

チヨーサにおける史的現在についての一考察

A Study of Chaucer's Historic Present

長谷川 和 子
Kazuko HASEGAWA

Introduction

We often find the remarkable choice of the present tense in Chaucer's narrative poetry dealing with events situated in the past. It is seen on the occasion when the narrator asks his audience some questions to attract their attention or to bring them into a psychological bond with his characters, inserts his short, temporary summary, presents his personal judgment or quotations from authorities, or refers to general truths or timeless observations. The present used in these cases includes an element of the real present time in the narrator's sphere. Besides the present tense used in them, there is another use of the present tense which refers to events or state in the narrative preterit. Now we define this use of the present as the historic present following Burnley's distinction.¹⁾ He points out the present as an effective device to increase a sense of immediacy and the vividness of narrative or to arrange the rhyme scheme. He also recognizes its frequent coincidence with the initiation of a new topic and its role to link verbs which are semantically related or two related scenes.²⁾

His statement of immediacy and vividness is tenable enough when they are attained by the present tense given to almost all verbs in sentences describing a certain scene or a certain event. Actually, however, the present is given to a few among many verbs used in a paragraphic cluster. In other words, we only find the sporadic use of the present tense. He does not discuss by what criteria some verbs are given the present tense while others are used in the preterit. And for the statement of coincidence with the initiation of a new topic, he cites a sentence without a subordinate clause, and he does not examine whether the first verb in a new topic is given the present, even if it occurs in a subordinate clause.

The purpose of this investigation is to clarify these vague points which Burnley leaves: we will try to find some criteria, by which Chaucer chose a verb to be given the present tense, by the contextual approach in the first chapter and by the structural approach in the second chapter. And the coincidence with the initiation of a new topic will be discussed in the

チ ョ ー サ における史的現在についての一考察

third chapter. *The Knight's Tale*, in which Burnley points out Chaucer's refined use of the historic present, is investigated for these purposes.

Although we differentiate the historic present from the narrator's present, there are ambiguous cases in the tale as follows:

- (1) But swich a cry and swich a wo they make (ll. 900-2)³⁾
 That in this world nys creature lyvyng
 That herde swich another waymentyng;

This is a description in the scene of Theseus' encounter with crying ladies in black. Both Theseus' and the ladies' actions are expressed in the preterit except the two underlined verbs. The first one make facilitates the rhyme. The second one nys should be the narrative preterit. But the phrase this world causes the narrator's confusion based on his psychological continuity that he belongs to this world too. The sense of continuity is nothing but the immediacy as an effect of the historic present. But at the same time, the present can be interpreted as the narrator's present which shows his judgment. Besides such ambiguous cases as example (1), we exclude from our discussion the present used in the rhyme position and the two uses of it which have been confused with the historic present. The first is the present used in subordinate clauses after verbs of saying, thinking, knowing, and seeing, as follows.

- (2) Duc Theseus, with al his bisy cure, (ll. 2853-5)
 Caste now wher that the sepulture
 Of goode Arcite may best ymaked be,
 I saugh how that his houndes have hym caught (ll. 2067-89)
 And freeten hym ...

The present in the examples above is called the "present of reflection" by Grimm.⁴⁾ The next examples show the present tense used in simile or comparison.

- (3) That lene hae wex and drye as is a shaft; (l. 1362)
 As is depeynted in the sterres above (l. 2037)
 As fayn as fowel is of the brighte sonne (l. 2437)

We regard the present in such cases as the present of general truths. In this category, statements about God, mythological gods, and astronomical bodies are included.

- (4) God woot he wolde have trowed it ful lite. (l. 1520)
 Ther Venus hath hir principal dwellynge, (l. 1937)
 Ther as Mars hath his sovereyn mansioun. (l. 1974)
 Ther Pluto hath his derke regioun. (l. 2082)

Chapter I

1.1.0. Immediacy and Vividness by Dynamism

Dividing the whole story of *The Knight's Tale* into 63 scenes, we find only 4 scenes in which almost all verbs are given the present. The first and second are the descriptions of Theseus' banner (ll. 975-80) and his habit of hunting (ll. 1673-82). The third is the description of the mass-fight between Palamon and Arcite (ll. 2599-635) and the last is that of Arcite's serious injury (ll. 2743-61). The other 59 scenes are depicted generally in the preterit and sporadically in the present. The last two scenes have the most dramatic importance. And the most conspicuous common characteristic among these 4 scenes is activity or dynamism.

We have 134 occurrences of the historic present except the concentrated occurrence in the 4 scenes mentioned above. 48 of them are found in the cases where verbs with the feature of dynamism get the present tense. It is necessary to see whether the characteristic can be a factor to get the present easily. According to our intuitive inference that battle scenes should be dynamic, we present the following.

- (5) And after that, with sharpe speres stronge (ll. 1653-60)
 They foynen ech at oother wonder longe.
 Thou myghtest wene that this Palamon
 In his fightyng were a wood leon,
 And as a crueel tigre was Arcite;
 As wilde bores gonne they to smyte.
 That frothen whit as foom for ire wood
 Up to the ancle foghte they in hir blood.

This is a scene of the first fight between Palamon and Arcite. In this passage we find a mixture of tenses. Although the underlined verbs are semantically dynamic, they do not take the present. The verb gonne is prevented from taking it for its ingressive feature. On the other hand, foynen gets the present. (Frothen is out of our discussion because it states a general truth of wild boars.) A factor to choose either the present or the preterit between the verbs foynen and foghte seems to be the degree of concreteness. The following example shows the choice of the preterit, because of the lack of concreteness of the verbs fighte and slee, in spite of their semantic dynamism.

- (6) he faught, and slough hym (l. 987)

The scene of Palamon's escape from a prison after the confinement for 7 years is very dramatic and dynamic.

- (7) It fel that . . . (ll. 1462-79)

チヨ一サにおける史的現在についての一考察

That soone after the mydnyght Palamoun,
 By helpyng of a freend, brak his prisoun
 And fleeth the citee faste as he may go
 For he hadde yeve his gayler drynke so
 Of a clarree maad of a certeyn wyn,
 With nercotikes and opie of Thebes fyn,
 That al that nyght, thogh that men wolde him
 shake,
 The gayler sleep he myghte nat awake.
 And thus he fleeth as faste as evere he may
 The nyght was short and faste by the day
 That nedes cost he moot hymselfen hyde,
 And til a grove faste ther bisyde
 With dredeful foot thanne stalketh Palamon.

Among all the predicates used in this scene, two fleeths, may go, moot...hyde and stalketh are in the present, while fel, brak, hadde yeve, wolde...shake, sleep, myght...awake and was are in the preterit. In the latter group, there are two predicates brak and wolde...shake with the feature of dynamism. Comparing these two with the three kinds of predicates in the present, except moot...hyde, which will be discussed on pages 6 and 7, we find that the dynamism in the verbs given the present tense connotes the movement from one place to another. In this scene, the subjects like the impersonal it, men, gayler, and nyght, other than Palamon himself are not given the present at all. Here 3 criteria can be presupposed.

A verb can get the historic present easily in cases when

1. a verb expresses the action of a character focused in a scene.
2. a verb contains the feature of activity or dynamism.
3. its activity or dynamism connotes the movement from one place to another, or contains much more concreteness than other verbs in the passage.

Here we must examine whether these 3 suppositions deduced from a few scenes can be general rules throughout *The Knight's Tale*.

- (8) And Arcita, that in the court roial (ll. 1497-515)
 With Theseus is squier principal,
 Is risen and looketh on the myrie day.
 And for to doon his observaunce to May,
 Remembrynge on the poynt of his desir,
 He on a courser, startlynge as the fir,
 Is riden into the feeldes hym to pleye,
 Out of the court, were it a myle or tweye
 And to the grove of which that I yow tolde
 By aventure his wey he gan to holde
 To maken hym a gerland of the greves,
 Were it of wodebynde or hawethorn leves,
 And loude he song ayeyn the sonne shene:
 ...
 And from his courser, with a lusty herte,
 Into the grove ful hastily he sterte,
 And in path he rometh up and doun

大手前女子学園「研究集録」(大手前女子短大研集) 第11号 (1991年)

This is a scene of the riding of Arcite who is in focus. The first three underlined verbs in the present tense will be discussed in the part concerning the “left dislocation” in the second chapter. His real actions are stated: he is riden, gan to hold his way, song, sterte into a grave, and rometh up and down. The predicates is riden and rometh which contain the feature of movement, are in the present. They are in accord with the suppositions 1, 2 and 3 (hereafter they are abbreviated S 1, 2, 3).

We find an interesting distinction between gan to holde his way in line 1506 and the streight wey hath hold in line 1690. To hold one’s way connotes the consequential movement from one place to another. In the latter expression, Chaucer gives the present tense according to S 3. But in the former use, the ingressive feature of gan prevents it from getting the present tense. We have no example of the verb ginne used in the present tense accompanied with the infinitive, as seen in example (5) and the following.

- (9) This Arcite and this Palamon ben met (ll. 1636-44)
 To chaungen gan the colour in hir face;
 Right as the hunters in the regne of Trace,
 That stondeth at the gappe with a spere,
 Whan hunted is the leon or the bere,
 And hereth hym come russhyng in the greves,
 And breketh bothe bowes and the leves,
 And thynketh “Heere cometh my mortal
 enemy!
 Withoute faille, he moot be deed, or I,

In the description above, all verbs except gan are in the present. The verb sterte which has the ingressive feature is also in the preterit in other scenes as follows.

- (10) He stirte hym up out of the buskes thikke (l. 1579)

Elizabeth Traugott regards the word gan as the carrier of the past tense and asserts that the use of it was a syntactic device rather than a semantic one.⁵⁾ But when we see sterte used in the preterit, we cannot cut off their semantic feature from a factor to get the tense.

We also find the validity of S 1, 2, 3, in the following scene which is more static than the example (8).

- (11) She was arisen and al redy dight, (ll. 1041-55)
 For May wole have no slogardie anyght.
 The sesoun priketh every gentil herte,
 And maketh it out of his slep to sterte,
 And seith “Arys, and do thyn observaunce”
 This maked Emelye have remembraunce
 To doon honour to May, and for to ryse.
 Yclothed was she fressh, for to devyse:
 Hir yelow heer was broyded in a tresse
 Bihynde hir bak, a yerde long, I gesse.

チョーサにおける史的現在についての一考察

And in the gardyn, at the sonne upriste,
 She walketh up and down, and as hire liste
 She gadereth floures, party white and rede,
 To make a subtil gerland for hire hede;
 And as an aungel hevenysshly she soong.

This is the description of Emily. The first 3 present verbs underlined are out of our discussion, because they are the present of a general truth of the spring season. Only Emily's active behaviors like walketh and gadereth are expressed in the present. (The verb soong is out of our discussion for its rhyme position.) The verb walketh has the feature of movement which proves the validity of S 2, 3 and the verb gadereth without the feature of S 2, 3 will be discussed in the second section of this chapter.

With the view of S 1, we can safely give its validity to this scene. The verbs for subjects This, Hir yellow heer, and the recipient pronoun in the passive voice, as seen in Yclothed was she, are not expressed in present. When we examine the whole occurrence of the historic present, S 1 is generally acceptable.

The following, however, seems to deviate from S 1.

(12) Ful litel woot Arcite of his felawe (ll. 1525-7)
 That was so ny to herknen al his sawe,
 For in the bussh he sitteth now ful stille.

The focused character in this scene is Arcite and he who sits is Palamon. But Palamon's action sitten cannot take the preterit sat for the metrical disorder. As shown in the example above, some cases where S 1 seems to be deviated are often controlled by the force of meter.

Regarding to S 2, 3, we have 14 cases where verbs belonging to the types specified in S 1, 2, 3 are not given the present. The ratio of those 14 verbs in the preterit to all verbs which specified in S 1, 2, 3, is 22 percent. We cannot always explain the reason why 22 present verbs are not given the present. The percentage, however, allows us to say that when a verb with the feature of activity or movement from one place to another is used to express an action of a character in focus, the historic present is generally given to it.

1.2.0. Verbs without the Feature of Dynamism

1.2.1. A Necessary Event

In the 134 occurrences of the historic present mentioned on page 3, 86 of them are not compatible with S 2, 3. In the previous example (7), we find the predicate moot...hyde in the present. The movement feature of the verb hyde seems to be weak. But as the words nedes cost (l. 1477) suggest, his hiding is inevitable not only for his safety but for the development

of this story. Without this behavior, he could not have heard Arcite's soliloquy. Then no development of the story could be expected. That is, a verb which makes the development of the story possible, in other words, which links one scene to another is given the present, even if it has no feature of movement.

Here we will see the generality of this. Both Palamon and Arcite, who were confined in a prison, saw Emily.

(13) He cast his eye upon Emelya, [He=Palamon] (l. 1077)

(14) And with that word Arcite gan espye (l. 1112)

Their actions are expressed in the preterit. But their subsequent reactions are expressed either in the preterit or in the present.

(15) And therwithal he bleynte and cride, "A" [he=Palamon] (l. 1078)

(16) Arcite is hurt as muche as he, or moore. (l. 1116)

The evident difference of the tense suggests the beginning of the avoidable tragedy, namely, the death of Arcite, caused by his impertinent love to Emily, with whom Palamon fell in love.

In the scene immediately after Arcite's victory, an infernal gust blew out. How his horse was surprised and how he was injured are expressed in the preterit except the following.

(17) And er that Arcite may taken keep, (l. 2688)

If Arcite had paid attention, the accident would not have happened. Then the promise of Saturnus to Venus, that "Palamon... shall have his lady" (ll. 2471-2), could not have been realized. Naturally the development of the story should be shut out. The key word for the development is obviously expressed in the present tense. From the foregoing examples, we can see the validity of the present tense in a necessary event.

1.2.2. Respectable Attribution

The second case where verbs without dynamism get the present tense is to emphasize the respectable attribution of a character in focus.

(18) And hem conforteth in ful good entente, (ll. 958-9)
And swoor his ooth, as he was trewe knyght,

For which this noble duc as he wel kan, (ll. 2715-6)
Conforteth and honoureth every man,

In the above examples, the nobility of Theseus is emphasized. But the worthy action like

チャーサーにおける史的現在についての一考察

swoon his ooth in line 959 to characterize his nobility does not get the present, because the change from the monosyllabic preterit swoon to the disyllabic present swereth would disorder the metrical scheme. Theseus' bravery is emphasized not only by direct descriptions but by the symbol like a banner.

- (19) The rede statue of Mars, with spere and targe (ll. 975-80)
 So shyneth in his white baner large
 That alle the feeldes glyteren up and doun;
 And by his baner born is his penoun
 Of gold ful riche, in which ther was ybete
 The Mynotaur, . . .

Burnley calls the description as "the evocation of the splendour of Theseus."⁶⁾ The descriptions of Theseus' banner and pennon show the distinction between the respectable figure and the negative one. In contrast with the red statue of Mars described by the present verbs, embroidered Mynotaur is expressed in the preterit.

As well as Theseus' character, Emily's attribution is emphasized by a symbol. In example (11), Chaucer gives the historic present to the verb gaderen. In the previous lines to example (11), Emily is compared to a lily as a conventional way to characterize the purity of a maiden. Her action to gather flowers to make a subtil gerland is a suitable realization of her character. The present verb gadereth resonates with the previous comparison. Shortly to say, it links the beginning part of one passage with its ending part and at the same time the present emphasizes her character.

Related with one's character, the present tense is used to show an important psychological change. When Theseus knew that two men who were duelling were his foes, Palamon and Arcite, he condemned them to death. But by his queen's and women's pleading, he changed his mind:

- (20) Til at the laste aslaked was his mood, (ll. 1760-6)
 For pitee renneth soone in gentil herte.
 And though he first for ire quook and sterte,
 He hath considered shortly, in a clause,
 The trespas of hem bothe, and eek the cause,
 And although that his ire hir gilt accused,
 Yet in his resoun he hem bothe excused,

Before and after the key word hath considered, all his state and actions are expressed in the preterit, except the verb renneth which satisfies S 2, 3. And his conclusion caused by this psychological change is given the present tense too.

- (21) And he hem graunteth grace, and thus he (l. 1828)

大手前女子学園「研究集録」(大手前女子短大研集) 第11号 (1991年)

And when a great emotional change occurs, his/her emotion itself can be a subject for a verb in the present, if he/she is focused in a scene.

(22) For pitee renneth soone in gentil herte. (l. 1761)

And shortly, whan his ire is thus agoon, (l. 1782)

1.2.3. A Suggestive Occurrence in Future

The way to focus a main character's action by giving the present tense is expanded to the skillful distinction between facts which had occurred and a suggestive occurrence in future. We have the description of the wall of the temple of Mars (ll. 1967-2050). On the wall, all kinds of fear and misfortune brought by Mars are painted. All of them are expressed in the preterit except the following.

(23) The barbour, and the bocher, and the smyth (ll. 2025-6)
That forgeth sharpe swerdes on his styth.

In the dark, ghostly pictures, only the action of a smith is focused by the present tense and it suggests various kinds of misfortune which will be brought by the swords forged by him.

1.2.4.0. The Deviation from Supposition 1

A few cases where subjects out of focus get the present verbs are classified into 4 groups. The first is non-human subjects with their predicates in the passive voice, which will be discussed in the second chapter. The second is subjects concerning time like day, somer and yeer, which will be discussed in the third chapter. The third and the last are subjects concerning sounds, and the mass or minor characters respectively.

1.2.4.1. Sounds

(24-1) Swich sorwe he maketh that the grete tour (ll. 1277-8)
Resouneth of his youlyng and clamour.

(24-2) Up goon the trompes and the melodye, (l. 2565)

(24-3) Now ryngen trompes loude and clarioun. (l. 2600)

(24-4) Anon ther is a noyse of peple bigonne (l. 2660)

(24-5) That roreth of the cryng and the soun. (l. 2881)

The special dealing with sounds shows the difference of the narrator's perception between the sense of sight and the auditory one, when he told the story as if he had seen the very scenes directly. And the present tense gives the auditory tension in the stream of time

チヨ一サにおける史的現在についての一考察

and makes the narrative tight.

1.2.4.2. A Common Emotion Shared by All

When we find the present verbs describing not the actions of a focused character but those of common people, we know the shift of the focus from a specified person to the mass. In this case, an emotion caused by great joy or deep sorrow is shared by all.

- (25) Infinite been the sorwes and the teeres (ll. 2827-30)
 Of olde folk and folk of tendre yeeres
 In al the toun for deeth of this Theban.
 For hym ther wepeth bothe child and man;

This is a description of deep sorrow after the death of Arcite. Not by focusing on one person, but by giving the present tense to actions of all men and children, Chaucer achieves the amplification of strong emotion shared by all. On the other hand, the statement of Egeus who consoled Theseus with the thought of transmutation of this world is expressed in the preterit (ll. 2837-50), because a detached old man's preaching needs no emotional stirring.

The following example is a description of people involved in excitement caused by the victory of Arcite.

- (26) The trompours, with the loude mynstralcie (ll. 2671-3)
 The heraudes, that ful loude yelle and crie,
 Been in hire wele for joye of daun Arcite.

The present tense at the very end of this story is used to extend a shared emotion not only to all characters in the narrative but also to its audience.

- (27) Hath Palamon ywedded Emelye. (ll. 3097-107)
 And God, that al this wyde world hath wrought,
 Sende hym his love that hath it deere aboght;
 For now is Palamon in alle wele,
 Lyvyng in blisse, in richesse, and in heele,
 And Emelye hym loveth so tendrely,
 And he hire serveth so gentilly
 That nevere was ther no word hem bitwene
 Of jalousie or any oother teene.
 Thus endeth Palamon and Emelye;

This shared feeling of happiness is nothing but the achievement of "immediacy", the purpose of the historic present.

1.2.4.3. A Reversed Social Position

We find another interesting device of the deviation from S 1. Released and expelled Arcite began to work as a servant. Here all of his actions are expressed in the preterit and those of other superior servants are in the present.

- (28) For he was wys and koude soone espye, (ll. 1420-25)
 Of every servaunt, which that serveth here.
 Wel koude he hewen wode, and water bere,
 For he was yong and myghty for the nones,
 And therto he he was long and big of bones
 To doon that any wight kan hym devyse.

This reversed focus suggests the reversed social position of Arcite. This treatment harmonizes with him in obscurity, named "Philostrate" which means "overthrown by love."

Chapter II

2.1.0. The Historic Present and the Structure

2.1.1. Balance in Parallel Descriptions

In the previous chapter, we have seen how the use of the historic present supports the development of the story and clarifies the attribution of a focused character in a scene. Now we see how the use of it harmonizes with the structure.

As Charles Muscatine points out, *The Knight's Tale* is designed in a symmetrical organization. Both Palomon and Arcite keep equal worth, while in the original *Teseida*, Arcite is a protagonist and Palamon is a secondary person.⁷⁾ To keep the equality between them, Chaucer gives the historic present to two verbs in parallel episodes. The sorrow which both Arcite who was expelled and Paloman who knew Arcite's liberation felt is expressed in the present.

- (29) The deeth he feeleth thurgh his herte smyte; (ll. 1220-1)
 He wepeth wayleth crieth pitously; [He=arcite]
- (24-1) Swich sorwe he maketh that the grete tour (ll. 1277-8)
 Resouneth of his youlyng and clamour. [he=Palamon]

The present tense suggests the equal depth of their sorrow. And the gates which Theseus built (example 30), the entrance of Arcite and Palamon to the gates (example 31), both King Lygurge's and King Emetreus' fights (example 32) are all expressed in the present equally.

- (30) He estward hath, upon the gate above, (l. 1903)
 Of Mars, he maketh hath right swich another, (l. 1907)
- (31) Arcite, and eek the hondred of his parte, (ll. 2582-5)
 With baner reed is entred right anon;
 And in that selve moment Palamon
 Is under Venus, estward in the place,
- (32) The stronge kyng Lygurge is born adoun, (ll. 2644-6)
 And kyng Emetreus, for al his strengthe,
 Is born out of his sadel a swerdes lengthe,

チオーサにおける史的現在についての一考察

As far as the symmetrical structure is concerned, the equal use of the preterit in parallel episodes can keep the structure too. But it fails to highlight some conspicuous events or state. In examples (29) and (24-1), the use of the present tense accords with Arcite's sorrow exaggerated by the alliterated synonymous repetition wepeth and wayleth and with Palamon's so much exaggerated sorrow as a tour resounded with his howl and clamor. That is, the present tense reinforces their emotion exaggerated lexically.

2.1.2. A Role to link 2 related Scenes

Very carefully Chaucer gives the present tense equally to verbs which are related semantically, even if a counterpart to be given is considerably far apart from the previous one. In the morning of the mass-fight, yeomen and soldiers went to a list.

(33) Yemen on foote, and communes many oon (ll. 2509-12)
 With shorte staves, thikke as they may goon;
 Pypes, trompes, nakers, clariounes,
 That in the bataille blowen blody sounes;

Whether the present blowen is used for the generic statement or the future time in the narrative preterit, no wind instruments sounded at the moment when yeomen and soldiers marched. And then the time when these trumpets actually sounded had come.

(24-2) Up goon the trompes and the melodye, (l. 2565)

These two responding present verbs are linked and the scene between these two becomes very tight as mentioned on page 9.

The similar use of two responding verbs in the present is seen in the description of Theseus' banner. As soon as he heard the cruel deeds of Creon, he started for Thebes to kill him. Then the first verb in the present appears:

(34) His baner he desplayeth and forth rood (l. 966)

After that, he neither went to Athens nor took rest. He sent his queen and Emely to Athens and rood forth. Then the description of example (19) begins. Theseus' actions being put between the first verb displayeth and the verbs in example (19), the description becomes so tight that the audience can image how promptly Theseus acted.

2.2.0. Intentional Unbalance

Chaucer's genius is show not only in the good balance mentioned above but also in his intentional break of the balance. The break is an important point to evolve the story, as seen in

examples (15 & 16). Sometimes the break saves the flatness of a long symmetrical description.

(35) And in this wise thise lordes, alle and some, (ll. 2187-9)
Been on the Sondag to the citee come
Aboute pryme. and in the toun alight

These lines appear after a long description of Kings Emetreus and Lygurege (ll. 2128-89) expressed in the preterit. The action not of the major kings but of minor lords, is expressed in the present Been . . . come. The present tense closes the topic of 2 kings tightly, which is expressed verbosely in the symmetrical pattern.

Another skillful break of the balance is seen in the following.

(36) The fires brenne upon the auter cleere, (l. 2331)
 And with that word, the arwes in the caas (ll. 2358-9)
 Of the goddesse clateren raste and ryng

Before the mass-fight, Emely and Arcite went to the temples of Diana and Mars respectively. Emely's actions and state are expressed in the preterit, and the response of Diana is done in the present. The present focuses on the most dramatic happening. The emotional reaction of Emely to the mysterious omen takes the present tense.

(37) But oonly for the feere thus hath she cried, (ll. 2344-5)
 And weep that it was pitee for to heere.

The second verb weep should take the disyllabic present wepeth if it would not disorder the meter.

Paralleling Diana's response to Emely, Mars gave his revelation to Arcite.

(38) The rynges on the temple dore that honge, (ll. 2422-3)
 And eek the dores, clatereden ful faste,

Comparing this preterit verb clatereden with the present verb clateren in example (36), we can find an evident difference of the importance of Diana's and Mars' revelation. In the case of Diana, the clatter of arrows is the climax before she vanished. On the other hand, in the case of Mars, the clatter of doors and rings is only one of foregoing omens before the statue of Mars cried "Victory," which is the climax. Chaucer's different treatment for the same verb used in the parallel scenes harmonizes with the different reactions between Emely and Arcite: she was upset extremely by fear and astonished very much, while he was afraid "somewhat" (l. 2424). By breaking the balance kept by the historic present given equally in parallel scenes, Chaucer reinforces the psychological difference between characters.

チヨ一サにおける史的現在についての一考察

2.3.0. The Historic Present and the Left Dislocation

One of the purposes of the historic present is to focus on some actions or state. There is a structure called the "left dislocation" to focus on words by putting them at the left side of the subject. Here we must examine whether these 2 devices to focus on some words are combined. We have 7 examples of the left dislocation. Two of them are irrelevant to our discussion because their left dislocated parts consist of the noun phrases. Two examples do not take the present verbs in the dislocated parts and the others do. Two of them are ambiguous as to whether they take the present of reflection or the historic present as follows.

- (39) Ne who sat first ne last upon the deys, (ll. 2200-6)
 What ladyes fairest been or best daunsynge,
 Or which of hem kan dauncen best and synge,
 Ne who moost felyngly speketh of love;
 What haukes silten of the perche above,
 What houndes ligen on the floor adoun-
 Of al this make I now no mencion,

Only the last one takes the present verb in the part.

- (8) And Arcita, that in the court roial (ll. 1497-502)
 With Theseus is squier principal,
Is risen and looketh on the myrie day.
And for to doon his observaunce to May,
 Remembrynge on the poynt of his desir,
 He on a courser, startlynge as the fir,
 Is riden into the feeldes hym to pleye,

As far as this eample is concerned, 2 devices are combined. As the 3 underlined verbs in the present tense have no feature of movement, the tense seem to be given for its structure. As a whole, however, we cannot find the harmonious combination of them.

2.4.0. The Historic Present and the Passive Voice

The passive voice is a marked structure in which a recipient is focused. There are 2 statements that Arcite in focus is carried from one place to another. Naturally they are expressed in the passive voice as follows:

- (40) Anon he was yborn out of the place (l. 2694)
 Tho was he . . . ybrought . . . (ll. 2696-7)

Though both the predicates in the examples above satisfy S1, 2, 3, they do not take the present tense, because of their passivity.

On the other hand, there are 8 examples of the passive voice expressed in the present. Some of them like example (41) get the present at the initiation of a new topic, and others get it for the semantic dynamism of the state of a character in focus as seen in example (32).

大手前女子学園「研究集録」(大手前女子短大研集) 第11号 (1991年)

- (41) Depeynted been the walles up and doun (l. 2054)
 Now been thise lystes mand and Theseus, (l. 2089)
- (32) The stronge kyng Lygurge is born adoun (ll.2644-6)
 And kyng Emetreus . . .
 Is born out of his sadel. . .

The 8 examples seem to get the present tense because of the contextual and semantic reasons rather than the syntactic reason that the focused recipient in the passive voice is harmoniously combined with the historic present, although the present in the following cannot be explained.

- (42) . . . is the strete ywrye (l. 2904)

2.5.0. The Historic Present in the Double Frame

Chaucer's intentional non-use of the present tense accords with the double frame structure.

- (43) Under the sonne he looketh and anon (ll. 1697-702)
 He was war of Arcite and Palamon,
 That foughten breme as it were bores two.
 The brighte swerdes wenten to and fro
 So hidously that with the leeste strook
 It semed as it wolde felle an ook.

This is a scene where Theseus saw the fight between Palamon and Arcite. Betraying our expectation, no historic present appears in the description of the fight itself which makes us feel dynamic, while the action of Theseus gets the present looketh. Here the narrator tells the fight through the eyes of Theseus. That is, it is described through a double frame. The event in the double frame is remote, which needs no immediacy. The non-use of the present tense harmonizes with the frame structure. This remoteness is shown clearly in the description of the wall of the temple of Mars mentioned on page 9. All the verbs to depict the events and state in the picture are in the preterit except for the verb forgeth in example (23) and the verb dwellleth used at the initiation of the topic.

2.6.0. The Historic Present in Complex Sentences

To see the frequency of the occurrence of the historic present in the main clause and the subordinate one, we exclude sentences in which verbs in the main and the subordinate clauses are expressed in the same tense. The following table shows the distribution of the present tense in the main and the subordinate clauses.

チョーサにおける史的現在についての一考察

	present in main :	present in sub.
adverbial clause	14	10
adjective clause	5	10
noun clause	1	1

Judging from it, we can safely say that the historic present is apt to occur in the adjective clause. By modifying the previous noun, its attribution may be focused. With regard to the adverbial clause, any conspicuous tendency cannot be pointed out. Concerning the noun clauses, most of them are regarded as the present of reflection, which is excluded from this discussion. Therefore, we cannot say anything because of our scanty data.

Chapter III

3.1.0. The Historic Present and A New Topic

As we have introduced, Burnley points out the coincidence of the historic present with the initiation of a new topic. We examine how the first sentence of 63 scenes begins.

The narrator's addressing	14
A direct narration of a character	1
Verb in the preterit	26
Verb in the present	22

14 scenes begin with the narrator's addressing, including 2 statements of general truth, and one with a direct narration of Theseus. These 15 scenes are irrelevant to our discussion. 26 scenes begin with a sentence with a verb expressed in the preterit and 22 in the present. In these 22, 6 complex sentences are included. But as shown in the previous section, there is no outstanding difference of the frequency of the historic present in the main clause and the subordinate one. Judging from the ratio of 26 to 22, we cannot support Burnley's statement.

Adding to these 22 scenes, 14 scenes of narrator's addressing with verbs or auxiliaries in the present seem to give him such impression.

3.2.0. The Historic Present and Non-Human Subject

The most notable thing about the initiation of a new topic is the subject concerning time like yeer, somer and day. They never take verbs in the present tense unless they occur at the initiation of a new topic, because they cannot be in focus. As shown in example (41), non-human subject can take a present verb in the passive voice generally when it is put at the initiation of a new topic.

Conclusion

We have tried to find some criteria by which Chaucer gave the present tense to some verbs in *The Knight's Tale*. Although we cannot always explain motivation for all occurrences of the historic present, we can say at least that the historic present is generally employed when a verb with the feature of dynamism, which often means the movement from one place to another, is used to express an action of a character in focus. In the feature of dynamism, the ingressive feature is prevented from getting the present tense and on the contrary, the feature of concreteness favors the tense.

On the other hand, the present tense of verbs without the feature of dynamism is employed for suggestive, explanatory, descriptive or stylistic purposes.

When an inevitable event for the development of the story, like the beginning of discord between the main characters and the cause of a hero's death, happens, the present tense is always used to suggest the significance of the event. And it is also used to suggest some happenings in future in the narrative, in contrast with events which had happened, expressed in the preterit.

And the most respectable attribution of a character in focus and sounds, both of which the narrator cannot perceive by his sense of sight, are expressed in the tense too.

As well as the vividness produced by the verbs with the feature of dynamism, the present tense given to actions of the mass of people vividly amplifies a common emotion of joy, excitement, and sorrow shared by all.

Seeing the historic present in relation with the symmetrical structure, there are 3 kinds of devices. One is the equal use of the present tense in a pair of symmetrical descriptions. When a verb is expressed in the present in the previous description, the same verb or a verb

チョーサーにおける史的現在についての一考察

related semantically in the latter one takes the same tense too. By two verbs given the present tense equally, equal depth of sorrow, equal strength and courage, and equal splendor are expressed, being foiled as a conspicuous event or state. Sometimes the use of this present accords with exaggerated expressions lexically.

The second is the non-use of the present tense both in parallel descriptions except for its use at the end of them as a tight conclusion. This use can avoid the flatness of descriptions.

The third is the unbalanced use of the present tense in parallel descriptions. Different degree of emotion and different reactions to similar events are suggested by breaking the symmetrical balance intentionally: by the use and non-use of the present tense, a subtle psychological or circumstantial difference is suggested. We find Chaucer's genius not only in the good balance in the symmetrical structure, but also in his intentional unbalance.

Besides this unbalance, he deviates intentionally from his criteria to give the present tense to a verb. The deviation that the actions of minor servants are expressed in the present, while those of the main character are in the preterit, accords with the reversed social position that he must serve them.

In regard to the frame structure, the choice of the present tense depends on it. When the narrator tells a scene through the eyes of a character and scenes painted on a wall, the events through the character's eyes and in the pictures happen within the inner frame of the double structure. Namely, they keep remoteness from the narrator, which need no "immediacy." In these cases, the present tense is not generally employed. On the contrary, the action of the character in the outer frame, who looks at the scene directly, is expressed in the present.

Concerning the coincidence of the historic present with the initiation of a new topic, the validity of the statement of Burnley is not proved in *The Knight's Tale*. The first verb in a new topic can get either the present or the preterit in an approximate proportion, whether it occurs in the main clause or the adverbial one. Subjects concerning time are the most notable thing and get the present verb only when they are put at the initiation of a new topic.

What we have found as Chaucer's criteria to give the historic present to some verbs is deduced only from one work of his so that in future we should extend our investigation to his other works to see whether this conclusion can be generalized criteria.

大手前女子学園「研究集録」(大手前女子短大研集)第11号(1991年)

Acknowledgment - I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. Eiko Ito, Professor of Kobe College, for her critical reading and direction of this paper.

Notes

1. David Burnley, *The Language of Chaucer* (London: Macmillan, 1983) 51.
2. *ibid.*, 55.
3. This investigation is based on the text *The Riverside Chaucer* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1987). And underlies in quotations are mine.
4. J. M. Steadman, Jr. "The Origin of the Historical Present" *Studies in Philology* 14 (1917) : 4.
5. Elizabeth Closs Traugott, *A History of English Syntax* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winstons, INC., 1972) 141.
6. Burnley, 55.
7. Charles Muscatine, "Order and Disorder," *Geoffrey Chaucer's The Knight's Tale* ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1988) 11-28.

Works consulted

- Bloom, Harold. Ed. *Geoffrey Chaucer's The Knight's Tale*. New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1988.
- Burnley, David. *The Language of Chaucer*. London: Macmillan, 1983.
- Cooper, Helen. *The Canterbury Tales*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989.
- Leech, Geoffrey N. *Meaning and the English Verb*. London: Longman, 1971.
- Steadman, J.M.Jr. "The Origin of the Historical Present" *Studies in Philology* 14 (1917) : 1-46.
- Traugott, Elizabeth Closs. *A History of English Syntax* New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winstons, INC., 1972.
- Zimmerman, R. "Verbal Syntax and Style in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*" *English Studies* 54 (1973): 533-43.