

Slant Sonnet for Melissa

Linda Sillitoe

This visit you talk of Merlin in both poem and prose,
and how he transformed Arthur to insect or mole,
teaching him how to become.

And you, briar rose,
bright-petalled and wild, don't I watch you unfold
again and again, dropping bits of yourself without heed,
then offering a thief only a handful of thorns.

In seasons of water you enter the dolphin who sleeks
past in moonlight; then a falcon who waltzes the sun.
And always your song of the moment spirals and peaks
as if it is truly your last, as if you are one
and not minion; or as if you will deign to repeat
a monotonous chorus.

Who, next visit, will come
as my daughter, carnate, incarnate; only the same
in the glimpse of Merlin flickering behind the flame.