

Chapter 2

FORM

THE OBVIOUS POINT of departure for our examination of the texts attributed to Jehan de Saint-Quentin is *Chevalier et escuier*, the only poem to contain an act of self-attribution by the author himself. This text is a short narrative poem, telling of a once-rich knight on *errance*, who becomes companions with a poor squire. They encounter the Devil, who offers them great riches if they become his followers. After they both deny God and all the saints, the knight refuses to take the final step and deny Mary, so the companions part ways. The knight goes to pray before an image of Mary, who is seen miraculously comforting him, and so a local lord gives him a title, wealth, and his daughter in marriage. The squire, meanwhile, is abandoned to the hangman's noose by the Devil, and the narrator warns sinners of taking the Devil's path. In the second to last stanza of this epilogue, the narrator says of the Blessed Virgin:

Jehan de Saint-Quentin dit que l'en doit servir:
On peut de son service a grant honor venir.
C'est le tresor de grace por tous ceulz garantir
Qui la veillent de cuer et amer et chierir.

(*Chevalier et escuier*, vv. 221–24)

ABSTRACT In this chapter, we begin our holistic examination of Jehan de Saint-Quentin's *œuvre* by considering the structural and formal characteristics that define the *J-corpus*, taking *Chevalier et escuier*, the only poem containing an act of self-attribution, as our starting point. The analysis of text length reveals that the *J-corpus* is predominantly united by brevity, but also contains a distinct "long-text" sub-group of poems approximately four to five times the median length, to which we can also add *Guillaume*, *Robert*, and *Richard*. To contextualize these findings, I use the *P1-corpus* to assess the *J-corpus* within the specific codicological context of fr. 24432, while the *A-*, *F-*, and *R-corpora* provide broader generic and authorial comparisons, revealing that Jehan's texts display a level of consistency in length that exceeds the work of Rutebeuf, for whom attribution is more secure. Beyond questions of text length, I identify a positive correlation between text length and prologue length, a feature shared with the *A-corpus* but appearing with greater consistency in the work of Jehan.

The use of the third person here means that there is not an immediate one-to-one link between Jehan and the *je* of the narrator. It is not unreasonable, however, to assume that this is indeed an act of self-attribution, given the extent to which the claims of this “Jehan de Saint-Quentin” overlap with the didactic intent of the narrator.¹ We can therefore be reasonably secure in the attribution of this text to Jehan.

The later collective attribution of the rest of the *J-corpus* to Jehan is made possible by the fact that *Chevalier et escuier* is an excellent archetype of the other texts for several reasons, not least given that, at just 228 lines of verse, it is short. It fits comfortably within the range of lengths found in the *J-corpus*, from 152 metrical lines (*Cordouanier* and *Pecherresse*) to 832 (*Florence*).² The text also begins with a four-line prologue, and ends with an eleven-line epilogue, features which Morawski (1939, 330) notes are present across all the poems he attributes to Jehan, and which we likewise find in the texts added by subsequent scholarship.

Morawski (1939, 330) observes that these prologues and epilogues in the corpus share similarities of content. The prologues, he notes, contain exhortations to a putative audience, who are called to listen and learn from the text’s content. In this sense, the prologue to *Chevalier et escuier* once again offers a representative example of those found elsewhere:

Moult est bone acointance d’estoire, bone gent,
 Bien m’en puis percevoir et en maint lieu souvent
 Que quant je dis un dit a tous generaument,
 Car il nous couvient vivre des bons premierement.

(*Chevalier et escuier*, vv. 1–4)

As for the epilogues, as in that of *Chevalier et escuier*, they often contain praise of, and prayers to, various religious figures, particularly Mary, with exhortative structures such as *or prions* and *si prions* especially frequent.³

Nevertheless, as Munk Olsen (1963b, 151) notes, there is nothing unusual or surprising about the use of prologues and epilogues in Jehan’s poems,

¹ Previous work on other authors has established that third-person self-reference is not an uncommon phenomenon. See, for example, Marnette (1998).

² The length of *Florence* supplied here does not exactly correlate with the length of the text as it appears in fr. 24432, given the absence of folio 223 from the codex, which I assume to be a later loss. Comparison with Grenoble, BM, MS 319, the other manuscript in which *Florence* appears confirms that the lacuna consists of seventy-two lines of verse, corresponding to a single folio containing four thirty-six-line columns, with each alexandrine line split into two hexasyllable hemistichs.

³ For more on this feature, see the discussion of terms of address in Chapter 4.

since such sections are commonly found in other texts with the same verse form. Nor, in fact, do the details of their content set the *J-corpus* apart. For Munk Olsen, it is the fact that they are consistently present, and are largely consistent in what they discuss, which provides a unity to the *J-corpus* that supports, if not doing enough to confirm, a collective attribution.

Text Length

A more data-driven approach can shed further light on the matter. Building on the findings of this previous scholarship, even simple statistical analysis of the length of the texts in the *J-corpus* can yield interesting results. Looking at the overall lengths of the texts in the corpus, as represented in

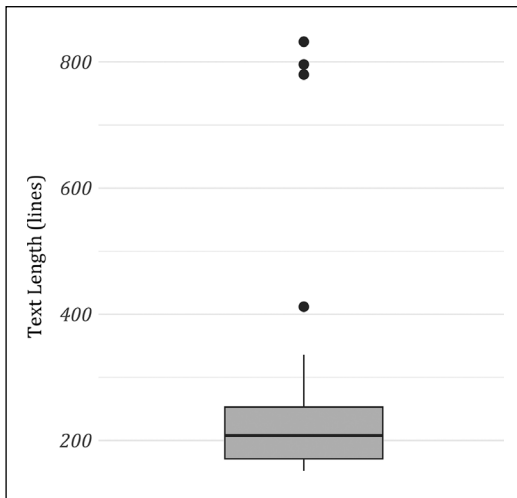


Figure 2. Box-and-whisker plot of the lengths of the *J-corpus*.

the box-and-whisker plot in Figure 2, we find that the poems have a median length of 208 lines, and eighteen of the twenty-four texts (75%) come in at under three hundred lines in length. The corpus is therefore mostly united in its brevity, but the plot also reveals the significant gap in length between three outlying, longer texts (*Florence*, *Anelés*, and *Buef*), and the next longest text (*Chanoines*), which is itself still an outlier despite being nearly half the length of the longest at only 412 lines.⁴

These three longer texts all appear relatively close together in fr. 24432, giving some indication that they were considered, by the compiler of this codex at least, as being a group *à part*, somehow distinct from the other poems in alexandrine monorhyme quatrains found elsewhere in the manuscript.⁵

⁴ Our definition of an outlier here, as is common practice, is a value which is less than 1.5 times the interquartile range below the first quartile (25% of the data), or greater than 1.5 times the interquartile range above the third quartile (75% of the data).

⁵ *Florence* appears on fols. 215rb–226va, *Anelés* on fols. 231ra–241rb, and *Buef* on fols. 247ra–257va.

This statistical evidence, combined with the codicological evidence, suggests that we may see the *J-corpus* as dividing into two groups, those around the two hundred-line mark which are written with brevity and concision in mind, perhaps for brief recitation, and those around eight hundred lines in length, which provide space for a more expansive narrative. Certainly, this alone does not suggest that the longer poems were not composed by Jehan,

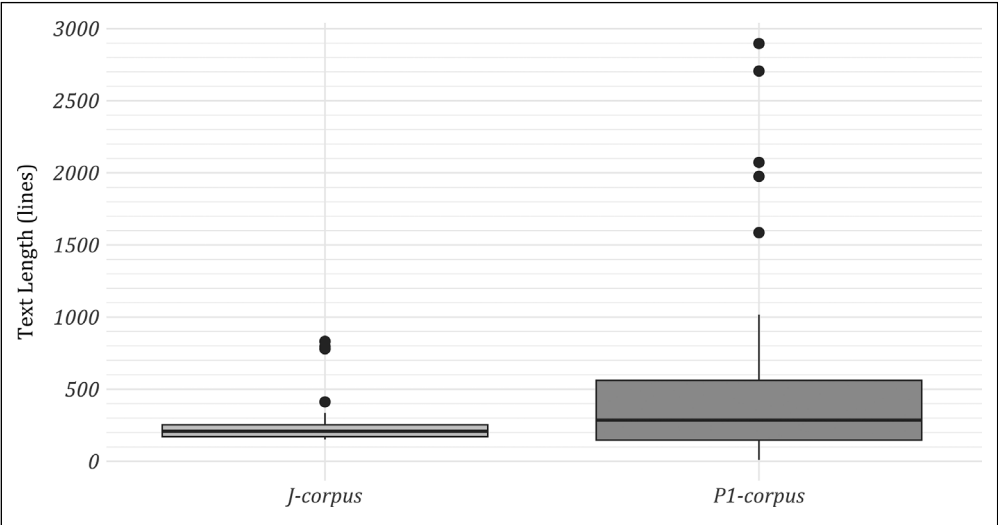


Figure 3. Box-and-whisker plot of the lengths of the texts of the *J-corpus*, compared to those of the *P1-corpus*.

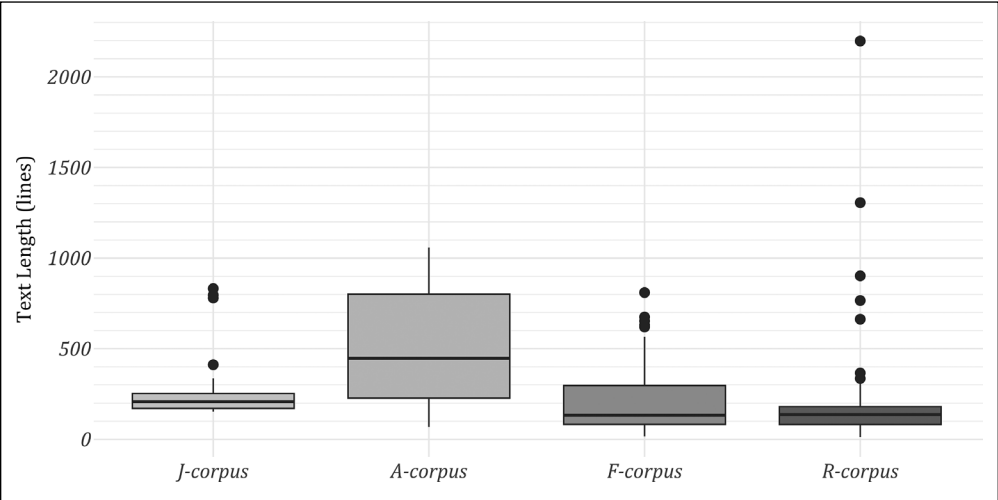


Figure 4. Box-and-whisker plot of the lengths of the texts of the *J-corpus*, compared to those of the *A*-, *F*-, and *R-corpora*.

but it does validate Moraswki's decision to view *Florence* and *Anelés* as a pair distinct from the rest of the corpus, to which we may also add *Buef*.

Fruitful examination of text length comes also from comparison of the *J-corpus* to those non-fragmentary poems found elsewhere in fr. 24432, contained in the *P1-corpus*, which can help us identify how usual the length of Jehan's texts is for the whole codex. As presented in Figure 3, we observe that the contents of the *J-corpus*, with a median length of 208, are not unusually short compared to those poems found elsewhere, where the median is 293, but they are certainly on the shorter end of the scale.⁶ Further, the longest texts of the *P1-corpus*, of which the most extreme example is the *Dit du tournoement d'Antecrist et d'euls de son barnage* at a length of 2,897 lines,⁷ reveal that *Florence*, *Anelés*, and *Buef*, while long by comparison to the other texts of the *J-corpus*, are not especially long within the codex as a whole.

However, while the *P1-corpus* is useful for contextualizing the *J-corpus* in the manuscript in which most of its texts appear, it does not allow like-for-like comparison. To do this, we must consider the texts of our more cohesive reference corpora, namely the *A-corpus* of narrative poems written in alexandrine monorhyme quatrains, the *F-corpus* of *fabliaux*, and the *R-corpus* of Rutebeuf's works.

Figure 4 displays box-and-whisker plots for the *J-corpus* alongside these other corpora, which reinforce our suggestion that Jehan's *œuvre* may in fact be notably limited in the variation of text length. Firstly, while the median text lengths for the corpora are roughly comparable between the *J*-, *F*-, and *R-corpora* (*J*: 208; *F*: 176.5; *R*: 137), the *J-corpus* has the narrowest range between the first and third quartiles (*J*: 82; *F*: 244.75; *R*: 98), suggesting a level of consistency which exceeds even that of the *R-corpus* for which the attribution of authorship is more assured.

The *A-corpus*, by contrast with these other corpora, has both a much higher median text length than the *J-corpus* (448) and a much wider inter-quartile range (573), when we exclude the three fragmentary texts. Notably, of the twenty-three non-fragmentary texts of our *A-corpus*, only seven are within the range of the *J-corpus* and would not be classed as outliers within it, namely: *Roy amie* (200), *Quatre sereurs* (204), *Leu* (252), *Sebastien* (256), *Basile* (352), *Jehan Paulus* (370), and *Confesseur* (374). Variation in text

⁶ Note that the discussion here is of lines of verse for a given text, not orthographic lines of text as they appear in the manuscript. Alexandrine verse in fr. 24432 is usually broken into two hemistichs by the scribes, whereas hexasyllable, octosyllable, and decasyllable are usually presented on a single line.

⁷ For an edition, see Tarbé (1851).

length up to about one thousand lines therefore appears particularly common for narrative poems in alexandrine monorhyme quatrains, making the appearance of a narrower, more coherent group within the *J-corpus* even more significant.

Taking a closer look at the texts of the *A-corpus* which I argue to be the work of Jehan, namely *Robert*, *Guillaume*, *Richard*, and *Jehan Paulus*, we find that *Robert*, at some 1,016 lines, becomes the longest of Jehan's poems, followed closely by *Guillaume* (948 lines) and *Richard* (818 lines). All three texts do therefore fit reasonably comfortably alongside *Florence* (832), *Anelés* (780), and *Buef* (796) within the longer grouping of texts from the *J-corpus*, especially given that *Robert* immediately precedes *Florence* in fr. 24432. *Jehan Paulus*, meanwhile, at 370 lines in length, sits just above the third quartile of the *J-corpus*, and would not be considered an outlier in the data.

Based on these data, then, we are already able to identify two core sub-groups within Jehan's works, one containing poems of around 200 lines in length, and another, which we may term the "long-text" sub-group, containing poems roughly four to five times longer. Based on the outliers that appear in the *R-corpus* of Rutebeuf's poems, of which the most extreme is *La Vie sainte Elysabel*, at 2,198 lines, we note that this division does not suggest that one group ought to be excluded from Jehan's *œuvre*. An author is not a one-trick pony, and may be capable of modifying the form of his poems where he deems it necessary. It is therefore certainly possible for a corpus of texts by the same author to contain texts of lengths which differ significantly from the remainder of the corpus, just as it is possible for the lengths of texts in a corpus containing a single genre but the work of several authors to be more consistent, as in the *F-corpus*.

Prologues and Epilogues

Taking a similar approach to the prologues and epilogues of the *J-corpus*, we observe that *Chevalier et escuier* is unique within the corpus in that its epilogue is longer than its prologue, a feature not seen in the other texts.⁸ We could argue that this distinguishes *Chevalier et escuier*, the text in which Jehan signs his name, from those in which he does not. On the contrary, however, it appears that it is precisely because of this act of self-attribution that the epilogue reaches this length, rather than suggesting that the

⁸ *Juitel* has a prologue and epilogue of eight lines each. On the use of narrative approaches to identify the point at which shifts occur between the prologues, narrative content, and epilogues of these texts, see Cholette (2022).

whole process of attribution is mis-aligned. The intensity of the epilogue's devotional content offers a suggestion for why Jehan extended this section, choosing to name himself to highlight his own piety, in a way that he did not do elsewhere.

Examining the non-fragmentary texts of the *A-corpus*, we find a greater degree of variation, with fifteen texts displaying a longer prologue than epilogue, as in most of the *J-corpus*,⁹ three where the opposite is true (*Leu*, *Sebastien*, *Quatre sereurs*), and four which either do not have a prologue (*Servais*, *Vieillards*, *Roy amie*) or an epilogue (*Thomas*). It is therefore clear that this feature, again, increases our sense of the cohesion of the *J-corpus*, and we can build on this by taking a more statistical approach the lengths of the prologues and epilogues.

Prologues are usually short in the *J-corpus*, with the two longest prologues (eighty-four and forty lines) appearing in two of the longest texts, *Anelés* and *Buef* (780 and 796 lines), both of which use the prologues to offer a summary of the plot to come. Despite some notable anomalies, such as the prologue of thirty-two lines found in *Beguine*, a text of only 204 lines in length, across the *J-corpus* there is a statistically significant link between total text length and prologue length ($p = 0.00207$). The correlation coefficient between text length and prologue length is also strongly positive (0.59706), such that we may say that on average longer texts in the corpus are likely to contain longer prologues, a fact which can perhaps be explained through the presence of greater pre-narration of their more complex plots. The texts from within the *A-corpus* which we are including Jehan's *œuvre* also fit this observation, with the three longer texts *Robert*, *Guillaume*, and *Richard* displaying prologue lengths of nineteen, thirty-six, and sixteen respectively, all within the range of the "long-text" grouping within the *J-corpus*, while *Jehan Paulus* has an eight-line prologue and thus sits comfortably alongside the remainder of the *J-corpus*.

The positive correlation between text length and prologue length is not a feature unique to the *J-corpus*, however. Across all the texts of the *A-corpus*, we observe a correlation coefficient between text length and prologue length of 0.48537 ($p = 0.01889$), suggesting that there is an increased desire across most longer poems in written alexandrine quatrains to engross an audience in the story before beginning the narrative, in a way that is not necessary in shorter poems. This hypothesis would also go some way to explain why

⁹ Barbe, Basile, Cristofle, Dieudonnée, Grégoire, Jehan Ewangeliste, Jehan Paulus, Confesseur, Vision, Thibaut, Guillaume, Robert, Richard, Troyes, and Dés.

the longer prologues in the *J*- and *A*-corpora often have a greater focus on narrative content than the shorter ones, rather than dwelling on any didactic message, since this enables the author to better prepare an audience for what is to come.

However, beyond the observation that a longer text is generally accompanied by a longer prologue, we should note a point of difference between the two corpora, namely that the *A*-corpus as a whole displays a greater standard deviation (σ) in the lengths of the prologues, both in real terms and as a percentage of the mean (*J*: $\sigma = 16.2$, 93.3% of the mean; *A*: $\sigma = 35$, 160.2%). In other words, in both corpora an increase in the length of a text results on average in a longer prologue, both in terms of the number of lines, and its relative length as a proportion of the whole text, but Jehan appears to do this in a more consistent way than the various authors of the *A*-corpus. Again, this reveals greater cohesion between the texts of the *J*-corpus than between those of the *A*-corpus, broadly reinforcing our shared-author hypothesis.

While there are indicators of distinctiveness in the use of prologues between the *J*- and *A*-corpora, the trends followed by the epilogues in the *J*-corpus appear as much determined by formal, generic considerations as they are by authorial ones. Evidence for this comes from the fact that for both corpora there is no statistically significant link between total text length and epilogue length (*J*: $p = 0.2608$; *A*: $p = 0.0863$), or prologue length and epilogue length (*J*: $p = 0.568$; *A*: $p = 0.8341$). This means that we cannot predict the length of the texts' epilogues based on any other length feature. This absence of a statistical link therefore allows for observations external to questions of authorship or form, in that it suggests that the content of the epilogue in texts written in monorhyme alexandrine quatrains may, as a norm, have been determined by the immediate requirements of the end of the narrative, be they metrical or thematic, whereas the prologue was determined by a combination of authorial preference and the requirements of the text as a whole.

The fact that the standard deviation amongst the epilogues is lower in relative terms than that of the prologues (*J*: $\sigma = 3.50$, 54.2% of the mean; *A*: $\sigma = 7.67$, 102.6%) is also a possible indication that authors of both corpora saw little reason to vary their epilogues at all. We therefore see something of a cognitive distinction for the authors of these texts between their prologues and epilogues, and thus through our use of statistical methods, we are able to support Morawski's (1939, 330) claim that the epilogues of Jehan's texts conform to reasonably consistent structures, regardless of features of the

text to which it is appended, while adding the caveat that this is not a unique feature for the *J-corpus*.¹⁰

Our examination of the formal features of prologues and epilogues has therefore revealed an apparently greater authorial influence in prologue length than epilogue length, which intersects with broader trends that apply across both the *J-* and *A-corpora*. We observe that, with limited, explicable exceptions, there is a coherence to the texts of the *J-corpus* that is not found to the same extent in the *A-corpus*. We may therefore tentatively take these data as initial evidence of the shared-author hypothesis for the *J-corpus*, while gaining a clearer understanding of the generic framework in which Jehan operated, a question which we will return to in the next section.

As we have already observed, as we move through this study, there will be no single smoking gun that definitively proves or disproves the attribution of any text to Jehan. Rather, it is the holistic combination of various such unifying features that we have now begun to build, which will allow us to reach more assured conclusions regarding Jehan's authorship of the *J-corpus* and the other texts which we will assign to him.

10 The epilogues of *Robert*, *Guillaume*, *Richard* and *Jehan Paulus* have epilogues of one, one, three, and four lines respectively, aligning with our observation that epilogue length in both the *J-* and *A-corpora* shares little to no statistical relation to the length of the rest of the text, but that epilogues in Jehan's works are almost always shorter than prologues. In the case of *Jehan Paulus*, the text's use of an eight-line prologue and four-line epilogue lines up precisely with those of *Pommes* and *Povre Chevalier* within the *J-corpus* (although the latter may well once have had a twelve-line prologue, given that lines 1–2 do not rhyme with lines 3–4).

Building the Case for the Shared-Author Hypothesis

The formal and structural analysis carried out in this chapter provides the first tranche of evidence to support the claim that Jehan's previously attributed *œuvre* can be reinforced and expanded. It reveals that the *J-corpus* is split into two broadly coherent sub-groups by length: a collection of shorter texts running to around two hundred lines, and a "long-text" sub-group containing *Florence*, *Anelés*, and *Buef. Guillaume*, *Robert*, and *Richard* align with the latter group, while *Jehan Paulus* is associated with the former, reinforcing the association of all four texts with Jehan. Further, all our additional texts align with the observation that Jehan's longer poems generally have longer prologues, while the same is not true for epilogues. This formal consistency, alongside the codicological evidence provided by *Robert's* proximity to *Florence* in fr. 24432, aligns these four texts with the *J-corpus*, and builds the case for the shared-author hypothesis.

Methodological Contribution

In this chapter, I have demonstrated the utility of macro-level formal and structural analysis when applied to a corpus with significant internal variation. By employing data-driven visualizations, we have moved beyond a reliance on simple averages to identify how outliers can reveal distinct textual groupings within the work of an individual author. Further, the application of statistical correlation tests provides a reproducible, falsifiable framework for examining the internal formal and structural consistency of a poet's output. Our approach has revealed that structural features like prologue length, while often comparable to works of a similar form by other authors, cannot solely be explained by generic requirements, and are instead often the result of authorial choices that can be quantified and compared.