

A Season of Dryness

By Mags Webster

She who held the seasons in her gift
now finds, year round, her mood is autumn,
mauve and leaf mould, accent of frost.

Hoarding the summer heat inside, she
stares down the sun as it dies each day,
she is the final mourner keening at the grave.

Slowly withering from within, she will not speak,
but cultivates economy like seeds, lest she lose
more moisture through the harvest of words.

This silence grows her, gravid with anger,
she thinks of her daughter, wintering beneath
her feet, living a rhizome life. Pale hands reach up,

dowsing for the roots of a vernal rain, but this
is still a season of dryness, its deckled edge resists
the quickening of spring. She has promised her daughter:

Death will not work you loose from me
but each year burns off more of her power,
makes it harder to ripen the fields. She has taken

to burying libations at night, pouring them
carefully into earthenware jars, planting them
deep in the stubborn soil, so the earth can flex

its violent fist, squeeze juice onto famished lips.
Summer was once all she longed for but now
she cannot recognise her daughter,

who emerges, mouth fissured, salt-edged
and poisoned, nursing a derelict womb,
her golden-eared children pounded to dust.

First published in *Jukebox: a selection of Prose, Soul, Poetry, Flash Fiction* (OOTA Writers, Fremantle, 2013)