

## A REFLECTION ON THE WINTER WESTERLY WIND

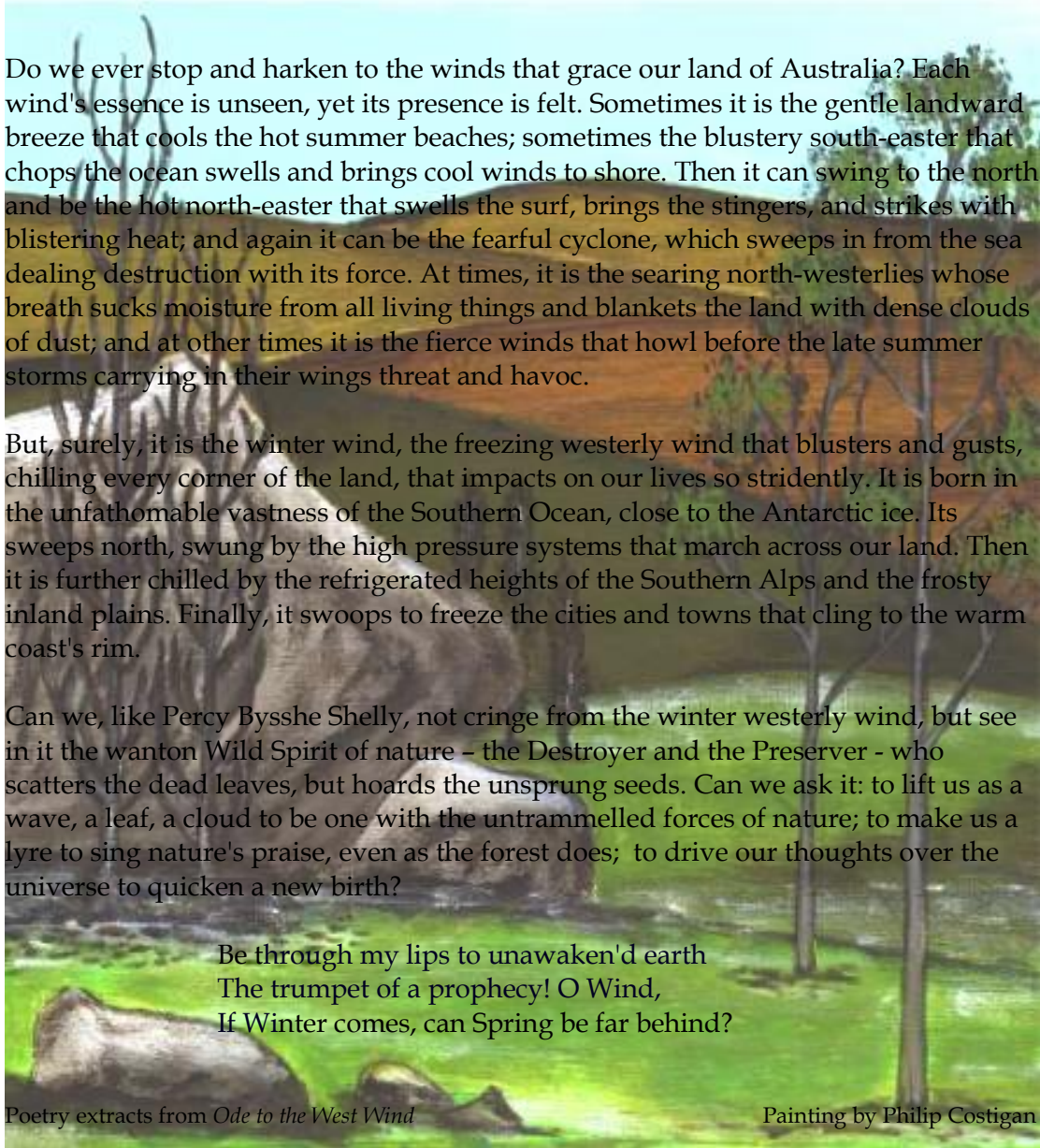
**O Wild West Wind, thou breath of [Winter's] being  
Thou from whose unseen presence the leaves dead  
Are driven like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing,**

**Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red,  
Pestilence-stricken multitudes! O thou  
Who chariotest to their dark wintry bed**

**The wingèd seeds, where they lie cold and low,  
Each like a corpse within its grave, until  
Thine azure sister of the Spring shall blow**

**Her clarion o'er the dreaming earth, and fill  
(Driving sweet buds like flocks to feed in air)  
With living hues and odours plain and hill;**

**Wild Spirit, which art moving everywhere;  
Destroyer and preserver; hear, O hear!**



Do we ever stop and harken to the winds that grace our land of Australia? Each wind's essence is unseen, yet its presence is felt. Sometimes it is the gentle landward breeze that cools the hot summer beaches; sometimes the blustery south-easter that chops the ocean swells and brings cool winds to shore. Then it can swing to the north and be the hot north-easter that swells the surf, brings the stingers, and strikes with blistering heat; and again it can be the fearful cyclone, which sweeps in from the sea dealing destruction with its force. At times, it is the searing north-westerlies whose breath sucks moisture from all living things and blankets the land with dense clouds of dust; and at other times it is the fierce winds that howl before the late summer storms carrying in their wings threat and havoc.

But, surely, it is the winter wind, the freezing westerly wind that blusters and gusts, chilling every corner of the land, that impacts on our lives so stridently. It is born in the unfathomable vastness of the Southern Ocean, close to the Antarctic ice. It sweeps north, swung by the high pressure systems that march across our land. Then it is further chilled by the refrigerated heights of the Southern Alps and the frosty inland plains. Finally, it swoops to freeze the cities and towns that cling to the warm coast's rim.

Can we, like Percy Bysshe Shelly, not cringe from the winter westerly wind, but see in it the wanton Wild Spirit of nature – the Destroyer and the Preserver – who scatters the dead leaves, but hoards the unsprung seeds. Can we ask it: to lift us as a wave, a leaf, a cloud to be one with the untrammelled forces of nature; to make us a lyre to sing nature's praise, even as the forest does; to drive our thoughts over the universe to quicken a new birth?

**Be through my lips to unawaken'd earth  
The trumpet of a prophecy! O Wind,  
If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?**