

DAVID SAPP
RELIQUARY

A thousand years from now,
a few pilgrims escape the sun,
trudging down the dark, cool nave
of an inconsequential abbey,
around the ambulatory, over
the crypt of some obscure bishop,
the vivid colors of stained glass
reflecting on stone, arched walls—
and come upon a tiny chapel
tucked away in a dim niche.

There will be our reliquary,
a forgotten, curious little box
covered in tarnished, beaten silver,
precious stones clouded like cataracts,
perhaps a solitary ruby, and our images,
icons arranged in delicate cloisonné.
The tourists mistakenly believe it holds
dry, dusty bones, an eminent saint;
one gawker awkwardly genuflects
before the big toe of Mary Magdalene.

Unopened for a century or two,
they'd be surprised as there is merely
the relic of our fleeting days,
our romance, our children,
our feeble triumphs,
our fears, our laughter.
There is no tunic or splinter of the cross,
only a flower, a small marvel,
its blossom as succulent and fragrant
as the day it bloomed.

SYMPATHY

When I was a child,
 the first time I planted
 anything, it was radishes.
 I drew a line in the soil,
 sprinkled tiny black seeds in the furrow,
 and covered them with small hands.
 In a few weeks, plump
 cupid cheeks smiled at me,
 knowing I needed their joy.

When my mother's petunias spilled
 a crazy wilderness across the walk,
 I didn't know where to play
 no matter how carefully I tread.
 Each morning, heavy with dew,
 their petals seemed to weep for me.
 Even the thistles cried a little.

When I was mostly grown
 and endured many days alone,
 when winter hours were especially bleak,
 I looked to my one, gruff plant
 in its plain clay pot,
 whose every leaf declined to wither,
 whose roots took hold, stems akimbo,
 stubbornly for me.

When I married, I dug
 a lilac sprig for my wife
 from the old matron along the fence
 and planted it at the corner of our house.
 All these years it thrived, refusing
 to acquiesce to implacable ice and snow.
 On warm days in May, its gracious fragrance
 drifts through our bedroom windows.