

# A Comparative Study of *Il Filostrato* and *Troilus and Criseyde*

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## I. Introduction

When Chaucer wrote "Troilus and Criseyde" he depended upon Boccaccio's work "Il Filostrato" and imitated it. W.A. Windeatt said, "Much has been written describing Chaucer's original handling of his sources, but the format of this edition is designed to enable the reader to re-live more closely for himself that distinctive creative process of poetic composition some six centuries ago, by which Chaucer uses Filostrato for the main line of much of his poem while extending, amending, fusing it with many other borrowings and allusions<sup>1</sup>." Many papers have written about the Chaucer work, but few have been written about Boccaccio's Il Filostrato.

The primary purpose of this paper is to clarify the rhyme schemes of Il Filostrato by Giovanni Boccaccio. A secondary purpose is to compare the rhyme schemes of Il Filostrato and Troilus and Criseyde. Il Filostrato consists of nine parts. Troilus and Criseyde has five parts. Here in this paper, I will focus on the first part and the second part of these books.

## II. Procedure

I would like to explain how my analysis was done. I used an NEC PC-9801 and the program was written by a graduate student in computer science<sup>2</sup>. The program is designed to identify the final letter of each line.

### III. Rhyme Scheme

I have put all the stanzas in the first and the second part of Il Filostrato <sup>3</sup> in order to discover any regularities in Boccaccio's style. The final vowels of each line of each stanza are given below.

#### Parte Prima

1 eeeeeeo	21 oaoaoaii	41 oaoaoeaa
2 aoaoaooo	22 eaeaeae	42 ooooooaa
3 aaaaaae	23 aoaoaoji	43 aeaeaeii
4 ioioiooo	24 ioioioii	44 oeoeoeoo
5 aoaoaooo	25 iiiiiiie	45 ioioioee
6 oeoeoeoe	26 oeoeoeaa	46 aaaaaae
7 oeoeoeaa	27 aiaiaioo	47 ooooooe
8 aeaeaeaa	28 oeoeoeoo	48 oeoeoeaa
9 ioioiooo	29 oioioiee	49 oeoeoeoe
10 oeoeoeoe	30 oeoeoeii	50 oeoeoeii
11 eeeeeeaa	31 oooooooo	51 ioioiooo
12 eaeaeao	32 aiaiaiee	52 ioioiooo
13 aoaoaoaa	33 oeoeoeoo	53 eieieioo
14 ioioioii	34 aaaaaao	54 oaoaoao
15 aeaeaeaa	35 oooooooo	55 iiiiiiio
16 aeaeaeoo	36 eeeeeeo	56 oaoaoao
17 ieieieoo	37 eeeeeeaa	57 eieieooo
18 eieieiii	38 aiaiaiaa	
19 aaaaaaaa	39 eeeeeei	
20 oeoeoeaa	40 eaeaeae	

#### Parte Seconda

1 oooooooo	37 ooooooe	73 oeoeoeaa	109 eeeeeee
2 aeaeaeaa	38 aaaaaaii	74 aoaoaooo	110 oeoeoeoo
3 aaaaaao	39 aaaaaao	75 aoaoaoaa	111 oeoeoeoo
4 eeeeeeaa	40 ieieieoo	76 aeaeaeoo	112 oaoaoao

5	eoeeoeee	41	aeaeaeoo	77	oeoeoeaa	113	oooooaaa
6	oeoeoeoo	42	oeoeoeaa	78	oeoeoeaa	114	eeeeeeaa
7	oeoeoeaa	43	oaoaoaii	79	oeoeoeoo	115	aeaeaeoo
8	oioioiaa	44	aeaeaeii	80	oaoaoaee	116	aeaeaeaa
9	oooooeee	45	ooooooii	81	oeoeoeaa	117	aaaaaaaa
10	oeoeoeoo	46	oooooaaa	82	aaaaaaoo	118	oeoeoeoo
11	oeoeoeaa	47	aeaeaeoo	83	eaeaeao	119	oeoeoeaa
12	oeoeoeoo	48	oaoaoaii	84	aeaeaeaa	120	oaoaoaaa
13	ieieieaa	49	oaoaoaaa	85	aeaeaeij	121	eeeeeeaa
14	aiaiaioo	50	eieieioo	86	aoaoaoaa	122	aaaaaaee
15	oooooeee	51	eeeeeeii	87	ieieieaa	123	oeoeoeee
16	oooooaaa	52	oaoaoaii	88	eaeaeao	124	eeeeeeoo
17	iaiaiaoo	53	eeeeeeee	89	oeoeoeoo	125	oioioiee
18	aaaaaaee	54	oeoeoeaa	90	oeoeoeoo	126	eeeeeeaa
19	oooooeee	55	oooooaaa	91	iaiaiaoo	127	oioioioo
20	eeeeeeoo	56	eeeeeeoo	92	eeeeeeoo	128	oaoaoao
21	oeoeoeaa	57	oeoeoeaa	93	ieieieoo	129	oaoaoaee
22	aeaeaeee	58	aeaeaeii	94	eeeeeeoo	130	aoaoaoaa
23	aeaeaeee	59	aaaaaaaa	95	aoaoaoee	131	eeeeeeaa
24	oeoeoeoo	60	aoaoaoii	96	ooooooii	132	aaaaaaoo
25	eaeaeaaa	61	oooooeee	97	oeoeoeaa	133	eaeaeao
26	oeoeoeoo	62	oeoeoeaa	98	eieieiee	134	aiaiaiee
27	aaaaaaaa	63	ioioiooo	99	aoaoaoaa	135	aoaoaoee
28	oeoeoeii	64	aaaaaaaa	100	oaoaoaee	136	eeeeeeaa
29	oaoaoaii	65	oooooaaa	101	eeeeeeaa	137	oaoaoaee
30	eieieiii	66	oooooeee	102	ooooooii	138	aaaaaaii
31	aiaiaioo	67	oeoeoeee	103	oooooeee	139	oioioiee
32	eieieiaa	68	aaaaaaoo	104	aaaaaaee	140	oooooaaa
33	aoaoaooo	69	aaaaaaoo	105	oooooeee	141	aoaoaoee
34	eaeaeaaa	70	aeaeaeoo	106	eeeeeeaa	142	eaeaeace
35	eieieioo	71	iiiiiiioo	107	eaeaeaii	143	aoaoaooo
36	oioioioo	72	oeoeoeii	108	aeaeaeii		

At first glance it seems that Boccaccio used an irregular rhyme scheme. However, his rhyme scheme does have regularities. In fact, he used only the

following seven rhyme schemes.

(1) AAAAAABB Type

Per che volendo per la tua partita,  
Più greve a me che morte e più noiosa,  
Scriver qual fosse la dolente vita  
Di Troilo, da poi che l'amorosa  
Criseida da Troia sen fu gita,  
E come pria gli fosse graziosa;  
A te convenni per grazia venire,  
S'io vo'pter la mia'mpresa fornire. (Parte Prima, 3)

(2) ABABABBB Type

Tu donna se'la luce chiara e bella,  
Per cui nel tenebroso mondo accorto  
Vivo; tu se'la tramontana stella  
La qual'io seguo per venire al porto;  
Ancora di salute tu se'quella  
Che se'tutto il mio bene e'l mio conforto;  
Tu mi se'Giove, tu mi sei Apollo,  
Tu se'mia musa, io l'ho provato e sollo. (Parte Prima, 2)

(3) ABABABAA Type

E voi amanti prego che ascoltiate  
Ciò che dirà'l mio verso lagrimoso;  
E se nel cuore avvien che voi sentiate  
Destarsi alcuno spirito pietoso,  
Per me vi prego ch'Amore preghiate,  
Per cui siccome Troilo doglioso  
Vivo lontan dal più dolce piacere,  
Che a creatura mai fosse in calere. (Parte Prima, 6)

(4) ABABABCC Type

Erano a Troia i greci re d'intorno  
Nell'armi forti, e giusta lor potere

Ciascuno ardito, fiero, prode, e adorno  
Si dimostrava, e con le loro schiere  
Ognor la stringean più di giorno in giorno,  
Concordi tutti in un pari volere,  
Di vendicar l'oltraggio e la rapina  
Da Paris fatta d'Elena reina. (Parte Prima, 7)

(5) AAAAAAAA Type

Tra'quali fu di Calcas la figliuola  
Criseida, la qual'era in bruna vesta,  
La qual, quanto la rosa la viola  
Di beltà vince, cotanto era questa  
Più ch'altra donna bella, ed essa sola  
Più ch'altra facea lieta la gran festa,  
Stando nel tempio assai presso alla porta,  
Negli atti altiera, piacente ed accorta. (Parte Prima, 19)

(6) Others (ABABABCD Type and ABABABCC Type)

Io provai già per la mia gran follia  
Qual fosse questo maladetto fuoco.  
E s'io dicessi che amor cortesia  
Non mi facesse, ed allegrezza e giuoco  
Non mi donasse, certo i'mentiria,  
Ma tutto il bene insieme accolto, poco  
Fu o niente, rispetto a'martirj,  
Volendo amare, ed a'tristi sospiri. (Parte Prima, 23)

Nè del dì trapassava nessun'ora  
Che mille volte seco non dicesse:  
O chiara luce che'l cuor m'innamora,  
O Criseida bella, iddio volesse,  
Che' l tuo valor che 'l viso mi scolora  
Per me alquanto a pietà ti movesse;  
Null'altra fuor che tu lieto può farmi,  
Tu sola se'colei che puoi atarmi. (Parte Prima, 43)

Every stanza of Il Filostrato exhibits one of these fixed rhyme schemes. The following table lists the total of each type in the First part and the Second part of Il Filostrato.

Table I	Type \ Part	Parte Prima	Parte Second
	AAAAAABB	12	41
	ABABABBB	9	18
	ABABABAA	14	19
	ABABABCC	17	54
	AAAAA AAA	3	10
	ABABABCD	1	1
	ABABACBB	1	0
	Total	57	143

#### IV. Rhyme Scheme in Troilus and Criseyde

In the same way as I did in Boccaccio's work, I have investigated Chaucer's rhyme schemes in Book I and Book II of Troilus and Criseyde<sup>4</sup>.

##### (1) AAAAAABB Type

And in hir hous she abood with swich meynee  
 As to hir honour nede was to holde;  
 And whyl she was dwellinge in that citee,  
 Kepte hir estat, and bothe of yonge and olde  
 Ful wel beloved, and wel men of hir tolde.  
 But whether that she children hadde or noon,  
 I rede it nought; therefore I lete it goon. (Book I, 19)

##### (2) ABABBBB Type

The double sorwe of Troilus to tellen,  
 That was the king Priamus sone of Troye,

In lovinge, how his aventures fellen  
Fro wo to wele, and after out of loye,  
My purpos is, er that I parte fro ye.  
Thesiphone, thou help me for tendyte  
Thise woful vers, that wepen as I wryte! (Book I, 1)

(3) ABABBAA Type

Now fil it so, that in the toun ther was  
Dwellinge a lord of greet auctoritee,  
A gret devyn that cleped was Calkas,  
That in science so expert was, that he  
Knew wel that Troye sholde destroyed be,  
By answeere of his god, that highte thus,  
Daun Phebus or Apollo Delphicus. (Book I, 10)

(4) ABABBCC Type

The noyse up roos, whan it was first aspyed,  
Thorugh al the toun, and generally was spoken,  
That Calkas traytor fled was, and allyed  
With hem of Grece; and casten to be wroken  
On him that falsly hadde his feith so broken;  
And seyden, he and al his kin at ones  
Ben worthy for to brennen, fel and bones. (Book I, 13)

(5) AAAAAAA Type

Now hadde Calkas left, in this meschaunce,  
Al unwist of this false and wikked dede,  
His doughter, which that was in gret penaunce,  
For of hir lyf she was ful sore in drede,  
As she that niste what was best to rede;  
For bothe a widowe was she, and allone  
Of any freend, to whom she dorste hir mone. (Book I, 14)

Each stanza of Troilus and Criseyde follows one of these five rhyme

schemes. Table II lists the total of each type in Book I and II.

Table II

Type \ Part	Book I	Book II
AAAAABB	7	5
ABABBBB	49	66
ABABBAA	37	60
ABABBCC	13	35
AAAAAAA	50	85
Total	156	251

#### V. Comparative Study

In this section, I am trying to make a comparative study between the two books based upon Table I and Table II.

Each of Boccaccio's stanzas consists of eight lines and each of Chaucer's is made up of seven lines. In Il Filostrato, the first part has 57 stanzas and the second part has 143 stanzas. In Troilus and Criseyde, Book I has 156 stanzas and Book II has 251 stanzas. Despite these differences, I can draw the following conclusions concerning the rhyme scheme by the comparison between Table I and Table II. Therefore, Chaucer imitated Boccaccio to make his own work.

- (1) Chaucer used rhyme schemes similar to those Boccaccio used. However, Chaucer changed Boccaccio's 8 lines into 7 lines. By deleting one line Chaucer had to alter Boccaccio's rhyme scheme slightly. For example, it seems reasonable to argue that Chaucer deleted the sixth line of Boccaccio's AAAAAABB rhyme scheme. Of course, it is possible to argue that he deleted one of the lines.
- (2) AAAAAABB Type in Chaucer corresponds to AAAAAABB Type in Boccaccio.
- (3) ABABBBB Type in Chaucer corresponds to ABABBBB Type in Boccaccio.
- (4) ABABBAA Type in Chaucer corresponds to ABABABAA Type in Boccaccio.
- (5) ABABBCC Type in Chaucer corresponds to ABABABCC Type in Boccaccio.



(6) AAAAAAA Type in Chaucer corresponds to AAAAAAAA Type in Boccaccio.

(7) Chaucer preferred ABABBBB, ABABBAA and AAAAAAA Type.

## VI. Conclusion

This paper has only dealt with the two parts of the works of the two authors, but it shows that Chaucer clearly imitated Boccaccio's techniques and innovated upon them. A future study will cover all parts of both works.

### Notes

1. Windeatt, B.A.(ed.), Troilus and Criseyde. (London & New York: Longman Group Limited, 1990). p.3.
2. As to computer program, Mr. Yoshikazu Hisazume at Toyohashi University of Technology is very instrumental for me.
3. The number of each stanza is based upon Griffin, N.E. and Myrick A.B., The Filostrato of Giovanni Boccaccio. (New York: Octagon Books, 1978).
4. The number of each stanza is based upon Skeat, W.W (Ed.), The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972).

### Text

Griffin, N.E. and Myrick A.B., The Filostrato of Giovanni Boccaccio.  
(New York: Octagon Books, 1978).

Skeat, W.W (Ed.), The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972).