

Chapter 3

GENRE

RETURNING TO *Chevalier et escuier*, the text in which Jehan names himself, we may note a further feature which links it to the other texts of the *J-corpus*, namely its didactic and parenetic function. As discussed in the previous chapter, this is particularly noticeable in the prologue-epilogue pairs, but it is found throughout the narrative as well, and appears to be a necessary characteristic of all the attributed poems, which seek to educate and persuade an audience on questions of good moral behaviour. Morawski notes Jehan's preference for "des sujets étranges ou horribles, propres à faire hérissier les cheveux sur la tête" (1939, 345–46),¹ which again, as Munk Olsen (1963b, 152) notes, is in no way astonishing for the didactic material of the period, and many similar tales appear in the *A-corpus*, yet it does add a further sense of thematic unity to the *J-corpus*. In the case of *Chevalier et escuier*, while its contents may not be as shocking as the infanticide of *Romme*, *Pecherresse*, or *Enfant rosti*, the two companions' initial willingness to renounce God and the saints, as well as the squire's gruesome ending at the bottom of a hangman's rope, is certainly intended to shock, while the knight's redemption provides a contrasting example of good moral behaviour.

¹ "strange or horrible subjects, apt to make one's hair stand on end."

ABSTRACT Moving beyond questions of structure, this chapter examines the use of generic descriptors in the *J-corpus* and our reference corpora, considering both internal self-descriptors and external paratextual labels. Comparing the *J-corpus* to the *A*-, *P*-, and *B*-corpora, I examine the distribution and collocations of three primary descriptors (*miracle*, *exemple*, and *dit*), and demonstrate that Jehan's use of these terms stands out amongst our corpora. Specifically, I identify an apparent preference for the phrase (*un moult tres*) *bel exemple*, and the frequent association of generic terms with verbs of orality, which do not appear with such frequency elsewhere. Finally, I identify that the ubiquitous use of the term *dit* by modern scholarship to describe Jehan's poems stems largely from the choices made by the rubricator(s) of fr. 24432, rather than from any authorial preference, but that the consistent use of these markers acts as further evidence in support of the shared-author hypothesis.

When examining the didactic nature of Jehan's texts, previous scholarship has often used this as a basis from which to determine the genre to which the *J-corpus* may be assigned. Such *post rem* generic classification has long been acknowledged to be lacking,² given that modern generic descriptors so often fail to encapsulate medieval conceptions of genre. More recently, a more holistic and historically informed understanding of genre has been offered through the "poétique des genres"³ enacted by Gingras (2016, 8), encompassing "aussi bien la forme revendiquée par l'auteur que le genre attribué par l'histoire de sa réception, depuis les rubriques des copistes et les associations suggérées par la mise en recueil, jusqu'aux classements canoniques établis par la critique depuis la fin du XIX^e siècle."⁴

However, it is of minimal significance to this study exactly which generic descriptor modern scholarship should choose to use for Jehan's poetry. The purpose of our analysis here is neither to prescribe nor to proscribe any specific generic term as a suitable descriptor for his texts. Nevertheless, questions of genre do still have much to offer the study of Jehan's *œuvre* from the perspective of the attribution of authorship. This is especially true when we align our approach with Gingras's genre poetics, considering the self-descriptors contained within and around Jehan's poems in their manuscript contexts, as well as asking why modern scholarship has chosen to describe the texts in the way that it has.

Taking this approach can help us in our search for unity within the *J-corpus*, and help us better to understand how the texts were conceptualized by their author, as well as their earliest audiences. In particular, what is most meaningful for our purposes here is to ask whether there is any consistency across how the texts describe themselves, and how they are described by their paratexts. If the same descriptors are used in a similar way across the poems, then this can contribute to the corpus' sense of coherence, while suggesting that the scribes who copied them may also have been aware of this unity. Neither of these features is enough to guarantee shared authorship on its own, yet they contribute to our growing, holistic picture of which elements of the *J-corpus* form a unified whole, assisting in the process of attribution.

2 For discussion of such challenges see, for example, Jauss (1970), Zumthor (1972), and Lacy (1987).

3 "genre poetics."

4 "both the form claimed by the author and the genre attributed by the history of its reception, from the rubrics used by copyists and the associations suggested by the compilation, to the canonical classifications set out by critics since the end of the 19th century."

Morawski (1939, 345) and Munk Olsen (1963a, 12; 1978, xviii–xix) observe three principal terms in use as self-descriptors within the texts attributed to Jehan: *miracle*, *exemple* (also *exemplaire*), and *dit*. Methods of digital textual analysis offer an advantage over those on which previous scholarship had to rely, since they allow us to analyse the forms and distribution of these self-descriptors in a reproducible way. We shall therefore consider each of these terms in turn, comparing their usage with what we might expect based on an analysis of our broader reference corpora. Following this, we look beyond the poems themselves, turning to an examination of the use of generic descriptors in fr. 24432's paratexts.

miracle

The self-descriptor *miracle* appears on several occasions in the *J-corpus*. As a generic term, it is often used both today and at the time of the texts' composition to describe a body of literature, frequently but by no means exclusively associated with the Blessed Virgin, which makes a moral point using a narrative depiction of events involving divine intervention. Many of the texts of the *J-corpus* share a great number of similarities with *miracles* such as those of Gautier de Coincy. Indeed, one of the latter's *Miracles de Nostre Dame* is found in fr. 24432 on fols. 315va–316vb, immediately following Jehan's *Beguine*, perhaps suggesting an acknowledgement of similarity between these texts on the part of the manuscript's compiler.⁵

The similarities between de Coincy's *miracle* and *Respon*, another text of the *J-corpus*, are stark. In Jehan's poem, a girl is sold to a canon by her father, but when he attempts to bed her, the mention of the girl's name, Marie, is enough to pull the canon out of sin. In return for turning away from sin, the canon is then saved from a hunting accident by Mary. De Coincy's *miracle* contains a similar story regarding a last-minute turning away from sin, in which a young *clerc* who has promised himself to Mary is reminded of his promise by the presence of the Blessed Virgin in his marital bed, convincing him to make good on his promise and embrace a life of chastity. Despite differing metres, the epilogues of both texts are notable in their similarity.⁶

⁵ The text in question is the catchily titled *Le dit de l'enfant qui mist l'anel que s'amie li avoit donné ou doit a l'ymage de Nostre Dame*. For an edition, see Koenig (1955–1970, ii: 197–204).

⁶ The surviving copies of Gautier de Coincy's text vary in their formulation of the epilogue, and the version found in fr. 24432 is not noted by Koenig (1955–1970) in

Si prions a la Vierge, qui est et fille et mere,
 Qu'elle prist son dous Filz—comme tres digne mere—
 Que il nous gart d'enfer, celle prison amere,
 Et nous otroit la joie qui est bellë et clere.

(*Respon*, vv. 189–92)

Or prion Dieu le fil Marie,
 Qu'il nous doint a touz bone vie
 Et apres vie pardurable,
 Car celui est bon heritage.

(fr. 24432, fol. 316vb, lines 3–6)

Certainly, then, some of Jehan's texts share some characteristics with texts which label themselves as *miracles*, as texts with a narrative focus but a didactic and parenetic function that tell of an act of salvation, and this leads Léonard (1996, 327) to argue that many of Jehan's texts are "incontestablement des *miracles*."⁷ And yet, this is not straightforwardly true of all of the texts in the *J-corpus*, including *Beguine*, the text that immediately precedes de Coincy's *miracle* in fr. 24432. This text falls into Kleist's (1973, 66–67) category of "negativen Mirakeln," that is, "negative miracles" or stories containing miraculous content but in which a sinner is damned rather than saved. Within *Beguine*, the eponymous *religieuse* falls into league with the Devil and places the Host into a box with a toad, prompting a Eucharistic miracle in which the Host cries out like a newborn child. The beguine's sin is discovered, she is burnt at the stake, and the Devil takes her soul. The text is therefore distinct from the archetypal *miracle* in that it does not have a positive ending for the sinner, but it is nevertheless miraculous in its content.⁸

Texts such as *Beguine* certainly have the same didactic potency as the more positive *miracle*-like texts in the *J-corpus*, and are perhaps most effective in combination with them, offering a clear depiction of the binary choice which sinners apparently face between following the path of righteousness or continuing to follow the path of the Devil. As we have noted, *Chevalier et escuier*, the text containing the instance of Jehan's self-attribution which we have so far seen as an archetype of the corpus, offers perhaps the most explicit version of this dichotomy, in that the knight, who refuses to renounce Mary, is rewarded with a miracle, whereas the squire, who chooses to follow the Devil, dies a humiliating death and is damned.

All this is not to attempt to answer the question of whether we should refer to the texts of the *J-corpus* as *miracles*. Medieval genre is of course

any of the ten manuscripts consulted for his edition. I have not found a comparable formulation elsewhere.

7 "undeniably miracles."

8 Tales resembling this one, we may note, are common also in *exempla*, as discussed on pp. 46–53. See, for example, the Eucharistic tales included in the *Index exemplorum* (Tubach 1969).

a thorny question, and as we shall see, there are plenty of other generic descriptors which could just as well be used to describe the texts. Rather, it is simply to display the narrative and functional similarities between Jehan's texts and archetypal *miracles* which suggest that it would not be unreasonable for the author to have solely categorized many of his texts as *miracles*, had he chosen to do so.

From the perspective of authorial attribution, a digital textual analysis of the *J-corpus* allows us to gain a global understanding of Jehan's interaction with the term *miracle* in relation to his texts, a task which previous scholarship has only achieved in part. Looking across the whole *J-corpus*, we find eighteen uses of *miracle*, all of which refer to a greater or lesser extent to an individual miracle within the narrative, but three of which can also be said to function as generic descriptors which refer to the whole text. These are found in *Narbonne* and *Pecherresse* (twice), and are displayed in Table 6.

Table 6. Uses of *miracle* as a generic descriptor within the *J-corpus*.

Text	Line	LH	KW	RH
<i>Narbonne</i>	221	Ceulz et celles qui ont ce	miracle	escouté
<i>Pecherresse</i>	9	Un de ses biaus	miracles	vous voudrai raconter
<i>Pecherresse</i>	145	Ce biau	miracle	cy a tous vous senefie

Given that, as we have seen, the poems of the *J-corpus* share numerous features with texts which describe themselves as *miracles*, it is therefore surprising that Jehan makes very little use of the term himself, and only across two texts. The fact that *miracle* appears much more frequently as a term to refer to events occurring within the narrative suggests that Jehan took the term as solely referring to content, rather than as one that had any generic implications. This observation also appears to be true of the *A-corpus*, in which there are some thirty-eight uses of the term *miracle*—an unsurprisingly higher rate of use given more of the texts are explicitly hagiographic—of which only one could also be read as a generic descriptor, as in Table 7.

Table 7. The single use of *miracle* as a generic descriptor within the *A-corpus*.

Text	Line	LH	KW	RH
<i>Thibaut</i>	1056	En cestui present livre cest	miracle	escrist

The sense that *miracle* in both the *J-* and *A-corpora* appears as a narrative descriptor, rather than a generic one, is reinforced by the fact that *miracle* in either use is often accompanied by *bel*, with this term characterizing the

moral, rather than aesthetic, beauty of the narrative itself. For the *J-corpus*, in addition to the two generic examples seen above, there are a further four narrative cases where a form of *bel* appears within two tokens either side of *miracle*, shown in Table 8, such that a third of the uses of *miracle* found anywhere in the *J-corpus* are accompanied by this word. These examples once again give us cause to consider *Florence* and *Buef* as a pair, which may be notably distinct from other texts of the *J-corpus*.

Table 8. Other uses of *miracle* alongside *bel* within the *J-corpus*.

Text	Line	LH	KW	RH
<i>Romme</i>	185	La fist moult biau	miracle	Nostre Dame Marie
<i>Narbonne</i>	80	Or oez biau	miracle	qui oïr leouldra
<i>Florence</i>	803	Sailli hors sanz main metre le	miracle	fu bel
<i>Buef</i>	644	Vous porrez ja oïr un	miracle	moult bel

Similarly in the *A-corpus*, seven of the thirty-eight uses of *miracle* are accompanied by *bel*, as in Table 9, where we note the appearance of such a structure in *Richard*, albeit not as a generic descriptor.⁹ The difference in rates between the *J-* and *A-corpora* is not statistically significant, suggesting that the use of *bel* alongside *miracle* in the *J-corpus* is hardly unique, but there are notable differences in the ways that *bel* is used in both. In the *J-corpus*, *bel* appears to be preferred at the rhyme, as in *Florence* and *Buef*, while its variant *biau* is consistently used line-internally and appears like an epithet, perhaps included for reasons of metre. In the *A-corpus*, meanwhile, *bel* and *biau* only appear immediately before *miracle*.

Table 9. Uses of *miracle* alongside *bel* within the *A-corpus*.

Text	Line	LH	KW	RH
<i>Alexis</i>	300	Ja orez biau	miracle	et plain de grant pitié
<i>Basile</i>	284	Et des bielles	miracles	ne me repuis plus taire
<i>Cristofle</i>	708	Onques plus beau	miracle	n'oïstes maiz compter
<i>Dieudonnée</i>	253	La moustra biaus	miracles	Dieus, qui set tout et voit
<i>Jehan Ewangeliste</i>	537	Certes c'est bel	miracle	cil doivent savoir tuit
<i>Leu</i>	100	Si ourrés beau	miracle	qui est moult avenant
<i>Richard</i>	315	Ce beau	miracle	cy si advent a Rouen

⁹ In the title of its incunable edition, the text is described as a “romant.” A narrative use of *miracle* is also observed within *Jehan Paulus* (v. 209).

Further, when comparing the use of *bel* to that found our more general reference corpora, namely the *P-corpus* of the texts in fr. 24432 not attributed to Jehan, and the large *B-corpus* which contains texts from a wide variety of generic, diachronic, and diatopic contexts, we find that the use of the term alongside *miracle* is unusually high in both the *J-* and *A-corpora*, but especially the *J-corpus*, when taken in this broader context. Both display statistically significant differences with the *P-corpus*, in which *bel* does not appear anywhere alongside the twenty-one instances of *miracle* (*J*: $p = 0.00593$; *A*: $p = 0.04327$) but statistical significance only applies for the *J-corpus* relative to the *B-corpus*, for which the figure is 10.24% (eighty-one of 791 uses of *miracle*; *J*: $p = 0.00434$; *A*: $p = 0.10713$). This means that, while *bel* appears to be a term used alongside *miracle* with high frequency in narrative poems written in alexandrine monorhyme quatrains, it is especially common in the texts of the *J-corpus*.

A further point of contrast between the *J-* and *A-corpora* comes in the fact that, in the *A-corpus*, we find occasional use of other descriptors alongside *miracle* which do not appear in the *J-corpus*, particularly *haut* and *apert*, as in Table 10. Both terms are focused on the divine significance of the miraculous events described, and it is therefore unsurprising that all these examples appear in texts which are explicitly saints’ lives. This, we may remind ourselves, is only true for the *J-corpus* in the case of *Sauveur*, and these examples thus reinforce our sense of Jehan’s apparent preferred subject matter: miraculous, holy events, which are mobilized in support of a didactic goal, rather than the veneration of an individual saint.

Table 10. Uses of additional descriptors alongside *miracle* within the *A-corpus*.

Text	Line	LH	KW	RH
<i>Basile</i>	144	Mais les hautes	miracles	raconter vous volons
<i>Jehan Ewangeliste</i>	370	Par tens te monsteroie une	miracle	aperte
<i>Jehan Ewangeliste</i>	845	Oiés tres haut	miracle	et bien divers afaire
<i>Jehan Ewangeliste</i>	887	Cascun jor i avint une	miracle	aperte
<i>Thibaut</i>	978	Que Dés apers	miracles	par lo cors seint faroit

Of final note is the fact that *miracle* in the *J-* and *A-corpora* is often associated with verbs of speech and hearing, with seven instances (38.89%) in the *J-corpus* and sixteen (42.11%) in the *A-corpus* in which *miracle* is accompanied by one or more instance of *oïr*, *dire*, *escouter*, *entendre*, (*ra*)*conter*, or *taire*, with *oïr* the dominant form in both corpora. The examples from the *J-corpus* are given in Table 11. This once again contrasts in a statistically sig-

nificant way with the *P-corpus*, which contains only one such example (within Gautier de Coincy’s aforementioned *miracle*), and thus has a rate of such use at 4.76% (one of twenty-one instances, $p = 0.00953$), whereas that of the *B-corpus* is only slightly higher at 8.34% (sixty-six of 791, $p = 0.00022$). The high use of such verbs alongside *miracle* therefore appears to be a particular feature of the kinds of narrative alexandrine poems contained within the *J-* and *A-corpora*, rather than resulting from an individual authorial preference.

Table 11. Uses of *miracle* alongside verbs of speaking and hearing within the *J-corpus*.

Text	Line	LH	KW	RH
Chanoines	402	Or oez les	miracles	que Dieus vouldt demoustrer
Narbonne	80	Or oez biau	miracle	qui oïr le vouldra
Narbonne	221	Ceulz et celles qui ont ce	miracle	escouté
Mescreant	84	Or entendez	miracles	se croire les volez
Pecherresse	9	Un de ses biaux	miracles	vous voudrai raconter
Buef	644	Vous porrez ja oïr un	miracle	moult bel
Abesse	117	Or oez les	miracles	que Diex i envoia

Through comparison with our reference corpora, the examination of *miracle* therefore reveals that, in a broad sense, Jehan’s use of the term is comparable to that found in other poems in alexandrine monorhyme quatrains. However, there are also cases where the poet associates *miracle* with certain words and actions more than other authors, which gives the texts of the *J-corpus* a sense of unity, and adds to our growing sense of Jehan’s personal style. Ultimately, while he may use the term to talk about miraculous narrative events, Jehan does not appear particularly interested in calling his texts *miracles*.

exemple

Turning to the use of the terms *exemple* and *exemplaire*, we find that, despite several appearances of these descriptors within the texts, there is limited evidence that would qualify the texts of the *J-corpus* for description as *exempla*. Such texts, generally defined as “un récit bref donné comme véridique et destiné à être inséré dans un discours, en général un sermon, pour convaincre un auditoire par une leçon salutaire” (Polo de Beaulieu 2019, 39),¹⁰ saw a

10 “a brief story presented as true and intended to be inserted into a speech, usually a sermon, to convince an audience with a salutary lesson.”

huge rise in popularity following the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 (Welter 1927, 1). Their particular success between the middle of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, as Polo de Beaulieu et al. (2026) have argued, reflects a “confiance aveugle dans la puissance de la narration,”¹¹ with preachers using narrative tales within sermons to respond to the challenges of an increasingly urban society, in which “[i]l fallait convaincre un public urbain, qui en majorité ne savait pas lire, et qui était attiré par des croyances jugées hérétiques par l’Église.”¹² To achieve this end, these “historiettes,” these little stories and anecdotes (Berlioz 1994, 235), served a double purpose, both as tales to teach and tales to entertain, with their more colourful elements engaging an audience so as to ensure that they would also pay attention to the moral message at its core. Ultimately, as Taylor notes (2000, 741), it was this focus on entertainment which led to increasing calls “for their elimination or radical reduction” from the fourteenth century onwards.¹³

On the face of it, Jehan’s texts overlap significantly with the canonical understanding of the *exemplum*. The poems of the *J-corpus* all seek both to entertain an audience, while also imparting a moral message. They are also all relatively brief, and while *exempla* were usually not performed in verse, this is not unheard of (Kienzle, 148). And yet, Munk Olsen (1963a, 10) does appear somewhat justified when he argues that Jehan’s texts cannot be described as *exempla*. He notes that:

Les *Dits* de notre recueil ne sont pas sans ressembler aux *exempla* [...] La différence la plus importante, c’est que l’élément narratif, fort réduit dans les sermons pour ne pas dépasser le cadre didactique, s’est amplifié et domine dans les *Dits*; mais ils servent tous à démontrer une thèse d’ordre moral ou religieux présentée dans leur introduction.

The *Dits* in our collection are not without resemblance to *exempla* [...] The most important difference is that the narrative element, greatly reduced in sermons so as not to exceed the didactic framework, has been expanded and dominates in the *Dits*; but both serve to demonstrate a moral or religious thesis which is presented in their introduction.

11 “blind confidence in the power of narration.”

12 “[i]t was necessary to convince an urban audience, who for the most part could not read, and who were attracted by beliefs deemed heretical by the Church.”

13 On the *exemplum*, see also Brémond, Le Goff, and Schmitt (1982) and Smirnova (2022). For a statistical textual analysis of a corpus of *exempla*, not dissimilar to what we are conducting here, see Berlioz and Guerreau (2019).

It is possible to argue against Munk Olsen's suggestion that *exempla* were inevitably reduced in their narrative focus compared to Jehan's poems. Many *exempla* found in the extant collections are notably abbreviated, as for example in the short vernacular tales of the *Ci nous dit* which contain very little extraneous narrative content,¹⁴ but this does not mean that the same was true for the spoken sermons in which such *exempla* may have been used. The highly condensed written *exempla* which survive, both in Latin and in the vernacular, were seemingly little more than *aide-mémoires* of a broader tale which could then be written up into full stories within a sermon. Taylor (2000, 741) notes that, in France in the later Middle Ages, "[a]lthough prescriptions suggested the maximum length of an hour, Lenten sermons could often extend to two or three hours," and thus *exempla* as they appeared in sermons could certainly have been of a comparable length and narrative complexity to the shorter of Jehan's poems. If, as Munk Olsen himself suggests,¹⁵ Jehan also in some cases developed his tales from sources such as the *Ci nous dit*, then his work could well be much closer to that of sermon writers than Munk Olsen acknowledges.

However, Munk Olsen's point does stand when we consider the didactic framework surrounding the tales. The primary difference between Jehan's poems and *exempla* is primarily in the nature and scale of the didactic context. Kleist (1973, 67) supports this suggestion, arguing that *exempla* "dient als Illustration einer These, deren Wahrheit in der Predigt schon durch Gründe und Argumente bewiesen worden ist."¹⁶ Jehan's texts, meanwhile, differ from *exempla* in that the tales themselves function as the proof of the moral message, rather than an illustration of a message that has already been proven.

Kienzle (2000, 145) offers a theoretical perspective which sheds further light on the matter. Applying Jauss's theory of genres (1970), she distinguishes between "genres with an independent function and those with a dependent function." The *exemplum* is an example of a genre with a dependent function, since it is "encompassed by" a genre with an independent function, namely the sermon. The *exemplum* appears in a sermon only after a lengthy exposition of a particular point of morality, liturgy, or doctrine,

14 For an edition of these texts, see Blangez (1979–1986), and for recent discussion, see Gingras (2022).

15 See, for example, Munk Olsen (1978, cxviii), and the discussion of sources in Chapter 8.

16 "serve as the illustration of a thesis, the truth of which has already been proven in the sermon through reasoning and argumentation."

and serves to reinforce that point, rather than serving independent aims.¹⁷ Jehan's texts, by contrast, carry an independent function, since there is no such accompanying co-text, and his moral messages appear primarily in the prologue and epilogue to a text, where they are stated relatively perfunctorily, as a truth universally acknowledged.

Pain, one of the poems within the *J-corpus*, provides an excellent example of this, beginning with a twelve-line prologue of which the first line is simply: "Moult fu nez de bone heure qui bien fait en sa vie." The narrative body of the text makes no explicit reference to this moral message, and yet the story, of a miser who changes his ways, acts wholly in support of the promythium. The message is repeated explicitly only in the eight-line epilogue to the text, of which the first stanza, before a final prayer to Jesus and Mary, reads:

Qui en sa plaine vie en bien faire labeure,
Ne se doit pas douter que Diex ne le sequeure;
Ains doit douter enfer qui est plus noir que meure.
Nulz ne scet de sa fin ne le droit jor ne l'eure.

(*Pain*, vv. 161–64)

The author, it appears, is explicit in his moral teaching in the prologue and epilogue, and yet is more interested in the main body of the text in implicitly and independently developing his moral argument, rather than explicitly expounding an external argument in a way that may be done with an *exemplum*.

Considering this evidence, the overwhelming conclusion we must draw is that, while Jehan's poems certainly exist in close generic proximity to *exempla*, there is good reason not to describe them as such. As a result, it is all the more surprising to observe the significant frequency with which the terms *exemple* and *exemplaire* appear as generic self-descriptors in the *J-corpus*. Across Jehan's texts, there are a total of thirty-seven appearances in various spellings of either *exemple* or *exemplaire*, of which nineteen are generic descriptors, as in Table 12, with the others either referring to moral lessons given to characters within the narrative, or referring to a specific element of that narrative.

The use of *exemple* as a self-descriptor therefore appears more consistent across the *J-corpus* than for *miracle*, with appearances in thirteen of the corpus' twenty-four texts. On a surface level, then, the significant frequency with which the term is used in the *J-corpus* would contradict our arguments above in which we dismissed the possibility that Jehan's texts could ever

17 On the structure of the medieval sermon, see Wenzel (2016).

Table 12. Uses of *exemple* and *exemplaire* as generic descriptors within the *J-corpus*.

Text	Line	LH	KW	RH
<i>Respon</i>	186	Cest	esemple	nous moustre a tous generaument
<i>Chanoïnes</i>	249	Or entendez pour Dieu un moult bel	esemplaire	
<i>Pommes</i>	5	Je vous weil une	esemple	amentevoir et dire
<i>Pommes</i>	6	De bon	esemple	dire ne puet nus estre pire
<i>Romme</i>	5	Un moult bel	esemplaire	vous vodrai recorder
<i>Deux chevaliers</i>	5	Par bon	exemple	oïr se puet l'en amender
<i>Enfant rosti</i>	6	Un moult tres bel	exemple	vous vouldrai recorder
<i>Narbonne</i>	9	Un moult tres bel	exemple	issy vous en devis
<i>Enfant sauva mere</i>	207	En cest	exemple	cy nous est raison moustree
<i>Eaue et vergier</i>	2	Deus	exemples	moult biais ou il n'a que reprendre
<i>Eaue et vergier</i>	5	La premiere	exemple	vus dirai sans mentir
<i>Eaue et vergier</i>	97	Le secont des	exemples	vous veil ramentevoir
<i>Eaue et vergier</i>	104	Par un moult bel	exemple	si con vous orrez ja
<i>Mescreant</i>	17	Bone gent je vous veil moustrer une	exemplaire	
<i>Merlin</i>	4	Vous dirai un	exemple	a tous generaument
<i>Merlin</i>	217	En cest	exemple	ci doit bien chascun entendre
<i>Anelés</i>	4	Un merueilleus	exemple	ou bon feroit penser
<i>Buef</i>	30	Par un moult bel	essample	qu'orendroit vous dirai
<i>Buef</i>	790	En cest	exemple	ci vous devez remirer

have been considered *exempla*. However, a more nuanced perspective can be found in the fact that at no point in his texts does Jehan use the Latin word *exemplum*, only French cognates. Indeed, the Latin term does not appear in the *A-corpus* or in any of the texts of the much larger *B-corpus*, and this lack of alternation between the Latin and French forms therefore reveals a general truth that Jehan’s conception of *exemple* and *exemplaire*, and that of other vernacular writers, was not as a direct translation of *exemplum*, but rather a more general term which can be applied to a broader range of narrative texts with a moralizing and didactic focus.¹⁸ It is this that can explain

¹⁸ Léonard (1996, 297) observes a similar trend within her larger corpus of *dits*, arguing that *exemple* and *exemplaire* are used in the vernacular to refer to “un récit de forme littéraire, souvent versifiée mais pas toujours” (“a tale in literary form,

the prevalence of *exemple* and *exemplaire* in the *J-corpus*, despite the generic distance between Jehan's poems and *exempla*.

Turning to the extent to which Jehan's use of *exemple* and its related forms may be said to distinguish the *J-corpus* from others, we find that of the twelve appearances of the term in the *A-corpus*, the term is used as a generic descriptor on only three occasions, across only two of the corpus' twenty-six texts, as given in Table 13.

Table 13. Uses of *exemple* as a generic descriptor within the *A-corpus*.

Text	Line	LH	KW	RH
<i>Leu</i>	233	Par cest	exemple	si creez tres bonne gent
<i>Quatre sereurs</i>	1	Par	exemple	vorai parler de l'Escripture
<i>Quatre sereurs</i>	4	Qu'	exemple	doit on panre quant la lettre est obscure

Similarly, from the perspective of the cohesion of the *J-corpus*, and thus the validity of the shared-author hypothesis, we find that, looking across all thirty-seven appearances of the word, there are several collocates that stand out. The phrase *moult tres bel* appears immediately before *exemple* in two cases, forming a construction that does not appear elsewhere in the *A*-, *P*-, or *B-corpora*. Meanwhile, the shorter construction *moult bel* appears a total of seven times immediately before *exemple* in the *J-corpus* with a rate of 18.92%, which again does not appear in the *A-corpus*, nor in any of the seventy-eight uses of *exemple* in the *P-corpus*.¹⁹ In the *B-corpus*, meanwhile, there is only a single instance of *moult bel* before *exemple* out of the 789 uses of the word (0.13%). Looking at the use of *bel* within any structure containing *exemple*, we observe a rate of 27.03% for the *J-corpus* (ten of thirty-seven instances), 0% for the *A-corpus* (zero of twelve), 7.69% for the *P-corpus* (six of seventy-eight), and 1.01% for the *B-corpus* (eight of 789). There is thus clear statistical significance for the difference in the use of *bel* alongside *exemple* in the *J-corpus* compared to the *A*- ($p = 0.04456$), *P*- ($p = 0.00572$), and *B-corpora* ($p = 0$), such that it appears reasonable to conclude that (*un moult tres*) *bel exemple* was a phrase that Jehan particularly favoured, and which reinforces the claim that the texts containing it are the work of a single author.²⁰

often but not always in verse”), which nevertheless has the same didactic intentions as an *exemplum*.

19 There are, however, two instances of *tres bel* appearing before *exemplaire*.

20 Namely: *Chanoines, Romme, Enfant rosti, Narbonne, Eaue et vergier*, and *Buef*.

The adjective *bon* also occurs six times in the *J-corpus* in the position immediately before *exemple* (16.22%). Comparing this again to our reference corpora, we find comparable rates with no statistically significant difference for the *A-corpus* (8.33%, one instance of twelve occurrences of *exemple*, $p = 0.54603$) and the *P-corpus* (17.95%, fourteen of seventy-eight, $p = 0.83887$) but a significantly lower rate of 4.56% for the *B-corpus* (thirty-six of 789, $p = 0.00456$). This is notable in that it suggests that Jehan's use of this phrase was not particularly unusual amongst other poems written in alexandrine monorhyme quatrains, or indeed the diverse texts which were chosen for inclusion in fr. 24432, but that the use of the phrase in these three corpora is unusually high compared to the rate found in a broader selection of texts, such as the *B-corpus*, which contains texts spanning a greater range of periods and dialects.

As for the verbs of speaking and hearing which we found to appear frequently either side of *miracle*, in the *J-corpus*, we observe sixteen instances of the use of one or more of *oïr*, *raconter*, *escouter*, *dire*, *recorder*, and *(r)amenter* within the immediate context of *exemple*, resulting in a use rate of 43.24%. This time, not a single such example appears in the *A-corpus* ($p = 0$), and much lower rates are observed for both the *P-corpus* (17.95%, fourteen of seventy-eight, $p = 0.00389$), and the *B-corpus* (6.46%, fifty-one of 789, $p = 0$). This once again reinforces the coherence of the *J-corpus*, and Jehan's apparent interest in presenting the oral nature of his storytelling. It also suggests that his conception of *exemple* was as a spoken genre, whereas this idea was not necessarily shared by the authors of the texts in the *A-corpus*.²¹

The didactic associations of *exemple* are also made clear by its frequent collocation with verbs which also have such connotations, including *montrer* (seven occurrences, 18.92%), *prendre* (six, 16.22%), *amender* (three, 8.12%), and *donner* (two, 5.41%). This didactic interpretation of the term does appear to be more widely shared than the association with orality, both in other narrative poems in alexandrine monorhyme quatrains in the *A-corpus*, and more widely. Half of the twelve uses of *exemple* in the *A-corpus* use such terms, with two examples each of *(de)montrer*, *prendre*, and *donner* (16.67%, $p = 0.90122$, 0.97818, and 0.20875 respectively). In the *P-corpus*, meanwhile, we find nine instances of *montrer* alongside *exemple* (11.54%, $p = 0.28559$), eleven of *prendre* (14.10%, $p = 0.76007$), none of *amender* ($p = 0.01990$), and four of *donner* (5.13%, $p = 0.95884$). That only one such use (*amender*) shows a statistically significant difference from that in the *J-corpus* therefore suggests that these associations are not unique to Jehan's

²¹ For more on this, see the discussion of performance on pp. 61–62.

texts, which helps us to better understand the ways in which *exemple* and *exemplaire* were understood within his immediate literary context, as terms inextricably linked with didacticism, thus making Jehan's association of the terms with orality all the more notable.

A similar story appears in the *B-corpus*, where *montrer* appears alongside *exemple* at a rate of only 4.56% (thirty-six of 789), *prendre* at 12.17% (ninety-six), *amender* at only 0.25% (two), and *donner* at 5.70% (forty-five). Again, the rates for *prendre* and *donner* are not statistically distinct from those in the *J-corpus* ($p = 0.47529$ and $p = 0.93402$ respectively), suggesting a general acknowledgement of the didactic associations of *exemple* and *exemplaire* amongst authors writing in medieval French across locales and periods. It is, however, notable that there are clear, statistically significant differences in the rates for *montrer* ($p = 0.00103$) and *amender* ($p = 0.00027$), suggesting at least some distinction in this area between the texts of the *J*-, *A*-, and *P-corpora* and those written by others in different *milieux*.

All in all, we may therefore say with some certainty that our statistical consideration of *exemple* has given several clear indications of the ways in which Jehan's texts differ from more diverse reference corpora, supporting our suggestion that these texts may be asserted to be the work of the same author.

dit

Thus far, in our examination of the generic descriptors used to describe Jehan's texts, we have omitted the one which appears most frequently in modern scholarship to describe them: *dit*. From its earliest appearances as a generic descriptor at the end of the twelfth century, the term remains remarkably difficult to define until it is reinvented and stabilized shortly before 1340, a few decades after Jehan's writing, at the hands of Guillaume de Machaut and others, when it comes to refer to "narrative verse texts in which the author's first-person literary persona recounts adventures in love" (Swift 2021, 264).²²

The most comprehensive attempt at a description of the pre-1340 *dit* is that by Monique Léonard (1996), in which she critically examines the use of the term, concluding that it is not a defined generic category like the

²² In addition to Swift (2021), on the post-1330s *dit* see also Cerquiglini-Toulet (2001). For a broader examination of the *dit* from the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries, see the volume edited by Delage-Béland and Salamon (2022), and in particular the chapter by Gabriel Cholette.

chanson de geste, fabliau, or lai, but instead is a broad term that can be used to refer to any “pièce rimée, non chantée, plutôt brève, souvent détentrice d’un enseignement ou d’un message à transmettre au lecteur” (1996, 350).²³

The term can be used of texts even if they already meet the requirements for inclusion in other categories like *miracles* and *exemples*, as well as of texts that do not sit comfortably within any other generic category, in which cases *dit* functions as what Helen Swift (2021, 265) describes as a “for want of anything better” category. Through her comprehensive numerical examination of texts which are considered *dits*, Léonard also reveals that poems can be considered *dits* regardless of whether they are strophic or non-strophic, and regardless of their metre or rhyme scheme. Indeed, she even identifies five texts, described plausibly as *dits*, which are nonetheless written in prose.

There is therefore nothing particular to the term *dit* which makes it an especially good generic descriptor for the texts of the *J-corpus*, since as we have seen their content is generally suitable for consideration as *miracles*, while Jehan appears particularly fond of the term *exemple*. And yet, it is *dit* which has come to be used consistently when referring to Jehan’s texts. Both Morawski and Munk Olsen use the term to describe Jehan’s texts throughout their analyses, for instance, with Munk Olsen even going so far as to include the term in the title of his edition, and more recent scholarship is unanimous in its uncritical acceptance of the term to refer to the texts of Jehan’s *œuvre*.²⁴ It is therefore surprising to find that the generic self-descriptor *dit* is actually used relatively sparsely in the *J-corpus*, appearing on only sixteen occasions (Table 14), which makes it slightly less frequent than *exemple*.

We should note that in the case of *dit*, the extraction of reliable data has been difficult, since RNNTagger in most cases erroneously marks the noun *dit* as a form of the verb *dire*, meaning that for the *J-* and *A-corpora* it has been necessary to manually determine which uses of the word form *dit* can be considered generic descriptors, and which cannot.²⁵

23 “rhymed piece which is not sung, rather brief, and often conveys a lesson or message to the reader.”

24 See, for example, Cholette (2022).

25 For reference, only five of the sixteen manually identified uses of *dit* as a noun in Jehan’s texts have been correctly identified by RNNTagger, so we may hypothesize, assuming the rates of failure are the same, that there are some seventy such examples to be found across the *P-corpus*, and perhaps some 1,632 examples in the *B-corpus*. For the *A-corpus*, RNNTagger is slightly more successful, at seven out of fourteen uses of *dit* as a generic descriptor tagged correctly.

Table 14. Uses of *dit* as a generic descriptor within the *J-corpus*.

Text	Line	LH	KW	RH
<i>Respon</i>	4	Weil recorder un	dit	dont la matiere est belle
<i>Pommes</i>	333	Par essemble vous ai en ce	dit	raconté
<i>Romme</i>	2	Veil dire un biau	dit	qui est sanz vilenie
<i>Chevalier et escuier</i>	3	Que quant je dis un	dit	a tous generaument
<i>Narbonne</i>	4	Or vous dirai bon	dit	qui ne me fera taire
<i>Cordouanier</i>	8	A tiex gens n'ai je cure de biaus	diz	recorder
<i>Enfant sauva mere</i>	27	Entendés un biau	dit	que je vous veil noncier
<i>Anelés</i>	333	Ainssi com vous orrés se tout mon	dit	recort
<i>Buef</i>	3	Veul recorder un	dit	a touz communement
<i>Buef</i>	33	Et pour ce que mon	dit ²⁶	soit plus ferme et estable
<i>Buef</i>	36	Qu'a vos ames puist estre ce biau	dit	proufitable
<i>Buef</i>	381	Or commence biau	dit	et plain de grant sustance
<i>Buef</i>	789	Vous qui avez oÿ ce biau	dit	recorder
<i>Abesse</i>	1	Ceus qui voudront oïr un biau	dit	recorder
<i>Abesse</i>	6	Un	dit	qu'ai en propos de cest miracle faire ²⁷
<i>Sauveur</i>	2	Je vous veul recorder ung	dit	de grant pitié

For this reason, given the scale of the *P-* and *B-corpora*, which contain 765 and 16,161 instances of the word forms *dit*, *diz*, and *dits* respectively, comparison with all observed forms in both corpora has in this case not been possible. Instead, alongside the sixteen nominal uses identified for the *J-corpus* in Table 14 and the fourteen uses in the *A-corpus* given in Table 15, I consider

26 This use of “dit” could solely be intended to refer to the narrator’s discourse, but given its position in the prologue of *Buef*, as well as its proximity to a much less ambiguous example three lines later, its inclusion appears reasonable on the basis that there is at least some generic reference being made here.

27 Note here Jehan’s division between *dit* as a generic marker, and *miracle* as a description of an event, as observed also by Cerquiglini-Toulet (2022, 129n1).

only the twenty-two instances which RNNTagger has correctly registered as the noun *dit* in the *P-corpus*, as well as the 510 instances in the *B-corpus*. While we must therefore be cautious about drawing any firm conclusions from these latter two corpora, we nevertheless observe similar patterns to those we noted for *miracle* and *exemple*, namely that there is a distinction between the frequency of Jehan’s use of particular collocated words, and the frequency with which we would expect to see these across a broader corpus.

Table 15. Uses of *dit* as a generic descriptor within the *A-corpus*.

Text	Line	LH	KW	RH
<i>Cristofle</i>	17	Cellui qui fist le	dit	a recordé souvent
<i>Dieudonnée</i>	3	Voel recorder un	dit	de boin entendement
<i>Dieudonnée</i>	54	Que qui ora mon	dit	jusques a le parclose
<i>Dieudonnée</i>	57	La dame dont le	dit	vous voel ci endroit dire
<i>Dieudonnée</i>	492	Or commenche dou	dit	la plus piteuse istoire
<i>Grégoire</i>	7	Vous diray ung beau	dit	maintenant sans targer
<i>Grégoire</i>	9	Le	dit	que je diray est de vraye matiere
<i>Jehan Ewangeliste</i>	78	S’il oient si bons moz et si bons	diz	reprendre
<i>Jehan Ewangeliste</i>	82	Mes	diz	et ma matere de quoi j’iere rimant
<i>Guillaume</i>	1	Pour recorder un	dit	sui ci endroit venus
<i>Guillaume</i>	627	Or commance du	dit	la piteuse matere
<i>Robert</i>	2	Veul commencer un	dit	mais por la grant misere
<i>Robert</i>	479	Tant chevaucha Robert pour abregier mon	dit	
<i>Dieu d’Amours</i>	17	Qui a biaus	diz	trover veut son corage enbatre

Looking at Table 15, we note first that there are two uses of *dit* as a generic descriptor in both *Guillaume* and *Robert*, the two texts which we argue are unambiguously the works of Jehan. Turning to the rest of the *A-corpus*, we observe that the particularly high frequency of *bel* immediately preceding *dit* in the *J-corpus* (seven instances of sixteen, 43.75%) contrasts with a notably but not statistically significant lower rate in the *A-corpus* (two of fourteen, 14.29%, $p = 0.09354$), and statistically significant lower rates within the *P*- (two of twenty-two, 9.10%, $p = 0.01553$) and *B-corpora* (seven of 510, 1.37%,

$p = 0$).²⁸ More strikingly, in twelve of the sixteen lines containing nominal *dit* in the *J-corpus*, we find at least one verb of speaking and hearing (either *recorder*, *raconter*, *dire*, *taire*, *entendre*, *noncier*, or *oïr*), giving an appearance rate of 75%. Again, the lower rate for the *A-corpus* is not statistically significant (six of fourteen, 42.86%, $p = 0.08056$), but is close enough to our significance threshold as to be notable, and a statistically significant distinction is observed for the instances in the *P-corpus* in which *dit* is tagged as a noun (three of twenty-two, 13.64%, $p = 0.00010$), and likewise in the *B-corpus* (seventy-seven of 510, 15.10%, $p = 0$).

Thus, while Jehan does not use *dit* as often as we might anticipate based on the frequency of the term in modern scholarship to describe his texts, instead making greater use of *exemple* and its variants, the same trends appear in the words that appear alongside *dit* as for the other generic descriptors we have examined. In particular, *dit* displays high rates of collocation alongside simple, positive adjectives such as *bel*, as well as with verbs of speaking and hearing, like *oïr*. The fact that these similarities apply across the terms used in the texts, and do so in a way that contrasts with many of the rates observed for our reference corpora, reinforces the cohesion of the *J-corpus* and strengthens our shared-author hypothesis. It also suggests that, for Jehan, the words used to describe his texts were largely interchangeable, particularly *exemple* and *dit*, and that he may have decided which word to use primarily based on the metrical requirements of its immediate context.

Generic Descriptors in Rubrics

One final angle from which the generic descriptors of the *J-corpus* can be examined is the codicological one. While Jehan appears to have been reasonably fluid in his use of generic descriptors, it is interesting that the compiler(s) and rubricators in fr. 24432, in which most of his attributed texts survive, were less flexible in their approach. Of the twenty-two texts from within the *J-corpus* which are found in fr. 24432, all but *Pommes* and *Anelés* contain an initial *incipit* marker, and in all twenty cases, the rubricator describes the text as a *dit*. While the same term also appears in the *explicit*s, it is less frequent, appearing in nine of the twenty-one *explicit* markers (only *Cordouanier* has no *explicit*). Significantly, *Pommes* and *Anelés*, the two texts without the use of the word *dit* in their *incipit*, are given such a descriptor

²⁸ Across her wider corpus of *dits*, Léonard (1996, 209) notes the appearance of *bel* with *dit* in some fifty-seven texts. She notes that texts containing this feature are often longer, but such a correlation does not appear to bear out for the *J-* or *A-corpora*.

by the *explicit*, meaning that at some point in the paratexts of fr. 24432, all twenty-two of the manuscript's texts that we have included in the *J-corpus* are described as *dits*, and indeed this term is the only generic descriptor used in the paratextual material to describe any of the texts.²⁹ The same is true for *Robert* and *Guillaume*, which are both described as *dits* in their *explicits*, and the former in its *incipit*.³⁰ This consistency of the use of *dit* is doubtless what explains the tendency of modern scholarship to describe Jehan's texts as such, revealing the power that paratextual information can exert in influencing modern interpretations of texts transmitted in manuscripts.³¹ More importantly for our purposes here, it also suggests that Jehan's poems held a certain generic unity in the mind of the compiler(s) of the manuscript, or those of the exemplar(s) from which the texts were copied, as well as at least a certain number of early readers, which may well have resulted from an awareness of shared authorship for these texts, the concrete bibliographical evidence for which has since been lost to us.

Even though the poems were clearly seen by the compiler(s), who may have been among the early readers of the texts, as conforming to a certain text type, we ought to be careful not to read too much into this use of descriptors in fr. 24432. The term *dit* is by far the most frequent across the paratexts of the codex, being used in the *incipits* of a further thirty-two texts which are not attributed to Jehan, and appearing in the *explicits* of a further twenty-three. Allowing for overlapping usage, we therefore find that, including Jehan's attributed poems, of the eighty-five texts across fr. 24432 for which either an *incipit* or *explicit* is included, fifty-six (65.88%) are at some point described as *dits* in their accompanying paratexts.

The term *dit* thus appears to have been in far more frequent use by the compiler(s) of fr. 24432 than by Jehan himself, and it is therefore clear that

29 In the paratext surrounding the two texts attributed to Jehan outside of fr. 24432, *Sauveur* (BnF, MS Ars. 2115) and *Abesse* (BnF, MS fr. 12483), no such descriptor is used, suggesting this feature may be particular to fr. 24432.

30 The lack of an *incipit* for *Guillaume* likely stems from it being the first item in fr. 24432.

31 Given the relative paucity of self-description using the term *dit*, we may therefore question the validity of the approach taken by Cholette (2022, 93), who selects his corpus of thirty-four “*dits non allégoriques où le caractère narratif domine*” (“non-allegorical *dits* where the narrative character is dominant”)—including those by Jehan—by excluding those which are described as something other than *dits* anywhere in the body of the text or in their manuscript paratexts. Based on our analysis, many of Jehan's poems should in fact have been excluded from Cholette's corpus.

the decision made by previous scholarship to ubiquitously describe Jehan's texts as *dits* stems not from the use of the term by the author, but from engagement in a chain of reception initiated or followed by the compiler(s) of fr. 24432. That is not to say that such a decision is invalid, and I do not seek to make a normative claim regarding the correct generic term for describing the texts of the *J-corpus*, but digital textual analysis has nevertheless revealed that the question of generic description in Jehan's poems is not as straightforward as may be assumed, and depends as much on reception as it does on the preferences of the author.

To conclude this section, we have seen across our examination of generic descriptors that Jehan has his own distinct method of describing his texts, which differs from the expectations of previous scholarship, from comparable and divergent texts, and from the perspective of the compiler(s) of fr. 24432. This distinctiveness, in and of itself, reinforces the shared-author hypothesis. Further, the fact that the compiler(s) of fr. 24432 and subsequent readers have chosen to see Jehan's poems as *dits*, whatever the author himself may have intended and however broad the definition of this term may be, reveals an awareness of the similarities shared between the texts of the *J-corpus* from Jehan's near-contemporaries onwards, which in itself offers further evidence in support of the claim that these texts share an author.

Building the Case for the Shared-Author Hypothesis

Modern generic labels and manuscript paratextual markers can obscure authorial intent, but the internal self-descriptors found within the *J-corpus* offer compelling evidence for collective attribution. For instance, Jehan's significant preference for the phrase (*un moult tres*) *bel exemple*, alongside his association of generic terms with verbs of orality, strengthens the shared-author hypothesis. Meanwhile, *Richard's* use of the *bel miracle* structure further supports its status as a surviving echo of an earlier work by Jehan, since this feature is notably rarer in our reference corpora. Finally, while the ubiquitous use of *dit* to describe Jehan's texts does not stem from the use of the term in the texts themselves, the fact that the rubricator(s) of fr. 24432 consistently applied this term to the texts of the *J-corpus*, as well as *Guillaume* and *Robert*, suggests that early readers recognized the poems' collective similarities.

Methodological Contribution

The approach presented in this chapter shifts from a focus on prescriptive modern labels to a *genre poetics* akin to that of Gingras (2016), which is rooted in data observed within the texts themselves, and their manuscript contexts. By using digital textual analysis to identify the distribution and collocations of specific generic descriptors, I have shown that authorial self-conceptions of genre can offer strong evidence in favour of collective attribution. Such an approach relies on humanistic engagement with a given text to situate generic self-descriptors within a given historical context. Comparing the self-descriptors in our target corpus to the uses in wider reference corpora like the *B-corpus*, I have also shown how it is possible to discriminate between broad linguistic trends and the idiosyncratic preferences of an individual author.