

Robert Gibbons

AN ECHO OF THE SILENCE AND THE DEAD

We took our sadness for the world to the orchard.
Nothing but green. Slowly the red, the black bark. Ashes
of our sadness began to lift.
Apple trees absorb
grief, quietly.
Off in the distance we imagined a castle.
Red blanket on long green grass, cloudless blue.
We didn't need to talk,
thoughts too similar to exchange.
The "Keep Out" sign had made no sense to us
at a time like this. Just hours before the autumnal equinox,
we saw shadows move.
Two little yellow butterflies rose up in dance,
a thoroughly interdependent prelude
to sexual encounter.
She wondered what it would be like to sleep out here,
answering her own question with "Cold,"
the word continuing through the orchard, an echo
of the silence of the dead.
The near fruit, the distant invisible
stars, with us as one.

IN NORTH LEBANON

Nassir is going back to his thousand trees.
Olives, ancient, & revered as the grape.
Oak, for building.
One almond, in particular, dead for ten years,
only the black trunk left, too distant from the house
for use.
Nassir said he first began to notice a change
of color, or something else inside the tree.
He told his father he believed it would come back to life.
Now, it flowers.
The whole time he's telling me the story
of the miracle
almond tree,
I'm picturing the sky above a thousand trees,
imagining the ground
as the patch of earth
Bonnard asked his nephew from his deathbed

to change from green to gold.
Other than that painting,
I've never seen an almond tree.
The only olive, at the Botanic Garden in Washington.

Nassir knows a place far from his village,
difficult to trek to,
where the stones bear all the earmarks
of Time before Law,
His tone of voice reveals he found Peace there.