

Contortionist

The spot snaps on. She lies in center stage
placid as a swan upon a lake.
The look on her face is disengaged
and we prepare to watch her bend or break.

Arms and legs pivot like a doll's.
She plies, unplies, collapses into splits,
her chin is at her feet—we are enthralled:
she holds a glass pagoda with her lips!

Presently she's folded on herself,
a parcel held together in her skin,
and freakish as a gewgaw on a shelf—
a Miesen maid, a precious minikin,

so self-possessed we envy her, her life,
until she walks off, wobbly, like a wife.