

Landscapes: the Journal of the International Centre for Landscape and Language

Volume 10
Issue 1 *Landscapes: 'The Idea of North'*

Article 8

December 2020

After Rain

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Recommended Citation

Boscacci, L. (2020). After Rain. *Landscapes: the Journal of the International Centre for Landscape and Language*, 10(1).

Retrieved from <https://ro.ecu.edu.au/landscapes/vol10/iss1/8>

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After Rain

Louise Boscacci (University of Wollongong, Australia)

I

When it rains
the smell is not
petrichor but
charcoal,

a musty sickness stuck
to brittle
ground.

Underfoot and patient
after that long trace
Saturday
calling up the blood
moon, mobile

networked ahead of all hotspot maps
and embers of rage, your damp ghost,
Fire, candles our shaky
after-calm.

II

Shiver.

III

I heard the cuckoo-shrike
Sunday,
afternoon cloud
sousing
the scarp
flat, black-faced

at birth, no silent
evacuee smudged
by carbon's
terror plume.

Good Luck Bird,
Molly Aura, Fortune-sifter,
Greyscale Glider,
Canopy Seer. Good
luck, bird.

IV

Behind the over-cooked
pot, umber water jar
rent by heat
in those early
hours you slept unbroken
with kiln free to run,
leaf shards
huddle where
they dropped the night
we ran once,
twice, three times
from fire's arc.

V

Country of the faeries
no more, flammagenitus
bears dry dead
thunder.¹ Pyro-crickets
underground queue after
rain to resurface.

—January 7, 2020.



Figure 1. The approaching Currowan-Morton fire front, as it crossed the Shoalhaven River to enter the Wingecaribbee district of the Illawarra (Southern) Highlands of New South Wales, 4 January 2020. This vantage point of watch and act was above the village of Fitzroy Falls, just out of sight below the water reservoir in the middle ground, in Wodi Wodi and Yuin country. (Photograph: Louise Boscacci).

¹ A flammagenitus, from *Cumulus flammagenitus*, is a fire cloud commonly known as a pyrocumulus. The most intense version is a pyrocumulonimbus, capable of generating its own thunderstorm of lightning and black hail, and casting embers kilometres ahead to spark new blazes. (WMO, International Cloud Atlas, n.d., <https://cloudatlas.wmo.int/en/flammagenitus.html>).