in the stiff hospital bed,
its iron sides raised and insulting,
the mound of your body
lies white-sheeted and still.
I know your eyes are open,
staring at the unblue ceiling,
but I stand at the door,
unable to intrude,
and wonder what images recolor
this pastel room for you,
what remembered sensations
are vying with your pain.

are you thinking of the homestead,
of the early years,
when you cleared the quarter by hand
and were always hungry and cold and unyielding;

or before that,
of the Old Country,
when you ran,
forever young then,
barefoot in the Bavarian hills;

or later,
of us,
born in this foreign land
of a foreign woman,
your children,
grown and educated now enough
to scorn farm
and Old Country;

or yesterday,
when the doctor told you the truth,
and there was nothing more to say?
then the nurse comes
and says, “go on in;
he's awake”,
and you turn your head
and see me
and we stare at each other,
strangers, unknowing,
across a distance
as deep
as your dying.

SPECIMEN

Leona Gom

Click,
and I have you again,
preserved in my camera killing jar.

We walk on,
my black bangle with its secret coils
dangling deadly from my wrist,
large eye alert
for some new scene
in which to capture you.

I smile smugly,
thinking of the future,
when you'd think you'd left me
but when I would have you still,
a mounted insect
pressed and pinned within the walls
of my formaldehyded photographs.