Utrecht University
Master Cultural History

Horses in a Modern War: A Modernity Misconstrued

The representation of horses in First World War historiographies

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Picture front page: Tank and horse ambulance, 1918.[1]

[1] IWM Q7080. The description of the Imperial War Museum (IWM) reads: “Second Battle of Arras. A horse ambulance (2/3rd London Field Ambulance of the Royal Army Medical Corps) and a stranded tank (named Lucretia II 6012) rendered useless by gas in the attacks of 24 August, at the crossroads. Croisilles, 13 September 1918 (Captured by 56th Division on 28 August).”

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Traffic Near Arras, 1917.[2]

[2] IWM Q Q6190. The description of the Imperial War Museum reads: “Battle of the Scarpe. Traffic on the road through Tilloy-les-Mofflaines and horse lines by the roadside, 13 April 1917.”

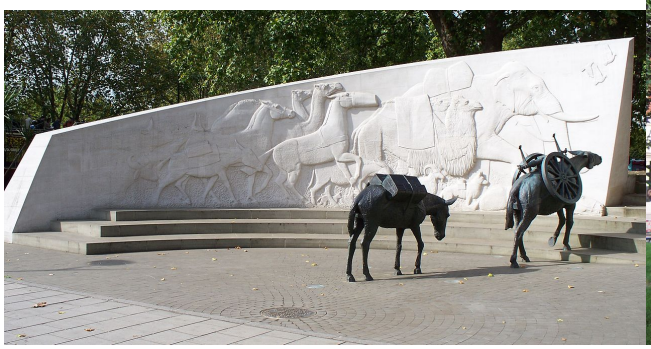
Introduction

The idea of the First World War often invokes images of battlefields in Flanders and France, characterised by trenches, mud, barbed wire, and a gruesome fate awaiting the many soldiers that were unlucky enough to be part of one of its great offensives. Walking across no man's land in waves, by the thousands, these men were met by a hail of bullets and explosives, fired at them by the most technologically advanced weaponry mankind could devise. After years of senseless slaughter, moving the frontline only a few hundred meters at great cost, the German army finally offered an armistice on November 11th, 1918, as Germany could no longer support the war effort. The allied armies, on the other hand, proved to be victorious due to their superior producing capacities, which allowed them to make enough of the latest technology capable of breaking through the enemy trenches: the tank.

What is not often part of these historical reconstructions is the role horses played in the armies that fought during the First World War. When horses are mentioned, this is often to show the ineptitude of commanders in regard to understanding the finesses of modern warfare. Certainly, the continued use of cavalry showed that commanders were

wilfully reactionary and possessed an “unavailing resistance to the inexorable development of modern mechanised warfare.”[3] Yet this binary in which a continued use of horses opposes modern fighting methods is simplistic when considering that a total of 591,324 horses were still used at the end of the war.[4] Such an enormous use of horses, in a war full of technological developments, can not just be explained by the stubborn attitudes of the few commanders.

In 2000, Jilly Cooper’s *Animals In* War, was reissued to spearhead a campaign to erect a memorial to animals in war which was unveiled in 2004. The centennial of the outbreak of the war in 2014 inspired new historical research. Two examples of such research are *The Oxford Illustrated History of the First World War* (reissue; 2014) and *The Cambridge History of the First World War*. The latter three-volume history uncovers various transnational historical experiences, such as the history of mutiny, finance, technology, war economies, logistics, commemoration, revolution, and the parallels between the challenges faced by urban populations in different warring states.[5] But although horses do figure in a few chapters in these three volumes, their overall role in the various armies, or even one army, is not discussed.



[6]

Looking at the various historiographies of the First World War, it is striking that this is the case. Interestingly, the horse does figure in popular culture, from the *Animals In War* book to the movie and theatre production *War Horse.* Yet the reconstruction of the war seems solely to revolve around the human character and the modern nature of the war. This rai-

[3] Gervase Phillips, “Scapegoat Arm: Twentieth-Century Cavalry in Anglophone Historiography,” *The Journal of Military History* 71, no. 1 (Jan. 2007): 63.
[4] Ian Brown, “Logistics,” in *The Cambridge History of the First Wold War*, Volume II, Part II, ed. Jay Winter (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 218.
[5] Jay Winter, “Introduction,” in ibid., Volume I, 6-7.
[6] Animals in War monument, retrieved from: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Animals_in_War_Memorial, 13-08-2019, 08:54.

ses questions as to why horses are used extensively in this war, prominently figuring in various memorials, but are left out of historical reconstructions.

This study will primarily focus on a historical reconstruction of the role of horses in the British army, in relation to the idea of the First World War as a modern war. It will also research how a different approach to the study of primary sources, in this case war diaries of various units that use horses, can offer a historical reconstruction in which horses are integrated into the narrative. The central question in this research is therefore: how does the notion of modernity influence the representation of horses in historiographies of the First World War, and how can an alternative approach to the study of primary sources offer a different historical reconstruction that includes the role of horses? My hypothesis for this study is therefore that ideas about the modern nature of the First World War influence the creation of historical narratives to such an extent that it leads to a distorted reconstruction that privileges certain elements, humans, and the technological developments they create, over other elements that are essential for the understanding of how the First World War developed. Due to the selection of primary sources from units that serve on the Western Front, the research will focus on this particular theatre of war.

To understand the importance of horses for the British army during the war, my first chapter will research how developments in technology and tactics changed the use of horses prior to 1914. It will also investigate how contemporary ideas about modernity influenced the public opinion of the use of horses, both in urban society and in war. In the second chapter I will analyse how a discourse of modernity has been created in historiographies of the First World War and how this influences the representation of horses. For this chapter I will use a variety of historiographies that were written between 1934 and 2014. Although more recent research obviously favours the most recent studies, this is useful in order to establish a good sense of the reiterations and changes that exist in the representation of horses. For this purpose I have used the early work of Basil Liddell Hart, as he is both referred to as the "prince of modern military critics" and the "chief propagandist" of negative representations of the cavalry, both as a fighting force and for the influence of their commanders whom he considers an "obstacle in the path of interwar reformers keen to modernise the army".[7] Other works used are John Terraine's *The Western Front 1914-1918* (1964), David Stevenson's *1914-1918: The History of the First World War*

[7] Paul Fussel, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (Oxford and London: Oxford University Press, 1970); Phillips, "Scapegoat Arm," 62. The work used in chapter 2 is Basil H. Liddell Hart, *A History of the First World War 1914-1918* (London: Cassell and Co., 1934). This edition is a reprint by Pan Books, issued in 2014.

(2004), *The Oxford Illustrated History of the First World War* (1998), edited by Hew Strachan, and *The Cambridge History of the of the First World War* (2004), edited by Jay Winter. These are respected historians in this field and their selected works therefore offer a well rounded account of the representation of horses in mainstream histories of the First world War.

In the third chapter I will then research whether a different approach to the study of primary sources that is sensitive to the various actors that took part in shaping certain events might result in a historical reconstruction that allows for a narrative in which the role of horses is acknowledged. Finally, in the conclusion, I will draw together my findings and discuss whether a modernity discourse has affected the representation of horses in First World War historiographies and whether a different research method contributes to a better understanding of the historical role of horses and of the war itself.

Historiography

According to Jay Winter, four generations of thinking about the Great War can be distinguished. The first generation of historians had direct knowledge of the war, due to their own military service or otherwise serving their country's war effort and can be placed in the interwar years. The prevailing themes are the role of the state in decision-making and politics at home and at the front, memoirs of generals and ministers, and official histories. The last category, trying "to frame 'lessons' for the future", was so technical and detailed that it took decades to appear.[8] The second generation wrote in the late 1950s and 1960s and researched the war in terms of its social structures and social movements. Scholars were able to consult state papers disclosed fifty years after the war. There was also an abundance of film and visual evidence available, resulting for instance in the 1964 BBC documentary *The Great War*, by means of which television now was added to the already existing forms of public history. Concomitant with these developments a populist strain surfaced in much of 1960s writing, accusing the elite of sacrificing the masses for vague notions of honour and glory.[9]

The third generation was influenced by the various wars fought during the 1970s and 1980s. In turn this inspired a reaction against military campaigns such as the Vietnam War and the danger of nuclear warfare. These histories portrayed the war as "a futile exercise, a tragedy, a stupid, horrendous waste of lives, producing nothing of great value

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[8] Jay Winter, "General Introduction," in *The Cambridge History of the First World War,* Vol. I, ed. Jay Winter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 1-2.
[9] Ibid., 2-3.

aside from the ordinary decencies and dignities thrown away by blind and arrogant leaders."[10] This resulted in three path-breaking histories concerned with "the tragedy of the millions of men who went into the trenches and who came out, if at all, permanently marked by the experience."[11] The fourth and current generation has "the tendency to write about the war in more than European terms and to see the conflict as trans-European, transatlantic and beyond".[12]

Historiography of Horses

According to David Kenyon, the Marquess of Anglesey's *History of the British Cavalry* is the only "detailed modern analytical investigation of the cavalry" written between 1981 and 2011.[13] "What little has been written" is primarily concerned with overcoming "the significant body of ingrained negative opinion", challenging the "old myths and preconceptions" that exist in historiographies.[14] As a result only small engagements in which the cavalry played a role are researched, and the role of horses is rarely the topic of investigation.[15] Research in the last three decades about the role of infantry and artillery has refuted the idea that all commanders were incompetent and the soldiers needlessly sacrificed, but as Kenyon points out, this has "largely passed without a detailed re-examination of the cavalry."[16] This is a gap in First World War literature Kenyon tries to fill with *Horse-*

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[10] Ibid., 4.
[11] Ibid., 5. Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975); Sir John Keegan, *The Face of Battle* (London: Allen Lane, 1976); Eric Leed, *No Man's Land: Combat and Identity in World War I* (Cambridge University Press, 1979).
[12] Ibid.
[13] David Kenyon, *Horsemen in No Man's Land: British Cavalry and Trench Warfare, 1914-1918* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Books, 2011), 1.
[14] Ibid., 1-2.
[15] The examples mentioned here are Richard Holmes, *Tommy: The British Soldier on the Western Front 1914-1918* (London: HarperCollins, 2004), 435-50; Gordon Corrigan, *Mud, Blood and Poppycock: Britain and the First World War* (London: Cassell, 2003), 139-60; S.D. Badsey, "Fire and the Sword: The British Cavalry and the Arme Blanche Controversy 1871-1921," PhD diss. (University of Cambridge, 1982); S. Badsey, "Cavalry and the Development of the Breakthrough Doctrine," in *British Fighting Methods in the Great War*, ed. P. Griffith (London: Frank Cass, 1996), 138-74. To give an indication of the broad range of small-scale studies about the cavalry, as used for this thesis: A.J. Echevarria II, "The 'Cult of the Offensive' Revisited: Confronting Technological Change Before the Great War, *Journal of Strategic Studies* 25, no. 1 (2002): 199-214; Bryan Perret, "Mounted Action: The Charges at Beersheba and Huj, Palestine, 1917," in *Impossible Victories: Ten Unlikely Battlefield Successes* (London: Arm & Armour, 1996): 140-62; J. Bou, "Cavalry, Firepower, and Swords: The Australian Light Horse and the Tactical Lessons of Cavalry Operations in Palestine, 1916-1918," *The Journal of Military History* 71, no. 1 (Jan. 2007): 99-125; Phillips, "Scapegoat Arm"; Gervase Phillips, "'Who Shall Say That the Days of Cavalry Are Over?' The Revival of the Mounted Arm in Europe,1853-1914," *War in History*, 18, no. 1 (Jan. 2011): 5-32; Spencer Jones, "Scouting for Soldiers: Reconnaissance and the British Cavalry, 1899-1914," *War in History*, 18, no. 4 (Nov. 2011): 495-513.
[16] Kenyon, *Horsemen*, 2.

men in No Man's Land, in which he analyses the contribution of mounted troops on the Western Front.

Horses outside their cavalry context have received even less attention. The problem faced here is described by Graham Winton in his introduction to *Theirs Not to Reason Why*:

> Most military histories and accounts of campaigns lack any reference to the vital importance of the horse. Yet for centuries, the horse provided the principal means of power and mobility for the supply of all army needs and was essential, for example, for infantry transport, the Artillery, Engineers, and prior to 1914 all ambulance units. The Army could not function without the horse. That the Army used horses is taken for granted, with little or no understanding of whence they came, in what numbers, the type or quality. For many writers, the horse is seen purely in a cavalry role and even then with little to suggest any understanding of the importance of the actual animal to the trooper, or ability of the cavalry to perform traditional tasks. Yet, more importantly, the crucial motive power without which an army could not function, was provided by the horse and pack animals.[17]

This leads, in the words of Erica Fudge, to the "calculated forgetting" of horses in historiographies of the First World War.[18] The research that exists about horses shows similarities with that of the cavalry, as it is fragmented and often appears in work that has a broader theme or is concerned with a larger span of time.[19] Graham Winton's work on the supply of horses for the British Army is therefore an important addition, as thorough research on this topic is lacking. Winton's analysis is based on a great variety of sources, ranging from Royal Commission and Court Enquiry to the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries, the Royal Corps of Transport Archive, the Veterinary Record and the various histories and articles written by members of these Corps.[20] The result "provides the first comprehensive study of the Army's horse services."[21] For this thesis I will therefore rely on

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[17] Graham Winton, *Theirs Not to Reason Why: Horsing the British Army 1875-1925* (Warwick: Helion & Company, 2013), 29.
[18] Erica Fudge, "The Animal Face of Early Modern England," *Theory, Culture & Society* 30, no. 7-8 (2013), 183.
[19] Examples used in this thesis are Simon Butler, *The War Horses: The Tragic Fate of a Million Horses Sacrificed in the First World War* (Somerset: Halsgrove, 2011); Jilly Cooper, *Animals in War* (London: Heinemann, 1983); Dale Clarke, *British Artillery 1914-19: Field Army Artillery* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2004); Dale Clarke, *World War I Battlefield Artillery Tactics* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2014); Neil R. Storey, *Animals in the First World War* (Oxford: Shire Publications, 2014); Ian Malcolm Brown, "Logistics," in *The Cambridge History of the of the First World War,* Volume II, ed. J. Winter (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 218-239; I.M. Brown, *British Logistics on the Western Front* (Cincinnati: Praeger, 1998).
[20] Winton, *Theirs Not to*, 32-33.
[21] Ibid., 35.

Kenyon's work where it concerns the cavalry, but for the widespread, overall use of horses I will largely depend on Graham Winton's work.

The number of historiographies that have the First World War as their subject is enormous. These texts generally do not devote attention to the influence of the non-human.. There is a straightforward explanation for this lacuna. History as a discipline is generally concerned with recreating a story of the past by means of its (written) sources. As writing is a human endeavour, this source material leaves out any of the other historical actors that might have co-created events in our past. But non-humans, from animals and diseases to eruptions of volcanos, have greatly influenced human life throughout its existence. The questions surrounding non-humans is a recent development in the study of history, for instance in what is termed Animal History, part of the interdisciplinary school of Animal Studies.

Animals are part of the past, yet they are absent in our historical reconstructions, which can create confusion.[22] Animal Histories seek to incorporate the animal into historical narratives in two ways. The first approach is writing animals into existing frameworks of history. The second approach, according to Hilda Kean, is "seeking to disrupt accepted ways of looking at aspects of the past by highlighting animal-human relations."[23] What this body of research shares is a concern with animal agency and representation. As such this field of study, as well as this thesis, relies on theories of semiotics, which I will further discuss in my theoretical framework.

Until now much of the research in Animal History is concerned with creating a theoretical position that allows for the possibility of writing a history of animals, which focuses on the question whether animals have historical agency.[24] Where it concerns the actual writing of a historical reconstruction which incorporates animals into the narrative, there are not many examples to be found. This thesis will analyse horses as signs and their representations, and employ methods that allow for a history of the First World War that is less anthropocentric.

Methodology

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[22] Hilda Kean, "Challenges for Historians Writing Animal-Human History: What Is Really Enough?," *Anthrozoös* 25, supplement 1, s59.
[23] Ibid., s64; see also Erica Fudge, 2002, "A Left Handed Blow: Writing the History of Animals," in *Representing Animals: Theories of Contemporary Culture*, ed. Nigel Rothfels (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 8-11.
[24] Concerning the historiographical issues when writing about animals, see Fudge, "A Left Handed Blow", 4.

Through a semiotic study of selected historiographies of the First World War and three war diaries of various units fighting on the Western Front, I will analyse via a close reading how horses are viewed within the context of the First World War. I look at signs and how they can be understood in relation to the discursive formation, which in this case is formed by a modernity discourse. The focus of this thesis will therefore primarily lie on the representation of horses and whether this is influenced by the modernity discourse.

Although the number of primary sources for this topic is vast and my selection of these sources limited in comparison, the three war diaries under scrutiny in this research are useful as they all deal with various units that depended on horses to function. As such a reliable cross-section can be obtained from an analysis of these diaries, which can subsequently be compared with the results from the selected historiographies.

For this research I use semiotics, the methodological approach of studying the production of meaning through signs in culture. Ferdinand de Saussure, the founder of semiotics, argued that signs consist of two elements: the signifier (the form, an actual word, image, photo, a red light) and the signified (the corresponding concept it triggers in your head).[25] As Stuart Hall explains:

> the underlying argument behind the semiotic approach is that, since all cultural objects convey meaning, and all cultural practices depend on meaning, they must make use of signs; and in so far as they do, they must work like language works, and be amenable to an analysis which basically makes use of Saussure's linguistic concept.[26]

The idea that objects within a culture can be studied as a language was elaborated upon by Claude Lévi-Strauss and Roland Barthes. Their studies show that "in the semiotic approach, not only words and images but objects themselves can function as signifiers in the production of meaning."[27] In this research, signs such as horses, tanks, and barbed wire are not only words and images, but function as signifiers in the production of meaning. Horses and tanks are also signifieds that carry meaning beyond their "horseness" and "tankness," for instance when they are placed within certain events or in a binary opposition. At this level these signs can be analysed as part of "the wider realms of social

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[25] Stuart Hall, "The Work of Representation," in *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, ed. Stuart Hall (London: Sage, 1997), 31.
[26] Ibid., 36.
[27] Ibid., 37.

ideology – the general beliefs, conceptual frameworks and value systems of society."[28] Signs can therefore represent a "more ideologically framed message or meaning."[29]

This idea that signs represent social knowledge, but that this knowledge is also bound to social practices and questions of power, was further elaborated by Michel Foucault. Discourse, Foucault argued, never consists of one statement, one text, one action, or one source. The same discourse, a characteristic in the way of thinking or the state of knowledge at any one time (what he called the *épistémè*), will appear across a range of texts, and as forms of conduct, at a number of different institutional sites within society. Therefore when there is a body of work on this topic, it is part of the same "discursive formation."[30] Knowledge and practices are historically and culturally specific, according to Foucault. So instead of "accepting the trans-historical continuities of which historians are so fond" this research will use these concepts to analyse how horses are represented in historiographical and primary sources.[31]

Theoretical Framework

The value system under scrutiny here is the discursive formation of modernity. In order to understand how this influences the narrative, I will now turn to an analysis of modernity discourse as created by Bruno Latour. The discourse under investigation is based upon the idea that horses are somehow an anachronism to the modern nature of warfare. It is exactly this binary between nature and culture, non-human and human that Latour identifies as the way in which the idea of modernity is framed. In *We Have Never Been Modern,* Latour argues that modernity is often defined in contrast with what is considered to be old-fashioned or outdated, and heralds something new.[32] These innovations are often revolutionary, and history as such is written in terms of revolutions that usher in a new "era" made possible by the brilliance of men.[33] This "gross dichotomizing" is what Paul Fussell refers to as the "persisting imaginative habit of modern times".[34] Because of the binary underpinning this modernity discourse, all that is non-human becomes obsolete, something of the past. This in turn leads to the calculated forgetting of animals, in this case their disappearance from a history in which they played an important part.[35]

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[28] Ibid., 38-39.
[29] Ibid., 39.
[30] Ibid., 42-44.
[31] Ibid., 47.
[32] Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 10.
[33] Ibid., 40-41.
[34] Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), 89.
[35] Fudge, "The Animal Face," 183.

This thesis builds on this notion of modernity, as it is exactly the preoccupation with that which is considered "modern" that leads to a blindness for the wider role in which animals, in this case horses, were used. Only the revolutionary new inventions, tactics, and ideas that are "modern" are worth considering and enabled the Allied victory. But such a narrative does seem to leave a big part left to be told. This thesis therefore also ties in with ideas of non-anthropocentric historiography, and contests the preoccupation with the agency of human beings in history. When considering the large number of horses present in the story that is the First World War, for instance within the artillery arm, or in transportation of supplies, it becomes harder to maintain that it was merely human actors that played a role. What role is more important? The horse without which an artillery piece would never reach its destination? The canon without which no shells would be hurled over vast distances? The shell that did the actual killing? Or the human that handled this combination of objects on the battlefield? In order to create a historical narrative that includes the non-human, a different theory is needed. For this purpose I will use Bruno Latour's Actor-Network Theory (ANT).

Actor-Network Theory Explained: A Network of Associations

According to Latour, ANT makes it possible to trace more sturdy relations and discover more revealing patterns, by registering the links between unstable and shifting frames of reference rather than by trying to keep one frame stable.[36] ANT can therefore be considered as an alternative to modernism. The modernity discourse presents nature and the social as binaries, opposing modernity and tradition, animality and humanity. ANT argues that a changed conception of the social, in which non-human elements are interlinked with the human, influencing one another, enables a different understanding of what the social entails.[37] The social is therefore not a stable continuity, but always different and changing due to the various elements that make up its context.[38]

ANT enlarges our understanding of the social. Instead of thinking in terms of binaries, surfaces, and spheres, one is asked to think in nodes that have many dimensions and are also connected to other nodes. In this way things can enter our understanding of social fabrics through a "network-like ontology and social theory."[39] By describing the

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[36] Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 24.
[37] Ibid., 41; see also Bruno Latour, *Pandora's Hope: Essays on the Reality of Science Studies* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 174-5.
[38] Latour, *Reassembling*, 35.
[39] Bruno Latour, "On actor-network theory: A few clarifications," *Soziale Welt* 47, no.4 (1996): 370.

smaller parts of a network, within the circumstances that influence it, it becomes possible to understand how these (a division or offensive) function. It is also possible to analyse how the associations that exist between things within this network influence one another. ANT is therefore more concerned with description, the question of "how" this network functions, than with the question of "why" it functions or why its function had a certain outcome.

ANT is both a semiotic definition of entity building, a methodological framework to record the heterogeneity of such a building, and an ontological claim on the "networky" character of actants themselves.[40] The terms actor and actant are used to distinguish between those elements in a description that influence something (actors), and those to which this action is directed (an actant). These actants themselves can become actors in this network, as they subsequently act or react. ANT, further, does not enable us to say anything about the shape of entities and actions. It only allows a description of entities in all their details.[41]

In ANT, there is no fixed network that can be taken as a given, interchangeable with every other occasion where it is mentioned. A thing, a horse, a division, the cavalry, or an offensive described in historiographies is never a stable element that recurs in the same form over and over again throughout the years of war. Rather, every time a division, cavalry, horse, or other thing is mentioned, it is made up of different elements, different men, animals, their experiences, training, weapons, materials, etcetera. Only in describing all these elements and their associations it becomes possible to understand how their combined presence shaped certain historical events.

So every offensive, or rather, at any given time during an offensive, the description of various elements in their own right, and how elements are interconnected with others, sometimes influencing these other elements, would lead to a better understanding of what happened. Mystical entities in the form of explanations no longer fill the gap in descriptions of historical events.[42] Instead, ANT would entail a renewed attention for the primary sources in order to find how the various actors collectively shaped such events.

ANT and Agency

With ANT, agency is no longer necessarily or exclusively of human origin. Instead of purposeful agency by humans, ANT underlines that an actor's origin of action is a major

[40] Ibid., 373.
[41] Ibid., 374.
[42] Bruno Latour, "An Attempt at a "Compositionist Manifesto"," *New Literary History*, 41, no. 3 (Summer 2010): 482.

source of uncertainty, as other agencies over which we have no control make us do things.[43] In order to understand what elements create "the social," some of these elements might need to be considered as more than just a backdrop for human action. The radical position offered by ANT is that non-human actors also have agency, even though this agency is of a different nature than human agency, for instance not verbal or traceable through written texts. Although objects do not do things exactly like human actors do, objects, the non-human, help shape the interactions which create the social.[44] It is therefore reasonable to accept that the continuity of any course of action will rarely consist solely of human-to-human connections (or object-to-object). Rather, it is influenced, to a greater or lesser extent, by either human or object.[45]

So instead of a social that consists solely of humans, ANT argues that all actors in a narrative might be associated in such a way that they make others do unexpected things. Things are no longer in the background manipulating an object unwittingly, but rather become a mediator that can explain how things are made to exist without using some unseen force that is behind this movement.[46] In such a narrative all the actors do something and are not just passive, simply transporting affect without transforming them. Rather, the actor behind the movement becomes visible to the reader, as part of the social.[47] If an actor makes no difference, and there are just repeated clichés of what has been assembled before as the social past, it is not an actor.

When these actors are not described, this creates gaps in the narrative. To make sense, these are filled by using a frame that explains a certain redundant cause.[48] In First World War historiographies these gaps are filled by the modernity discourse. As such, causes that might explain how offensives materialised, played out, and failed to break through are left out. Instead of the historical intricacies, a simplified narrative of modernity is used as a frame in which a lack of modern elements explains the outcome of events. But it is exactly the enriched understanding offered by detailed descriptions that allows all elements involved, all actors in a network, to enter a historical narrative. It explains the intricacies of a panoply of actors such as animals, whether human or non-human, as well as mechanised transport.

As Bruno Latour argues, "by increasing the number of actors, the range of agencies making the actors act might be expanded, the number of objects active in stabilising

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[43] Latour, *Reassembling*, 46, 50.
[44] Ibid., 72.
[45] Ibid., 75.
[46] Ibid., 106-8.
[47] Ibid., 128.
[48] Ibid., 137.

groups and agencies might be multiplied and the controversies about matters of concern might be mapped."[49] This is also the case with the role of horses during the First World War. A better understanding of their role enables a better understanding of the Western Front, how fighting was carried out, and how a great variety of elements influenced events. This in turn enlarges our understanding of what happened, what the social is made up of, and through which connections actors, we, are associated together.

By deploying ANT, this controversy, the difference between a modernist historiography in which the role of horses is lacking and the historical reality in which horses were an important element allowing the conduct of warfare, becomes visible. ANT, according to Latour, has tried to:

> make itself sensitive again to the sheer difficulty of assembling collectives made of so many new members once nature and society have been simultaneously put aside, saying that the task of as sembling a common world cannot be contemplated if the other task (trace connections among un expected entities, to make those connections hold in a somewhat liveable whole) is not pursued well beyond the narrow limits fixed by the premature *closure* of the social sphere.[50]

ANT is part of a renewed effort for historians to delve into the various sources available, to extend the traditionally conceived anthropocentric social ties and detect other circulating entities that are part and parcel in the creation of this collective.[51] Subsequent histories can influence what the social can be, and what the multiple metaphysics and singular ontology of the common world should be.[52] Such histories would allow for a better understanding of the historical interactions that existed between humans and non-humans, no longer in terms of a simplified human hegemony but with a sensitivity to the collectives of which we humans are a part.[53]

To summarise, four guiding principles, can be taken from ANT for this research. First, the social is not stable. It is always different and changing due to the various elements that make up its collective. Second, the social is heterogeneous. It is made up of humans and non-humans. Third, agency, or rather the source of action of a human or non-human, is a major source of uncertainty. Fourth, rather than *why*, ANT is a network-tracing activity that allows for an understanding of *how* nodes within a network intertwine.

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[49] Ibid., 138.
[50] Ibid., 260.
[51] Ibid., 233.
[52] Ibid., 258.
[53] Ibid., 262.

The thesis will investigate how an analysis of primary sources by means of these guiding principles might enable a historical reconstruction that includes horses.

Chapter 1: The role of horses in the British army and modern society

> What … is the artillery that predominates in modern warfare? The field gun, which is the weapon of the RFA and RHA. Each must have its own team of conditioned horses, and so when you count up the guns in a battery, the batteries in a brigade, the brigades in a division, the divisions in a corps, and the corps in our Armies on all fronts, you arrive at a first calculation of the vital necessity of horses and mules in many tens of thousands … then, with the artillery in every division, there must be a division artillery column, which means several hundred more animals, and again there is the divisional transport, chiefly horsed by weighty draught horses.
>
> –Captain Sidney Galtrey[54]

Introduction

When the British Expeditionary Forces (BEF) went to France in 1914, they were comprised of six divisions, totalling 125,000 men. One division consisted of three infantry brigades, three artillery brigades, one howitzer brigade, a heavy battery, and ammunition columns for all of these brigades.[55] Besides these brigades there was the support of two field companies of Royal Engineers, a cavalry squadron, signal companies, field ambulances, stretcher bearers, and the Army Service Corps. The division further had its own supply train, which consisted of 450 men, 375 horses and mules, and around 200 wagons. Although transport would be gradually mechanised throughout the war, near the frontline the rather mundane day-to-day tasks of hauling guns, ammunition, wagons, ambulances, or supplies in general, were carried out primarily by horses.[56]

The horse was used intensively by the British army during the First World War. As a modern war, it might be expected that rather than the use of animals, mechanisation would take over this role as a source of motive power. This chapter focuses on organisational changes that enabled the British to horse their army throughout the First World War, and provides arguments to explain the extent to which horses played a role in this modern war. It will also analyse changing public opinion about the role of horses in modern society and whether these ideas influenced the use of horses in the army. The analyses will serve to answer the research question for this chapter: how were horses used by the British Army between 1902 and 1919 and did contemporary ideas about the role of horses in modern society influence this use?

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[54] Winton, *Theirs Not to*, 260.
[55] Jilly Cooper, *Animals in War*, 48.
[56] Ibid., 52.

Wastage and changing weapons and tactics

The use of horses during the First World War cannot be understood without changing attitudes toward horses in the nineteenth century and British experiences during various wars, primarily the second Boer War (1899-1902). This war influenced the use of horses in two ways, that of cavalry tactics and the way in which horses were cared for, also known as horsemastership. During the Boer War the number of horses lost, also called wastage, had been terrible. Out of a total of 518,794 horses, 326,027 horses died, amounting to a dead loss ratio of 66.9%.[57] Wastage rarely resulted from enemy action, but from a wide range of causes.[58]

Official inquiries found a number of causes that resulted in a huge wastage number. Horses were imported from all over the world to South-Africa, over vast distances. A lack of acclimatisation and the poor quality of (some) remounts ensured they were not fit for duty. To these problems disease, starvation, overwork, exhaustion, and neglect were added. A general lack of planning, training, poor relations between Remount and Veterinary Departments, a lack of facilities, as well as hard campaigning combined with military incompetence, resulted in huge numbers of horses being killed.[59] Besides a tragic and needless loss of life, “spending vast sums of money on foreign animals, yet starving and destroying trained horses at the seat of war, was an incredibly wasteful and expensive remount policy.”[60]

The causes underlying the high wastage of horses during the Boer War can be used to argue that it is not the weaponry and enemy action that thwarted the use of horses on a modern battlefield. The knowledge about horsemastership and further logistical necessities that enable a healthy horse population that provides motive power in the army, or in the case of the Boer War the lack thereof, was far more important than the damage done by enemy weapons. This offers substance to the argument that, contrary to the ideas of contemporary critics that horses were extremely vulnerable on a battlefield, other elements were far more important sources that debilitated horses. It is therefore in-

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[57] Ibid., 91; Kenyon, *Horsemen*, 19. This number excludes the 150,781 donkeys and mules used, of which 51,399 (35,4%) were lost, as well as 195,000 lost oxen out of an unknown total. Winton, 109.

[58] Ibid., 94. A unit starting with 406 horses used some 4,290 horses between November 1899 and 30th June 1902. Of a total of 4,170 horses hospitalised, only 163 had bullet, and 3 had shell injuries.

[59] Ibid., 94-95.

[60] Ibid., 101. Simon Butler also argues that the barren environment and inhospitable climate played a role, the horse in war. Butler, *The War Horses,* 39.

teresting to analyse where this idea of the horse's incompatibility with modern warfare originates.

During the nineteenth century, changes in weapon technology greatly influenced the way in which battles were fought. The various characteristics by which a modern battlefield would be shaped during this era, are technological innovations, the scale of fighting, and its global nature. New developments for artillery guns led to shells being loaded from the back of the barrel (breech-loaded), which allowed for much faster firing. The shells themselves could be fired over ever-increasing distances and became more lethal, as shrapnel and high-explosive rounds were introduced. Together with the development of the machine gun, these two kinds of weapons greatly improved the defensive power of armies.[61]

This in turn led to changes in tactics, as large groups of soldiers could no longer march across open fields without serious casualties being inflicted. It also influenced the use of cavalry. Traditionally cavalry was used to either charge and 'break' the formation of enemy forces, which had been am important tactic ever since knights used it in the early middle ages, or to ride around enemy forces and attack them from the side or rear, called flanking. With the changes in weaponry and growing size of armies, it became harder to do both. Frontal charges could result in high casualties, most vividly immortalised in the poem *Charge of the Light Brigade*:

> Cannon to right of them,
> Cannon to left of them,
> Cannon behind them,
> Volley'd and thunder'd:
>
> Storm'd at with shot and shell,
> While horse and hero fell,
> They that had fought so well,
> Came thro' the jaws of Death,
> Back from the mouth of Hell,
> All that was left of them,
> Left of six hundred.
> -Alfred Lord Tennyson (1854)

[61] David Stevenson, *1914-1918; The History of the First World War* (New York: Penguin, 2012).

The increased range of weapons also made it harder to ride around an enemy position in the open. During the American Civil War, cavalrymen armed with rifles were used to ride to a covered position, out of reach from enemy fire, dismount and attack, quickly riding away when attacked themselves. On the other hand, the Franco-Prussian War proved that even in a modern war the traditional use of cavalry could still be effective. Due to these technological changes and new tactics used in various wars, a discussion arose in the British army: should cavalry be trained in fighting primarily with rifles or should they also be trained in the shock charge or *arme blanche* doctrine?[62] The experiences of the Boer War eventually resulted in British cavalry being trained to fight both dismounted, with rifles, as well as retaining their *arme blanche* capabilities.[63] But concerns about the role of horses in modern warfare were not only voiced by military tacticians.

Changing attitudes towards horses in society

Coalescent with these changes in warfare, ideas about animals changed in Western societies. Examples of these changing sentiments are the Cruelty Treatment of Cattle Act, passed in 1822, and the founding of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals in 1824.[64] Ideas of what constituted an animal were primarily based on Cartesian thought, and the protection of animals based on the idea that mistreatment would hurt the animal were therefore controversial. The first initiatives aimed at a better treatment of animals in order to make them work more efficiently. Animal welfare also became linked with morality. If someone took good care of an animal, it was thought to show good morale, so if animals were generally looked after properly this would benefit society at large.[65] As Erica Fudge already argued in a study of animals in early modern England, the historical primacy of certain philosophical concepts that divide humans and animals does not mitigate practices that transgress these boundaries.[66]

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[62] *Arme blanche* refers to the use of steel weapons by the cavalry. One of the ways in which cavalry could attack enemy forces was using 'shock' tactics. This attack, the charge, was only capable if horsemen were armed with either swords or lances (*arme blanche*; steel weapon). *Arme blanche* doctrine refers to the use of these shock tactics within the cavalry. Kenyon, *Horsemen,* 8-9 and 18-19; The term is also used as referring to the cavalry as a whole being an *arme blanche* unit, with the underlying connotation that cavalry use steel weapons instead of firepower. Badsey, "Fire and Sword," 3-5.

[63] Phillips, "Scapegoat Arm," 40.

[64] Storey, *Animals*, 9. The organisation was given a royal status in 1840, becoming the RSPCA. Butler, *The War Horses*, 13.

[65] Peter Soppelsa, "The Instrumentalisation of horses in nineteenth century Paris," *Anthropocentrism: Human, Animals, Environments*, ed. Rob Boddice (Leiden, Brill, 2011), 257.

[66] Ibid., 256; McShane and Tarr, *The Horse in the City: Living Machines in the Nineteenth Century* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011), 2; Fudge, "The Animal Face," 183.

The late nineteenth century also saw the public influenced by new artworks that depicted the various battles and engagements of the British Army throughout the empire. Although one of the earliest examples of such artworks, Lady Butler's *Remnant Of An Army* (1879) became famous, it would be the works containing gallant and heroic actions that helped to establish the empire, that would become most popular. The theme of horses in dramatic action, with vivid and lively depictions where one can see the fear in the eyes of the animals, also became increasingly sought after by a growing public. The increasing demand for reproductions of paintings such as Lady Butler's *Scotland Forever* (1881) and Caton Woodville's *Charge of the Light Brigade* (1894), attests to this growing popularity.[67] These painting portray the important role horses played in the creation of the British Empire. On the other hand, the horses serve to underline the natural order of this endeavour: as humans subdue nature, the British are destined to rule other nations. These paintings, and novels such as Anna Sewell's *Black Beauty* (1877), also illustrate how a "new sentimentality and awareness of the plight of animals" became commonplace in popular culture.[68] Popular artworks anthropomorphised animals and in turn influenced anti-cruelty regulations. These developments indicate that animals were increasingly viewed as living beings that deserved to be treated as humanely as possible.[69] As such the connotations that underline the representation of horses in these artworks reflect various cultural tropes.

Lady Butler, *Remnant of an Army* (1879)[70]

[67] Storey, *Animals*, 6.
[68] Ibid., 7.
[69] McShane and Tarr, *The Horse,* 9.
[70] Tate Modern, https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/butler-the-remnants-of-an-army-n01553, 04-08-2019, 19:24.

Lady Butler, *Scotland Forever!* (1881)[71]

Caton Woodville, *The Charge of the Light Brigade* (1895)[72]

The increased attention for animal welfare led to the founding of yet another society, the Our Dumb Friends League (ODFL) which had the aim "to encourage in individuals humanity to dumb animals by education, co-operation and, where desirable, grants of money" founded in 1897.[73] Organisations such as the RSPCA and ODFL therefore reflect another attitude towards horses in this era, one of genuine care for the welfare of these animals. That this society was founded at this time was no surprise, as McShane and Tarr argue: horses were indispensable for nineteenth-century metropolitan transport. But around 1900 horsecars provided so much problems that they were considered too old-fashioned for modern cities.[74] Besides the increased traffic and congestion, the horse populations of cities caused all sorts of problems: "manure, "typhoid flies", and "dead horses" were replaced in a relatively short time between 1888 and 1902 by electric

[71] Leeds Art Gallery Online, http://www.leedsartgallery.co.uk/gallery/listings/l0081.php, 04-08-2019, 19:27.
[72] National Army Museum, https://collection.nam.ac.uk/detail.php?acc=1988-06-19-1, 04-08-2019, 19:31.
[73] Storey, *Animals*, 9.
[74] McShane and Tarr, *The Horse*, 172.

power.[75] As the use of horses started to decline around 1900, the use of automobiles in the city rose. These new technologies replaced horses quickly, which gave substance to the idea that horses were at odds with the modern city as they lost their place as the motors of urban life.[76]

Shifting representations: The horse and modern society

As industrial technology became identified with modernity, the role of horses in daily life as well as their status and symbolical meaning changed. Bicycles and automobiles became a part of modern, civilised, urban life, whereas horses were increasingly associated with the past, with aristocracy and the military. Ultimately their use in modern cities became considered backward and barbaric.[77]

The cultural connotations represented by horses shifted during the nineteenth century. Paintings about the British army initially represented horses dramatically, in a central role in which they either carried soldiers to victory or else as part of a noble failure, a glorious endeavour for king and country. The horse in these representations is used to celebrate human power, in particular that of the British creating their empire.[78] They underline a sense of imperialism, cultural superiority, and as such were meant to indicate the noble causes that were pursued in these wars.[79] Although these themes of heroic, distant battles remained popular throughout the nineteenth century, the mentality about horses and what they represented changed.

Examples from this changing perspective can be clearly discerned in the cartoons from the French weekly satirical magazine *L'assiette au Beurre,* shown on the next page.[80] The left cartoon is a good example of the idea that horses were incompatible with modernity, the right one offers a deeper level of social criticism. An underlying critique can also be discerned. The cartoon on the right uses the phrase "inferior brother," a term used to de-

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[75] Ibid. That this was done so quickly might have been due to the use of the same track by electric tram and horse omnibuses, for instance in Paris. The electrical conductors were vulnerable to humidity, and horseshoes good conductors. The result between July 1900 and January 1901 was 57 horses killed.

[76] Soppelsa, *Instrumentalisation*, 261.

[77] Ibid., 259, 263.

[78] Fudge, "Left handed blow," 6.

[79] Gretton, T. P., "Edgy encounters in North Africa and the Balkans," in *Militarized Cultural Encounters in the Long Nineteenth Century: Making War, Mapping Europe,* ed. Joseph Clarke and John Horne (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 246.

[80] Soppelsa, *Instrumentalisation*, 262. For the cartoons see: Albert Robida et son blog, http://albert-robida.blogspot.com/2016_03_20_archive.html, 4-8-2019, 18:37; *L'assiette au Beurre*, https://www.assietteaubeurre.org/mis_cheval/mis_chev_f1.html, 04-08-2019, 18:56. Inferior brothers was also a contemporary term used for colonial subjects, Soppelsa, *Instrumentalisation*, 257. According to Harriet Ritvo, this was also done in English culture. See *The Animal Estate: The English and other creatures in the Victorian Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), 19: "Popular natural history writers routinely characterised the horses as "noble", and sometimes as nobler than the class of humans generally charged with its care."

Cheval de chair et de fer contre cheval d'acier
"The horse of flesh and iron against the steel horses"

Et c'est ca qui nous apelle ses "freres inferieurs!"
"And you call us inferior brothers?"

signate colonial subjects of the French empire. The horse in this cartoon is not only used to question the presumed superiority of humans in relation to horses, but also the French in relation to the inhabitants of their colonies. The cartoons, illustrations in newspapers, paintings, and books can be seen as fundamentally self-reflexive, and offer an insight into the meaning that is conveyed when using horses.[81] As Soppelsa argues, the idea took hold that "it was not horses that were insufficiently modern, but rather the ways humans used them."[82]

Although these examples might have been representative for metropolitan areas, this does not account for the continued use of horses outside the cities. As much as the representation of horses in the paintings used above focuses on cavalry (leaving out the role of horses in other units) the attention to cities and their modern elements leave out the important role horses played at this time in other areas. In order to argue just how horses remained an important source for motive power outside the city, it is illuminating

[81] Clarke and Horne, *Militarized Cultural Encounters*, 5.
[82] Soppelsa, *Instrumentalisation*, 263.

to understand the various changes and experiments implemented between 1902 and 1914 in the army.

The use of horses in the British army

While technological innovations changed the way of fighting on a battlefield in an important way, enabling increasingly more 'modern' weaponry, the means by which these armaments were transported were only altered to some extent. The network of train tracks in Europe allowed the swift transportation of huge numbers of war materials, such as soldiers, weaponry, and supplies. But the tracks did not stop near the battlefield, especially when armies were on the march. Therefore the use of horses for transport was much needed to provide the link between the railhead and the fighting units.

To prevent the catastrophic loss of horses as experienced during the Boer War, several changes were implemented in the organisation of the army that greatly improved the possibilities for horsing the army, ensuring enough remounts and that the animals were in good health. One of the most important changes entailed the creation of the Army Veterinary Service in 1903, with personnel that could be used in the field and in hospitals and supplied adequately with veterinary stores.[83]

The horse was used in a variety of units, from cavalry to artillery to carrying supplies. Different types of work required different sorts of horses. The military used a classification system which divided horses into their respective class: riding, light and heavy draught, and pack draught, often ponies and mules.[84] It was further not enough to just simply find a horse and use it for duty. The horses for units such as the cavalry and artillery needed their horses to be trained, the cavalry with 18 months requiring the most time.[85] The horse team of artillery units consisted of six horses, but each duo had its specialist roll. The lead horses were somewhat light but with big legs and and provided speed. The centre horse was somewhat smaller and had to be an allrounder, both fast and powerful, the smallest, sturdiest and strongest were the wheeler or brake horses, closest to the gun. With a strong neck and thicker rear legs, these horses were the powerhouse of the team.

Artillery remounts began their training as a centre horse and would develop into either one of the other roles. In order to enable the procurement of enough horses that were adequately trained an extensive system was developed in this period.[86] Then there

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[83] Winton, *Theirs Not to*, 134.
[84] Ibid., 139.
[85] Ibid., 147.
[86] Ibid., 148-86.

were the other means of transport that needed horse power, such as General Service (GS) wagons, limbered GS wagons, mess carts, water carts, and any other form of transport that could be used.[87] The General Service wagon was used to transport any supplies to and from the front line, by the so called "first line transport."[88] Between two and six animals were used to pull these carts and wagons, depending on the circumstances.[89]

On mobilisation the army would vastly expand and the need for horses increased accordingly. Therefore various plans were implemented to assure that there were enough horses available of every class and that private owners were financially compensated. The increased attention to animal welfare combined with economical arguments, were important incentives for transport companies to phase out their horses whilst gradually implementing mechanised alternatives. This posed a problem for the army as it would result in a shortage of light draught horses., essential for artillery teams, when war would brake out. Therefore, a subsidy system was implemented which would entice firms to refrain from mechanising their motive.[90] This so-called "decentralised Horse Mobilisation Scheme" showed its worth when war eventually broke out, and 115,000 animals were impressed in twelve days.[91]

Bigger armies needed larger quantities of rifles and guns, and subsequently required more ammunition. That meant an increase in horse transport and this had various disadvantages: greater costs, the increase in fodder for the horses, and the relatively high number of horses and personnel needed per ton of load.[92] The army therefore implemented various programs to ensure new mechanised motive power could be incorporated into a new system, using mechanised transport primarily on roads and horses as the prime mover across country. Similar subsidy schemes were used in order to provide enough motorised transport in the event of a mobilisation.[93] Even though "the internal combustion engine had a poor record of reliability", 1,485 motor lorries, tractors, motor cars, vans, and motor cycles could be mustered when war broke out.[94]

To sustain an army in the field in 1914 therefore required an intricate system which enabled the transport of supplies from anywhere in the world to the proper location on the Western Front. A schematic by Graham Winton is insightful for understanding the compli-

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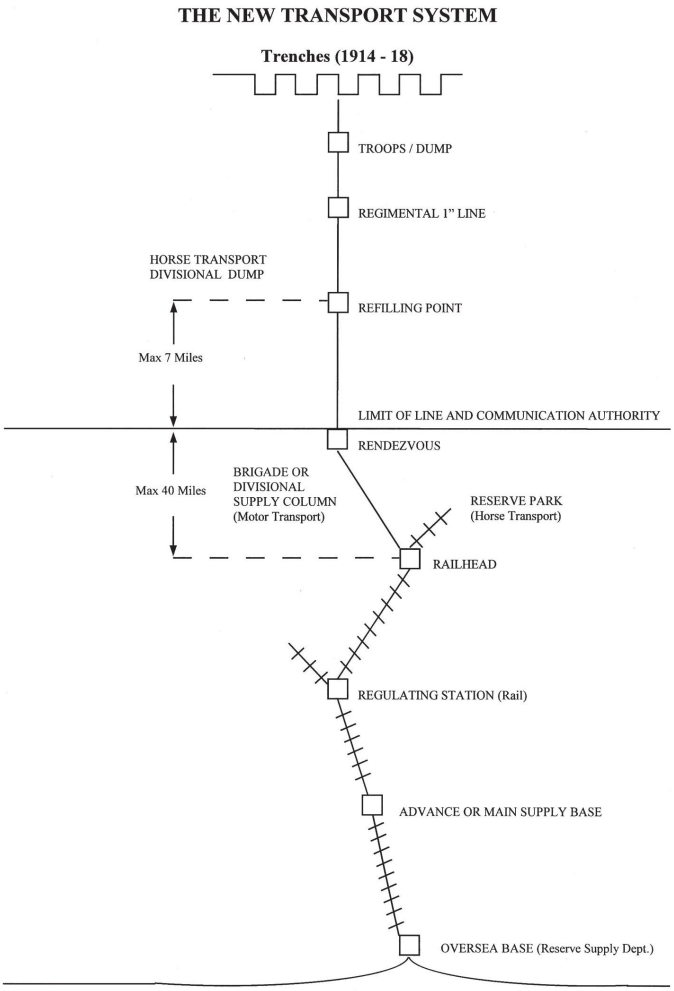
[87] Clarke, *British Artillery*, 12.
[88] Winton, *Theirs Not to*, 204-7.
[89] Butler, *The War Horses*, 66.
[90] Winton, *Theirs Not to*, 183-86.
[91] Ibid., 189.
[92] Ibid., 192.
[93] Ibid., 199-204.
[94] Ibid., 212, 272.

cated and many faceted face of this supply chain.[95] Most important features are the railhead, the end station of transport by train and boat. From here the motorised transport unit of a division would take supplies via the rendezvous point to refilling points. At this point the task of the Army Service Corps (ASC) stopped and “First Line or Regimental horsed transport“ took “the next day’s rations for men and animals in the front lines”.[96] The analysis or primary sources in chapter 3 will show that in practice the distinction in motive power for each segment of transport would differ in practice, depending to a great extent on horse power.



A large number of horses was therefore needed to supply the British army, primarily due to the widespread use of draught horses within various units. The ASC was literally the workhorse of the army, as they supplied all specialist units and the heavy artillery regiments with horses, besides being responsible for most transport. The majority of the 800,000 horses on the Western Front were therefore employed by the ASC.[97] An example

[95] Ibid., 206.
[96] Ibid., 207.
[97] Butler, *The War Horses*, 62.

of a specialist unit was the Field Ambulance (FA). Every division had three infantry brigades, each of which had an FA. The FA included, next to nine medical officers, a quartermaster, forty Army Service Corps drivers and about 78 horses.[98] Even though the FA would be increasingly motorised during the war, horse-drawn ambulances remained most effective when moving cross-country in the most shell-torn and inaccessible areas.[99]

A single infantry division of the British Expeditionary Forces arriving in France in 1914 would number approximately 18,000 men and 5500 horses.[100] In total, the BEF arrived in France with 40,000 horses and mules, a number that would only grow as the war progressed and remounts were needed to replace the wounded and killed horses.[101] The new system of logistics created before 1914 ensured that all sorts of other personnel was present to care for the horses, like shoeing smiths, veterinarians, and further administrative units.[102]

When contrasted with the few motor vehicles that were available in 1914, it becomes clear that the British army, aware of the limitations that came with horsed transport, tried to implement new forms of mechanised transport. But besides the fact that only a small number was available in 1914, the increase in reserve vehicles from 25% to 75% indicates that they were technically unreliable and often needed replacement. The number of horses and trucks in the last year of the war shows that although mechanisation really took off between 1914 and 1918, the horse remained the primary mover. The numbers do show that during the war the balance started to shift. The highest number of animals in the British army, 460,000, was reached in June 1917.[103] At the end of the war, this number had dropped to around 292,000.[104] The number of mechanised transport increased throughout the war and by March 1st, 1919 reached a total of 125,149.[105]

The disastrous wastage numbers of the Boer War were not only prevented by the new schemes and preparations in procuring animals, but also by a better organised veterinary service. The work of the Army Veterinary Corps (AVC), created in 1903, proved to

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98 Ibid., 53.
99 Ibid., 56.
100 Ibid., 48.
101 Storey, *Animals*, 25.
102 Butler, *The War Horses,* 67-68.
103 Winton, *Theirs Not to*, 332.
104 James M. Laux, "Trucks in the West during the First World War," *The Journal of Transport History* 6, no. 2 (September 1985), 69.
105 Winton, *Theirs Not to*, 391; 53,107 motor lorries, 31,098 pneu-tyred vehicles and ambulances, 36,953 motor cycles. These numbers differ somewhat from another account by James Laux, giving a total of 32,000 trucks of which some 800 were powered by steam. Laux, "Trucks," 67. As Winton is more thorough in his research, which is based on more recent research, his numbers are probably more accurate.

be of great value in the prevention of horse casualties. Units of the AVC made sure sick and wounded horses were taken from herds, taken care of by Mobile Veterinary Sections (MVS). If need be, they evacuated the horses to one of the more than 70 veterinary hospitals that were established during the war. The hospitals in France admitted 725,216 horses and mules throughout the war, of which 18,975 died, 127,741 were destroyed, 29,524 sold to agriculturists, and 19,912 remained under treatment. On the Western Front between 78% and 84% of the admitted animals were successfully treated, with an annual mortality rate of less than 14% for all British forces.[106] For the western front, losses totalled 256,204, with 225,856 dead or missing horses, and 30,348 cast, meaning that horses were sold alive from the military due to old age, illness, injury or because they were no longer required.[107] The total number of horses that served on the Western Front is difficult to arrive at, due to fluctuations in the number of horses received in France and issued to the front, although two totals can be compounded.[108] For all theatres in which the British army had horses and mules in service, the total used is 2,800,210. Of this number, a total of 1,483,703 served in France, although this does not include the number of horses for 1918.[109]

Public reactions to the suffering of horses

The work and the suffering of horses was the core focus of public opinion where horses are concerned. Voluntary civil organisations such as the Blue Cross Fund and RSPCA played an important part in aiding the war effort. The RSPCA offered “ten motor lorries, ten motor ambulances, nine corn and chaff cutters, 2,000 shelters (stabling accommodation), 5,000 horse rugs, 5,000 headstalls, 5,000 halters and 5,000 sets of bandages” as well as raising over 1/4 million pound with their official fund ‘For sick and wounded Animals’.”[110] In May 1918, the RSPCA gave eighteen Veterinary Evacuation Stations to the army to be put in the field, each with one officer and 38 other ranks, and a motor horse ambulance capable of accommodating two patients.[111]

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[106] Ibid., 386-7.

[107] Ibid., 430. Although numbers are given for certain periods for the number of losses due to gunfire and gas, this does not say much as the total for this period is not given. What can be taken from these numbers is that gas is relatively ineffective. Between July 1st, 1916 and November 11th, 1918, gas killed 211 horses and incapacitated 2,220. In the same period gunshot and bombs killed 50,090 and wounded 77,410. Ibid., 431.

[108] Ibid., 331.

[109] Ibid., 428.

[110] Ibid., 389.

[111] Ibid., 385. Between August 1914 and January 1919 500,000 injured and sick animals were collected and moved by similar Mobile Veterinary Sections and Evacuating Stations to hospitals, providing an important link between frontline units and veterinary hospitals to the rear.

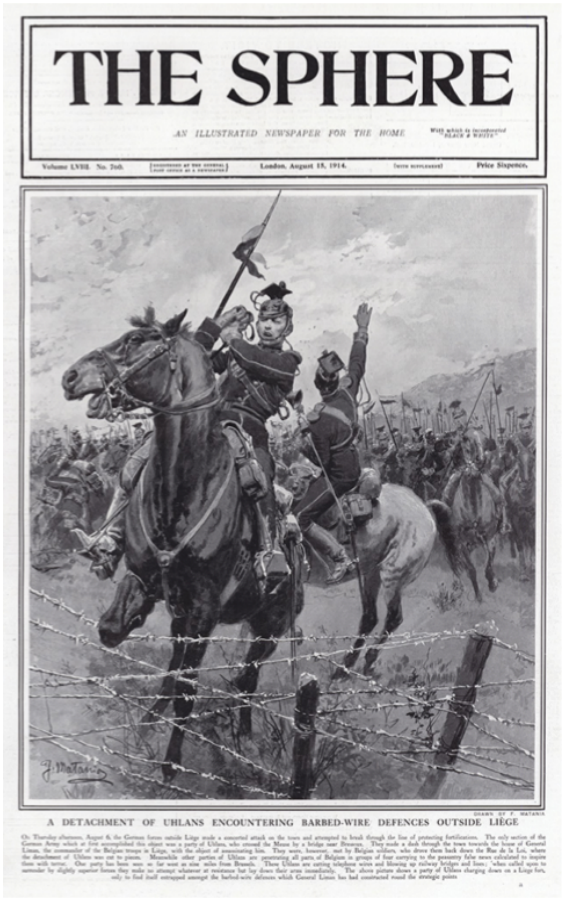
All animals that were no longer considered suitable for military use were cast. By March 1919, 225,812 horses were disposed off worldwide, by the army. Some of these would be used by farmers and breeders. Others would become food or by-products in so called horse carcas economisers.[112] This policy of casting caused considerable outrage when brought to public attention by letters in the press in the summer of 1915, as questions were raised about the fate of horses sold in foreign countries. Some members of the House of Commons considered it a better idea to destroy (kill) all cast horses, for they might well be mistreated by their new owners abroad. The RSPCA passed a resolution in October 1916 in which it threatened to stop all material and financial aid if the War Office continued the sale of horses abroad. This led, for a short time, to the policy of destroying all cast horses abroad. By November 1916 horses in France were exempted from this policy and a further revision for horses in Palestine and Egypt was implemented in December 1918, allowing local commanders to decide what should happen to those animals deemed unfit for service.[113]

The negative opinion concerning casting abroad was based on the idea that this would prevent cruelty to animals. The sentiment that destroying cast horses was a better idea indicates that this discussion was not necessarily about the fate of animals. Rather, it might be explained in different ways, both in line with the ideas above about horses in a modern society. The idea that horses were only treated properly in the hands of British subjects ties in with ideas of cultural superiority. This superiority seems to exist in various degrees. The sale of horses is acceptable in France by late 1916, but only becomes an option after the armistice in 1918 for other theatres outside the Western Front. Here, the choice for casting, again, seems to revolve primarily around economic choices rather than ideas that primarily focus on the wellbeing of animals. Such deliberations also underline the negative attitude towards the idea of returning horses to England from abroad as this was considered too expensive.

The care for horses in this era should therefore not only be taken as a sign of empathy in a sentimental sense. Rather, it indicates that people engaged in animal welfare for various reasons, donating to funds in order to help injured horses back into the fight and also to prove that they were good citizens. This puts the meaning of horses used to raise funds in a different light. This is emphasised by a poster of the U.S. Red Star Relief Fund, figuring the famous artwork by Fortunino Mantania, *Good-bye, Old Man*. Instead of helping the horse on its own merit, because it suffers and this is morally wrong, the poster

[112] Ibid., 324.
[113] Ibid., 421-22.

Good-Bye Old Man, An Incident on the Road to a Battery Position in Southern Flanders, Fortunio Matania. This is one of many ways in which this iconic drawing was used, in this case by the American Red Star animal relief fund.
Retrieved from: Boston Atheneum, https://cdm.bostonathenaeum.org/digital/collection/p16057coll34/id/3, 06-08-2019, 12:01.

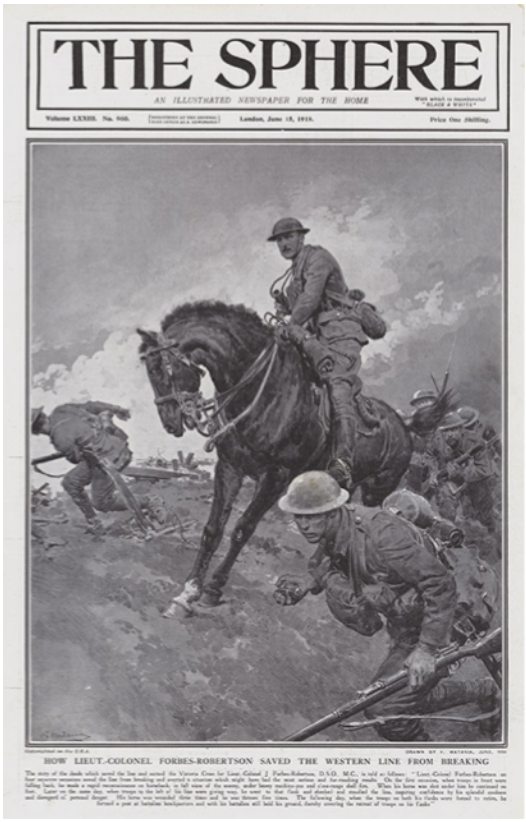


A Detachment of Uhlans Encountering Barbed-Wire Defences Outside Liege (*The Sphere*, 15 August 1914), Gosling, *Goodbye, Old Man*, 38. Retrieved from: Bookpalace, bookpalace.com, https://bookpalace.com/acatalog/sphere-1914-Aug-15-L.jpg, 05-08-2019 10:03.

implies that the help for horses indirectly benefits the soldiers it supports. The animal relief fund therefore functions not so much as an aid to animals, but rather to support the soldiers.

The work of Fortunino Mantania was very popular during the First World War. His visits to the front together with eye witness accounts combined with a special technique, resulted in images that looked almost as real as photographs and helped readers from *The Sphere* to get a good impression of the war.[114] The representations of horses in these works carry other connotations than merely their part in the events pictured. In *A Detachment of Uhlans Encountering Barbed-Wire Defenses Outside Liege* the horses are re-

[114] Gosling, *Goodbye, Old Man*, 14, 18. It also enable readers to get some visual image of the battlefields, as photographs of action at the front were still a rarity. Those we use today from archives such as that of the Imperial War Museum collection were only released after the war.



Colonel-Lieutenant James Forbes-Robertson, awarded the Victoria Cross for his actions on 11/12 April 1918 at Vieux-Beuqin, where he repeatedly saved the British line from breaking. (*The Sphere*, 15 June, 1918).” Gosling, Goodbye, old Man, 120.
Retrieved from: Bookpalace, http://bookpalace.com/acatalog/info_MataniaSp15Jun18.html, 05-08-2019, 12:17.

“‘The Care of the Wounded War-Horse in the Northern France: What is Being Done to Alleviate the Suffering of Dumb Animals in the War Region.’ The work of the Blue Cross Fund at the front – veterinary doctors receiving a wounded war horse for treatment at a Blue Cross Station or receiving depot. (Original artwork, reproduced in *The Sphere*, 27 February, 1915).” Gosling, *Goodbye, Old Man*, 53.
Retrieved from: Look and Learn, https://www.lookandlearn.com/history-images/N132336/The-care-of-the-wounded-war-horse-in-Northern-France 05-08-2019, 12:21.

presented as unsuitable in modern conditions. The German cavalry run helplessly into barbed wire, creating a scene which conveys the idea that horses were very much unsuitable to work under the modern conditions encountered in this war.

In another work, recreating the actions of Victoria Cross recipient Colonel-Lieutenant James Forbes-Robertson, the event pictured is used to create the idea of danger and subsequent heroism by the main character. The horse in this case clearly seems to be unhappy with the circumstances it is in, somewhat struggling in the face of danger and perhaps of a mind to leave this place. This enhances the bravery and perseverance of Forbes-Robertson, exposing himself to danger and in the meantime being able to control

the horse he is riding.[115] He subsequently inspires the other soldiers to withstand the oncoming attacks, resulting in the line not being broken. The composition also ties in with the better known paintings referred to above, of brave soldiers charging in the face of danger, and is reminiscent of the way in which horses are often used in statues to portray the importance of the person they carry.

The only picture of Matania that seems to have horses as a topic is *The Care of the Wounded War-Horse in the Northern France: What is Being Done to Alleviate the Suffering of Dumb Animals in the War Region*. The horses pictured are the centre of attention, for both viewer and the men and women concerned with their care. This work did not originate as a newspaper picture, but was painted for the Blue Cross Fund, that sold prints to raise funds. The picture shows what is being done with the money raised and how this helps alleviate the suffering of the horses. The artwork does not show the horse in its own right, but rather the good work done by fundraisers and those who donate for this cause. It can therefore also be interpreted as another example of how the use and care for horses enabled civilians to be good citizens, doing their bit for the war effort by giving to charity.

Conclusion

The representation of horses has a variation of connotations. Yet, even if a representation of horses does seem to revolve around the horse, the underlying meaning often seems to reflect attitudes towards animals that existed in society. These images therefore tell us very little of the experiences of these horses and the particular role they played, for instance in shaping the events. To what extent were horses more than a backdrop in the events described? Could a horse, in the case of Forbes-Robertson, have contributed to his survival as it was unwilling to pursue a certain course of action? Did the willingness, or unwillingness, of this horse perhaps help shape events in such a way that it enabled the line from being broken? Such information is hard to obtain from these sources, as further descriptions of these events are lacking.

As argued above, the images offer a variety of cultural tropes regarding horses that existed prior to and during the First World War. On the other hand, these images do not really say anything about the actual work of horses and how horses reacted to the cir-

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[115] This is also a theme discerned by Harriet Ritvo in *The Animal Estate,* The English and other creatures in the Victorian Age, Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA, 1987. “Livelier animals that nonetheless acknowledged human superiority provided better models for human subordinates.” The horse is often characterised as noble, “and sometimes as nobler than the class of humans generally charged with its care.” (19)

cumstances in which they were expected to function. What the pictures show is that horses were not necessarily considered out of place in warfare, but for the image of German cavalry riding into barbed wire. Rather, it shows that a wider public was aware of the important role horses played in this modern war, and that it was important to assist in animal welfare. The National Peace Congress in London (May 1912) can be taken as a good example of how these two tropes convened. The awareness of the use of horses, and the importance of animal welfare, led to questions about the treatment and welfare of animals used for military purposes. This resulted in an extension of the provisions of the Geneva Convention, which now also included wounded horses and other animals employed in warfare.[116]

This brings me to the research question for this chapter: how were horses implemented by the British Army between 1902 and 1919 and did contemporary ideas about the role of horses in a modern society influence this use? The first part of this question offers a rather straightforward answer. The introduction of new fighting technologies in the nineteenth century led to a response in the British Army. Within the cavalry a discussion ensued about its role and the tactics with which it could be useful on the battlefield. Experiences in the Boer War resulted in a twofold solution: the cavalry would retain its *arme blanche* weaponry whilst also being equipped with rifles. The Boer War experience further instigated changes in horsemastership. Further organisational and logistical developments made sure that in a future war, which would be enormous in scale, sufficient horses could be mustered and wastage would be minimised, although despite all these changes horse wastage could not be prevented. The Western Front posed equally unsuitable circumstances compared to the Boer War, with freezing cold, mud, and a lack of fodder. Apart from the weather, and despite the skills of British cavalrymen, other factors like the weight of equipment that had to be carried would have its toll, or as Kenyon puts it, became “apparent in the cost of horseflesh”.[117] It is due to the work of the Army Veterinary Corps that the wastage due to preventable causes like exhaustion and sickness did not lead to the terrible loss in horses experienced before.

The various uses and attitudes towards horses show that there is no simple explanation for the role horses played in modern societies at the start of the twentieth century. The examples used in this chapter indicate that simplistic binaries do not contribute to a better historical understanding of the use of horses in this era.[118] As societies developed,

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[116] Storey, *Animals*, 11.

[117] Kenyon, *Horsemen*, 20. A cavalry horse had to carry a kit and equipment which weighed up to 50kg when in the field. Combined with a rider this could increase to some 125kg in total.

[118] McShane and Tarr, *The Horse*, 167.

the horse played an important role, in both cities and the army. Horses, therefore, did not hinder the modernisation of the British army, but became an essential part of the modern army. The new transportation techniques and organisational changes introduced between 1902 and 1914 show that at the start of the twentieth century they did reshape the face of transport in the cities. Outside the cities, for instance in agriculture, there were no alternatives for horse power.

The public attitudes towards the role of horses in a modern society can therefore not simply be placed into a frame in which the modern is juxtaposed to the traditional. Rather, multiple motivations and ideas existed and were combined or used. The army rationale for improving horsemastership can largely be attributed to the lack of efficiency which resulted from high wastage, as experienced during the Boer War. On the other hand, the involvement of (former) army personnel in animal welfare organisations such as the RSPCA also show a genuine care for the animal.

That horses were essential for the armies fighting during the First World War is perhaps best described by Graham Winton:

> War is not glamorous, nor is the suffering of animals who participate without choice, but they were an integral part of the military system and their work and those of the 'horses services', that supported them deserve greater and wider acknowledgment. The light and heavy draught horses of the ASC, Artillery, specialist and infantry units were the cornerstone military success in 1918.[119]

The greater and wider acknowledgment was present prior and during the war, but seems to have disappeared afterwards, with the reconstructions created by historians. The next chapter will therefore analyse how horses are represented in the historiographies of the First World War.

[119] Winton, *Theirs Not to*, 438.

Chapter 2: The role of horses in mainstream histories

Introduction

In the previous chapter I have analysed the role of horses in the British army. One of my arguments is that horses played an essential role. I also argued that an important strand of thought at the time opposed horses to the concept of modernity, in particular the modern city. The mechanisation of transport increasingly put horses at odds with what was considered modern. On the other hand, horses were still an important source for motive power outside the cities, for instance in agriculture. Although mechanisation was also sought after in the military, the British army between 1914 and 1918 still greatly depended on horses for transport.

The contrast between ideas about modernity and the practice of using horses as a source of power is also reflected in historiographies about this era. This chapter will analyse how ideas about the modern nature of the First World War influenced its historical reconstructions. I will analyse whether this leads to a modernity discourse and how horses are represented within this narrative. This will offer arguments to answer the research question for this chapter: to what extent do historiographies of the First World War form a modernity discourse and how does this affect the representation of horses in the historical reconstructions of this era?

By using historiographies written between 1934 and 2014, I will analyse whether changes and continuities within the representation of horses have occurred. It also allows me to analyse to which extent new research and possible revisions about the role of horses in the First World War have become part of these historiographies. But first I will identify what the various authors identify as the characteristics of modern warfare.

The characteristics of modern warfare in historiographies

As argued in the previous chapter, the idea that the First World War is a modern war leads to a preference amongst historians for the elements that are considered characteristics of this modernity, such as innovations in fighting techniques and how these influence warfare. These elements, such as barbed wire, artillery, machine guns, poison gas, mechanised warfare, and the use of railways and trains, are a testament to the modern nature of war. This attention leaves out other important elements of warfare in this period, such as fighting with clubs and axes in trenches, which had been done for ages in siege warfare, as

well as the use of soldiers and horses.[120] Even though the influence of new techniques is needed to understand the way in which trench warfare was fought, the risk lies in overestimating the influence of such new techniques or leaving out the elements that helped shape events.

Liddell Hart refers to various elements with the epithet "modern." In his analysis of the belligerent armies, Liddell Hart describes how the massive armies of 1914 could only function because of the modern railway network. His analysis focuses on those technological innovations that might be considered unique for each country, such as the German artillery and machine gun, French artillery and tactics, the importance of mechanised transport by train, and the apparent lack of outstanding armament of the British Army.[121] The author criticises the lack of technical motor developments that had taken place in the army prior to 1914. In his opinion the tank is the essence of this new technology, because it can ultimately restore mobility on a battlefield and enabled victory in 1918. The chapter about war in the air is in line with this focus on the mechanisation of warfare.

The idea that modernity and technological development are interlinked is also propagated by John Terraine. He regards the most modern soldier as the one who understands that warfare would become more and more mechanical.[122] In *The Western Front* he explains what the solution to the stalemate of trench warfare entailed:

> Nothing could break the stalemate, except another breakthrough in technology – a breakthrough which, fortunately, had already occurred and now awaited application. This was, quite simply, the internal combustion engine which, in the form of a lorry, offered independence of the railways; in the form of a tank, supplied the answer to the joint problem of barbed wire, machine guns and artillery; and in the form of the aeroplane added a new dimension to war itself, a new meaning to its national character. Not all of these effects were properly seen in 1918; but enough of them were by then apparent to bring the bloodbath to an end.[123]

As analysed in the previous chapter, lorries and especially tanks and airplanes would eventually influence warfare to a great extent during the Second World War. Yet during the First World War these technologies were distinctly different from those machines used decades later. They were scarce in 1914, unreliable (as shown by the high number of re-

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[120] Hew Strachan, "Introduction," *The Oxford Illustrated History of the First World War*, ed. Hew Strachan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 5.
[121] Liddell Hart, *History*, 35-38; concerning trains during the opening stages of fighting in 1914, see ibid., 59.
[122] John Terraine, *The Western Front 1914-1918* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Military Classics, 2003), 175-176. Originally published in 1964.
[123] Ibid., 214.

placements needed), and although mechanised transport would be used more and more during the war, the horse remained the primal source of power beyond the railhead. Nonetheless mechanical superiority is considered the conditioning factor which enabled the Allies to win the war. Historians therefore refer to the importance of tanks and artillery in the battles at the end of the war, for instance the Battle of Amiens in August 1918.[124]

Amongst the works of historians analysed here, a difference concerning the high number of casualties suffered in offensives during the war, can be discerned. Liddell Hart points out that one of the problems with modern warfare was the power of defence, and the difficulty for soldiers to cross a bullet-swept zone, in order to drive an enemy off the field of battle. Instead of considering the high number of casualties as a result of fighting battles with modern weapons, he blames army commanders for the high casualty rate as they did not understand warfare under these new modern conditions. Terraine on the other hand considers such casualties part of modern warfare, which is also reflected in his references to the number of losses belligerents incurred during battles.[125] This can be explained due to the fact that Liddell Hart's work was written prior to the Second World War and as such the terrible loss of life later considered a characteristic of wars in the twentieth century was not yet known to him. Nonetheless, the arguments of Liddell Hart are still being reiterated contemporary historians such as Robin Prior.[126]

In the introduction to *The Oxford Illustrated History of the First World War*, Hew Strachan also reiterates the importance of the mechanical dimension of the war, the technological sophistication, and scale of fighting offered by industrial means of transport, which influence the way in which the war was fought. Examples that he mentions are the submarines, airplanes, the scale in which artillery and trains were used, and the developments in weapon technology. Although one might expect a reference to the tank here, Strachan argues that the only way to realise any goals during the war was by reintegrating artillery fire and infantry movement.[127]

Due to the disastrous effect of modern weapons, the immediate response was premodern: to dig in and build fortifications. These would eventually turn out to be what we know as the trenches. Although these trenches are an important factor on the Western Front, how this works and what the trench system entails is not given much attention by any of the authors. The only description that comes close is David Stevenson's descripti-

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[124] Ibid., 156.
[125] Ibid., 14-16, 21-22, 36-37, 53, 66, 81, 132-133, 148-149, 163, 170.
[126] Robin Prior, "The Western Front," in *The Cambridge History of the First World War*, Vol. I, Part II, ed. Jay Winter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 221.
[127] Strachan, "Introduction," in *Oxford Illustrated,* 4-5.

on of the Western Front. Here, again, the above-mentioned elements that are considered modern are used to paint a picture of the Western Front.[128]

On the horses that played such an important role in the armies of the belligerents next to nothing is written. The only reference to horses is in their role as cavalry, often mentioned as one of the units that were present during a battle. The representation of cavalry as utterly useless and even as an important factor for the failure of offensives has its roots in the work of Liddell Hart. As an advocate of mechanised warfare, he did not see any role left for such vulnerable units as cavalry. Liddell Hart writes that all armies had “unexampled masses of cavalry” but that "they caused more trouble tot their own sides than to the enemy”. Besides their minimal effect and relative lack of use, cavalry did put a great strain on the supplies, as forage was the largest item of supply shipped overseas.[129] That most of this forage was used to feed the workhorses in the army shows that the broader role of horses within the army is overlooked by Liddell Hart.

Liddell Hart writes that the cavalry sense of mobility was as vital a necessity as it was decadent in modern warfare, because horses were very vulnerable to rifles and machine gun fire, as well as to high explosive artillery shells.[130] Liddell Hart writes: “For information, the French relied mainly on their cavalry, of which they had 100,000, but this enormous mass of cavalry discovered nothing of the enemy’s advance … and the French armies were everywhere surprised.”[131]

As a result the French armies blundered against the German troops in a fog on 22 August 1914, and attacked with bayonets, after which they were killed by German machine guns. When the Germans did attack swiftly with some of their cavalry, cavalrymen were accused of breaking lines and instruments of communication.[132] On 14 September, the German cavalry even roamed at will in the northwest of France, yet did nothing to permanently occupy these parts of France.[133] The cavalry and their actions are therefore vilified by Liddell Hart, a theme recurring throughout his book.[134]

David Stevenson has a more nuanced perspective on these events. Offering a detailed account of the same events, he describes how a stronger German reconnaissance cavalry, combined with a thick mist that grounded the French reconnaissance aircraft aided the German forces. The German reconnaissance, one day later, in return missed the

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[128] Stevenson, *1914-1918,* 182-183; on the use of new technologies and tactics, see 186-187.
[129] Liddell Hart, *History*, 43.
[130] Ibid.
[131] Ibid., 65.
[132] Ibid., 68.
[133] Ibid., 72.
[134] Kenyon, Horsemen, 3.

enemy soldiers until they were attacked by the British. Again fog was to blame. Another interesting observation by Stevenson is the distance traveled, and the way in which this was done. In the first month of fighting, some elements of the German army covered 500 kilometres, during which period men and horses carried the supplies. The German army did have approximately 4,000 lorries, but 60% of them broke down before they reached the Marne river.[135] That so many lorries broke down is a cautionary tale which runs contrary to Liddell Hart's argument that more motorised transport would have helped the British army in 1914.

In the work of Terraine, the battles fought in August are skimmed through to merely make a point that this is the last mobile fighting of the war. Omitting the cavalry as the most mobile force available is a tell-tale sign of the blindness of historians that surfaces in these works. Strachan refers to the cavalry fighting on 21 August briefly and in similar terms as Stevenson. The fighting between August and September is discussed in more detail, but horses only sparsely figure here in two references to German cavalry in a reconnaissance role.[136]

The only clear references to horses in Strachan's work are made in the descriptions of two pictures in which horses figure. The first example informs us about the dependence of armies in 1914 on horse-drawn transport once they left the railheads. The author mentions the need of 5,000 horses for an infantry division and that the requisitioning of such quantities of horses could have devastating effects on the rural communities, in this case in France. The other picture shows the cavalry of the Indian Expeditionary Forces landing in France in 1915 and how it would eventually take part in Allenby's successful Palestine campaign.[137] The first text is rather interesting since it concerns the role of horses in the armies of 1914. Even more interesting is the fact that there is no further mention whatsoever of horses and their use in the belligerent armies. That such an important element of the armies is not explained adds substance to the idea that the modern narrative seems to omit the important role of horses. This is also the case for the Indian Cavalry, which is given no further attention in the rest of Strachan's work, even though brigades

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135 Stevenson, *1914-1918*, 54.

136 Dennis E. Showalter, "Manoeuvre Warfare: The Eastern Front and Western Front, 1914-1915," in *The Oxford Illustrated History of the First World War,* ed. Hew Strachan (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2014), 44-45.

137 Samuel R. Williamson, jr., "The Origins of War,", in *The Oxford Illustrated History of the First World War,* ed. Hew Strachan (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2014), 20; Showalter, "Manoeuvre Warfare", *Oxford Illustrated*, 47.

from this unit would be active on the western front, for instance during the Battle of the Somme on 14 July 1916.[138]

What we find after an analysis of the work of these authors is that where it concerns the modern nature of the war, the primary guiding characteristics are those of new technologies and tactics. This is not surprising, especially if we take into consideration Bruno Latour's idea of how a narrative of modernity is formed, juxtaposing the modern with that which is considered not modern. As a consequence, the binary underlying this idea of modernity also becomes visible. This is what I would argue to be a modernity discourse, in which the advance of modernity, with a central role for the human and those elements made by humans, are given centre stage at the expense of other nonhuman actors. The role of those elements considered not modern are neglected and even though nonhuman elements such as horses were essential to the functioning of armies, they are often not mentioned, for instance in their role as draught animals. Of all historiographies analysed, the only explanation for the use of horses in transport can be found in Ian Brown's chapter on logistics in *The Cambridge History of the First World War*.[139] Therefore, I will now analyse how this modernity discourse influences the representation of horses in these histories.

Cavalry: A signpost for misunderstanding modern warfare

One of the legacies of Liddell Hart is his advocation of mechanised warfare. In order to make this point he vehemently argues against the use of cavalry on the battlefield, often representing cavalry as obsolete and outdated, a useless unit that is sent to suffer with little effect on the outcome of fighting. Therefore, his work is a great example of the way in which the modernity narrative influences the history of the First World War and how it puts the new and technological at opposites with older elements and techniques.

In Liddell Hart's view, cavalry become a signpost for the failure of offensives. This has much to do with his understanding of the role of cavalry. In his view, the cavalry were a breakthrough unit, used whenever infantry and artillery had broken through enemy defences. This was the tactical legacy of cavalry. Liddell Hart argues that the commanders between 1914-1918 merely used large masses of soldiers and artillery against enemy lines, in order to force a breakthrough and finally be able to use their beloved cavalry. But as the defenders were always at an advantage, the offensives dragged on for months and

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[138] Kenyon, *Horsemen*, 59-66.

[139] Ian Brown, "Logistics", in *The Cambridge History of the First Wold War, Vol II, Part II,* ed. Jay Winter (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2014), 228-236.

ended in a costly failure with hundreds of thousands of casualties. The cavalry, as always on the Western Front, would only assemble in vain, never to be used in this modern war.

As has already been shown above, during the opening stages of fighting the bodies of cavalry are represented in a fairly negative manner. The French cavalry were useless in a mist on 21 August 1914 and the German cavalry roamed behind enemy lines with no effect. Although both cases are not untrue, the way in which horses are represented makes them the scapegoat for offensives gone wrong, which is not the case. As I shall argue later on, mist and fog play an interesting role for the success of an offensive on the Western Front. And where it concert the German cavalry, they roam freely behind the enemy lines, returning without much effect, even though this might be explained due to the bad means of communication that existed, a fear of being cut off, or the fact that they were needed for the various battles that were fought in this period, such as at Mons and at the Marne.

So whenever the cavalry is mentioned by Liddell Hart, it forebodes a senseless loss of life for the soldiers. The historical orthodoxy that during the war soldiers were senselessly slaughtered due to all belligerents having inept commanders, has since then been revised. Nevertheless, the negative representation of cavalry has continued to permeate the most recent historiographies.[140] During the Battle of the Marne, as the German offensive was finally pushed back, the movement of the British troops was considered to be very slow and the cavalry worst of all, as they were right behind the infantry.[141] What this exactly means is not clear, as cavalry could easily move cross-country and therefore would not need to walk on a road behind infantry. This notion of the cavalry as a sign for loss and trouble has been reiterated in many historiographies.

At the first Battle of Ypres in late October, the cavalry was dismounted. Although the German offensive threatened the front line, these units were able to help repel the attack, before being replaced by new infantry units.[142] In fact, due to their mobility, the various cavalry units were used in this period to quickly ride to parts of the line that were threatened, referred to as “fire brigade” work.[143] At Arras, the presence of cavalry was considered a futile part of the plan for the offensive and eventually the cavalry moved up in vain, which only added to the congestion of roads. The fundamental weakness in the planning of the Battle of Cambrai was the use of cavalry as a reserve force, for which they

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[140] Kenyon, *Horsemen*, 2-3.
[141] Liddell Hart, *History*, 110.
[142] Ibid., 147-48.
[143] Kenyon, *Horsemen*, 35.

were useless according to Liddell Hart.[144] The use of cavalry as a negative signpost was reiterated throughout other histories. Terraine argues that the use of cavalry at the Battle of Passchendaele reflected the false confidence of commanders in their own plans. Stevenson, in similar words, argues that a cavalry follow-up during the Battle of Arras led to a predictable failure. Strachan also refers to the massing of cavalry behind the front line, awaiting a breakthrough that never materialised.[145] In this representation of the cavalry, their presence in the narrative merely serves to indicate that casualties were caused by foolhardily maintaining an offensive in order to break through enemy lines. Yet what they and other units such as artillery or infantry actually did remains unclear.

Juxtaposed: The outdated cavalry versus modern technology

The narrative in which the war is represented primarily by its modern elements, often leads to a juxtaposition. Authors oppose the modern elements with those that they consider not modern. Horses, primarily in their cavalry role, are often used for this juxtaposition. One of the best examples is given in Liddell Hart's argument that commander Haig, as an "untechnically minded cavalryman", forgets the importance of using artillery to destroy barbed wire fortifications in his plans for the Somme offensive.[146] At the Battle of Cambrai, the cavalry are represented by the author as being unable to carry out a role of exploiting any successes that might occur due to the use of tanks in this offensive. Therefore he questions their presence at the start of the battle.[147] On another two occasions, the cavalry are further considered unable to function "in the face of modern weapons" or "modern conditions".[148]

Where they do play a role of some importance, exploiting opportunities that arose during the Battle of Amiens, Liddell Hart argues that this role was "but a slender thing compared with the true role of cavalry in past history". Similarly, when one squadron of Fort Garry Horse was useful, the emphasis is that the other units of the cavalry divisions were not and that British cavalry appeared late and were easily stopped by German enfilade fire.[149] Terraine argues that when the cavalry and the tank, as a modern technique,

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144 Liddell Hart, *History*, 383, 410.
145 Terraine, *Western Front*, 145; Stevenson, *1914-1918*, 176; Robin Prior and Trevor Wilson, "Eastern Front and Western Front, 1916-1917," in *The Oxford Illustrated History of the First World War*, ed. Hew Strachan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 189.
146 Liddell Hart, *History*, 284.
147 Ibid., 364.
148 Ibid., 410, 327.
149 Ibid., 514, 414.

are used in concert, the lack of success of the tanks is caused by the cavalry. On the other hand, when tanks are used without cavalry, they are considered to be a success.[150]

In his description of the attacking forces in 1914, Stevenson argues that the opening stages of fighting "resembled nineteenth-century warfare more closely than what followed". Even though he argues that mounted troops were essential units for reconnaissance and rapid manoeuvres, Stevenson states that "French cavalry still wore breastplates; British officers carried sword in combat." Although the breastplates were rather useless against rifles and machine guns, the use of swords was retained by the British cavalry in order to be able to fight mounted and dismounted.[151] Yet what this entailed or how this changed during the war is not mentioned any further. As such the idea that cavalry is at odds with modern warfare is reiterated, and the more complex nature of this war is overlooked. For the war did have its modern traits, but the neglect of such "non-modern" elements warrants an oversimplified narrative which does not do justice to all actors.

The calculated forgetting of horses

Although cavalry is sometimes mentioned, albeit often in a negative context, the use of horses for transport and supply is generally overlooked altogether. When the number of artillery guns prior to an offensive are mentioned, their horse teams are not. When there is some reference to these horses, it remains rather vague. For example, when gas is used against German artillery, the transport horses are killed off like flies or the gas paralyses the enemy artillery.[152] But these descriptions do not really say anything about what actually happens, how it influences the use of transport and artillery or what number of horses are killed or wounded. As such, this information is merely a form of backdrop, a literary addition to make the narrative more lavish. In terms of a historical reconstruction, however, it does not really offer much information. The same can be said of descriptions of the cavalry. When they play a role no details are mentioned as to how or what their actions exactly amount to.[153] However, when it concerns transport, railways or trains figure again to form a modern narrative.[154]

The same can be said of the other authors, who generally seem to reiterate Liddell Hart's narrative. Where special attack units are referred to, such as the Canadian, Australian, and Cavalry Corps, the further exploits of the infantry are given further attention, but

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[150] Terraine, *Western Front*, 170, 514.
[151] Stevenson, *1914-1918*, 51. For *arme blanche* discussion, see chapter 1 above.
[152] Liddell Hart*, History*, 380-382, 512.
[153] Ibid., 414, 472, 483.
[154] Ibid., 511.

not the cavalry or horses in other units.[155] The only reference made by Terraine is when he paints the remarkable scene of British units during the Amiens offensive: “The whole Santerre plateau … was dotted with parties of infantry, field artillery, and tanks moving forward. Staff officers were galloping about, many riding horses in battle for the first time.”[156]

Yet again, one can ask: what do these galloping horses amount to? Even Stevenson, the only author who mentions the use of horse teams to move guns, in this case for the German artillery, does not give any further explanation as to the number of horses used in such a way, during a battle or for the war in total.[157] Strachan’s accounts of the Battle of Amiens and the representation of horses in his work is extraordinary. The most insightful references to horses or are given in the texts of pictures, for instance with the two examples mentioned above. The Battle of Amiens is only mentioned fleetingly. On the single page where it is analysed more thoroughly, the only information offered are the number of planes and tanks, as well as the number of guns and important artillery tactics. Nothing is explained about the infantry units that were used and the cavalry is not mentioned at all.[158] This is rather surprising, as cavalry units were extensively involved in the fighting during this “Hundred Days’ period.”[159]

The text guiding a picture is the most insightful clue as to the role of horses. It reads: Mark V 5th Battalion tanks going forward on 10 August 1918 to support the allied offensive at Amiens. Due to heat and gases inside, some of the tank crews are outside and the hatchways are open. A dead horse and its cart block the road, an officer directs traffic, and German prisoners move to the rear.[160] Although what is in front of the tank is hidden from sight, the horse and cart are seen on the side of the road, and the first tank has almost passed them. The tank crews seem to be preparing themselves or the

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[155] Terraine, *Western Front*, 165-167, 212-213.

[156] Ibid., 169.

[157] Stevenson, *1914-1918*, 47.

[158] Hew Strachan, “Economic Mobilization,” in *The Oxford Illustrated History of the First World War*, ed. Hew Strachan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 145; David Trask, “The Entry of the USA into the War and its Effects”, in ibid., 246; Holger H. Herwig, “The German Victories, 1917-1918,” in ibid., 261; Tim Travers, “The Allied Victories, 1918,” in ibid., 280-281.

[159] Kenyon, *Horsemen*, 231-234. The Hundred Days’ period started with the Battle of Amiens on August 8th, after which the Allied forces in France drove the Germans back until the armistice of November 11th. With every withdrawal, the Allied forces had to reestablish contact and find out where exactly the enemy forces were, and how strong they were, a cavalry task also known as *reconnoitring*. Reconnoitring was used on a daily basis in this period, for instance by regimental cavalry, the cavalry unit attached to an infantry regiment.

[160] Travers, “The Allied Victories,” in *Oxford Illustrated,* 281. Alas, though referred to in the illustration sources, the source reference lead to a different picture and subsequently no further background information as to what happened in this scene can be cross-referenced.

tanks, or perhaps, as indicated in the text, pause to ventilate the tank. This was a necessity, as temperatures of up to 60 degrees Celsius combined with toxic petrol fumes greatly reduced mobility.[161] The idea that the cart or horse have anything to do with the tank's lack of movement can therefore not be ascertained. The idea that a dead horse and cart on a roadside are enough to stop a tank in its tracks seems rather incredulous. In this case, the horse is again represented negatively, literally blocking the progress of modern war machines. These images and representations of horses do not paint a fair picture of the actual role they played. This calculated forgetting of the horse as an important actor, results in a misleading narrative created by historians. But what does this calculated forgetting entail?

The term calculated forgetting is used by Erica Fudge to explain how our understanding of the philosophy of a certain era might influence our idea of people's perception of and contact with animals in this era. Early modern philosophers considered animals in Cartesian terms, as soulless, irrational, and embodied machines. Humans, on the other hand, with their duality of body and mind, are agents that exert power outside these bodies; naming, knowing, and possessing the world and what's in it. When such philosophical ideas are generalised to subjugate all human-animal interactions in an era, it might well overlook other ways in which communication took place. Instead of people viewing their livestock as objectified machines, they interacted with them on a daily basis and saw animals as individuals with particular traits and needs. This led to reciprocal recognition, allowing animals to be part of an ethical framework in which their bodies also counted. This is not to say that this was always the case, but helps us understand that both ideas and practices, the animal considered as a soulless machine, as well as a subject, as an actor influencing its environment, existed simultaneously in an era.[162] The point is that viewing human-animal interaction from a mere philosophical perspective does not represent the entire historical reality.

Fudge's argument can be extended to the representation of horses within the discourse of modernity. A focus on the modern aspects can lead to the calculated forgetting of those elements that influence a modern war, but are not considered modern. As argued above, the use of cavalry as a signpost for disastrous plans or as a means to show what elements are modern, does not help understand what their role was. This is perhaps best

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[161] Robin Prior, "The Western Front," in *The Cambridge History of the First World War*, Vol. I, Part II, ed. Jay Winter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 217.
[162] Fudge, "The Animal Face," 195-196.

described with Robin Prior's reference to "horsed-soldiers" during the battle of Neuve-Chapelle in March 1915. He writes:

> These guns began to take a toll on the soldiers and the horsed-soldiers, who in any case were having difficulty making their way forwards across ground intersected by trenches and littered with barbed wire entanglements. Eventually the cavalry was withdrawn but not before three days of futile endeavour and high casualties.[163]

But during this offensive cavalry never saw action as they were used as a reserve force.[164] This truly a-historical representation of the cavalry can only be explained as an attempt by Prior to create a vivid image of a modern battlefield, using horses in a negative binary by which this modernity is created.[165]

Tanks: A signpost of modernity and success

The tanks used during the First World War are often described as the prime example of modern technology in this era. In contrast to horses and cavalry, a lot of attention is given to tanks, specifically to explain their introduction and use. Liddell Hart argues that the tank, combined with surprise, was the means to break through the trench barrier.[166] Their first appearance, at the Battle of the Somme in 1916, is considered by him to have been a premature appearance, before they were mechanically mature and available in adequate numbers.[167]

The most vocal advocate of the use of tanks is Liddell Hart. Yet as these new techniques did not deliver the breakthrough that was hoped for, his focus lies on what went wrong, how they were not applied correctly and how commanders did not know how to

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[163] Robin Prior, "The Western Front," in *Cambridge History*, 209-210.

[164] Kenyon, *Horsemen*, 38.

[165] Besides his chapter "The Western Front," Prior is also the author of two other chapters in *The Cambridge History of the First World War*: "Impasse," (Vol. I, Part I) about the British offensives in 1916, and "The Ottoman Front." (Vol. I, Part II). In these chapters he has nothing to say about a positive contribution of the cavalry to the outcome of battles. Rather, cavalry are ideal targets for German machine gunners and artillerymen ("Impasse",102), are swept away by them and as such had no place on battlefields such as the Somme (103), and are obstructed by mud ("Impasse", 107). Prior generally considers the use of cavalry a form of romanticism in behalf of the British commander Haig ("Impasse", 109). His subsequent use of the term "cavalry commander" is meant as a slur to indicate British commanders did not understand modern warfare ("The Western Front", 233). His only positive reference to cavalry is in "The Ottoman Front," where he writes that the British had a "formidable cavalry component" in the field, but what they do or contribute is not explained ("The Ottoman Front", 315).

[166] Liddell Hart, *History*, 364

[167] Ibid., 311; Terraine, *Western Front*, 219; Stevenson, *1914-1918*, 189-190; Robin Prior and Trevor Wilson, "Eastern and Western Front, 1916-1917," in *The Oxford Illustrated History of the First World War,* ed. Hew Strachan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 190.

use tanks.[168] When German counterattacks materialise, tanks avert disaster. When few tanks are used during British offensives, the advance is checked by the Germans.[169]

Liddell Hart does away with criticism of the tanks' performance as "bad press." He argues that, because it is a new technique, it was given more attention than other units, such as infantry or cavalry. Yet tanks were taken out by German artillery guns, and therefore not machines that would help the Allies win the war. Crews were exhausted before they reached open country behind the trenches and cavalry could not aid in exploiting potential success.[170]

The limitations of the tanks used during the war is also a topic touched upon by the other authors. Terraine argues that besides misuse by commanders, their mechanical limitations were as much a cause for their limited influence on battles.[171] All authors agree that tanks were slow, especially on rough terrain, and as such vulnerable.[172] They were lightly armed, lacked armour and whenever they were used intensively their numbers dwindled rapidly.[173] This is shown in the losses incurred during battles in which they were used in great numbers. At Cambrai, of the 378 tanks used on day one, 179 were hit, with only 92 remaining by day four.[174] During the Battle of Amiens in August 1918 430 tanks ran on day one, with only 38 left on day four.[175]

Rather than war-winning machines, or their important role in the tactics of the Second World War, tanks were still limited between 1914 and 1918, but used as much as their mechanical unreliability allowed. They only succeeded where the terrain was suitable, such as at Cambrai, and even then their contribution did not lead to the sought-after breakthrough. As Strachan argues, both tanks and airplanes were used to keep the offensive going. Combined with the many casualties suffered, this period therefore resembles the ongoing attrition warfare which is characteristic of the Western Front.[176] The Allies are capable of winning because they can suffer more losses, have better and more technology and use all available material in the fight: "Whether in artillery, ammunition supplies,

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168 Liddell Hart, *History*, 313, 383, 405-412.
169 Ibid., 416, 510-513.
170 Ibid., 412-414.
171 Terraine, *Western Front*, 220.
172 Ibid., 221.
173 Stevenson, *1914-1918*, 189.
174 Terraine, *Western Front*, 221; Stevenson, *1914-1918*, 338; Travers, "The Allied Victories," in *Oxford Illustrated*, 280.
175 Terraine, *Western Front,* 221; Stevenson, *1914-1918,* 444; Travers, "The Allied Victories," in *Oxford Illustrated*, 280.
176 Travers, "The Allied Victories," in *Oxford Illustrated*, 284.

tanks, planes, Lewis guns, rifle grenades, machine guns, food supplies, rail lines, or even horses, the allies were irresistibly superior."[177]

The reference "even horses" is what makes this line of thought interesting in two ways. On the one hand it ties in with the above-mentioned calculated forgetting of horses: historians generally do not see them as an integral part of the belligerent armies, but rather as at odds with modern warfare. The Allied army is superior in all its modern techniques and even in those techniques that are obsolete, such as horses. This is what happens, in different degrees, throughout all historiographies: certain aspects are selected for closer analysis, others are not. The problem with this approach is that the elements chosen within this modern narrative are never the non-modern or the non-technical, which leads to a distorted representation of the actors present in this historical era. This is the other interesting point that can be taken from this quote: how did the elements that are mentioned but not analysed influence the outcome of battles or the war in general?

Geography: The conditioning factor of the natural elements on the Western Front

The conditions on the Western Front made fighting an offensive difficult for all participants. The frontline, extending from the North Sea to Switzerland, made it impossible to circumvent the enemy, at least since this had been tried in October 1914 in the so-called Race to the Sea.[178] Other theatres of war saw more fluid forms of fighting and therefore better possibilities for the use of mobile units such as the cavalry. A short sidestep from the Western Front can therefore be illuminating where it concerns the possibilities to use cavalry, under modern conditions. The following excerpt by Bryan Perrett details events during the Battle of Beersheba, 31 October 1917:

> There, out on the plains, came squadron after squadron, regiment after regiment, all trotting forward in clouds of dust. Guns opened up on them, but they kept moving, the thousands of flying hooves stuttering thunder, going at a rate that frightened a man; an awe-inspiring sight galloping through the red have – knee to knee and horse-to-horse – the dying sun glinting on their bayonet points. Machine gun and rifle fire rattled but the 4th Brigade galloped on. We saw shellbursts among them and horses crashed, but the massed squadrons thundered on. We laughed in delight when the shells burst behind them, telling that the gunners couldn't keep the range, and suddenly men ceased to fall and we knew the Turks, wild with fear and excitement, had forgotten to lower their rifle sights. The last half-mile was a berserk gallop with squadrons in magnificent line, the horses leaping the trenches, the Turkish bayonets thrusting up. One regiment leapt from the saddle and into

[177] Ibid., 287.
[178] Terraine, *Western Front*, 203.

> them; the following regiment galloped on, over another redoubt, and in a roar of cheers and thundering hooves, down the half-mile slope and into the town. Then a mad rush of other troops followed in the gathering dark, mad, mad excitement – terrific explosions in the town – Beersheba had fallen![179]

This cavalry charge was successful, even though defenders were entrenched and used modern weapons. Although casualties could have been higher if the Turkish defenders had adjusted their sight, they were considered light compared to Western Front standards.[180] The achievements of the cavalry are further described as exceptional, something also attested to by the title of the book: *Impossible Victories*. In other accounts the Turkish soldiers defending Beersheba are considered to be of inferior quality, although such accusations have since been refuted, as this is not the only explanation of the cavalry's success.[181]

Instead of the binary in which cavalry is at odds with modern technology, the battles in Egypt, Palestine, and Mesopotamia between 1915 and 1918 offer a more nuanced narrative. In this narrative horses are still very much effective in combat and as such their use is integrated in offensive systems, instead of merely charging after enemy lines are broken.[182] Many of the cavalry brigades fighting here, in what would in modern terms be considered a reactionary deed, armed themselves with swords for the first time, whilst maintaining their use of rifles, as this suited their fighting capabilities. Apparently the cavalry needed to be able to charge an enemy, besides their use as a mobile infantry. These examples can be used to argue that cavalry was still very useful, even on battlefields full of modern weaponry.

When these evens are mentioned in the various historiographies under scrutiny here, cavalry is referred to in the context of mistakes that were made, and operations that are skilfully conducted are not mentioned. Just like the descriptions on the Western Front, cavalry here was "behind the infantry" and apparently of no use.[183] As cavalry played an important part during the operations in this period, the reference to it can only be under-

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[179] Perrett, "Mounted Action," 153.
[180] Ibid., 155.
[181] Phillips, "Scapegoat Arm," 65; Jean Bou, "Cavalry, Firepower and Swords: The Australian Light Horse and the Tactical Lessons of Cavalry Operations in Palestine, 1916-1918," *The Journal of Military History* 71, no. 1 (Jan. 2007): 122.
[182] Phillips, "Who Shall Say," 8.
[183] Liddell Hart, *History*, 253-254, 327, 452-453.

stood as another vilification.[184] Even though this narrative does the actors no justice, the complete lack of knowledge about the use of cavalry outside France in the work of Stevenson and Strachan is even more surprising. They do mention events in Palestine and even the Battle of Beersheba. Yet Stevenson refers to this episode as a surprise infantry charge, whereas Strachan offers no details at all.[185] Such an oversight of units that play an important role in the outcome of battles is rather odd, but can be explained when the context of a modern discourse that underlines these histories is taken into account. In order to maintain the narrative that this war is modern, such exceptional events which show a more nuanced representation of the role of horses are easily overlooked. And as such, they are again left out of the narrative.

Conclusion

The goal of this chapter is not so much to prove that cavalry is wrongly represented in histories, or that military tacticians can be proven wrong. Although some of the evidence offered might suggest a revision is necessary, this has already been partially undertaken by military historians such as Stephen Badsey, David Kenyon, Gervase Philips, Bryan Perret, and Jean Bou, who write about the role of cavalry during the First World War. For this thesis, the underlying premise is rather that the idea of this conflict as a modern war limits our understanding of the way in which events unfolded. A focus on those modern elements that were influential, or the extent to which certain fighting units were, whether tanks or cavalry, leads to the forgetting of those other parts of the narrative that made fighting possible in the first place. So whereas trains and railways are mentioned, the horse that made possible the movement from railhead to frontline is overlooked in all histories under scrutiny in this chapter. As for cavalry, where they do tend to be active with success, such as their conduct in Palestine, they are not incorporated into the narrative.

The research question for this chapter is: to what extent do historiographies of the First World War form a modernity discourse and how does this affect the representation of horses in these historical reconstructions? I have argued that the discourse of modernity can explain how the historical role of horses, primarily in their role as cavalry, leads to their negative representation. The binary underlying modernity, the continuous contrast

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[184] Perrett, "Mounted Action," in *Unlikely Successes*, 161; Bou, "Cavalry, Firepower, Swords," *Military History,* 122. The lack of details surrounding the cavalry fighting is also present in Robin Prior's description of the same events in "The Ottoman Front," *Cambridge History*, 315-318.

[185] Stevenson, *1914-1918*, 337-339; Showalter, "Manoeuvre Warfare,", *Oxford Illustrated*, 41; Ulrich Trumpener, "Turkey's War," in *The Oxford Illustrated History of the First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 87-91. As Terraine's work is concerned with the Western Front, events in other theatres are not covered here.

with that which it is not, creates a distorted historical narrative. First there is the cavalry, slandered by Liddell Hart, reiterated by the other historians in less harsh terms but nonetheless at odds with the modern conditions of warfare. As such their contribution to battles remains either unclear or unmentioned. Second, the other roles of horses, in transport, for supply, or as the horse-team pulling the guns, is generally absent and the focus lies on cavalry units. This is a striking oversight, as their contribution to the war effort cannot be underestimated. If one would imagine the First World War without horses, purely human and mechanical, this would mean no food, water, or ammunition could have been brought to the frontlines. Artillery would not be resupplied, soldiers would starve, and the wounded would be left to die in the trenches.

The overemphasis on the mechanical, the modern, therefore leads to a representation of the war in which some of its most important actors, albeit perhaps also the most mundane, are forgotten. Some authors do refer to the importance of horses in this role, yet to what extent, how this is done, or how it influences the war, remains a mystery. This seems to be a general oversight in all histories analysed here, and can therefore be regarded as an element of First World War historiography. As such, it can be argued that a modernity discourse exists within the historiography of the First World War. This discourse leads to a focus on the influence of innovations and new technological developments. The things that are not considered modern are further used to create a false contradiction, in which these traditional, obsolete, or reactionary elements are juxtaposed with the modern. This creates a historical reconstruction in which the use of all that is not modern is represented as wrong. Yet, the presence of so many different elements indicates something rather different, and when taken into account, enables a narrative in which both sides continue the fight with all possible means: human, technological, and animal.

In 2001, during the war in Afghanistan, a key breakthrough occurred by means of a cavalry charge, conducted by Afghanistan allies and US special forces.[186] Instead of considering this as utterly incongruent with modern warfare, we can also try to understand why this happened, what conditions enabled such an event and explore the continued use of animals. During the First World War the Allies prevailed, aided by soldiers from the United States, by being able to continue the production of armaments and ammunition and the ever-increasing mechanised means by which the war was fought. But what this narrative lacks is the continued use of animal power, the horse in its transport capacity

[186] Donald Rumsfeld, *Annual Report to the President and the Congress*, 29 (2002), retrieved from https://history.defense.gov/Portals/70/Documents/annual_reports/2002_DoD_AR.pdf?ver=2014-06-24-153732-117

and how, for instance, the British could endure the movement of their artillery and supplies, when the German army could no longer. The next chapter will investigate how a more inclusive narrative might help to create a historical narrative that is sensitive to the heterogeneity of actors that shaped events.

Chapter 3: A historical reconstruction by means of Actor-Network Theory

Introduction

In this chapter I analyse primary sources by means of Actor-Network Theory (ANT), in order to create a historical narrative that is more heterogenous. As argued in the previous chapter, the modernity discourse underlying most historiographies of this period is rather anthropocentric and leaves out actors that helped shape events. The results of these analyses will offer arguments in regards to the gains that might be made in the historical reconstruction of this era when using ANT. For this purpose three war diaries of different units are used: the war diary of 'C' battery Royal Horse Artillery, the 47th Brigade Royal Field Artillery war diary, and the 14th Division Divisional Train war diary. The various sizes of these units will allow for an understanding of the representation of horses.

The analyses of primary sources will follow the four guiding principles outlined in the introduction, and contribute to a better understanding of the social under investigation. Over time the social is unstable, changes, and influenced by actors. The social is heterogenous, not merely human but a collection of humans and non-humans. That the social is interconnected as such is due to the source of agency, which is uncertain. Trying to understand how the social functions, and how the constituent actors influence one another, further helps to understand how events are created collectively. The analysis in this chapter offers arguments to answer the research question for this chapter: how can the method of Actor-Network Theory be used to create a historical narrative that is more heterogenous, allowing horses to be written into historical reconstructions?

One of the first notable differences when analysing primary sources with ANT is the variation of horses which surface. As much as humans have different ranks, horses are referred to as light draught, baggage, and light riding, although most distinctions concern the heavy draught horses.[187] The various references to remounts and sick horses, as well as castings, also bears testimony to the importance of the organisational changes within the horse branches of the British army, as analysed above.[188] The reference to cases of sickness also show the few instances in which reference is made of individual horses,

[187] 14th Division Divisional Train War Diary (Div. Train.), May-September 1918, Number (no.) 1 Company (coy.): 3, 7, 11 May, no. 3 coy. 4, 6, 26, 27 May, no. 4 coy. 23, 27, 31 May, WO 95/1893/6.

[188] See Chapter 1 for organisational changes. References in sources: Div. Train. no. 1 coy. 28, 30 May, no. 3 coy. 27 May, no. 4 coy. 27 May, 1, 10, 27 August. Royal Horse Artillery (RHA) War Diary, 7 November, 18 December 1915, 22-23 May, 8 June, 1917, WO 95/1152/2.

when they were evacuated.[189] A single act of defiance is mentioned when driver Hetherington is accidentally kicked in the faced by a horse, but the record does not give any further information about the circumstances or the specifics of the horse in question.[190] The diaries therefore offer an insight into the use of horses, but not so much how they performed in general or how individual horses fared over time.

These sources are not useful to reconstruct the way in which individual horses influenced daily activities. The same can be said of soldiers who are often simply referred to as "O.R." or "other rank." While officers are mentioned by name more often, soldiers are at best referred to when they become a casualty. As such, most of the descriptions of both human and horse show a certain lack of agency. In terms of ANT, all are actants rather than actors, as it is not clear how a single actant becomes an actor and influences events. Only on a few occasions the various actants described in the war diaries seem to escape their lack of historical agency. These examples are found in the war diaries' more detailed descriptions of battles.

In terms of historical agency this can be used as an argument to put the soldier and the horse on equal footing. For both human and horse are shown to be historical actors that influence the day-to-day conduct of war, enabling warfare, even though the diaries do not clearly explain the exact role individual actors had. Taking the human away would mean waging war is no longer possible. If we think about the First World War without horses, the same would happen. All transport would stop, food, water, ammunition, artillery, everything would remain in place without horses (and other draught animals) to take them up to their next location. The horse, as an important cog in the war machine, can therefore be seen as equally indispensable for the conduct of war on the Western Front. As we have seen in the previous chapter, the horse is referred to in its role of motive power. The horses on the battlefield are represented as outdated and obsolete elements.

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[189] Div. Train, no. 3 coy. 7 May: "HD horse No 61 (No1 Coy) evacuated to 26th A.V.S.," no. 4 coy.; 11 May: "Horse HD no 256 (89F company Royal Engineers) attached from 4 company died in camp of ruptured bowel"; 1 July: "H.D. horses 89.172 evacuated to 26 M.V.S. (Mobile Veterinary Station); 9 July: "H.D. horse no 4511 of reinforcements from PARK ROYAL evacuated to M.V.S.; 2 September: "HD horse 43 F. Amb. (Field Ambulance) sustained broken leg through ride was shot"; 23 September: "Riding Horse no 172 to 26 M.V.S., no. 1 coy.; 1 November: "HD no 342 evacuated to M.V.S. by no 3 C.M.,WO 95/1893/6."

[190] Div. Train, no. 3. coy. 3 November 1918.

Horses on a modern battlefield

The Royal Field Artillery (RFA) and Royal Horse Artillery (RHA) diaries both mention various engagements of their units between 1915 and 1918. This on its own offers an interesting idea about the changes that occurred throughout the war on the Western Front. Whereas this front is often described as static, the elements that are present in this collective of things, the infantry in the trenches, the artillery guns, and all units moving to and from the frontline, attest to its continuously changing character. This is shown in the fair amount of movement all units in the diaries perform on a regular basis, due to changes in railheads or when ordered to move to another part of the front.[191] As such, artillery is not a fixed given, a number of guns always at the disposal on a certain part of the front line. Rather, the guns had to be moved to their designated positions, by horses, in order to fight on the front line, returning after a period for rest or more training.[192]

By means of the descriptions of two offensives described in the various diaries, these sources will help to understand the movements, actions, and other ways in which men, animal, and machine helped shape events.

The Battle of Morval

On the early morning of August 10th, 1916, the RFA brigade came into action near Delville Wood. The brigade was reorganised and distributed in two 18 pounder batteries of 6 guns each and one 4.5 howitzer battery (D/47). A/47 battery was divided, sending one section (of two guns) to C/47 and the other section to B/47. The batteries went into action during the night of 10-11 August. Subsequently, the batteries attacked the enemy trenches regularly, interspersed by more intense bombardments in which they supported infantry attacks, for instance on the 24th. On the night of the 26-27th, the guns moved to a new position nearby. On the night of the 30-31st, the diary notes:

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[191] Div. Train. no 1 coy. 1, 2, 3, 7, 11, May 1918, WO 95/1893/6. 1 May is also one of the few examples of the use of lorries, indicating that although mechanised transport was used more often, at least for this unit most of the transport was still conducted by horse and wagon.

[192] Rest; off the line of RFA and RHA, also; training of units. RFA; 21-27 April 1918: The Brigade rested and trained. Batteries were made up in guns and hows; RFA 21-30 June 1918: Battery rested and trained; RFA 19 August: C/47 moved to Camblain Chatelain, for training, WO WO 95/1887/1. & RHA; 18 November 1915: Battery settled down (in Sains Les Fressins, 8km south west of Fruges) to rubbing up drill, training young N.C.O.s and telephonists. Owing to the battery being on a side road and owing to the hillsides, motor lorries did not deliver rations and forage to the battery. Have to send for rations + forage to Creguy, WO 95/1152/2.

The enemy bombarded intensely Delville Wood & back area at 3pm. On [the] left he managed to gain some trenches & on [the] right secured a footing in the N[orth] E[ast] of [the] wood. On our im mediate he was stopped by artillery fire. By a counter he was driven out of most of the trenches.[193] As a retaliation the battery positions were heavily attacked by gas shells, but this did not lead to casualties.[194]

A further mention of the total expenditure of shells fired between 9 and 31 August sheds some light on the nature of shelling. The lion share of shells at this point was the so-called shrapnel shell, that consisted of fragments that exploded above ground in order to kill or wound enemy soldiers and animals. Some 30,876 shrapnel shells and 9,712 high explosive shells were fired, as well as 13,721 High Explosive howitzer shells, showing that shrapnel was used more than high explosives.[195] The images below show a shrapnel shell

[193] 47th Brigade Royal Field Artillery War Diary, 2-31 August, WO 95/1887/1.
[194] Top: IWM Q1274, a panoramic view looking towards the Fricourt-Carnoy road, September 1916. Bottom left: Q4692, Horse transport park in the snow, Arras road, near St. Pol, February 1917. Bottom right: IWM Q6320, Watering of Horses. 235th Brigade (47th Divisional Artillery) watering their horses in captured Flesquieres, 24 November, 1917.
[195] Ibid, 31 August. The High Explosive shells were devised to explode on impact, blowing away barbed wire or destroying enemy defensive positions. This distinction between sorts of shells, and the absence of gas shells used, shows that not all shells fired were explosive and gives a better idea of the way artillery was used than the mere reference to the total number of shells used during an offensive.

exploding over a trench (left). The middle and right show the possible results; a soldier and a horse who are wounded by fragments of the shell.[196]

The brigade remained on the frontline during September, again supporting attacks on the 15th and 16th near High Wood and Delville Wood. These woods were cleared by the brigade in the late afternoon, and while the Germans were pushed back, D/47 moved forward into a valley between the woods and Switch Trench.[197] On the 16th, at 09:30 AM, a barrage was then fired to assist the 2nd New Zealand Brigade to capture the 4th objective, which they succeeded in doing. Although the German artillery fired heavily on the infantry in the trenches, they paid little to no attention to the back area and artillery guns positioned there.[198] The following days more infantry attacks were supported, until the next big attack on the 26th. The diary describes how a large party of the enemy advanced to the front lines, at 4pm:

> A section [two guns] of D/47 [howitzers] was immediately turned on to them with rapid fire & fired 109 rounds in 8 minutes. They were completely dispersed & straggled down into the valley. A Squadron of cavalry went up to Gueudecourt. Dismounting there they went forward on foot & held the line at [the] same time orders came in to say that the N.Z. infantry would resume the offensive on our front on the 27th instead.[199]

The brigade left the frontline on October 1st.

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[196] Left: IWM CO 971; a shrapnel shell bursting over a Canadian trench, Flers-Courcelette, 15-22 September. Middle: Q 1778; wounded soldiers showing steel helmet pierced by shrapnel, Hamel, December 1916. Right: screenshot from IWM 114 film, showing a horse which sustained a shrapnel wound being dressed in a veterinary hospital at Neufchâtel, spring 1916. Retrieved from: https://film.iwmcollections.org.uk/record/1254, 17-08-2019, 09:36.
[197] 47th Brigade Royal Field Artillery War Diary, 15 September, WO 95/1887/1.
[198] Ibid., 16 September, WO 95/1887/1.
[199] Ibid., 26 September, WO 95/1887/1.

Analyses

What these episodes show is the presence of artillery on the battlefield, moving at times without great loss of life, whether horse or human. This can be used to argue against the idea that horses were out of place. No losses are given for the artillery horses, and human casualties were limited: three were wounded and one was killed. As David Kenyon argues, the speed of cavalry was useful in reducing casualties, as most of the horses described in the diary died after the horsemen dismounted.[200] For the cavalry the Gueudecourt action can be viewed as an exemplar of a key role cavalry could have adopted on the Western Front, and towards which it moved gradually, particularly in 1918: small forces, at the disposal of front-line commanders, used to seize advanced positions and exploit small tactical advantages.[201]

As far as it concerns the artillery horses, it seems that these also were capable of moving around the field of battle without heavy casualties. The battlefield itself also does not seem to pose insurmountable obstacles for cavalry and artillery horses, both moving around and crossing trenches whilst taking up new positions "in the face of shelling and machine gun fire."[202] Again, the frontline seems to be a place of more fluid movement, with interconnected elements that together shape events, rather than the rigid character described in the previous chapter.

The Battle of Arras: Monchy-le-Preux

Another example of the use of horses on the battlefield is found in the 'C' battery RHA diary, describing events during the Battle of Arras between 9 and 11 April, 1917. During the first week of April the battery marched daily, to their appointed positions prior to the start of the offensive. When the offensive commenced on the 9th they stood to, moved through the western edge of Arras, by did not get into action. On the 10th they did, as the diary notes: "went at a fast pace through Arras and along the cavalry track towards Fuechy Chapel. Sent battery along Arras-Cambrai road. Battery into action at 4pm. Wagon lines 500 yards back along the road and north of it. Snowed heavily. No shelter."[203]

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[200] Kenyon, *Horsemen*, 81. German artillery located the horse lines in the sunken road to the south-west of the village, shelling killed thirty-five horses and wounded a further twenty-four, more than half of the equine strength of the force. A contemporary mentions in hindsight that the horses might have been safer dispersed in the open, rather than concentrated out of sight but vulnerable to shelling. The total human casualties for the cavalry were three killed and seven wounded.

[201] Ibid., 82.

[202] Ibid.

[203] 3rd Cavalry Division, 6th Cavalry Brigade, 'C' Battery Royal Horse Artillery, 10 April 1917, WO 95/1152/2

The next day saw a more extensive role for the battery during the attack, in what would would be the furthest point of advance during the offensive. A “Supplementary War Diary” offers additional details of the events. The 6th cavalry brigade (of which the battery was a part) moved at 05:30am to their objective near Monchy-le-Preux. During the ride a shell fell between the wagon lines, killing two men and wounding seven of the no. 3 team. Seven horses were killed and wounded, and at a crossroads which was under constant German fire two more men were seriously wounded. The leading unit, 3rd Dragoon Guards cavalry regiment, moved to the objective south of the town. Lieutenant Patrick and the left section accompanied the Dragoon Guards, as the right section followed the Royals (Royal Dragoon cavalry regiment) on to Orange Hill. At 11 AM, both sections rejoined and fired from Orange Hill, in support of the Dragoon Guards, as they came into action at N6C51. The brigade was then able to hold the high ground from Monchy to Foche Farm, where they were joined by the 8th Brigade. The Wagon Lines on Orange Hill were shelled and retired below the ridge. Other batteries of the 3rd Cavalry Division also took up position on Orange Hill, at position N4d55, as it started to snow harder. In the diary further events are described clearly:

> At this point the brigade held a line roughly as follows – old. 60 – N12d – 18a – 17d – 16d but the sloping ground between Orange Hill and Fosse Farm was exposed to machine gun fire and shrapnel fire from the direction of Guemappe. The position taken up by the 4 guns was a covered one. About 8ft of cover in front and hidden by Fosse Farm on the right. Flashes would have been visible from the high ground behind Heninel and Guemappe. The wagon lines were placed on the low ground between the Battery and Fosse Farm. Heads of horses facing the battery. The 3rd Dragoon Guards were also here. The sergeant major was sent to steady the teams as Fosse Farm came under heavy shell fire from *Bois du Sart* and *Bois du Vert* (4.2 shell). Lieutenant Patrick directed the fire of the Battery from a point in N12b by telephone. Targets engaged. Infantry in wood at o8b1.1. Also machine gun. German infantry digging in front of *Bois du Sart* & *Bois du Vert*. Rounds fired about 60. In consultation with o.c. 3rd Dragoon Guards. It was decided to save ammunition in case of counter attack. About 12.30 PM 5 German planes flew over position. One flying very low. These planes remained in the divinity about 15 minutes. The staff captain 6th Cavalry Brigade was with o.c. 3rd Dragoon Guards near the Battery at the time and took back a report to the G.O.C. 6th Cavalry Brigade. About 1 company of infantry came down the slopes from Orange Hill towards the position. They were shells by 4.25 x shrapnel and altered their direction towards Monchy. About 1.30pm orders were received for the Battery to retire on to Orange Hill from G.O.C. 6th Cavalry Brigade. The retirement was carried out without mishap. The Battery came under machine gun fire & shrapnel fire during the retirement on to Orange Hill. The wagons and centre section left on Orange Hill were also observed by hostile aeroplanes and were heavily shelled. These wagons and guns retired under Lieutenant Hutchins in good order, and took up a position below the Feuchy Ridge.

> Batteries were now divisionalised and the right & left section took up a position about N4d55. About 3 PM a telephone wire was run out to the eastern slope of Orange Hill, but direct observation was impossible E[ast] of Monchy, except from Lieutenant Patrick. Original O.P. Fire was director on to *Bois du Vert* and road East of Labergere where German cavalry were reported. Rounds fired roughly 400. Snow fell heavily. The B.S.M [Brigade Sergeant Major] was now set to the wagon lines to take the horses to water and Lieutenant Hutchins was sent to refill ammunition from Arras. He also brought back 60 field dressing[s] as many of ours had been used up. The horses at water came under shell fire and one driver was killed and one wounded. The wagon lines again came under shell fire from 5.30 PM till 6.30 PM. But the BSM decided not to move them, as all the ground behind Feuchy Ridge was all exposed to shell fire.[204]

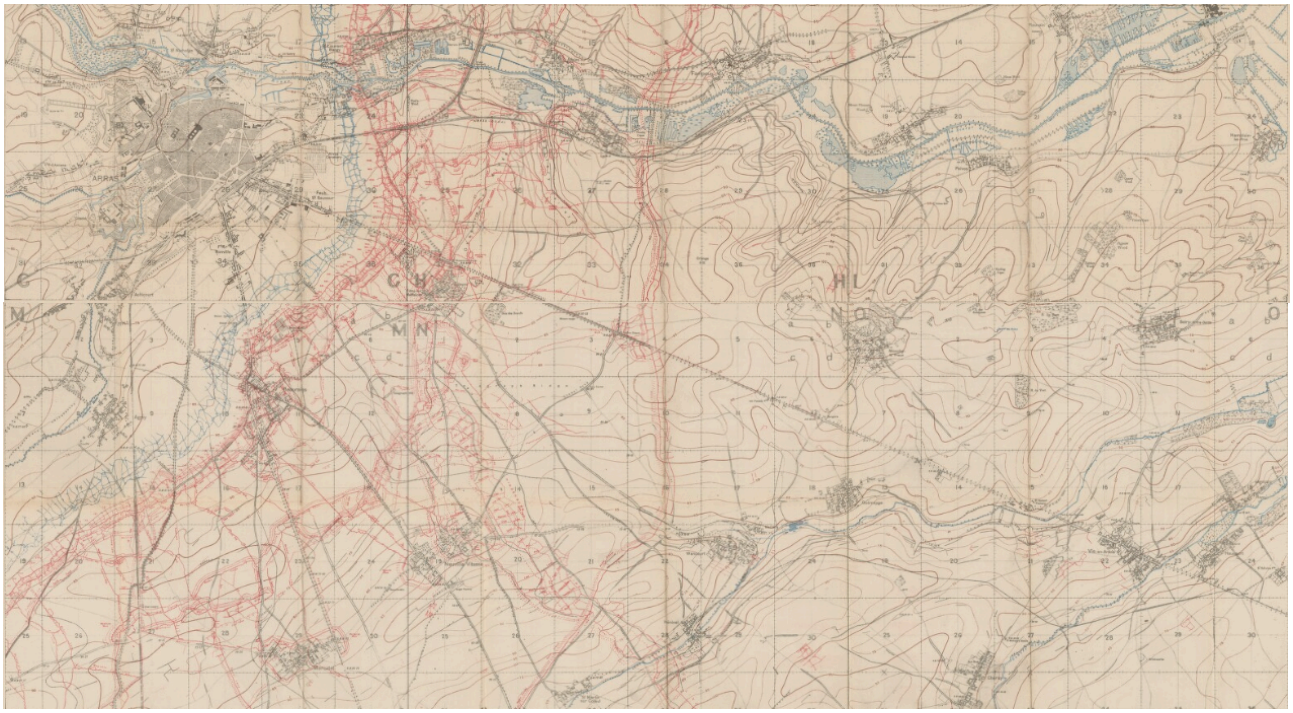
At 7 PM, the brigade was ordered to retire to the Arras racecourse. This was rather difficult as it kept snowing and the roads were congested. The total casualties for the battery were 3 ORs killed, 16 wounded and 27 horses wounded. Combined with a reference to a "map reference sheet 51B" it becomes possible to retrace the steps of 'C' battery on the 11th.

A better visual understanding: Maps

The map on the below shows the trenches around Arras, prior to the offensive. On the far left Arras is visible, the small blue lines running from top to bottom are the British trenches. The blue lines from left to right are waterways, primarily the Scarpe river. The better part of the trenches, those in red, are part of the German defence system, and the scale below shows this is between 4,5 and 6 kilometres wide.[205] Further lines indicate the natural features of the landscape, showing the difference in height: the hills and valleys. When

[204] Ibid., 11 April 1917 and Supplimentary War Diary 11th April, WO 95/1152/2.
[205] Map 51B NW, edition 6A – British First World War Trench Maps, 1915-1918. Retrieved from https://maps.nls.uk/view/10465068, 26 July, 2019, 08:04.

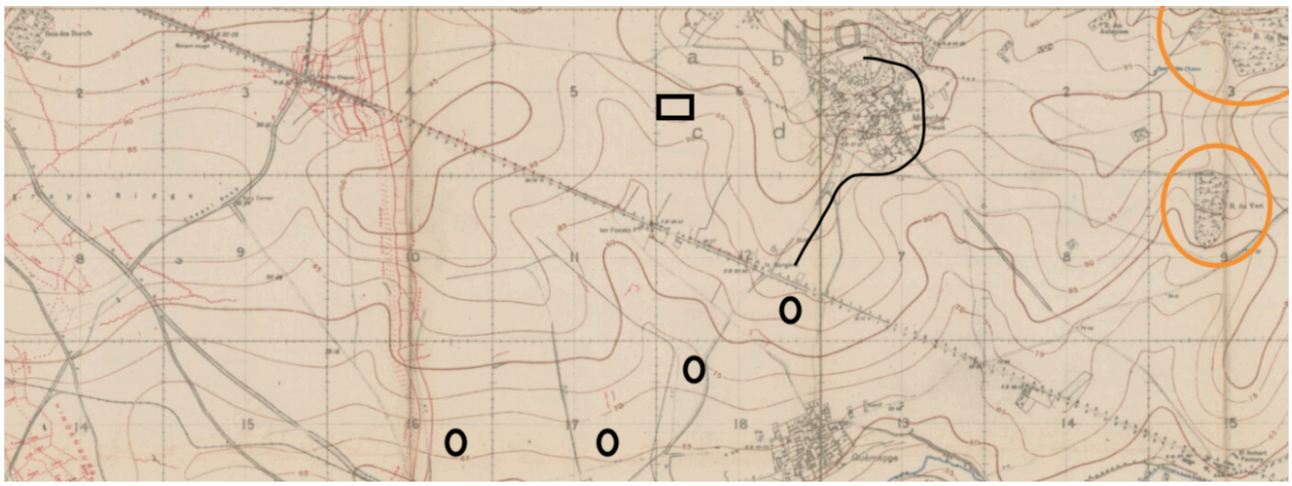
we zoom in on details of the map, it becomes clear where the brigade and ‘C’ battery were fighting. The image below is a combination of two trench maps combined, with the



trenches drawn corrected to 4 March, 1917.[206] During the first two days of fighting the British managed to move through the defences created by the various trenches on the left of this map. But, as can be read in the war diary above, by the time ‘C’ battery came into action around Monchy on the 11th, the Germans had already moved their defensive positions and were busy building new trenches, for instance in front of *Bois de Vert* and *Bois de Sart*.

The village of Monchy(-le-Preux) can be seen on an edited map on the next page, just below the letters N and O. Orange Hill can then be found three squares left of the letter H. In order to understand where the battery is positioned, it is useful to take a closer look at the map around Monchy. Clearly visible is the provincial road moving across the map, with Monchy again south of NO. Orange Hill is not visible on this map, but is located on the first two squares above number 4 and 5 on this map. The black circles indicate the various positions as described in the diary, the orange circles show top Bois de Sart and bottom Bois de Vert. The line of the British troops would extend north through the town of Monchy. Behind this line, indicated by the black square, ‘C’ battery would have been po-

[206] Ibid. & Map 51B SW, edition 4A - British First World War Trench Maps, 1915-1918. Retrieved from https://maps.nls.uk/view/101465068, 17 August, 1918, 13:38; 51B NW & 51B SW, both edited by the author to create one map.



sitioned, before moving back to Orange Hill. The line drawn to the north and east of Monchy indicates the defences that were constructed by the 8th Cavalry Brigade, which were in place at about 9:30 AM.[207] Kenyon further refers to several other RHA batteries being present beside 'C', namely 'G' and 'K'.[208] Because the effect of explosive shells was much greater between the houses and streets of the village, the cavalry suffered greatly here and Lieutenant Wire of the Essex Yeomanry was instructed to shoot wounded horses in the crowded streets.[209] This is rather different when compared to the losses of 'C' battery, which were outside the village in the open, where explosive shells did less damage. Although the exact number of horse casualties is not clear, it must have been high in the village. The 6th and 8th Cavalry Brigade therefore played an important part in securing a position that briefly fell between the two fighting armies, arriving somewhat accidentally at the scene, yet enabling the capture of Monchy.[210]

A better visual understanding: Google Earth

Another perhaps somewhat unusual aid in the reconstruction of events is the use of Google Earth. To get a better idea of the lay of the land for a certain part of the battlefield, such as the area around Monchy, I have used Google Earth extensively for a variety of battles. The pictures offered here show a range of buildings, trees, and other scenery that did not exist between 1914-1918, and obviously lack the shell holes, barbed wire and other obstacles a battlefield offered. By cross-referencing these pictures with trench maps, these images were very helpful in understanding how horses could move around, as they do show large hills, valleys, and other natural features that would allow them to avoid being shot from an enemy position. In terms of ANT, such geographical features

[207] Kenyon, *Horsemen*, 120.
[208] Ibid., 121.
[209] Ibid.
[210] Ibid., 125.

can also be considered as actors, as in certain events they greatly aided or thwarted other actors.

For Monchy, the images below helped me understand the distances between British and German troops and how units were situated in regards to one another. All pictures show an area around the crossroads south of Monchy, at the end of the defensive line drawn into the map above. The left image follows the road east, and on the left side a tree

is visible. To the right of this tree, following the horizon, two forests can be discerned. These are from left to right the *Bois de Sart* and *Bois de Vert*. The tree line on the right side of the road is also visible on the image on the right. This picture corresponds to the position 12d as indicated in the war diary. On the right side of this picture, another line of trees is visible. These follow the road south from the crossroad, towards Gueumappe, the town directly south of Monchy on the map, from which German units stopped the advance of the 3rd Dragoon Guards. The tree line along the southbound road can also be seen on the left image below.

Somewhere on the far end of this field is position 18a from the war diary. The field then continues to the right, along the provincial road, east to west, and the image on the right follows this road, with a view on the fields to the north of it. In the far distance, to the left of the road, a building with trees can be seen, which seems to correspond with the location of Fosse Farm, when-cross referenced with the map above. On the right of the image, the outskirts of modern-day Monchy are visible. ‘C’ Battery should have positioned itself somewhere to the left, as the diary describes their position being hidden from view to the south by Fosse Farm.[211]

[211] Images retrieved from: www.google.com/maps, 18-08-2019, 14:02-14:14.

If we also take into account the weather conditions, the snow falling all day, the Google Earth images add substance to the argument that horses were capable of moving around in the field to the South and West of Monchy, north of the provincial road.[212] Moving towards the area to the West and South of the cross road would mean units came into view of German units in front of both the forests to the East and the village of Gueumappe to the South. If we also take into the account the influence of weather conditions on the further functioning of artillery and machine-guns (in more detail below), a more compelling reconstruction including horses can be created.

Different sources, different narrative

What these examples show is that offensives were collectives of multiple units with a myriad of human, animal, and technological elements influencing its outcome. In this case the weather also contributed and made fighting more difficult, which is arguably another important actor, in terms of ANT, to understand how events unfolded. Besides the diaries, images such as the examples on the next page show that horses were part of warfare in

[212] Images at the top on this page: IWM Q 2016, Battle of the Scarpe. Cavalry Resting near the St.-Pol-Arras road, April 2017. (Probably 1st Cavalry Division, resting in the valley of the Ternoise, north-west of St. Pol(-sur-Ternoise) (HQ at Croix(-en-Ternois) on April 7th). See Kenyon, *Horsemen*, p. 109.
Bottom left: IWM Q 2004, Battle of the Scarpe. Moving a 60-pounder gun of the 35th Heavy Battery, Royal Garrison Artillery, with an eight horse team at Tilloy, April 1917. The weather conditions during the Battle of Arras are clearly visible in this picture. Bottom right: IWM Q 8712, Operation Georgette. Gun crew of a Royal Field Artillery 18-pounder battery prepare to open fire near Meteren during the fighting for Hazebrouck, 13 April 1918.

this period.[213] The use of trench maps further enables a reconstruction of the roads traveled. Combined with Google Earth, they help us understand where units were situated at a certain time during an event. Combined, the diaries, maps, and pictures allow a historical reconstruction that differs from the historiographies analysed in the previous chapter. Compared to the narratives analysed in the previous chapter, the different reconstruction offered here can be used as an argument for expanding the range of sources that are currently used by historians. None of the historiographies used in the previous chapter use

[213]Top left: IWM Q 6190. Traffic near Arras, on the road through Tilloy-les-Mofflaines and horse lines by the roadside, 13 April, 1917. Right: IWM Q 5351. Transport column of the 1st Newfoundland Regiment marching back to their billets at Monchy-Le-Preux (on 13 April 1917) and Les Fosses Farm (on 23 April 1917). Berneville, 9 May, 1917. The object description is not totally clear, perhaps indicating between brackets the date on which both places were captured. Berneville lies to the west of Arras and is apparently the billet in question, to which these men and horses are moving.
Bottom left: IWM Q 5197. Horses at Feuchy, near Arras. These horses are waiting to fetch ammunition. The thick coat of the horse on the left would have protected it against the snow and cold as described in the war diaries. Right: IWM Q 3955: Casualties – dead soldiers and horses – caused by a German shell that fell amongst a British cavalry unit near Arras.

war diaries. Instead, biographies, autobiographies and other source material written by contemporaries are most often used. Using the work of historians further seems to result in a reiteration of the modernity discourse, rather than allowing important actors to be included into the reconstruction. The same can be said of trench maps, which are also absent in the historiographies under scrutiny.

Pictures are used, at least by most more recent historiographies, yet only rarely the ones that actually refer to the described events. As argued in the previous chapter, these pictures seem to be a means to underline a modernity discourse. This is rather odd, particularly as a wealth of images can be retrieved from various online sources, and can be used for a more accurate reconstruction of the historical events that are being described.[214]

What the analysis of war diaries shows is that a horse, whether draught or cavalry, was not out of place on the Western Front, but necessary for the army to function properly. Instead of using high casualty numbers as an argument for the obsolete nature of hoses on the western front, a cross-reference with infantry or tank casualties shows a parallel between these units. Thus, war on the Western Front was primarily fought by infantry and artillery, with a comparable impact, though small in comparison, by cavalry and tanks, in terms of casualties and effectiveness when fighting.[215]

When it comes to artillery and other means of transport, the role of horses should therefore not be underestimated. Artillery is considered the primary killing machine, and is very important in the support of offensives in order to enable infantry to reach the enemy trenches with as little problems as possible.[216] To make this support possible meant that enormous quantities of horses were used to move the guns to their positions. As argued in the first chapter, the British army did not use horses because of a traditional view on battlefield tactics, but because they were necessary.

The offensive described as a network of things allows for a far more inclusive understanding of the various actors, the social, that helped shape these events. Another example of a different historical reconstruction, sensitive to the changing elements within

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[214] For this thesis I am particularly indebted to the images made available by the Imperial War Museum: https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections.

[215] Kenyon, *Horsemen*, 243: "It is therefore possible to see the circumstances of the Tank Corps and the Cavalry Corps as analogous rather than opposed, both contributing to, and participating in but neither dominating, an evolving infantry and artillery battle. Also by 1918 this battle was taking place on such a scale that neither corps (tank or cavalry) was numerically in a position to make more than a marginal contribution." For a comparison of casualties: Ibid., 245. For other examples for the limitations of infantry and cavalry in terms of fighting distance per day: Ibid., 100, 129, 236; Terraine, *Western Front,* 174; Winton, *Theirs Not to,* 416. For logistical problems faced by moving armies: Brown, "Logistics", 236.

[216] Kenyon, *Horsemen*, 243

the social and the heterogeneous interpretations it enables, is offered by the various references to mist and fog.[217] Chapter 2 already mentions a few instances in which an offensive, whether German or British, was successful because fog concealed the movement of troops. In the war diaries, this is also an element that resurfaces every now and then, and greatly influences the effectiveness of fighting troops. These factors were not just a backdrop, but made movement and accurate firing possible. This is most clearly the case in the RFA diary, which describes how on 21 March 1918, during the first day of the German St. Michael offensive, "owing to the fog the batteries were unable to locate the enemy until he was actually attacking from the flank or rear."[218] As such, they can also be considered actors in certain events.

Other ways in which elements influenced events have been described in the example of Monchy above, although the war diary does not go into great detail about how the cold and snow influenced the capacity of soldier and horse to fight. For the cavalry horses circumstances were particularly dire. As David Kenyon describes, during the fighting near Monchy, the horses were exposed during freezing nights in the open and weakened by months of shortages in rations. When soldiers saddled and mounted the horses the following morning, many of them just collapsed and died.[219] In such events the weather can therefore be described as greatly affecting the ability to fight, and as another actor in such events.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have analysed War Diaries by means of Actor-Network Theory, with the aim to create a historical reconstruction that is sensitive to the various actors that took part in the First World War. Various arguments can be taken from these analyses that favour the use of ANT in a historical reconstruction of this period. Two of the guiding principles of ANT, the social as ever-changing and as heterogeneous, are clearly present in the various war diaries under scrutiny. The variety of horses, the ways they were used, the circumstances under which they had to perform, and training they received can all be used to indicate that at any given moment during the war, the social somewhat differed

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[217] RFA, 19-31 October 1915: A quiet time, weather generally very foggy with a good deal of rain, which limited the shooting a great deal; 24-30 November: Towards the end of the month shooting as much hindered by mist and rain; 13 December: A quiet time. Weather conditions interfering a great deal with shooting; 4 April 1918: Throughout the day visibility had been very bad, owing to mist and showers. A few clear intervals in mid-day enabled the movements of supporting troops to be seen, WO 95/1887/1. RHA, 29 April 1916: A very foggy day put an end to all artillery activity. A few odd Germans were sniped at dusk. 30 April: Another foggy day, WO 95/1152/2

[218] RFA, 21 March 1918, WO 95/1887/1

[219] Kenyon, *Horsemen*, 128-129.

with what came before as well as after. As such the social is also clearly more than human: a great variation of horses influenced the movement and fighting of all sorts of things, human, technological, or otherwise.

It can also be argued that instead of the idea that the Western Front is mostly stable, a concatenation of battlefields and trenches that barely changed over the course of four years of fighting, the various elements that together form the front continuously change. Units were frontline soldiers for a certain time, after which they were taken off the line, to move elsewhere or return to their billets. The focus on how this intricate web of actors is interlinked offers a rather different conclusion for the use of horses during the war. While a focus on the war in terms of breaking through enemy lines in huge offensives offers little interesting knowledge about the role of horses, the different point of view offered by ANT results in a historical reconstruction that is sensitive to horses as well as to other elements, such as the more detailed changes that occurred during the war.

In terms of agency the sources offer very little information. A singular actor, actively influencing an event, is difficult to find in the diaries as these sources offer little information about individuals as such. The diaries never refer to ways in which, for instance during training, certain horses refuse or excel, or otherwise set themselves apart, no longer willing to pull a gun or deemed excellent for service due to their great strength. As such all horses seem to remain actants. But this is also the case with soldiers and officers, and other elements that are part of the social. In terms of historical agency it is therefore fair to say that horses influenced the events as much as their human counterparts. As far as the information offered by these diaries, humans and horses might both be considered dumb brutes. Yet, the presence of horses and their day-to-day activities in transport allowed the war to be fought. The horse was essential in enabling the conduct of war, and as such those that surfaced from the examples described in this chapter can be considered actors in these events.

This research is based on only three examples. A wealth of further information is available for historians that seek to pursue a more inclusive reconstruction of this period, for instance to create an animal history or a less anthropocentric one. This, I would argue, is very much needed as the creation of a historical reconstruction which includes those elements offers a better understanding of the various actors that are part of the social. In this sense using ANT is also a means of creating actors that were previously not seen, giving those considered dumb a voice.

The analyses in this chapter have allowed me to trace a network of actors who influenced historical events. It also offers arguments for a more varied use of sources,

maps, and images, that actually concern the event that is being described. Besides maps, a further addition of Google Earth imagery can help to make visible what battlefields looked like. In terms of ANT, such geographical features can also be considered as actors, as in certain events they greatly aided or thwarted other actors.

The various limitations of the actors present on the Western Front also offer an argument for the difficulties faced when trying to defeat an opposing army. Humans fighting were able to advance about 4,5km on the western front, being limited by the strength of the defence, the difficulty of the terrain, the morale of troops, the state of the horses pulling artillery guns, and other variations. The Germans from 1916 onwards, created a deeper defence system that resulted in battlefields of up to 10 kilometres. As such it became very hard for infantry to fight through the defences and have enough units in reserve to finally reach open country and keep the advance going. Men and horses were simply limited by the inevitable moment they were spent. Added to these were the logistical problems of an army moving away from its railhead, and the increased length which lorries and horse-drawn wagons had to move to supply the fighting forces as well as the distance reserve troops had to march in order to get to the front line. Defenders, on the other hand, had the benefit of railheads relatively close by, allowing for a steady supply of reinforcement of men and material on those parts of the front that were hard pressed. As such the idea that certain elements influenced offensives, leading to a long war of attrition, offers a better explanation for how these offensives were fought, as opposed to simply blaming stupid, reactionary commanders.

What the analyses of primary sources provide is a continuous effort by a plethora of units to keep up the fight and continue the movement of the various machinations of war. It can be argued that the representation of horses as in some way obstructing the conduct of war is far besides the truth. Rather, the armies between 1914 and 1918 used all means available to keep the fight going. And for warfare in this era this meant using the mechanised transport that was available, but primarily the use of huge numbers of horses.

The research question for this chapter is: how can the method of Actor-Network Theory be used to create a historical narrative that is more heterogenous, allowing horses to be written into historical reconstructions? The analyses in this chapter offer arguments for a different understanding of the social including a variation of horses, their use as well as the way in which they suffered (although this is also the case for their human compa-

triots: men got killed or wounded, during fighting or due to accidents).[220] To understand such a narrative, it is necessary to understand what organisation and logistics underlie keeping the continued presence of horses in the field. This explains the great lengths to which the British, as well as other armies, had to go to keep their armies moving. Even though the Western Front is often considered to be a place of very limited movement, the various sources under investigation show that artillery units were not stuck at one point for the entire war. Rather, movement was continuously needed. This was even more the case for those units tasked with moving between the railhead and frontline. Although battles resulted in very little movement where it concerns ground gained, the analyses of primary sources shows that, to keep units in the frontline, a whole system of transport and logistics existed behind the fighting units. A research by means of ANT also moves away from the actual fighting and the techniques with which this was done, and takes into account the other actors that made fighting possible.

As shown in this chapter, a historical reconstruction that examines how the interplay between various actors enabled certain events, allows for a far more detailed understanding of how the First World War was fought. The analyses in this chapter offer substance to the argument that narratives which reduce warfare on the Western Front due to its modern characteristics leave out important elements, without which a thorough understanding of why the war was fought as it was is impossible. Representing horses in their cavalry form, merely frustrating the use of tanks, is a far cry from the many ways in which horses were part of this war. Their use might have been a continuity from a time before mechanised transport, but their historical use does not equate them to being an obsolete means of motive power during the war. Rather, the totality of warfare required the use of every available tool to maintain the conduct of war. Especially when offensives were prepared, the amount of supplies, weaponry and munitions that needed to be brought up to the front line required a huge number of transport capabilities. And beyond the railhead, the primary motive power remained the horse. The use of ANT shows that ideas and characteristics of modernity, and their incongruence with older and more traditional tenets that continued to be used, should not be taken as a historical primacy, the rule by which everything is measured in a certain period. Instead, ANT allows a historical reconstruction that includes all actors that together shaped events in the past, whether old or new.

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[220] For example: 47th Brigade Royal Field Artillery War Diary, 30 May 1915, WO95/1887/1 & 1-16th June, 8 July, 10 July, 31 July, 25 September 1915, 15 and 16 September 1916, 21 April 1917 (summary of casualties over the month), 23 May 1917, 21 March 1918 (continued), 8 April (premature explosion of shell), 6 May, 14, 15 and 18 Oktober, and 7 November, WO95/1887/1-2.

Conclusion

The examples of illustrations analysed in this thesis show how the connotations underlying the representation of horses changed over the course of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Horses were considered important instruments in the creation of the British Empire. The paintings in which horses were depicted also signified a deeper meaning, of men subordinating animals, reflecting the way in which the British subdued other nations. As Western countries industrialised and changed the face of cities, the representation changed accordingly, as well as ideas about animals in these cities. As such, animal welfare organisations emerged, as well as a growing body of anti-cruelty legislation for animals. In the cities the growing horse population was met with increased apprehension, as it brought all sorts of problems with it. Due to the increase in manure, flies, and the sight of dead horses, horses were more and more considered as out of touch with the characteristics of a modern metropolis. Gradually their role as primary mover was taken over by the power of electricity and the combustion engine.

Concurrent with these modern changes in the city and the revolutionary developments in transport that enabled the steam train, the horse remained indispensable for agricultural use and transport outside the city and train station. As such, the British army also remained reliant on the use of horses for the movement of guns and supplies. The experience of the Boer War nonetheless greatly influenced the use of horses, leading to organisational changes that resulted in exquisite horsemastership when war broke out in 1914. At the same time, discussions in the cavalry led to the adoption of a new way of fighting, using both firepower and the *arme blanche*. The implemented changes prior to 1914 enabled the British army to provide enough horses for their army during the war, without depriving farmers and those in transport from their motive power. So even though some considered the horse at odds with modern society, it remained an essential means of transportation outside the city, in rural communities and in the British army marching to war. Therefore, when they were shipped off to France in 1914, those Britons concerned with their plight raised funds that would enable the best care possible for those horses in active service.

After the war, the trope that horses were incompatible with modernity became the predominant approach of representing them in historiographies. The war has since been described primarily by those elements considered modern. This results in a historical reconstruction of the First World War which is primarily concerned with its modern characteristics. Those elements that are not considered modern, such as horses, are subse-

quently debased or not mentioned altogether. The exception is the horse in its role as cavalry, which is mentioned by many authors, but in a negative fashion. The various historical narratives analysed for this thesis show that the cavalry is often not used to describe how they fought in battle. Rather, cavalry signifies a problem, a misunderstanding of the modern nature of a battlefield by commanders, or is otherwise used as a straw man that obstructs the progress of modernity. Subsequently, historians tend to overlook the use of horses beyond the scope of cavalry. This is arguably an effect of the primacy that modern characteristics hold for First World War scholars.

The reiteration of this idea of the war as merely modern, as well as the use of cavalry to explain the failure of offensives, together form what I would argue is a modernity discourse. This discourse is problematic, as it leaves important elements out of the historical reconstruction of this era. This thesis offers evidence for the variety of ideas about, and uses of horses, that existed prior and during the war. The historical reconstruction which only highlights a single cultural trope of modernity results in a simplified narrative. This is the incompatibility of horses with modernity. What is more, this discourse obstructs the inclusion of horses into historiographies. Whereas both David Kenyon and Graham Winton researched the importance of horses in the British army, historians continue to focus on the modern elements of the war. In two of the most recent historiographies about the war, *The Oxford Illustrated History of the First World War* and *The Cambridge History of the First World War*, the negative connotations attributed to cavalry are still present, and the wider use of horses in transport is overlooked.

The research in this thesis offers compelling evidence about the problems that result from the modernity discourse in histories of the Great War. I have analysed whether a different method might offer a historical reconstruction that is more sensitive to the non-modern elements that are currently missing. Using Actor-Network Theory, I have analysed war diaries in order to construct a historical narrative that includes the various actors that influenced the way in which events unfolded. These analyses have offered a more detailed idea of how various units functioned. The underlying elements taken from ANT, or guiding principles, have first of all enabled a reconstruction that allowed new actors to be included into the historical narrative. Instead of a history closed off by a focus on the modern elements, this narrative includes not only those things considered human or modern, but opened the stage for a wide range of actors that influenced its outcome. Landscape, weather, horses, humans, knowledge, training, these things can all be used to provide a better understanding of the intricacies, the ever-changing network, that underlines the historical events. It offers a different understanding of the Western Front, not rigid but

fluid, in which horses were immensely important, as much as humans, or the changing technologies with which battles were fought. Conversely, the war is no longer fought on a modern battlefield, where horses are out of place, but on a battlefield where they contribute, as one of the actors, collectively shaping events, resulting in a historical reconstruction that is sensitive to the role of all these actors.

This thesis has also offered arguments for the use of other sources than those primarily used in historiographies under scrutiny. The wealth of war diaries that is available, of a variety of other units such as the infantry and tanks, would allow for more actors to be written into the histories of the war. The research of diaries has shown that the quality greatly depends on who wrote them, both in terms of readable handwriting and the information, or lack thereof, offered by the writer. In line with the transnational approach pursued in *The Cambridge History of the First World War*, diaries of German units would also allow an even better understanding of how various actors shaped the outcome of battles. Further research of war diaries perhaps also enables a narrative that reconstructs how individual horses have helped shape various events.

The analyses of other primary sources, such as pictures and trench maps, have offered arguments for a different use of these sources. The use of pictures has until now been in line with the modernity discourse, with a representation of horses that offers either little knowledge about their role in the war, or merely a representation in which they obstruct modernity. The examples offered in this thesis, as well as the great number of images in the Imperial War Museum database encountered during my research, indicate that alternatives are available that show the important role of horses in this war. The combination of trench maps with Google Earth has also shown to be a valuable aid. It has helped create a better understanding of what battlefields looked like, where certain units were located, and how certain natural features might have improved the use of horses. As such it offers the possibility of a better historical reconstruction.

This thesis started with a central question I set out to answer: How does the notion of modernity influence the representation of horses in historiographies of the First World War, and how can an alternative approach to the study of primary sources offer a different historical reconstruction that includes the role of horses? It has become clear that historians over the past century have created a modernity discourse when writing their historiographies of the First World War. This has led to a distorted historical reconstruction of this period where it concerns the role of horses. They have been written out of the narratives or are represented as being at odds with the modern fighting technologies used during the war. The analyses in this thesis offer compelling evidence of the existence of this dis-

course. The alternative to this discourse can be offered by a research which uses ANT. The understanding in ANT of the social as non-anthropocentric, contributes to a better understanding of the way in which nonhuman actors have influenced the events in this period. The prior occupation of historians with explaining why the war was modern, and why the non-modern frustrated successful offensives, has led to a distorted and simplified reconstruction of the past. The use of ANT has on the other hand allowed for a far better understanding of the various actors that were influential, offering a far more detailed and heterogeneous idea of what the Western Front entailed.

The work of David Kenyon and Graham Winton has already shown that the use of war diaries can offer a very different account of the war. What ANT adds to this is a more inclusive narrative, not primarily concerned with the cavalry, or the number of horses that the British were able to provide due to organisational changes. Rather, it allows the assembly of this knowledge with that of other interesting elements, that together can offer a more detailed historical reconstruction, and subsequently a better understanding of this period. The relative lack of references to their work in histories influenced by the modernity discourse also indicates that a different approach is needed to enable a narrative which is sensitive to the various roles of horses during the war. The way out of the limitations imposed by the modernity discourse is exactly what ANT offers.

The inclusive idea of the social that ANT underlines is what makes the methodology very useful in various fields of research. It can be used to provide a better understanding of the way in which humans and nonhumans have influenced one another, and how our lives have been intertwined throughout history. As such it ties in with the study of Animal History, as well as the non-anthropocentric study of history. In turn, the research in this thesis has provided arguments about the way in which cultural and social frameworks influence the way in which historians construct the past. It has shown how a modernity discourse has been reiterated and has greatly influenced our understanding of the First World War. What the method of ANT has enabled is a radical break with the predominantly modern characteristics in which the war is usually described. As such, ANT allows historians to finally include the role of horses, the actors without whom the First World War would not have been possible, and create a reconstruction of our collective history.

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