

DAVID SAPP
ACANTHUS

In ancient Corinth,
it seemed, just yesterday,
the girl walked near the long,
columned shadows of the *stoa*,
her black eyes, her black hair
basking in a vivid Aegean sun,
her temperament, her curvature,
her bearing, her modest temple just
turning to that of a woman.

In a basket,
her nursemaid gathered her few
little things, trifles placed upon
her tomb: her comb;
her favourite leafy earrings;
a bronze coin she found
on Apollo's temple steps;
a curved, iridescent shell
turned from the Ionian Sea;
a small *kore* doll in brightly
painted crimson *peplos*;
a tiny amphora of scented oil,
once tied to her wrist,
her mother bought in the *agora*.

In the springtime,
an acanthus root grew,
turning through the basket weave,
intertwining with her cherished
trinkets, its tendrils bending

into elaborately curving volutes,
leafy columns bent to grief.

The architect,
upon passing her grave, turned,
touched by the simple elegy,
and, so inspired, adorned many
temples and palaces with columns
topped with leafy capitals,
the peristyles, her necklaces of acanthus
curving round the soft
throats of mighty structures,
this humble weed,
this single, distant anguish,
this unassuming girl,
immortalized in stone.