



3-15-1996

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Recommended Citation

Simpson, Doug (1996) "What Is Left Behind," *Westview*: Vol. 15 : Iss. 3 , Article 29.
Available at: <https://dc.swosu.edu/westview/vol15/iss3/29>

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WHAT IS LEFT BEHIND

by Doug Simpson

Rose branches sway in a warm wind,
They caress the flaking paint of the eaves,
And scratch the weathered wood.
Pink and red petals droop over the gate,
And curve in the hot sun,
Moored to drying topsoil.
In the back room,
Amid cobwebs and musty curtains,
Grandfather Coleman naps on his widowed bed.
His alarm clock ticks in the pastel heat,
He breathes shallow but sure,
An occasional snore wrinkles his nose.
His weak, bare legs lay straight,
Delicate blue veins pulse in the dim light,
Hands curled loosely around his T-shirt.
There are few reminders of Grandma Mimi,
Dusty Avon bottles sit untouched on the mantelpiece,
Norman Vincent Peale is on the bookshelf,
But the double bed and unfinished sewing are gone,
A nest of late Spring birds sing in the garden,
The sparrows preen amid dry tomato branches,
Their winds whisper against the dead vines.
During the annual visit the garden seems smaller,
Plucked stems bend to the browning grass,
More neighbors borrow roses for their vases.
Although he doesn't tend the flowers anymore,
And the odor of wine is gone from the soil,
He says he feels soothed
By what has been left behind.