we walk toward the wires
you whisper: what does the pattern mean?
I shake my head

through the center of the grid
red putty pushes out
shaping to a sagging ball

the hawk whirls
great wings slap the wind
we huddle closer together

a scream slashes from the building
I lean toward you: it's started
scream after scream bellies out
to where we stand inside
the lights go on figures move
the screams dull to whimpers
I touch your arm: we must go

no wait
you edge nearer the grid press your body against the wires
parts of your flesh push through forming sagging balls
I try to pull you away you slap me

come we must go!
no I'm staying!

I leave you
sticking there

you scream after me:
what does the pattern mean!

--- Ottone M. Riccio
Belmont, Massachusetts

The Doll House

Say, this is some doll house; they're serving martinis on the cocktail table. --- Today

Allowed the darkest corner of the trunk
The Duke and Duchess gradually grow old
And chipped, their fires unlit, their hallways cold.
What could they do? They had to turn to drink.

All of the shutters closed, and curtains drawn,
Another room is shut off every year.
The servants lose no chance to overhear,
And everything they hear they tell the town:
About the son, a known adulterer
Who finally ran off; their youngest gambles;
Behind its pillars, the east wing's a shambles;
Their girl was ruined by the gardener.

The Duchess is a shadow among more
Shadows of heirlooms sold. The family jewels
Are paste. The Duke defends forgotten duels:
"My dear, there is no honor anymore."

And what lies in the bottom of a glass?
Ladies with parasols and gliding swans,
Chateaus whose shadows float on lakes and lawns.
Now everything once gold has turned to brass.

Their carpets are not from the Orient.
No peer has come to leave his calling-card.
Their days are done; their nights are evil-starred.
They cannot pay the servants nor the rent,

Nor change, nor end. And even if they could
Escape the darkness turned to tedium
Of trunk and closet, why should they become
A little more of man, and less of wood?

-- Martha Grimes

Silver Spring, Maryland

The Nightmare Is Over

I'd always been a great
lover of books
polar ends of a continuum
Lerwick, principal town
of the Shetlands
founded by Dutch smugglers
in 1670
Shetland=Zetland.

In the Zetlands as elsewhere
children get born
old people die
in a water cycle,
people try to get in touch with Blake
thru the Chevreul pendulum
automatic writing.

Bewildering multiplicity
of gods & goddesses.