

Provision

The horses of the first world war
Shipped out to Egypt with the drafts,
Sold, without oats or tack, were found
Starved, scabbed, in Cairo, between shafts.

A charity gave less cruel bits,
Vets, water toughs, to slake some pain.
The ribbed sides has sunk, finally,
When the troopships sailed East again

With cavalry horses, all hand-picked,
Big in bone, packed hard with oats.
A groom I knew marched through Iraq
To haul their buckets, shine their coats.

That war too ended. There they stood,
Sixteen hands high, without a spot
On their smooth shoulders – Do not say
Soldiers learn nothing. They were shot.