of *mie* and *pas* in question are, in fact, used in contexts that are compatible with the functional properties I have attributed to reinforced negation in Old and Middle French.

Thus, of the six examples of *ne...mie* occurring in mid-verse, two express direct denial of, or disagreement with, the contents of a preceding utterance (as in (20)), while the remaining four express or deny a pragmatic presupposition of a preceding utterance (cf. (21)):

(20) *La Dame: [...] Et je donneray aus maufez // Le fruit, se de vous je conçoÿ.*

Le Seigneur: Fole musarde, je n'otroy // Mie le don que fait avez. (vv. 188-91)

'The Lady: And I'll give the Devil // The fruit, if I conceive by you.

The Lord: Crazy fool, I'll not [*mie*] consent to the gift you've made.'

(21) *Nostre Dame: Maufè de male denommee, // Retournez, n'alez en avant!*

II. Diable: Que nous alez vous demandant, // Dame? Du vostre n'avons riens: // Cestui n'est mie crestiens, (vv. 1242-46)

'Our Lady: Evil demon, // Go back, don't go forward!

2nd Devil: What are you asking of us, // Lady? We have nothing of yours: // This one is not [*mie*] a Christian,'

Of the five tokens appearing at the end of a verse, two express a paraphrase of a preceding clause or utterance (cf. (22)), two express denials of a pragmatic presupposition (cf. (23)), and the last one expresses an inference warranted by a preceding utterance (cf. (24)):

- (22) *Qui vous ayme, il ne vous het mie* (v. 1366)
 ‘Who loves you, he doesn’t [*mie*] hate you’
- (23) *La Dame: Mon seigneur; je vous cri mercy : // Menez moy a l’ostel briefment. // Je travaille certainement, // Si ne say s(e) a temps y venray.*
Le Seigneur : Oil, s’il plaist a Dieu le vray. // Ma seur; ne vous esmaiez mie :
 (vv. 268-73)
 ‘The Lady : My Lord, I cry out to you for mercy: // Take me quickly to the house. // I’m certainly in labor, // So I don’t know if I’ll get there in time.
 The Lord: Yes, if it please the true God. // My sister, don’t [*mie*] be afraid:’
- (24) *Belgibus, II. Diable: [...] Avant que voie. i. mois passé, // Je leur feray leur veu brisier ; // Et si vueil l’enfent gaaingnier // Qu’il engendreront en ce cas.*
Le premier Diable : Amis doux, or ne t’en fain pas, // Se tu veulx aquerre m’amour ; // Et je t’aideray sanz demour, // Si qu’a ce cop ne faudrons mie,
 (vv. 74-81)
 ‘Beelzebub, 2nd Devil: [...] Before I’ve seen one month pass by, // I’ll make them break their oath; // And thus I’ll gain the child // That they’ll beget then.
 The 1st Devil: Sweet friend, don’t lose courage now, // If you want to win my affection; // And I’ll help you without delay, // So that we don’t [*mie*] fail to pull it off,’

In the case of verse-internal tokens of *ne...pas*, two of the host clauses represent paraphrases (e.g. (25)), six express or deny a pragmatic presupposition (e.g. (26)), and three express or deny an inference warranted by previous text (e.g. (27)):

- (26) *La Dame: [...] Et si alez querre son pere, // Qui sera ja en grant misere // Quant il orra telles nouvelles.*
La voisine: Elles ne li seront pas belles, (vv. 327-30)
 ‘The Lady: [...] And so go seek his father, // Who’ll be most miserable // When he hears such news.
 The neighbour: It’ll not [*pas*] be good news to him,’
- (27) *Le Filz: [...] Si que jamais ne mengeray // Jusques a tant que je saray // Se je suis crestiens ou non [...]*
Le Seigneur: [...] Vous n’estes pas crestiennez; (vv. 673-75, 681)
 ‘The Son: [...] So that I’ll never eat // Until I know // If I’m a Christian or not [...]
 The Lord: [...] You’re not [*pas*] baptized;’
- (28) *Le Filz: [...] Vers ma mere vint en son lit, // De ce fol delit eschaufez, // En la veille que Diex fu nez; // Maugré ma mere jut a lui. // Par courrouz et de cuer marry, // Pour le veu que li fist brisier; // Donna le fruit a l’aversier // Qu’en celle nuit conceveroit // Et que mon pere engendreroit. // Sire, en ce point fui engendrez. // Après le jour que je fui nez // Me vint querre li ennemis // Cui je*

*fui donnez et promis, // Saint pere, si com vous oez, // Et ne fu pas crestinne :
(vv. 858-72)*

‘The Son: He came to my mother in her bed, // Excited with that mad crime,
// On the night before God was born; // Against my mother’s will he slept with
her. // Out of anger and downcast of heart, // Because of the oath he made her
break, // She gave the fruit to the devil // That she conceived that night // And
that my father begot. // My Lord, at that time I was begot. // After the day I was
born // The enemy came to claim me // To whom I’d been given and promised,
// Holy Father, the way you hear, // And I wasn’t [*pas*] baptized.’

Of the four verse-final tokens of *ne...pas*, one occurs in a direct denial ((28)), and two in denials of a contextually warranted inference (e.g. (29)):

(28)*Je le vois querre sanz respite // Et puis si le vous amenray // Tout au plus tost
que je pourray; // Mais que vous au cuer ne prenez // L’ennoy, quant delez vous
l’arez, // Ou je ne l’enmainroi pas.* (vv. 642-47)

‘I’ll go seek him right away // And then I’ll bring him to you // As soon as I can;
// But you mustn’t take to heart // The pain when you have him close to you, //
Or I’ll not [*pas*] bring him.’

(29)*La Dame: Sire, Diex en soit aorez! // De ce va bien, d’autre part mal, // Pour un
dyable criminal // Qui est venuz querre voir hoir:
Le Seigneur: Diex y puist bonne part avoir! // Dame, pour ce ne l’a il pas.* (vv.
342-47)

‘The Lady: My Lord, God be praised! // On one hand, things are well, on the
other bad, // Because of a criminal Devil // Who came to seek your heir.
The Lord: May God intercede! // Lady, for all that he doesn’t have him.’

The one remaining example, reproduced as (30) below, is slightly problematic, as it does not, on the face of it, appear to enter into any of the four categories of discourse-old proposition that I have posited above. The *pas*-marked clause can conceivably be classified as a paraphrase of v. 68 (*sanz vous destourber*), except that the two propositions have different understood subject referents. As the *pas* fulfils a rhyming purpose, and as this is the only problematic example, I think we may conclude that it is simply a somewhat loose use of the reinforced negator, licensed here by poetic considerations:

(30)*Belgibus, II. Diable: Lucifer, sanz vous destourber, // Biau Sire, entendez ma
raison : // [...] Avant que voie. i. mois passé, // Je leur feray leur veu brisier ; //
Et si vueil l’enfent gaaingnier // Qu’il engendreront en ce cas.
Le premier Diable : Amis doux, or ne t’en fain pas.* (vv. 68-9; 74-8)

‘Beelzebub, 2nd Devil: Lucifer, without worrying, // Good Lord, listen to my idea: // [...] Before I’ve seen one month pass by, // I’ll make them break their oath; // And thus I’ll gain the child // That they’ll beget then.
The 1st Devil: Sweet friend, don’t [*pas*] lose courage now,’

Finally, the two instances of *ne...point* – a reinforcer that was not analyzed in either Hansen (fc) or Hansen & Visconti (fc) – in this text conform to the hypothesized pattern as well, but may have additional properties. Thus, both of them are found in imperatives, and appear at emotionally charged moments, where they mark strong exhortation, as in (31), where the *ne...point*-marked clause moreover represents a paraphrase of the immediately preceding utterance:

- (31)*Le Seigneur: [...] Je vois a la vierge prier // Qu’elle vostre cuer mette a point.*
La Dame: Sire, alez, ne vous feignez point // Du prier a vostre pouvoir. (vv. 534-37)
‘The Lord: I’ll go pray to the Virgin // That she give you courage.
The Lady: My Lord, go, don’t [*point*] hesitate // To pray as strongly as you can.’

The small number of tokens of *ne...point* in this *Miracle* of course makes it impossible to draw any conclusions of more general scope about any affective nuances that may or may not have been attached to the use of this negator in older stages of French, but the existence of such nuances would at least be compatible with the widely recognized intuition that in contemporary French, where *ne...point* survives marginally, and principally in formal registers, this negator somehow marks a “stronger” form of negation that *ne...pas*.

Now, in comparison, 50 of the 80 tokens of plain preverbal *ne* are found in clauses expressing information that is contextually new, e.g. (32):

- (32)*Vous ne savez comment il m’est, (v. 158)*
‘You don’t know how it is with me,’

A total of thirty plain *ne*-marked clauses contain discourse-old information, and among these, we find the same pattern that was observed in Hansen (fc), namely that *ne* tends to occur without a reinforcer in contexts that downplay the discourse salience of that information.

Thus, in (33), for instance, the idea that the speaker might succumb to lust (*Si que je n’enchiee ou solaz // De luxure*) can be seen as an inference warranted by the fact that the Devil is constantly tempting him, but its negation

occurs in an irrealis context, namely that of a purpose clause. Similarly, while the idea of the Virgin coming to the speaker's aid, as expressed in the second *ne*-marked clause in this passage (*Se vous ne m'aidiez sanz attente*), is implied by his praying to her, the negated clause is the protasis of a conditional, again an irrealis context. Sixteen of the thirty *ne*-marked clauses in discourse-old contexts in this text can be accounted for in this way²:

(33)...*Car li dyable plain de triche // Me tente par nuit et par jour. // Dame, par vo sainte douçour // Veuillez moy garder de ses laz, // Si que je n'enchiee ou solaz // De luxure, dont il m'entente. // Se vous ne m'aidiez sanz attente, // Je crains que je n'y sois attains; (vv. 122-29)*

'For the devil who's full of trickery // Tempts me night and day. // Lady, by your holy sweetness // Protect me from his traps, // So that I don't fall into the pleasures // Of lust, with which he tempts me. // If you don't help me straight away, // I fear that I'll be condemned to it.'

Some of the remaining examples background the negated clause in other ways. Thus, (34) has *ne* occurring in a context where the negation is restricted to a certain states-of-affair, rather than representing a complete denial of the proposition. Thus, it is clear that the Devil *will* come to claim the child at some point in the future, just not until it has reached the age of reason:

(34) *Il ne venra pour sa promesse, // Tant que li enfes soit sannez. (vv. 388-89)*
'He'll not come so is his promise, // As long as the child is in its infancy.'

In yet other cases like (35), a presupposed negative proposition is backgrounded because the speaker's focus is not on that proposition itself, but on the reason for its being the case:

(35) *Et que je sache l'achaison // Pour quoy vous n'avez joie au cuer: (vv. 676-77)*
'And until I know the reason // Why you have no joy in your heart.'

Finally, about ten examples express discourse-old information which does not appear to be backgrounded. As already discussed above, such examples are to be expected to the extent that plain *ne* was the unmarked form of negation in Old and Middle French. It is generally possible for unmarked forms to replace their marked counterparts; indeed, that is part of the definition of an unmarked form. Thus, such examples do not constitute counter-examples to

² Note that the last *ne* in this excerpt is not negative in meaning, but is an expletive *ne*, whose appearance is triggered by the matrix verb *crain*. This token therefore falls outside the purview of the present analysis.

the hypothesis defended here. What is remarkable is perhaps rather that they should not be more numerous than they appear to be, both in the text analyzed here and in those that form the empirical basis for Hansen (fc).

7. CONCLUSION

In this paper, I have presented additional empirical support for the idea that simple and reinforced forms of negation in Old and Middle French were not in essentially random variation, as has been the assumption in much of the existing literature on the topic, but that the reinforced forms were not only morphologically marked (due to their greater morphological weight) and statistically marked (due to their relatively less frequent occurrence), but also marked in terms of meaning, their occurrence being subject to definable cognitive and discourse-functional constraints. The account presented here has the advantage not only of explaining why plain and reinforced forms could both remain in seeming competition for some five to six centuries in the history of French, but also of being compatible with what we know about the uses of reinforced forms of negation (some of which are etymologically identical to the Old French forms) in a number of contemporary Romance vernaculars.

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