

Turves from horses hooves, and flakes of foam from the bridle-bits

The chariot episodes in the Táin Bó Cúailnge

**An analysis of the description of the chariot in the Táin Bó Cúailnge and the influence of
orality on this description.**

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April 2016

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Introduction

The chariot or *carpat*¹ in Old Irish Literature poses an interesting problem, since the chariots are described in the literature but are poorly represented in other sources. There is no direct archaeological evidence for military use of the chariot in Early Ireland², nor are there concrete references in the Law Texts³ or in any other art except for the literature. Several theories exist on the origin of the chariot as a motif in Early Irish myth. Some claim that the chariot from the *Táin Bó Cúailnge*⁴ is a representation of a chariot in existence in Iron Age Ireland⁵. The Iron Age chariot would have been a remnant from the La Tène period, where princes on the mainland were buried with chariots⁶ and must have travelled with the tribes north-westwards to eventually end up in Ireland⁷. Others believe the chariot to be a purely literary motif⁸. Besides the many theories the question remains: did *carpat* ever exist in Early Irish society? And if yes, when did it exist? Archaeology has no answers, neither have the Laws. The only real evidence of *carpat* remains hidden in the Old Irish tales. This paper will look at the influence of orality on the depiction of *carpat*, in the *Táin Bó Cúailnge*⁹ in order to add to the understanding of *carpat*.

The chariot as a literary phenomenon can be found throughout Irish literature, though it is most apparent in the earlier texts and the Ulster Cycle¹⁰. One never reads about Finn and his chariot, but Cú Chulainn seems to be inseparable from his scythed chariot and his charioteer, Lóg. This research will focus on *TBC* within the Ulster cycle, because this is the largest and most coherent corpus of the Ulster Cycle texts¹¹. The text of *TBC* has a very complex structure. Some scholars believe the structure to be a product of its oral origins, this is called the nativist view¹². Others take a non-nativist view and believe that the structure of *TBC* does not originate from the oral tradition, but that *TBC* was created by the Christian monks, who wrote the corpus down¹³. The corpus is built up of a series of different stories. Some belong to the main storyline and others are classified as the pre- or fore-tales (*rémscéla*).

¹ Translated as 'war-chariot' in E. Quin, *Dictionary of the Irish Language, based on mainly on Old and Middle Irish Material*, Compact edition (1990): p.101.

² Finbar McCormick, "The Horse in Early Ireland", *Anthropozoologica* 42.1 (2007): p.90.

³ The Laws do mention a *carpat-saer* or 'chariot-builder'. The chariot is, however, not discussed as a military tool but as a way of transport for people of high rank. Fergus Kelly, *Early Irish Farming: a Study Based Mainly on the Law-Texts of the 7th and 8th Centuries AD* (1998): pp.496-499

⁴ 'the Cattle-raid of Cooley', Cecile O'Rahilly, *Táin Bó Cúailnge: From the Book of Leinster* (2004): p.ix.

⁵ 'These tales represent a state of affairs older than the 5th century with a wholly pagan background, and, according to professor Jackson, depict the civilisation of the Early Iron Age which in Ireland, untouched by Roman influence, lasted much longer than in Gaul or Britain', O'Rahilly, *TBC: From the Book of Leinster*, p.xii.

⁶ 'typified by its many richly furnished warrior burials. Some of these include chariots, an innovation in Celtic warfare.', John Haywood, *the Historical Atlas of the Celtic World* (2009): p.34.

⁷ 'these immigrants brought with them such characteristics as their iron swords and decorated scabbards, and, in particular, their use of the war-chariot', O'Rahilly, *TBC: From the Book of Leinster*, p.xii.

⁸ 'the scythed chariot is a late literary motif and no part of the old tradition', David Greene, "The Chariot as described in Irish Literature", *The Iron Age in The Irish Sea Province* (1972): p.60.

⁹ Hereafter referred to as *TBC*.

¹⁰ Greene, *The Chariot as Described in Irish Literature*, p.59.

¹¹ Cecile O'Rahilly, *Táin Bó Cúailnge: Recension I* (1976): p.vii.

¹² For example see: Kenneth Jackson, *The Oldest Irish Tradition: A Window on the Iron Age* (1964).

¹³ For example see: Kim McCone, *Pagan Past and Christian Present in Early Irish Literature* (2000).

The composition of stories differs between manuscripts and most stories exist with several endings¹⁴. The main storyline however stays the same. It tells of Medb, queen of Connacht, who travels into Ulster territory to claim a bull that has been denied to her by the Ulstermen. The Ulstermen suffer from a terrible curse, which makes them helpless, when attacked and they cannot defend their land or property. Cú Chulainn, being excepted from this curse defends Ulster singlehandedly against the Connachtmen. Every day Medb and her husband Ailill send one of their best warriors to take Cú Chulainn on in single combat. The *rémscéla* give explanation for some of the problems the main story poses, like the reason for the curse of the Ulstermen or the reason why Medb wants to obtain the bull. In theory, an oral performer could adapt the version to his audience, to their knowledge of the tale and to the occasion¹⁵ or add stories of his own making¹⁶. How does this oral element in *TBC* influence the depiction of *carpat*?

This thesis will analyse the influence of orality on the depiction of *carpat* in *TBC*. To do so it will analyse the depiction of *carpat* in Recension I and II of *TBC* by looking at its uses within the text and how the *carpat* is described. In this analysis this thesis will use the editions of Recension I and II by Cecile O’Rahilly, because using both editions from one editor will give a more stable and clear image of the influence of orality opposed to the influence from different editors and translators¹⁷. It will then analyse the change in the depiction of *carpat* by using narrative theories of Mieke Bal¹⁸ and Hildegard Tristram¹⁹. This thesis will also analyse the orality of both recensions of *TBC* by using the theories on orality by Walter J. Ong²⁰. Even though the theories on orality from Ong are mostly based on orality in the 19th and 20th century, many of the concepts can be applied to Medieval and Early Irish society as well.

By answering all of these questions this research will give a broader and more detailed view of *carpat* in Early Irish literature. By doing this it will contribute to the understanding of *carpat* and perhaps to an understanding of its function within Early Irish literature or its origin inside or outside of literature. It will build on the existing research and will add to the corpus of papers written on the subject. Hopefully, it will help people looking into the subject in the future to understand the subject better. Besides shining more light on the subject of *carpat*, this paper will also add to the understanding of orality and functional narratology. It will show how theories by Ong and Bal can be applied to Early Irish literature and how an oral nature can influence the structure and subjects of stories.

¹⁴ ‘The story of the Táin, told countless times in oral recitation, must have varied continuously with the additions and improvisations of each teller elaborating and developing a traditional theme’, O’Rahilly, *TBC: From the Book of Leinster*, p.xvi.

¹⁵ ‘What made a good epic poet was, among other things of course, first, tacit acceptance of the fact that episodic structure was the only way and the totally natural way of imagining and handling the narrative, and, second, possession of supreme skill in managing flashbacks and other episodic techniques’ Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (2012): p.141.

¹⁶ ‘the tale grew by the accretion of episodes’, O’Rahilly, *TBC: From the Book of Leinster*, p.xix.

¹⁷ The editions by O’Rahilly are also the most recent editions of *TBC*.

¹⁸ Mieke Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative Third Edition* (2009).

¹⁹ Hildegard Tristram, “Mimesis and Diegesis in the Cattle Raid of Cúailnge”, *Ildánach Ildírech: A Festschrift for Proinsias Mac Cana*, ed. by John Carey, John T. Koch and Pierre-Yves Lambert (1999): pp.263-276.

²⁰ Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy*.

The title of my thesis is based on an English translation of *TBC* by Joseph Dunn from 1914²¹. The original Irish quotation is: '*fótbaiqe a crúib greg nó uanfad a glomraib srían*'²².

²¹ Joseph Dunn, *The Cattle-Raid of Cooley*, <http://adminstaff.vassar.edu/sttaylor/Cooley/index.html>.

²² O'Rahilly, *TBC: From the Book of Leinster*, p.16 l.583.

Theoretical Framework

Bal theorizes that a narrative functions on three different levels: the text, story and fabula²³. Space embodies different functions in all these levels. In the text, which is what is compared in this thesis, most important in space is the description. According to Bal: 'description is linked to the perception of the character'²⁴. Bal links the concepts of description and perception to that of focalization²⁵. The focalizer in a text is the one that observes the object, this is not necessarily the same person as the one giving the description²⁶. This thesis will try to determine the focalizer in the descriptions of *carpat*. It will attempt to answer the question: Does the focalization of *carpat* change between Recension I and II?

Besides the change of focalization this thesis will also look at the change between mimesis and diegesis between Recension I and II. In her article on mimesis and diegesis, Tristram discusses these two aspects in combination with *TBC*, from Bal's functional narratology. Mimesis and diegesis are both techniques used in narratology. 'Mimesis means the verbal act of 'imitating' or 'showing' the events and actions'²⁷. This technique uses direct speech to create a reliable representation of the events that occurred. 'Diegesis means the act of verbal 'mediating' or 'telling' of the events and actions narrated'²⁸. This technique often uses indirect speech in narration, which creates a more visible narrator. Tristram claims that the narrating techniques in the different recensions of *TBC* do not differ. This thesis will test this theory by looking at the descriptions of *carpat*.

To analyse the orality of the two recensions of *TBC* this thesis will use Ong's theories on orality. Ong's theory is based around a few important concepts. Firstly there is his concept of a primary oral society²⁹ or a society where there is no or very little knowledge of writing. Even the knowledge of the existence of writing influences the orality in a society. Another society exists, where there is knowledge of the existence of writing, but the knowledge of writing is exclusive for the upper class of society. The last kind of society Ong names is the literate society, in this society almost everyone has knowledge of writing and writing has become a necessity for people in that society. The late Middle Irish society around 1100 would have classified as the second type of society, because even though the monks or scribes, who wrote down the texts were literate, the majority of the public would not have been.

Furthermore, Ong comments on the use of the term oral literature³⁰, which is often used to describe the stories that are performed in oral society. A tale is called oral when it has not been committed to writing. The tale exists in speech but has no form in writing, no physical appearance. Oral tales like the one described above have different characteristics that

²³ Bal, *Narratology*, p.5.

²⁴ Bal, *Narratology*, p.144.

²⁵ 'Description is a privileged site of focalization, and as such it has great impact on the ideological and aesthetic effect of the text', Bal, *Narratology*, p.35.

²⁶ Bal, *Narratology*, pp.145-165.

²⁷ Tristram, *Mimesis and Diegesis*, p.266.

²⁸ Tristram, *Mimesis and Diegesis*, p.266.

²⁹ 'a primary oral culture, that is, a culture with no knowledge whatsoever of writing or even of the possibility of writing', Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, p.31.

³⁰ Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, pp.10-15.

originate in the oral nature of the tale. The most striking characteristic of the oral tale is the lack of a physical form. Then if an oral tale has no appearance, how can we talk about the Early Irish tales as oral? They have a physical form, because they are written down in manuscripts. Ong comments that the word 'literature' itself implies a written text. But when an oral tale is committed to writing it does not immediately lose the oral characteristics, this happens over time when the tale is submitted to re-writing by a literate society. In accordance with Ong's theory, this thesis will only use the term oral literature to talk about texts that are written down but show oral residue, like Recension I and II.

Besides this Ong focusses on the mnemonics of oral stories. Memory was much more important in oral culture than in a literate culture³¹, because all knowledge was kept intact by memory³². This is the reason for the formulaic structure of oral stories³³. Ong formulates nine different characteristics that occur in oral thinking. The first three characteristics he formulates concern the structure of a story. Firstly, the additive structure of oral stories, this works really well when performing a tale but when reading it this makes the tale seem dense and long³⁴. Together with aggregative language³⁵ and repetitions³⁶, this creates a tale that feels ungrammatical to a literate audience. This ungrammatical feeling is created, because a literate audience is not used to the repetitions or the aggregative and additive language from an oral text. Another of Ong's characteristics is the homeostatic³⁷ status of oral stories and oral society. Homeostatic status means that tales lose certain information over time when it becomes redundant. Ong gives the example of a genealogy of the Gonja people in Ghana³⁸. Two sons of the founder of Gonja disappeared from genealogy, because their divisions of the land were assimilated in the other divisions. Knowledge of their existence thus became redundant and was forgotten. The next two characteristics of Ong deal with the traditional nature of oral stories³⁹ and the fact that their subjects are close to the human life world⁴⁰. Oral stories often deal with myths, legends and heroes that have been known for ages and do not tend to change. This mainly has to do with the preservation of knowledge which was done through these tales. Changing the tale, as discussed in the piece on the homeostatic status, meant that certain knowledge would disappear. Besides this the oral stories tend to be agonistically toned⁴¹, this means that there is an aspect of competition involved. Oral performances were very dependent on their audience⁴². The audience in an oral society was expected to get involved in the story that was being performed and they would often be asked questions by the oral performer. In an oral performance the composition of an audience would

³¹ 'Wood strikingly suggests that memory played a different role in oral culture from which it played in literate culture' Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, p.19.

³² Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, pp.57-67.

³³ Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, pp.25-26.

³⁴ Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, pp.37-38.

³⁵ Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, pp.38-39.

³⁶ Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, pp.39-41.

³⁷ Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, pp.46-49.

³⁸ Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, pp.47-48.

³⁹ Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, pp.41-42.

⁴⁰ Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, pp.42-43.

⁴¹ Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, pp.43-45.

⁴² Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, pp.45-46.

differ and often would require a change in the story. Multiple versions of stories existed and storytellers were judged on their ability to adapt the story to the audience and occasion⁴³. Finally Ong claims that oral stories are often more situational than abstract⁴⁴. This thesis will focus on the structural differences between Recension I and II of *TBC*, which means it will mainly concern itself with repetitions.

⁴³ Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, p.141.

⁴⁴ Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, pp.49-57.

Methodology

This thesis will discuss five questions in order to research the main question: Does the oral residue influence the depiction of *carpat* in Recensions I and II of the *Táin Bó Cúailnge*?

The first chapter will show the different recensions of *TBC*. Which recensions exist of *TBC* and why are only Recension I and II used in this thesis? This chapter will also explain, where the different recensions can be found and how they differ.

Secondly this thesis will look at the use of *carpat* in Recensions I and II of *TBC*. By going through the edited texts of O’Rahilly⁴⁵, I will count and catalogue the appearances of the word *carpat* in its different morphological forms. Different forms may include several cases, singular and plural forms, but also forms with alternative spelling or compound uses of *carpat*. By doing this, the thesis will show if there is any change in the amount of occurrences of *carpat* in Recensions I and II of *TBC*. This chapter will also give a close reading of the different functions of *carpat* in Recensions I and II of *TBC*. This will be researched by using the translation and edited text as given by O’Rahilly.

The findings of the second chapter will be combined in the third chapter, where the change of *carpat* will be researched by using the theory of Bal⁴⁶ on focalization. Does the focalization of the *carpat* descriptions change between Recension I and II? If yes, how? If no, is there another change that can be observed in *carpat*? Besides the theory of focalization this thesis will look at the change of narrative mode as discussed in *Mimesis and Diegesis in the Cattle Raid of Cuailnge* by Tristram⁴⁷. In this case I will again go through the texts looking at the different instances that *carpat* appears in order to determine the focalization and the narrative mode.

The fourth chapter will focus on *TBC* and its origins. It will present a discussion about the orality of *TBC* between nativist and non-nativist theories.

The final chapter will research the orality of Recension I and II of *TBC*, by comparing them to the theories of Ong⁴⁸. It will look closely at repetition in the texts. It will also give an indication of how a change in *carpat* could be explained by a change in orality.

⁴⁵ O’Rahilly, *Recension I* and O’Rahilly, *TBC: from the Book of Leinster*.

⁴⁶ Bal, *Narratology*.

⁴⁷ Tristram, *Mimesis and Diegesis*.

⁴⁸ Ong, *Orality and Literacy*.

Recensions of the *Táin Bó Cúailnge*

The story of *TBC* has been passed down in three different recensions. The earliest recension (Recension I) is found in the following manuscripts: *Lebor na hUidre* (dated to ca. 1100⁴⁹), *the Yellow Book of Lecan* (dated to the 14th century), *Egerton 1782* (dated to 16th century) and *O'Curry MS. 1* (dated to late 16th century)⁵⁰. None of these manuscripts contain the complete version of *TBC*, but in the edition by O'Rahilly the different versions are used to create one complete version. The edition takes *Lebor na hUidre* as the main text and uses *the Yellow Book of Lecan*, where the text of *Lebor na hUidre* is incomplete or corrupt⁵¹. The text of *Lebor na hUidre* is interesting because it is filled with repetitions, inconsistencies and contradictions created by interpolations⁵². Two theories exist about the origin of this text. The first claims that the repetitions and inconsistencies derive from an oral tradition⁵³. The second believes that these are a product of the combining of two earlier written versions⁵⁴. The interpolations by the scribe (identified as H) give different versions for some of the tales⁵⁵. The interpolations refer to other texts and versions of *TBC*⁵⁶. This was thus not the first version of *TBC* to be written down⁵⁷. The language that is found in Recension I can mainly be categorized as Old Irish, but has a lot of Middle Irish forms. This proves that the text existed before it was written down in Recension I in the twelfth century, because the language used by then would have been late Middle Irish. Recension II of *TBC* is the most coherent and complete version of the text in existence today and can be found in *the Book of Leinster*⁵⁸ (compiled around late twelfth century⁵⁹). Recension II is complete except for the loss of one page⁶⁰. In style, Recension II differs greatly from Recension I. The style used is much more detailed⁶¹ and the text is, thus, also much longer than Recension I⁶². Recension II is also written in Middle Irish, whereas Recension I uses a combination of Old and Middle Irish. Recension III is a highly fragmentary version of the text⁶³ and thus is not used in this thesis. Recension III is written in

⁴⁹ O'Rahilly, *Recension I*, p.vii.

⁵⁰ O'Rahilly, *Recension I*, p.vii.

⁵¹ O'Rahilly, *Recension I*, p.xxii.

⁵² 'Interpolations were added and a compilation of the two versions, containing the mentioned inconsistencies, was then made in the eleventh century', Ruairí Ó hUiginn, "The Background and Development of the *Táin Bó Cúailnge*", in *Aspects of the Táin*, ed. J.P. Mallory. (1992): p.31.

⁵³ 'O'Rahilly sees it as the natural process of a long oral tradition', Ó hUiginn, *Background and Development of the Táin*, p.32.

⁵⁴ 'It is obviously a compilation showing different linguistic strata and is marked by many inconsistencies and doublets', Ó hUiginn, *Background and Development of the Táin*, p.31.

⁵⁵ O'Rahilly, *Recension I*, p.vii.

⁵⁶ 'Mad iar n-arailib immorro dorala and so imacallaim eter Medb 7 Fedelm banfáith, amal ro innisimar remoind', O'Rahilly, *Recension I*, p.10 ll. 303-304. 'According, to others, however, it was here that the dialogue between Medb and Feidelm Banfháith as we have related above took place', O'Rahilly, *Recension I*, p. 133.

⁵⁷ 'The compiler quotes throughout "from another version" or "according to other books" i.e. manuscripts', O'Rahilly, *Recension I*, p.viii.

⁵⁸ O'Rahilly, *TBC: From the Book of Leinster*, p.xv.

⁵⁹ Úaitéar Mac Gearailt, "The Language of Some Late Middle Irish Texts in the *Book of Leinster*", *Studia Hibernica* 26 (1992): p.167.

⁶⁰ O'Rahilly, *TBC: From the Book of Leinster*, p.xv.

⁶¹ O'Rahilly, *TBC: From the Book of Leinster*, p. xlvi.

⁶² Recension I (ed. Cecile O'Rahilly) contains 4160 lines, whilst Recension II (ed. Cecile O'Rahilly) contains 4925 lines.

⁶³ O'Rahilly, *TBC: From the Book of Leinster*, p.xvi.

Early Modern Irish and, thus, would pose a different view of *carpat*. Due to the length and clarity of this thesis it will, however be left out. It would pose an interesting research subject for the future.

Carpat in the Táin Bó Cúailnge

Recension I

The original text of Recension I shows 122 instances of *carpat* in different forms with an additional two usages within a place name⁶⁴. There is use of alternative spelling in some cases, like the use of *carbat* in line 2912 or *carpaid* in line 2706. Also interesting is the use of *óencharpait*⁶⁵ which is used in a formula, that is used when Lóg and Cú Chulainn are approached by a single warrior. This compound is used four times in Recension I⁶⁶. In these cases Lóg calls out to Cú Chulainn to let him know a warrior is nearing their camp: '*Óencharpat chucaind sunn, a C[h]úcacán*'⁶⁷. *Carpat* was even named in a triad⁶⁸: '*Túarascbáil charpait Con Culaind annso, in tres príimcharpat na scélaigeachta for Tánaich Bú Cúailnge*'⁶⁹.

A close reading of the episodes containing *carpat* shows different uses of the chariot in Recension I. Chariots seem to be closely associated with people of high rank, for instance warriors, kings and queens⁷⁰. The exterior of a chariot gives status to its owner, so there is a great focus on the use of expensive materials in the chariot like gold, silver or silk: '*Carpat imbar rígráith romóir cona chuingib dronórdaib, cona t[h]arbc[h]lár umaide, cona féirtsib crédumaib, cona c[h]reit cróestana cróestitim cleasaird clocda clocatcain curate, for díb echaib duba dénmecha suntig séitrig sogabáltaich sodaim ma grindib állib a fén*'⁷¹.

A description of the chariot often also includes a description of the horses that pull the chariot. The description of the horses does not only deal with their exterior but also with their nature or spirit, for instance in the episode *the Incantation of Lug*. After a visit from Lug, Cú Chulainn falls asleep for three days and three nights to heal from his wounds. In his absence the hundred and fifty youths of Emain Macha defend the kingdom against Medb and Ailill. When Cú Chulainn wakes up he discovers that all of the youths have died. Cú Chulainn orders Lóg to yoke the chariot and prepare for battle. When he jumps on the chariot on his way to battle, the chariot is described. The description of the chariot is not very specific, but describes different aspects of the chariot. The horses, however, are described more specifically than one

⁶⁴ 'Áth Carpat', O'Rahilly, *Recension I*, p.30, ll.951-952. 'Clúain Carpat', O'Rahilly, *Recension I*, p.32, l.1020.

⁶⁵ *Óencharpait* is a compound of the words *óen* (meaning one) and *carpat*. The compound can be translated as 'one chariot' or 'one single chariot'.

⁶⁶ O'Rahilly, *Recension I*, ll.339, 829, 2702 and 3152.

⁶⁷ O'Rahilly, *Recension I*, p.82 ll.2702. 'A single chariot is coming towards us, little Cú', O'Rahilly, *Recension I*, p.198.

⁶⁸ Triads were used in Early Celtic Literature (often Welsh). They linked important events, subjects or people into three's. Brynley F. Robert, "Oral Tradition and Welsh Literature: A Description and Survey", *Oral Tradition* 3/1-2 (1988): p.67.

⁶⁹ O'Rahilly, *Recension I*, p.89 ll.2941-2942. 'A description of Cú Chulainn's chariot, one of the three principal chariots in story-telling, on the Foray of Cúailnge', O'Rahilly, *Recension I*, p.204.

⁷⁰ 'In this text – as in early Irish literature generally – the chariot is associated particularly with persons of high rank, the king and the bishop', Kelly, *Early Irish Farming*, p.497.

⁷¹ O'Rahilly, *Recension I*, p. 82 ll.2707-2711. 'A chariot like a great palace, with yoke of solid gold and a strong panel of copper, with its shafts of bronze, its frame with narrow compact opening, high and sword-straight, fit for a hero, drawn by two black horses, active, spirited, vigorous, easily yoked, ...', O'Rahilly, *Recension I*, pp.198-199.

would expect. This example shows, that a description of a chariot often incorporates a description of the horses and their nature:

‘larsin ríastrad sin ríastarda im Choin Culaind is and sin doreblaing ind err gascid ina chathc[h]arpat serda co n-erraib iarnaidib, cona fáebraib tanaidib, cona baccánaib 7 cona birc[h]rúadib, cona thairbirib níath, cona nglés aursolcidi, cona their[n]gib gaíthe bítís ar fertsib 7 íallaib 7 fithisib 7 folomnaib don charpat sin. Is amlaid boí in carpat sin cona chreit chróestana chróestirim chlesaird clangdírig caurata ara taillfitís ocht n-airm n-indflatha co lúas fainde nó gaíthe nó chliabaig dar róe maige. Ro suidiged in carpat sin for dá n-echaib díana dremna dásachtacha cendbeca cruindbeca corrbeca biruích bascind bruinnederg sesta suachinte sogabálta sodain fo grinnib áillib a fén. Indara hech díb-side ocus sé lugaid lúathlémnach tresmar túagmar traigmar fótmar fochorsid. In t-ech aile ocus sé casmongach cascháel coseng seredchóel airgdech’⁷²

‘After being thus distorted, the hero Cú Chulainn sprang into his scythed chariot, with its iron points, its thin sharp edges, its hooks and its steel points, with its nails which were on the shafts and thongs and loops and fastenings in that chariot. Thus was the chariot: it had a framework of narrow and compact opening, high enough for great feats, sword-straight, worthy of a hero. In it would fit eight sets of royal weapons, and it moved as swiftly as a swallow or as the wind or as a deer across the level plain. It was drawn by two swift horses, fierce and furious, with small round pointed heads, with pricked ears, with broad hoofs, with roan breast, steady, splendid, easily harnessed to the beautiful shafts (?) of Cú Chulainn’s chariots. One of these horses was lithe (?) and swift-leaping, eager for battle, arched of neck, with great hoofs which scattered the sods of the earth. The other horse had a curling mane, and narrow, slender feet and heels’⁷³

The descriptions from Recension I show *carpat* to be a status symbol. This is very important when it is described how Medb travels around the encampment. *‘asbert Medb fria haraid ara n-indled a nó carpti’*⁷⁴. Medb travels with nine chariots that surround her, so that she is protected from the dust of the encampment and the mud from the horses hooves.

That *carpat* is a symbol of wealth and power is also supported by several instances in Recension I, where the chariot is used as payment. Medb and Ailill use the chariot as payment for those who fight Cú Chulainn in single combat. The worth of the chariot is shown in the amount of *cumala*⁷⁵ or female-slaves that it is worth⁷⁶. Medb and Ailill offer the warriors that

⁷² O’Rahilly, *Recension I*, p.69 ll.2279-2291.

⁷³ O’Rahilly, *Recension I*, p.188.

⁷⁴ O’Rahilly, *Recension I*, p.5 ll.136-139. ‘Medb told her charioteer to harness her nine chariots’, O’Rahilly, *Recension I*, p.128.

⁷⁵ Singular: *cumal*. Translated as ‘female-slave’ or ‘bondwoman’ in E. Quin, *DIL*, p.169.

⁷⁶ ‘The great importance of slavery emerges clearly from the fact that in the law-texts the word ‘femal slave’ (*cumal*) is often used as a unit of value’, Bernhard Maier, *The Celts: A History From the Earliest Times to the Present*, trans. Kevin Windle (2003), p.131.

are prepared to go into single combat with Cú Chulainn a chariot that is worth thrice seven *cumala*: ‘acht da thobairt **charpait** trí secht cumal dait’⁷⁷.

Besides being a status symbol the chariot in Recension I is also associated with fighting. *Carpat* is most often translated as ‘war-chariot’, however there is no archaeological evidence for the chariots to ever have been used in battle. Neither annals nor other written sources seem to refer to military use of the chariot. Recension I supports this theory with many episodes, where a single chariot approaches Lóeg and Cú Chulainn with a new challenger for single combat. These challengers exit their chariot to commence single combat from the ground. Recension I however also shows an episode, that seems to describe how Cú Chulainn is fighting from within his chariot. This episode that directly follows the description given above, describes how Cú Chulainn avenges the death of the youths of Emain Macha, by encircling the enemy and throwing up ramparts. It seems like Cú Chulainn does not leave his chariot, but the language is not clear and the episode could be interpreted in different ways:

*‘Ocus dotháet ass fón cumma sin d’insaigid a námat 7 dobretha a **charpat** mórthimchull cethri n-ollchóiced nÉrend ammaig anechtair, 7 dosbert | fóbairt bidbad fó bidbadaib foraib 7 dobreth seól trom for a **charpat** 7 dollotar rotha íarnaídi in **c[h]arpaithi** talmain corbo leór do dún 7 do daingen feib dollotar rotha íarnaíde in **charpait** hi talmain, uair is cumma atrachtatár cluid 7 rothaib íarndaíuib súas sell sechtair. Is aire focheird in circul m[b]odba sin mórthimchull cethri n-ollchóiced nÉrend ammaig anechtair arná teichtis úad 7 ná scailtís immi coros tairsed fri tendta fri tarrachtain na macraide forro. Ocus dotháet isin cath innond ar medón 7 fáilgis fáilbaigi móra do chollaib a bidbad mórthimc[h]oll in tslóig ammaig anechtair fo thrí 7 dobert fóbairt bidbad fo bidbadaib forro co torchratár bond fri bond 7 méde fri méde, bas í tiget ind árbaig. Dosrimchell aridisi fa thrí in cruth sin co farcaib cossair sessir impu fá mór-thmichull .i. bond trír fri méde trír fó chúaird timchill immón dúnad. Conid Sesrech Breslige a ainm issin Táin,⁷⁸*

‘And in that manner he came forth to attack his enemies and drove his chariot in a wide circuit outside the four provinces of Ireland. And he drove his chariot furiously so that the iron wheels sank deep into the ground casting up earth sufficient to provide fort and fortress, for there arose on the outside as high as the iron wheels dykes and boulders and rocks and flagstones and gravel from the ground. He made this warlike encirclement of the four great provinces of Ireland so that they might not flee from him nor disperse around him until he pressed them close to take vengeance on them for the deaths of the youths of Ulster. And he came across into the middle of their ranks and three times he threw up great ramparts of his enemies’ corpses outside around the host. And he made upon them the attack of a foe upon his foes so that they fell, sole of foot to sole of foot, and headless neck to headless neck, such was the density of the carnage. Three times again he encircled them in this way leaving a layer of six corpses around them, that is, the soles

⁷⁷ O’Rahilly, *Recension I*, p.79 ll.2594-2595. ‘but (you have been summoned to us) to give you a chariot worth thrice seven cumala’, O’Rahilly, *Recension I*, p.196.

⁷⁸ O’Rahilly, *Recension I*, p.70 ll.2296-2313.

of three men to the necks of three men, all around the encampment. So that the name of this tale in the Táin is Sesrech Breslige, the Sixfold Slaughter⁷⁹

Despite this one episode, which hints at the chariot being used in battle, the text poses no evidence for military use of the chariot. The chariot in the text is clearly associated with fighting and warriors, but is used to transport warriors towards single combat, which commences on foot.

The last use of *carpat* in Recension I is the chariot as a place of storage. It is described in the text how the chariot was used to store a warrior's weapons. The warriors in the Old Irish texts often used several different weapons and feats to defeat their enemies. Cú Chulainn is known for the use of his *gae bulga*⁸⁰, but he used different weapons within battle as well, like a sword or a spear⁸¹. These weapons needed a place of storage especially once the warrior was within battle. For instance when Aillil makes his servant steal Fergus' sword. He orders the servant to put the sword under the seat of the chariot to keep it safe: '*Bá maith bláth in c[h]laidib lat,*' or Aillil. '*Atnaig fót súide isin carput 7 anart léined imbi*'⁸² Besides storing weapons the chariot could be used to store the heads of fallen enemies in a battle⁸³ or other spoils of war⁸⁴. These trophies were collected and transported back home to show the status and invincibility of the victorious warrior.

Recension II

Recension II uses different forms of the word *carpat* in 126 instances, with an additional three uses in place names⁸⁵. There is thus no apparent decrease or increase in the amount of instances that *carpat* appears in the Irish text. Recension II however shows less alternative spellings and the use of *óencharpait* has disappeared except for one instance. The formula that was used in Recension I is replaced by the use of *óenláech* or a single warrior⁸⁶.

Where the depiction of *carpat* in Recension I was generally more complex because of its many different uses and associations, Recension II shows a much clearer depiction of *carpat*. *Carpat* has two functions in Recension II: transport and status symbol. The chariot is

⁷⁹ O'Rahilly, *Recension I*, p.188.

⁸⁰ '*Tochomlai amail óenga co mba cetheóra randa fichet*', O'Rahilly, *Recension I*, p.94 ll.3097-3098. 'It was a single barb when it entered but it became twenty-four (in Fer Diad's body)', O'Rahilly, *Recension I*, p.207.

⁸¹ '*Ba don chatharm chatha sin iarom ro gavastar a ocht claidbini ima arm déit ndrechsolus. Ro gabastar a ocht slegini ima sleig cócrind^a. Ro gabastar a ocht ngothnatha má goth néit. Ro gabastar a ocht cletíni 'ma deil cliss*', O'Rahilly, *Recension I*, p.68 ll.2229-2233. 'Then the royal hero took up his weapons of battle and contest and strife. Of these weapons were his eight small swords together with his ivory-hilted bright-faced sword. He took his eight little spears with his five-pronged spear. He took his eight little javelins with his ivory-handled javelin. He took his eight little darts together with his *deil chliss*' O'Rahilly, *Recension I*, p.186.

⁸² O'Rahilly, *Recension I*, p.33 ll.1054-1055. 'Make sure that the sword remain in good condition. Put it under your seat in the chariot, wrapped in a linen cloth.', O'Rahilly, *Recension I*, p.155.

⁸³ '*Adchíu in cruth immondnaig ocht cind inna chuillsennaib*', O'Rahilly, *Recension I*, p.72 ll.2380-2381. 'I see how he drives around with eight severed heads on the cushions of his chariot', O'Rahilly, *Recension I*, p.190.

⁸⁴ '*Dobeir a fodb di súdiu 7 dobeir na trí cind laiss ina charput*', O'Rahilly, *Recension I*, p.23 l.756. 'He carried off the spoils and brought the three heads with him in his chariot', O'Rahilly, *Recension I*, p.146.

⁸⁵ '*Áth Carpait*', O'Rahilly, *TBC: From the book of Leinster*, p.34 l.1259. '*Clúain Carpat*', O'Rahilly, *TBC: From the Book of Leinster*, p.37 l.1350. '*Clúain Carpat*', O'Rahilly, *TBC: From the Book of Leinster*, p.37 ll.1351-1352.

⁸⁶ '*Óenláech cucund, a Chúcúc*', O'Rahilly, *TBC: From the Book of Leinster*, p.43 ll.1578-1579. 'A single warrior comes towards us, little Cú', O'Rahilly, *TBC: From the Book of Leinster*, p.182.

used to transport warriors to single-combat. In the following episode Etarcumul, a warrior from Ailill and Medb, uses his chariot to transport him to his single-combat with Cú Chulainn:

*'Imsoí in t-ara in **carpat** arís dochum inn átha. Tucsat a clár clé fri airecht a ramus ind átha. Rathaigis Láeg. 'In carpdech dédenach baí sund ó chianaib, a Chúcúc,' ar Láeg. 'Cid de-side?' ar Cú Chulainn. 'Dobretha a chlár clé riund ar ammus ind átha.' 'Etarcumul sain, a gillai, condaig comrac cucum-sa,'⁸⁷*

'The charioteer turned the chariot again towards the ford. They turned the left board of the chariot towards the company as they made for the ford⁸⁸. Láeg noticed that. 'The last chariot-fighter who was here a while ago, little Cú,' said Láeg. 'What of him?' said Cú Chulainn. 'He turned his left board towards us as he made for the ford.' 'That is Etarcumul, driver, seeking combat of me'⁸⁹

The description of the chariot and accompaniment differs very much from Recension I. In Recension II the description of the chariot rarely includes a description of the horses yoked to the chariot. Simultaneously the descriptions seem to be less detailed in general. This can be seen when comparing the episode in which Cú Chulainn avenges the youths of Emain Macha in Recension I and II. In Recension I an elaborate description is given, whilst the same description in Recension II contains the following:

*'Iarsin ríastrad sin ríastarda im Choin Culaind iss and sin dorroeblaing ind err gaiscid ina chath**charpat** serda cona erraib iarnaidib, cona fáebraib tanaidib, cona baccánaib 7 cona birchrúadib, cona thairbirib níath, cona glés aursloicthi, cona tharngib gaíthe bítis ar fertsib 7 iallaib 7 fithisib 7 folomnaib dun **charput** sin'⁹⁰*

'After Cú Chulainn had been thus distorted, the hero sprang into his scythed chariot with its iron points, its thin sharp edges, its hooks, its steel points, with its sharp spikes of a hero, its arrangement for opening, with its nails that were on the shafts and thongs and loops and fastenings in that chariot'⁹¹

Comparing the two descriptions clearly shows that the horses have been removed from the description. All the other parts of the description from Recension I are used in the description from Recension II. However the description from Recension II shows an enumeration of the aspects of the chariot, whilst Recension I uses different sentences and techniques to show all these aspects. This is interesting since the overall style of Recension II is more detailed than Recension I⁹².

⁸⁷ O Rahilly, *TBC: From the Book of Leinster*, p.44 ll.1633-1637.

⁸⁸ Turning the left board of the chariot towards a company was a signal for challenge.

⁸⁹ O'Rahilly, *TBC: From the Book of Leinster*, p.183.

⁹⁰ O'Rahilly, *TBC: From the Book of Leinster*, p.62 ll.2295-2299.

⁹¹ O'Rahilly, *TBC: From the Book of Leinster*, p.202.

⁹² 'The style of the LL-text is more diffuse and more detailed than that of Recension I', O'Rahilly, *TBC: From the Book of Leinster*, p.xlvi.

Even when the chariot is used as payment, the description of the chariot seems less detailed and mostly only includes reference to its worth in *cumala*⁹³. The chariot is again used in the description of Medb's nine chariots. Again this episode shows the use of more detail and a clearer explanation of the reason why she travels with nine chariots in Recension II, but not a clear description of the chariot:

*'Dáig ar bíth is amlaid no imthiged Medb 7 noí **carpait** fóthi a óenur. Dá **charpat** rempe díb 7 dá **charpat** 'na diaid 7 dá **charpat** cehtar a dá táeb 7 **carpat** eturru ar medón cadessin. Is aire fogníd Medb sin arná rístais fótbaige a crúib greg nó uanfad a glomraib srían nó dendgur mórslúaig nó móruiden arná tísad díamrugud don mind óir na rígná'*⁹⁴

'For this is how Medb was wont to travel; with nine chariots for herself alone, two chariots before her, two behind, two on each side and her chariot between them in the very middle. And the reason she used to do that was so that the clods of earth cast up by the horses' hooves or the foam dripping from the bridle-bits or the dust raised by the mighty army might not reach her and that no darkening might come to the golden diadem of the queen'⁹⁵

⁹³ '*carpat trí secht cumal*', O'Rahilly, *TBC: From the Book of Leinster*, p.3 l.86. 'a chariot worth thrice seven cumala', O'Rahilly, *TBC: From the Book of Leinster*, p.140.

⁹⁴ O'Rahilly, *TBC: From the book of Leinster*, p.16 ll.579- 585.

⁹⁵ O'Rahilly, *TBC: From the Book of Leinster*, p.153.

Change of *Carpat*

Even though the amount of instances that *carpat* is attested in both recensions shows no great change, the description and depiction of the *carpat* differs significantly. *Carpat* has many different functions, like protection, status symbol, payment, transport and even storage in Recension I. The descriptions of *carpat* in Recension I are elaborate and include not only the chariot itself, but also its interior and its horses. *Carpat* in Recension II shows only two functions: transport and as a status symbol. The descriptions in Recension II do not give a lot of information and rarely include long descriptions of the interior of the chariot or the horses. These differences in the description of *carpat* only show a slight shift in focus. Can this change of focus be explained by Bal's theories on functional narratology?

This thesis will firstly look at the change in focalization of the descriptions. A change in focalization could explain a change in the description of *carpat*, because the focus of a description is dependent on the character. When looking at the narrating techniques of Recension I and II of *TBC*, the texts show a fairly complex combination of different techniques. A change in focalisation occurs only in six instances in Recension I and seven instances in Recension II. This focalisation change always occurs when the narrator is describing a focalisation of one of the subjects. For instance:

*'Nírbo chían d'araid Fir Diad dia mboí and co facca ní, in carpat caín cúicrind cethirind go llúth go llúaid go lánghliccus, go pupaill úanide, go creit chráestana chráestirim chlessaird chlogfata churata, ar dá n-echaib lúatha lémnecha ómair bulid bedgaig bolg[š]róin uchtlethna beochridi blénarda basslethna cosscháela fortréna forráncha fúa.'*⁹⁶

'Not long was Fer Diad's charioteer there when he saw something: a beautiful, five-edged, four-wheeled chariot (approaching) with strength and swiftness and skill, with a green awning, with a framework of narrow compact opening, in which feats were exhibited, a framework tall as a sword-blade, fit for heroic deeds, behind two horses, swift, high-springing, big-eared, beautiful, bounding with flaring nostrils, with broad chests, with lively heart, high-groined, wide-hoofed, slender-legged, mighty and violent'⁹⁷

This episode which precedes the episode in which Cú Chulainn fights with his foster-brother, Fer Diad, shows how a focalization change might occur. In this case, as in all other cases that appear in *TBC* it is the narrator that narrates actions or events that have been observed by a character.

When it comes to mimesis and diegesis *TBC* poses an interesting and complicated structure, mainly because it includes embedded stories and flashbacks. The most prominent of examples would be *the boyhood deeds of Cú Chulainn*. In this episode Fergus narrates the boyhood deeds of Cú Chulainn to Ailill and Medb. The entire episode appears in direct speech and can thus be classified as mimesis, it can however be seen as diegesis, because the narrator is temporarily replaced by Fergus. Tristram divides the narrating techniques in five different

⁹⁶ O'Rahilly, *TBC: From the book of Leinster*, p.80 ll.2914-2919.

⁹⁷ O'Rahilly, *TBC: From the book of Leinster*, p.218.

modes. However to keep the thesis more clear, it will divide the narrating techniques in three different kinds: direct speech, indirect speech and embedded narration by a character or Fergus-narration. When simply looking at the different accounts of *carpat* in the two recensions some shifts seem to appear. In Recension I there are 58 instances of indirect speech, when regarding *carpat*, 51 instances of direct speech and 13 instances of Fergus-narration. Recension II on the other hand shows 62 instances of indirect speech, 42 instances of direct speech and 23 instances of Fergus-narration. It thus becomes clear that Recension II shows a slight preference for indirect speech, but also shows an increase in the phenomenon of Fergus-narration. The increase of diegesis in Recension II results in a distancing of the audience⁹⁸, in comparison to Recension I. The Fergus-narration being an embedded story, can be seen as an in-between mode, between mimesis and diegesis. Its increase combined with the decrease of direct speech could explain some of the differences of the descriptions experienced by the audience.

When looking at the amount of instances in which *carpat* can be found and the differences in descriptions, there are no major differences between Recension I and II. The reader is however left with a more distanced description of *carpat* in Recension II. When applying the theory of narrative modes by Tristram on the descriptions of *carpat* in *TBC*, one can see a shift from a balance between direct speech and indirect speech in Recension I to a preference for indirect speech in Recension II. According to this theory there is thus a difference between the description of *carpat* in Recension I and II of *TBC*. Therefore, this thesis does not agree with the conclusion from Tristram that the narrative modes in *TBC* do not differ between recensions⁹⁹.

⁹⁸ 'The difference between these two narrative modes may be compared to different degrees of audience 'distancing': mimetic narrative is emotionally closer to the audience, diegesis is more distanced (or detached)', Tristram, *Mimesis and Diegesis*, p.266.

⁹⁹ 'The three recensions do differ on the discourse level, but again not so substantially as to constitute completely different texts', Tristram, *Mimesis and Diegesis*, p.265.

Origins of the *Táin Bó Cúailnge*

Before this thesis will go on to look at the difference in oral residue between Recension I and II of *TBC* to try to explain the change in *carpat* that has been determined in the previous chapters, it will give a short account on the different theories on the orality of *TBC*.

Many theories exist on the origins of *TBC*, its orality and other Early Irish literature. But the theories can be divided into two basic groups: the nativist and non-nativist theories.

The nativist theorists assume that *TBC* and several other Early Irish stories originate from an oral tradition and then came to be written down. This can for instance be found in the work of Kenneth Jackson¹⁰⁰, who argues that *TBC* offers information on an Iron Age society in Ireland. According to his argument *TBC* can be dated back to the fourth century A.D. in an oral tradition. His argument is built mostly on some customs that can be found in *TBC* and other Old Irish tales that do not belong to the time that the stories were written down. O’Rahilly in her introduction to both recensions also follows these theories: ‘This view, that Irish heroic tales had a long oral existence before they took literary shape, is that accepted by the majority of Celtic scholars’¹⁰¹. Other nativist scholars are for instance Myles Dillon, D.A. Binchy and Proinsias Mac Cana.

The non-nativist theorists argue that *TBC* and other Early Irish stories were created by scribes, when they were written down. According to this theory *TBC* thus has no oral origin. The non-nativists do not deny the presence of oral and archaic aspects in *TBC*. Many theorists however claim that these aspects were created by the medieval scribes in order to create an Old Irish epic. This theory is for instance supported by academics like David Greene¹⁰² and Kim McCone¹⁰³. McCone argues that the influence of monasteries in Early Irish literature cannot be denied: ‘The whole of this literature was undoubtedly produced either in monasteries or by people who had received an essentially monastic education’¹⁰⁴.

¹⁰⁰ Jackson, *Oldest Irish Tradition*.

¹⁰¹ O’Rahilly, *TBC: From the Book of Leinster*, p.xiii.

¹⁰² Greene, *the Chariot in Old Irish Literature*.

¹⁰³ McCone, *Pagan Past and Christian Present*.

¹⁰⁴ McCone, *Pagan Past and Christian Present*, p.1.

Orality in the *Táin Bó Cúailnge*

Both Recension I and II show oral aspects in their texts. This thesis is not concerned with the origin of *TBC*, but will analyse the effect of the oral residue on the depiction of *carpat*. To analyse these signs of orality this paper will use the theories of Ong¹⁰⁵.

When looking at the two versions of *TBC* it becomes clear that the Recension I shows more signs of oral thinking. Even though both Recension I and II show an additive structure and aggregative language, Recension I shows a lot of repetitions, inconsistencies and alternative endings, created by interpolations from scribe H. For instance the story of *The Death of Órlám*, which is recorded twice in Recension I. In the first version Órlám dies, when he tries to leap over an oak tree with his chariot¹⁰⁶, while in the second version Órlám dies, when Cú Chulainn cuts off his head¹⁰⁷. Different versions of stories are told and sometimes there is mention of the origin of the tale, like another manuscript¹⁰⁸. Recension II on the other hand shows a more linear version of *TBC*. The structure of the different stories making up one big text remains intact, but the different stories now only include one version and do not give alternative endings. Even though Recension II shows a more literate structure of the tale, the main story is kept intact. Recension I uses a lot of repetition and shows alternative endings, but Recension II has more lines¹⁰⁹. This is because Recension II uses a more detailed style. This is for instance shown in the episode where Medb send messengers to Fer Diad in order to make him fight Cú Chulainn. Recension I records the episode as such:

‘Dobretha Medb techta for cend Fir Diad. Nocho tánic Fer Diad risna techtaib hísín. Dobretha Medb filid 7 áes dána 7 áes glámtha grúaidi ara chend co nderntais a érad 7 a aithised 7 a ainfiálad coná fágad inad a chind for bith co tísad I pupal Medba 7 Aililla for Tána. Tánic Fer nDiad leisna techtaib hísín ar úaman a imderctha dóib’¹¹⁰

‘Medb sent messengers for Fer Diad, but he did not come with those messengers. Then Medb sent to fetch him poets and artists and satirists who might satirise him and disgrace him and put him to shame, so that he would and Ailill on the Foray. So for fear that he should be put to shame by them Fer Diad came with those messengers’¹¹¹

The same episode in Recension II, is recorded as follows:

‘Is and sin ra fáittea fessa 7 techtairedsa ar cend Fir Diad. Ra érastar 7 ra éittchestar 7 ra repestar Fer Diad na techta sin & ní thánic leó dáig rafitir aní

¹⁰⁵ Ong, *Orality and Literacy*.

¹⁰⁶ ‘*Slicht sain so co aided nÓrlám*’, O’Rahilly, *Recension I*, p.26 ll.825-832. ‘A different Version up to the Death of Órlám’, O’Rahilly, *Recension I*, p.148.

¹⁰⁷ ‘*Aided Órlaim*’, O’Rahilly, *Recension I*, pp.27-28 ll.868-906. ‘The Death of Órlám’, O’Rahilly, *Recension I*, pp.149-150.

¹⁰⁸ ‘*Combad Ríamdrong Con Culaind for Tarthesc ainm in sceóil sea isin Tána*’, O’Rahilly, *Recension I*, p.63 ll.2044-2045. ‘In another version the name of this tale in the Táin is Ríamdrong Con Culainn for Tarthesc’, O’Rahilly, *Recension I*, p.182.

¹⁰⁹ Recension I contains 4200 lines whilst Recension II contains 4925 lines.

¹¹⁰ O’Rahilly, *Recension I*, pp.78-79 ll.2577-2582.

¹¹¹ O’Rahilly, *Recension I*, p.196.

‘ma rabatar dó, do chomlond 7 do chomrac re charait, re chocle 7 re chomalta, re Coin Culaind mac Sualtaim, 7 ní thánic leó. Is and sin fáitte Medb na drúith 7 na glámma 7 na crúadgressa ar cend Fír Diad ar co nderntáís teóra áera sossaigthe dó 7 teóra glámma dícend go tócbaitís teóra bolga bara agid, ail 7 anim 7 athis, murbud marb a chétóir combad marb re cind nómaide, munu thised. Tánic Fer Diad leó dar cend a enig, dáig ba hussu les-sium a thuttim do gaub gaile 7 gascid 7 enigma ná a thuttim de gaaib aíre 7 écnaig 7 imdergtha’¹¹²

‘Then messengers and envoys were sent for Fer Diad. Fer Diad refused and denied and again refused those messengers and he did not come with them, for he knew what they wanted of him, which was, to fight his friend and companion and foster-brother, Cú Chulainn mac Sualtaim, and so he came not with them. Then Medb sent the druids and satirists and harsh bands for Fer Diad that they might make against him three satires to stay him and three lampoons, and that they might raise on his face three blisters, shame, blemish and disgrace, so that he might die before the end of nine days if he did not succumb at once, unless he came (with the messengers). For the sake of his honour Fer Diad came with them, for he deemed it better to fall by shafts of valour and prowess and bravery than by the shafts of satire and reviling and reproach’¹¹³

This example clearly shows the more detailed style of narration that is used in Recension II, this style can be explained by literacy. According to Ong literate texts need more words than an oral tale, because they lack extra information like intonation or facial expression¹¹⁴. This is also shown in the episode of Medb and her nine chariots, discussed above. The version from Recension II has more words¹¹⁵ and clearly describes the reason for Medb travelling with nine chariots. The same episode in Recension I however is less clear, because the description does not include an explanation, which is also the reason O’Rahilly included a footnote to explain this phenomena further¹¹⁶.

The difference in orality between Recension I and II, thus, solely rests on the different structure and the difference in language. Both recensions will seem awkward, ungrammatical and long for a literate audience, but Recension II will be easier for a literate audience to understand.

Does this however influence the depiction of *carpat*? This thesis has established that Recension I shows a more detailed depiction of the *carpat*, whilst Recension II paints a more detached picture. Besides this Recension II shows a decrease in oral aspects compared to Recension I. The development from Recension I with repetitions, alternative endings and inconsistencies to a linear story in Recension II, could be compared to the development of *carpat* as well. Recension I shows a depiction of *carpat* with many different functions, whilst

¹¹² O’Rahilly, *TBC: From the Book of Leinster*, pp.71-72 ll.2617-2627.

¹¹³ O’Rahilly, *TBC: From the Book of Leinster*, pp.211-212.

¹¹⁴ Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, pp.102-103.

¹¹⁵ The description of Recension I counts only nine words, whilst the description from Recension II counts sixty words, that give an accurate explanation why Medb travels with nine chariots.

¹¹⁶ O’Rahilly, *Recension I*, p.128.

in Recension II *carpat* only shows two distinctive functions. Also the mimesis and diegesis factor could be included in this theory. The more detached picture of *carpat* from Recension II could be explained by the lesser amount of audience participation in literate texts. Interaction with an audience, which is used in oral performances and oral literature, creates a closer emotional bond with the audience, which in Recension I is achieved by the use of mimesis.

Conclusion

After working through the steps determined in the introduction, this thesis has shown that the depiction of *carpat* in Recension I and II of *TBC* differs. In Recension I *carpat* is shown to have many functions, like transport and payment but also a place of storage. The elaborate descriptions that occur in Recension I not only show the exterior *carpat*, but also describe the interior of the *carpat*, the appearance of the warrior and the appearance of the horses, that draw the chariot. Besides the different functions *carpat* appears in many different cases, alternative spellings and compounds. One of the compounds is even used in a formula, that is used whenever Lóeg warns Cú Chulainn that a new warrior is approaching. Even though the amount of instances that *carpat* occurs in Recension I and Recension II show little difference (122 in Recension I and 126 in Recension II), there is a difference in the depiction of *carpat* in Recension II. Recension II mainly shows two functions of *carpat*: transport and payment. The descriptions of *carpat* now only rarely include a description of the horses (the description of the warrior, however is still used). Even the descriptions themselves seem less elaborate than Recension I and look like enumerations. What becomes most apparent after reading both recensions is that the descriptions from Recension II seem more distant and less lively, than those of Recension I.

When looking at the focalization and narrative modes that were used in the description of *carpat* in Recension I and II of *TBC* this change can be explained. The change in focalization in the two Recensions seems equalised and does, thus, not affect the description of *carpat*. The narrative modes however do differ between Recension I and II. Recension I equally balances the narrative modes: mimesis and diegesis, whereas Recension II shows a preference for diegesis. This preference for diegesis increases the space that is felt between the audience and the story and, thus, results in a more distant and less lively description of *carpat* in Recension II.

Can this change in the description of *carpat* be explained by a change in orality? When it comes to the orality of Recension I and II of *TBC* it is mainly the structure of the story that differs. Recension I shows different versions, repetitions and alternative endings, whereas Recension II shows a linear structure of the tales. Many of the inconsistencies in Recension I derive from interpolations of scribe H. Whilst the main storyline remains the same in both recensions, the structure changes. This structural change that occurs in *TBC* seems similar to the change that occurs in the description of *carpat*. An unclear elaborate subject with many different sides is transformed into a coherent structural piece.

Does this mean that it is orality that influenced the change that appeared in the description of *carpat*? No, it does not. This thesis merely shows that there is a similar change in both orality in Recension I and II of *TBC* as well as a change in the description of *carpat*. *Carpat* remains one of the more mysterious subjects of the Early Irish literary genre. To discover its origins and its function within the literature more research will be needed.

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