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A Relaxed Knight and an Impatient Heroine: Ironizing the Love Quest in the Second Part of the Middle Dutch *Ferguut*¹



MARJOLEIN HOGENBIRK

An original adaptation

FERGUUT OR *DIE Riddere metten witten scilde* (*The Knight with the White Shield*) is one of the oldest (c. 1240) Arthurian romances in Middle Dutch.² The romance was written in Flanders, but the only extant copy is preserved in a

¹ This article is based on my section on the Middle Dutch *Ferguut* in '5. Translations and Adaptations of French Verse Romances', in *The Arthur of the Low Countries: The Arthurian Legend in Dutch and Flemish Literature*, ed. Bart Besamusca and Frank Brandsma (Cardiff: University of Wales Press 2021), pp. 78–112. It was a great pleasure to collaborate with David Johnson on this chapter about the Middle Dutch translations and adaptations of French verse romances, including the section on *Ferguut*. I thank David for his skillful translations and his comments on my sections of this chapter. I also thank Roel Zemel for his comments on an earlier version of this article.

² See: Bram Caers and Mike Kestemont, 'Over de datering van de Middelnederlandse ridderepiek', *Verlagen en mededelingen van de Koninklijke Academie voor Nederlandse taal- en letterkunde* 121 (2011): 1–59 at pp. 20–18. Mike Kestemont, 'In het land van Alena: Over de lokalisering van de *Ferguut*', in 'Ende hi verkende dien name wale': *Opstellen voor Willem Kuiper*, ed. Marjolein Hogenbirk and Roel Zemel (Amsterdam: Stichting Neerlandistiek VU / Münster: Nodus Publikationen, 2014), pp. 93–98. Monographs on the *Ferguut* include Willem Kuiper, *Die Riddere metten Witten Scilde: Oorsprong, overlevering en auteurschap van de Middelnederlandse 'Ferguut', gevolgd door een diplomatische editie en een diplomatisch glossarium* (Amsterdam: Schiphouwer and Brinkman, 1989), and R. M. T. Zemel, *Op zoek naar Galiene: Over de Oudfranse 'Fergus' en de Middelnederlandse 'Ferguut'* (Amsterdam: Schiphouwer en Brinkman, 1991). See also: A. A. M. Besamusca, 'The Middle Dutch Arthurian Material', in *The Arthur of the Germans: The Arthurian Legend in Medieval German and Dutch Literature*, ed. W. H. Jackson and S. A. Ranawake (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000), pp. 187–228 at pp. 211–14 and Willem Kuiper and Geert H. M. Claassens, 'Fergus', *Ferguut*', in *Germania Litteraria Mediaevalis Francigena. Band V. Höfischer Roman in Vers und Prosa*, ed. René Pérennec and Elisabeth Schmid (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2010), pp. 311–29 at pp. 318–22.

manuscript, made in the duchy of Brabant around the middle of the fourteenth century, Leiden, Universiteitsbibliotheek, Ltk 191. *Ferguut* is an adaptation of *Fergus*, an Old French Arthurian romance (c. 1200) by Guillaume le Clerc. This romance tells the story of an extraordinary hero who begins his career as the son of a farmer. Knighted at Arthur's court and on his way to his first adventure, he meets Galiene, who confesses her love for him. Fergus spurns her advances and the offended Galiene flees. When Fergus successfully returns from his adventure, he finds himself under the spell of love and leaves on a long quest for Galiene, in which he has to learn to combine *amour* 'love' and *chevalerie* 'chivalry'. As the 'Chevalier au bel Escu' [the Knight with the Splendid Shield], Fergus fights for Galiene, who, after her father's death, has become mistress of Lothian. Eventually Fergus wins Galiene's hand in marriage and becomes lord of all her lands.

Research has shown that the romance of *Fergus* was also meant as a literary critique of Chrétien de Troyes's late twelfth century story of Perceval in *Le Conte du Graal* (*The Story of the Grail*). Guillaume returns to the romance model centering on the theme of the balance between worldly love and martial prowess, which Chrétien chose for his earlier romances *Erec et Enide* and *Yvain*. At the same time, Guillaume rejects Perceval's choice for a religiously inspired form of chivalry, symbolized by the Grail, by creating a new hero, Fergus, who is very similar to Perceval, and whose goal lies in the union of chivalry and love in the service of Galiene.³ Unlike Guillaume, the Flemish author does not aim at playing this specific intertextual game with the *Conte du Graal*; instead, the Middle Dutch romance offers a simpler, but skillfully told, fast-paced version of the story.⁴ The romance reads like an account of the spectacular career of the son of a farmer, an unusual protagonist, who eventually becomes the best knight of Arthur's court and the world.

The Middle Dutch text starts as a slightly abridged translation of the Old French *Fergus*, after which it gradually turns into a free adaptation in the second half of the romance. Several explanations have been offered for this. Considering linguistic characteristics of both parts, Willem Kuiper argued that *Ferguut* must have been written by two authors, the second working years later than the first.⁵ Others have opted for one author who, for whatever reason, had to continue his work from memory.⁶ Recent stylistic research,

³ See: Roel Zemel, *The Quest for Galiene: A Study of Guillaume le Clerc's Arthurian Romance 'Fergus'* (Amsterdam: Stichting Neerlandistiek VU / Münster: Nodus Publikationen, 2006), Chapters 2 and 3.

⁴ Zemel, *Op zoek naar Galiene*, pp. 181–353, presents a detailed comparison of part I of the *Ferguut* and the Old French source.

⁵ Kuiper, *Die Riddere metten Witten Scilde*, pp. 217–301.

⁶ See: David F. Johnson and Geert H. M. Claassens, eds., *Dutch Romances. II. Ferguut* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer 2000), pp. 3–6; Kuiper and Claassens, 'Fergus', *Ferguut*, pp. 318–22.

however, seems to suggest that we are dealing with one single author.⁷ This author does not simply retell the story from the French source, but, as he proceeds, breaks free from it, and makes his own choices for style and content.⁸ From the moment that the protagonist Ferguut goes in search of the White Shield, the romance contains a series of connected changes, especially in the development of the love story of Ferguut and Galiene, which points to a deliberate and creative, and above all, humorous adaptation of the Old French source.

This humorous perspective is visible from the very beginning of the story. The romance opens with a prelude in which Arthur and his knights set out to hunt a white stag and arrive in the land of the rich farmer Somilet who is married to a noblewoman. The narrator introduces the unusual hero, *des dorpers sone* 'the son of a villein' (313), who stops plowing when he sees the hunting party pass by and decides to go to Arthur's court to become his advisor. There he enters the great hall on horseback and is mocked by the seneschal Keye. Nevertheless, Ferguut is dubbed a knight. His first task is to defeat the Black Knight, Arthur's enemy. On his way to the battle, he finds lodging at a castle named Ydel, where he meets Galiene, whose uncle owns this castle. She visits him at night at his bedside declaring her love for him. Ferguut does not immediately respond to her advances, because he knows nothing about love and because he first has to complete the task given to him by Arthur. However, he promises to return. When he has defeated the Black Knight and has sent him to Arthur's court, Ferguut returns to Ydel. Galiene, however, has fled, and suddenly the hero finds himself completely under the spell of love for Galiene. Feeling guilty about having spurned her advances, he embarks on a long quest to find her. After several encounters with adversaries which do not bring him any closer to his goal, Ferguut loses his mind and roams the forest for two years until he is healed by a magic fountain. A dwarf tells him that he must acquire the White Shield in order to find his beloved. At the castle where the shield is kept and defended by a dragon, he fights the giantess Pantasale and acquires the shield. Then, Ferguut passes the castle of a giant, Pantasale's husband, defeats him and frees two damsels who were captured and whose lovers had been slain by the giant. Ferguut also tames the giant's horse, Pennevere, who becomes his new mount.

From the damsels he learns that Galiene's castle, Rikenstene, is besieged by king Galarant, who intends to conquer her and her lands by force. Acting

⁷ M. Kestemont, *Het gewicht van de auteur: Stylometrische auteursherkenning in Middelnederlandse literatuur* (Gent: Koninklijke Academie voor Nederlandse Taal- en Letterkunde, 2013), p. 236; Th. Meder et al., 'Stijlbreuk in de *Ferguut*: Stylometrische heroverwegingen bij een auteurskwestie', *Queeste* 25 (2018): 87–100.

⁸ See also: Roel Zemel, 'Koning Artur in actie: Over het begin van *Fergus* en het eind van *Ferguut*', *Voortgang, jaarboek voor Neerlandistiek* 29 (2011): 29–52 at p. 43.

as 'The Knight with the White Shield', Ferguut twice takes the lead in a great battle against Galiene's enemy, but he returns to the giant's castle afterwards. When Galarant attacks again in the hero's absence, Galiene proposes a decisive combat in order to save her lands: her champion will fight against two of the opponent's knights. Galiene sends her lady-in-waiting Lunette to Arthur's court to look for a champion to take up the fight. Lunette returns unsuccessful but passes Ferguut's castle on the way back where she tells him about the situation. Ferguut arrives the next day just in time to fight the two knights: Galarant and his nephew Macedone. Ferguut kills the latter and defeats Galarant, after which he once again departs immediately to his castle without identifying himself.

The attention now shifts to Galiene, who travels to Arthur's court to find a husband to administer her lands. In a comical scene (5101–44), which does not appear in the Old French source, Ferguut learns about Galiene's initiative from a dwarf in knightly armour, who happens to be passing by Ferguut's castle. He tells Ferguut that Arthur has declared a tournament with Galiene's hand in marriage as a prize. The dwarf, who is also infatuated with the beautiful Galiene, is on his way to this tournament, hoping to catch a glimpse of her. Ferguut realizes that now he must hurry to Arthur's court, because he could lose Galiene. There, Ferguut, alias 'The Knight with the White Shield', defeats Keye on the first day, Pertsevael on the second, and one knight of the Round Table after the other on the following days. On day twelve, Gawein steps forward but Ferguut refuses to fight him. When he removes his helmet, Gawein joyfully recognizes him. Ferguut wins the tournament and receives Galiene, who feels deeply ashamed, from Arthur's hand, and Ferguut and Galiene marry immediately at Arthur's court.

As several critics have shown, one of the most attractive aspects of the Middle Dutch romance lies in superior narrative style. The author has a talent for burlesque descriptions, frequently using litotes and diminutives. The addition of large quantities of direct speech, original expletives, and expressions makes the romance very lively and humorous.⁹

In the second part of the romance, the author's style becomes even looser than in the first part, and deviates in a number of remarkable ways from the French source. This part of the romance has, like the Old French romance, a tripartite structure: first, Ferguut has to complete the quest for the White Shield (3161–3814); this part is followed by the story of Ferguut's actions

⁹ On the humorous style of the *Ferguut*, see: E. Rombauts, N. de Paepe and M. J. M. de Haan, eds., *Ferguut* (Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff 1982²), pp. 35–39; Veerle Uyttersprot, "'Entie hoofsche Walewein, sijn gheselle was daer ne ghein": Ironie en het Waleweinbeeld in de *Roman van Walewein* en in de Europese middeleeuwse Arturliteratuur', PhD dissertation (Katholieke Universiteit Brussel, Brussels, 2004), pp. 45–48; Frits van Oostrom, *Stemmen op schrift: Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse literatuur vanaf het begin tot 1300* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2006), pp. 272–74.

during the siege of Rikenstene (3865–4890), and the last part concludes with the tournament and the hero's marriage to Galiene (4979–5589). The free adaptation presents a new version of the hero's quest for Galiene, and its humorous style evokes an ironic distance with regard to the *amour-chevalerie* theme of the Old French romance. Here, Ferguut takes his time rather than being driven by love.¹⁰ Other characters propel him toward his reunion with Galiene. Moreover, in the very last part of the romance Galiene also seems to have forgotten Ferguut.

Chilling at the giant's castle

The first example of Ferguut's slackness appears when he has won the Shield (3815–84). Ferguut takes up residence in the giant's castle, with the two damsels he has liberated at his side, who serve him. He allows himself to be pampered by the damsels for four months. The narrator comments:

Dus was hi ginder .i. stickelkijn
 Viere maent wel te gemake
 Metten joncfrouwen; al hare sprake
 Ende datsi daden sat hen wel;
 Si hadden bliscap ende spel.
 (3822–26)¹¹

[And so he remained there for a little while, for four months at his ease with the damsels; their every word and deed became them; they rejoiced and made merry].

The use of the diminutive *stickelijn* 'a little while' in line 3822, combined with the rather long period of four months, is remarkable. The author implicitly criticizes Ferguut: the aim of his quest is Galiene, but he does not seem to be in a hurry to find her. In the French source Fergus focuses on Galiene constantly. He is severely wounded from the battle with the giant and the two girls do their utmost to cure his wounds. After three days, Fergus climbs to the upper floor of the castle and looks out of the window at Rocebourc, 'La u s'amie assise estoit' [Where his beloved is besieged] (4791).¹² The land has been burnt and laid waste. This displeases Fergus greatly, and he bursts into action:

¹⁰ Another opinion is voiced by Kuiper and Claassens, 'Fergus', *Ferguut*, p. 126, who see in the *Ferguut* the very same return to the overriding love theme as in the *Fergus*.

¹¹ All quotations and translations of the *Ferguut* in this article come from Johnson and Claassens, *Dutch Romances. II. Ferguut*. Line numbers are given in parentheses.

¹² The edition of the *Fergus* is W. Frescoln, ed., *Guillaume le Clerc, The Romance of Fergus* (Philadelphia: William H. Allen, 1983). Line numbers are given in parentheses.

Or se tenra molt a mauvais
 Se il I sont longues en pais
 El siege qu'il ne les regart
 Maintenant des estres se part;
 Les degrés de la tour avale,
 Si vint courant parmi la sale,
 (4797–802)

[Now he will think himself a great coward if they maintain that siege undisturbed for long without investigating them. He immediately leaves the upper floor, goes down the staircase in the keep and comes running into the hall].¹³

In contrast, the Middle Dutch hero seems to forget about Galiene in the pleasant company of the damsels. After four months, he starts longing for adventures, and asks:

“Joncfrouwen, dat u God moet dagen,
 Wetti iewer enighe niemaren
 Daer ic soude moghen varen
 Om te bejagen lof ende prijs?”
 (3829–31)

[*Damsels, may God be with you, have you heard tell of any place where I might journey to in order to achieve praise and honor?]

As a knight, he wants to live up to chivalrous expectations but his question has nothing to do with Galiene; he does not seem concerned with her at all.

From the damsels, Ferguut and the audience learn that Galiene, who lives in a nearby castle (only about seven miles away), is under attack by a king who wants to marry her against her will. Suddenly, Ferguut is in a hurry. The narrator uses the word *dapperlike* ‘courageously’ (3868), when Ferguut quickly fetches his new horse, Pennevare, and he also comments that Ferguut does not want to linger anymore (3886), which could be understood ironically after four months of vacation.

In the next episode Ferguut fights for Galiene and Rikenstene. For two days, he takes the lead in the battle for those from ‘inside’. In the evening he retires to his castle in the woods where the damsels take good care of his wounds (3857–4191). This is not a good decision since in his absence, Galarant and his men attack Rikenstene and the townspeople are about to give up the castle. In order to rescue her lands, Galiene also acts foolishly.

¹³ The translation is from D. D. R. Owen, *Guillaume le Clerc, Fergus of Galloway: Knight of King Arthur* (London: J. M. Dent and Sons Ltd, 1991), p. 77.

She proposes a winner-takes-all-battle: her champion (although she does not have one) will fight Galarant and another knight in forty days. Because no one dares to undertake such a combat, Galiene sends her maid servant Lunette to Arthur’s court. However, the girl returns alone since all of the knights of the Round Table have left on a quest to find Ferguut.

Before she arrives at Rikenstene on the way back, Lunette passes by the giant’s castle and meets Ferguut as he is enjoying himself outside. Ferguut does not know about the combat Galiene proposed to Galarant, and does not seem to be overly concerned about her. The narrator comments: ‘Hi ginc hem meien in dat gras’ [He was out riding for pleasure in the meadow] (4414). It is only by the force of Adventure that Ferguut’s quest may proceed: ‘Alse adventure soude gescien / Lunetten heft hi saen versien/ Die uter maten serich quam’ [As luck would have it, he caught sight of Lunette who approached in deep sorrow] (4415–17).

When Ferguut sees the grief-stricken girl, he takes the initiative and stops her against her will. After asking her four times (!) why she is crying, he finally learns the reason for her sadness and hears about Galiene’s problems: she has not succeeded in finding a champion to fight on her mistress’s behalf (4458–523). Talking to Ferguut, Lunette expresses her displeasure about the battle by means of an ‘apostrophe’ addressed to Galiene:

‘Al u lant seldi verliesen
 Wel hebdi gesproken den riesen.
 Ghi selt varen uten sinne
 Eer gi den coninc geloeft u minne.
 Dusgedaen dinc hordic noit lesen.
 Volmaket God, hoe mach dit wesen?
 Mi heves wonder, so helpe mi God!
 Datsi minnet enen sot
 Dien si noit maer enewerf sach’.
 (4505–13)

[‘You will lose all your lands. You have taken counsel with fools. You’ll go quite insane before you pledge your love to the king. I have never heard tell of such a thing. O God of perfection, how can this happen? So help me God, it amazes me that she loves some fool whom she has seen no more than once’].

According to Lunette, Galiene has made a foolish agreement with king Galarant. Moreover, she loves a ‘sot’, an idiot she has only seen once. He is, in Lunette’s words: ‘.1. arem keytijf, / Een blode knecht ut vremden lande’ [some poor wretch, a simple knight from some foreign land] (4518–19). The use of dramatic irony makes this beautiful scene interesting and humorous.

The audience knows that Lunette is unaware of the fact that it is precisely this idiot to whom she is speaking.

As Lunette takes her leave, Ferguut tells her that Galiene's beloved will no doubt ride to her rescue (4527). The girl, however, thinks that Ferguut is mocking her. Later, when she arrives at Rocebourc, she repeats Ferguut's words to her mistress. Galiene, in turn, is understandably dubious: "Lunette, dit mochte niet waer sijn / Die ghene die heft die herte mijn / Hine acht op mi lettelt no vele" ["Lunette, this cannot be true, the man who possesses my heart cares nothing for me one way or the other"] (4585–87). Ferguut has not shown much concern so far and acts very slowly indeed. Only when Lunette informs him about the situation at Rikenstene, does he know what he must do.

In the Old French *Fergus*, Galiene's lady-in-waiting, Arondele, is modeled on the character of Lunete from *Le Chevalier au Lion* (*Yvain*) (*Yvain or The Knight of the Lion*; hereafter *Yvain*).¹⁴ The Flemish author must have recognized this connection and reinforces it by using the same name as Chrétien and by adding other references to *Yvain*. For instance, Lunette tells Ferguut that her lady will have her beaten to death because she did not find a champion: 'Mijn joncfrouwe sal mi doet doen slaen' [My lady will have me slain] (4498). Later on in the romance, confronted by her mistress, she asks for judgement: "Over mi so doet rechten./ Doet mi branden in enen viere" ["Pass judgement on me now, have me burnt at the stake"] (4548–49). These words evoke Chrétien's romance where Lunete is accused of treason and faces execution at the stake if a champion willing to fight for her against three adversaries within forty days does not appear. In *Yvain*, Lunete is locked in prison when she meets the hero, Yvain, who eventually rescues her.¹⁵ The intertextual connection has a humorous effect: in *Ferguut* Lunette asks for the punishment that was almost inflicted upon Lunete in Chrétien. However, the Middle Dutch Galiene would not even think of harming Lunette (4551–54). In *Yvain*, Lunete plays a much larger role than her namesake in *Ferguut*. Because of her clever manipulation, the love story of Yvain and Laudine ends well, at least for Yvain. But at this point in *Ferguut*, Lunette does not recognize the hero, and a happy ending seems far away.

The next day, Ferguut, alias the Knight with the White Shield, arrives in the nick of time to rescue Galiene and Rikenstene. He defeats king Galarant, kills his nephew Macedone, and the future looks promising. However, once again Ferguut disappears to his castle without making himself known, bringing the story to a standstill once more.

¹⁴ Roel Zemel, "Ene behagele coninginne": Over de heldin van de *Ferguut* en haar voorgangsters', *Spektator* 22 (1993): 181–97 at p. 195.

¹⁵ Chrétien de Troyes, *Le Chevalier au Lion* (*Yvain*), in *Chrétien de Troyes, Romans*, ed. and trans. David F. Hult (Paris: Le Livre de poche, 1994), lines 3561–765; 4383–573.

A happy ending, eventually?

Galiene eventually sets the story in motion again. The narrator takes up the final part with the words: 'Nu keric weder te Galienen' [Now I shall return to Galiene] (4979). What follows is a complete surprise because things get worse for Ferguut:

Nu keric weder te Galienen
Die heft gelaten staen haer wenen.
Soe siet wel dat het niet en wout:
Hen es geen dinc, hen vercout.
Ferguut mach wel so lange merren
Dat sijn rapen selen berren:
Wijfs herte en es niet van stale.
(4979–85)

[Now I shall return to Galiene, who has left off her weeping. She realizes that it will do her no good: there is no passion that does not lose its heat. Ferguut may well delay so long until his turnips have burned. A woman's heart is not made of steel].

Galiene's love for Ferguut suddenly seems to have cooled and she no longer wants to wait for him. She rides to Arthur's court to ask the king to find her a husband to administer her lands, and the king announces a tournament with the hand of Galiene as the main prize.

In *Fergus*, Galiene is clever, manipulating her barons and King Arthur in order to ensure that the tournament will lead to her having the Knight with the Splendid Shield as her husband, because she knows that Fergus is beneath that disguise. The Middle Dutch author makes a different choice: Galiene does not know the identity of the Knight with the White Shield, but she admits to her barons that she would love to have him as her husband, if possible (5010). She appears to have completely forgotten about Ferguut.

With this turn, the tension mounts about whether the two will be united in the end. The narrator seems to ridicule Ferguut's lack of action: he must really make haste now if he wishes to have Galiene as his wife. The combination of line 4985: 'Wijfs herte en es niet van stale' [A woman's heart is not made of steel], read as a litotes, and the unusual and enigmatic saying about the burning turnips that precedes it: 'Ferguut mach wel so lange merren / Dat sijn rapen selen berren' [Ferguut may well delay so long until his turnips have burned] (4983–84), which offers a sudden change of style (referring to Ferguut's agricultural background?), are fine examples of the author's ironic narrative style. With these remarkable expressions, he criticizes both Galiene and Ferguut. The hero is too relaxed, he has waited too long, and now the

turnips (farmers' food?) are almost burned, while the heroine is not only impatient but even fickle.¹⁶

At this point in the story, the Flemish poet inserts another humorous scene, not found in the French source (5098–151).¹⁷ As before, Ferguut has to be compelled by another character. He does not know about Galiene's initiative and is enjoying himself (again!) in the woods near his castle. Then, he encounters an ugly dwarf, armed as a knight, on a beautiful horse, a contradiction in terms, which makes Ferguut laugh:

In sijn wout was hi spelen gaen
 Ende hi sach comen enen naen
 Op een herde scone ors gereden.
 Hi was lelic van allen leden,
 Enen scilt ane sinen hals hi droech.
 Ferguut groettene ende loech
 Ende sprac: 'Naen, waers die tornoy?'
 (5101–07)

[He was riding out for pleasure in his forest when he saw a dwarf approaching, mounted on a very handsome horse. He was ugly as sin, a shield he wore about his neck. Ferguut greeted him and laughed, and said, 'Dwarf, where is the tournament?']

The dwarf makes clear that he is no fool, in contrast to the ignorant Ferguut who is not on his way to the tournament himself to win the hand of the stunningly beautiful Galiene:

'Waer dat ic vare, dat wetti wel,
 Want en es batsleer en geen
 Hine si daer, die wert es twee sleen;
 So soudi oec, waerdi niet sot'.
 (5118–21)

['You know full well where I am going, for there isn't a bachelor worth two plums who isn't there; You would be too, if you weren't a fool!']

Like Lunette, the dwarf calls Ferguut a 'sot', a fool, and urges him to act: 'Her ridder, of gi daer wilt sijn / Ghi moet u haesten' [Sir knight, if you want to be there you had better make haste] (5142–43).

¹⁶ See: Zemel, "'Ene behagele coninginne'", pp. 194–97. See for the ironic use of the rhetoric figure *litotes*: D. H. Green, *Irony in Medieval Romance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), Chapter 6, especially pp. 189–94.

¹⁷ See: Zemel, 'Koning Artur in actie', pp. 44, 51.

When Ferguut hears about the tournament, he thinks first of *chevalerie*, his long-awaited revenge on Keye (5148), and *not* Galiene. Only once he is on his way to Arthur's court does he finally realize that he may well lose Galiene due to his own stupidity. It seems that he has come to his senses at last and can finally combine love and chivalry. Alone, he cries out in despair:

Hoe dicke riep hi: 'Galiene,
 Salic u nu moeten verliesen?
 Wel haddic gesproken den riesen,
 Dat ic naesten niet en voer tote u
 Ten Rikenstene; dats mi leet nu,
 Hets dicke geseit; dats waer sprake
 Blode man quam noit te hoger sake.'
 (5152–58)

['How often did he call out: 'Galiene, am I now to lose you? I acted as such a fool that I did not go to you before at Rikenstene; I regret that now. It is often said, and a true saying: cowards never do great deeds'].

Earlier, Lunette uses a very similar expression as in line 5154: 'Wel hebdi gesproken den risen' [You have taken counsel with fools] (4505), criticizing her mistress's behavior. In his soliloquy, Ferguut pathetically criticizes himself, finally realizing that his behavior so far has been very foolish, even cowardly, indeed. Again, the Flemish author treats the balance between love and chivalry, which Ferguut needs to find, in a humorous light.

In the end, Ferguut appears at Arthur's court in time. As the Knight with the White Shield, he first defeats Keye and then all the knights of the Round Table, except Gawein, whom he does not want to fight. Only when he removes his helmet does the court recognize him. Ferguut wins his prize and a bishop marries him and Galiene right away. The narrator then ends the story with a remarkable comment, which offers another indication for irony as far as the love quest is concerned: 'Elc en haette anderen niet sere' [Each held little hate for the other] (5559). This phrase contains a *litotes* in combination with a word conveying moderation (*niet sere*, 'little'). The meaning of this indirect statement is of course that Ferguut and Galiene love each other very much.¹⁸ However, this is not what the narrator says. By the *litotes*, the denial of the opposite, the author causes the listener or reader to remember the characters' actions leading to this finale. It almost went wrong because of Ferguut's laziness, but above all, because of Galiene's impatience. Does she really love Ferguut? All the narrator says about her emotions is that she is very much ashamed when she discovers that the Knight with the White Shield is the

¹⁸ For similar examples, see for instance: Green, *Irony in Medieval Romance*, p. 193.

knight who once rejected her (5547–53).¹⁹ So, the use of litotes here is once again an indication for the ironic treatment of the love theme by the author.

Conclusion

The Flemish author of the Ferguut gradually turns his romance into an ironic and humorous variant on the *amour-chevalerie* theme found in *Fergus* and in Chrétien's first romances.²⁰ He may have even intended the last part of his romance as a parody of a courtly love romance, since, for a long time, it remains uncertain whether Ferguut and Galiene will have each other. Moreover, Ferguut is not a hero driven by love, like Fergus, Erec or Yvain; he adopts a comfortable wait-and-see-attitude at his castle in the woods and needs other characters to push him into action: the damsels, Lunette, and the funny dwarf who acts as a herald by announcing the tournament. Galiene is also an atypical heroine. She is impatient and does not want to wait any more for Ferguut: at one point she even seems to forget about him, travelling to Arthur to ask for a husband. Finally, the author ridicules Arthur too since he is so impressed by Galiene's beauty that he sponsors a tournament for her in which all of his famous knights are defeated by an unknown knight, the son of a villein. In the end, Galiene finds a husband, but hangs her head in shame when she recognizes Ferguut. She must marry the man she had banished from her thoughts and for whom she no longer wished to wait. The irony is that Ferguut and Galiene will have each other indeed, not because of the force of love, but because the lady-in-waiting Lunette and a dwarf happen to pass by.

¹⁹ Note the similarities between line 1517, at Ydel castle: 'Si scaemde hare utermaten sere' [She was exceedingly embarrassed], and line 5551: 'Galiene hadde die scaemte groot' [Galiene was very embarrassed]. See also: R. M. T. Zemel, 'Het vergeten vergrijp van Galiene'. *Spektator* 18 (1988–89): 262–82 at pp. 276–78.

²⁰ See: Zemel, 'Het vergeten vergrijp van Galiene', pp. 278–79 and "'Ene behagele coninginne"', pp. 194–97.