

JENNIFER ATKINSON

Canticle of the Blossoming Almond Tree

Is this, this gray-green net and in it a captured wingbeat, it,
Come now at last to wrest the almonds from their stupor?

Doubt is not irreversible, Love. Take care

Without first the cold, the rehearsal of snow on the wet branches
There are no blossoms or fruit—fruit kept for its hard pit, the flesh
is cut away

But lilies are just as much lilies at root as they are in blossom

Will the feral cat, kinked tail twitching, a bird in her mouth
Set it down to lap a dish of warm milk?

JENNIFER ATKINSON
Canticle of Assisi Rain

An olive branch threaded with clear beads of rain
The whole tree swagged with garlands of rain

Fog, the same fog cowl Chiara wore,
Scarves my hair and shoulders, before, after, during the rain

Pecking for crumbs in the gravel, fledglings
Hunch up and soften like bread in the rain

The cypresses nod, a solemn quorum of elders,
A jury to rule on the rights of rain

The lines of the city are washed away or left undrawn—
The road, wall, far side of the garden—forgotten or dissolved in the rain

JENNIFER ATKINSON

Canticle of Francis and the Wolf at Gubbio

Once upon a hill, a shepherd long and far away and a wolf of what big
teeth and slaver lived alike on lamb, lamb bone, and stars

O they sang to the wax and wane, O to the glaring full

Then comes drought, comes famine. Then snarls the wolf; the shepherd
gnaws the gnawed bone then. O they cry to the wane and wane

So the stranger waves his hand: so rain, so corn. Sheep fat with twins,
one born for the shepherd live, for the wolf one stillborn

O they sang to the wax and wane, O to the ever after full

JENNIFER ATKINSON
Canticle of the Abbey

Under splotches of cloud-shadow and kiting cloud,
A great dry lake of lavender

Pine, honey, cut cork and sage, wheat
Scythed down and bound with wheat—the dry scent of growing lavender

Chants of the sequestered monks brim over the gray windowsills
And spill out to water the dry lavender

Who will walk with us among the furrows, the ruled waves,
Down the long voluptuous aisles of dry lavender?

Purple's woodwind timbre cools the throat,
Dry voices slaked and retuned to the color of lavender