By the Tennessee River by Jefferson Holdridge

In an aquarium filled With fluorescent Coralstone, a seahorse Swam upright, As though By force of will.

Another bobbed by the glass, Turning from side To side, gazing Into a one-way mirror, While hundreds Watched then passed

Its tender show of cursed Self-consciousness, Held at pressure In filtered water and light, Which an ocean Would cloud and burst.

Inside a nearby tank The leafy seadragon Half seahorse, half kelp Moved very slowly Not to seem alive, As it rose and sank

On currents pulsing through The artificial realm Of underwater Captives, resigned To stifled instincts Becoming something new.