

## Song of the Sea-Horse Harvest

First we saw them plucked, indiscriminately,  
from the reef, to suffer, egg-sac and all,  
a tiny withering, and piled up like weathered  
candy, fodder for the dream-horse of potency.  
Monogamous, surviving partners  
left dangling frailly upright.

But as the decorous herd dwindled  
towards extinction, a confinement  
for the pregnant males was contrived, in cages  
barred too narrowly for them,  
but not for their newborn to drift through:

straight after their birthing tribulations  
the nonplussed fathers still hauled out  
to perish in the void of superstition  
but still, as those tiny ones floated clear like notes  
from a stave, the life-cycle of that ornate race  
trickling safely now through the human grasp,  
I felt the tinkling song of the sea-horse harvest  
leaven, like a bouyancy, my heavy predator's bones.

(from Michael Heald — *Focusing Saturn*, p74)