Everyone knows the wind’s touch, its presence, its force. Sometimes it roars and howls, at other times we hear its wistful sighs and feel its soothing caresses. Since antiquity, humans have borne witness to the wind and relied on it to navigate the seas. And yet, despite its presence at the heart of human experience, the wind has evaded scrutiny in our chronicles of the past.

In this brilliantly original volume, Alain Corbin sets out to illuminate the wind’s storied history. He shows how, before the nineteenth century, the noisy emptiness of wind was experienced and described only according to the sensations it provoked. Imagery of the wind featured prominently in literature, from the ancient Greek epics through the Renaissance and romanticism to the modern era, but little was known about where the wind came from and where it went. It was only in the late eighteenth century, with the discovery of the composition of air, that scientists began to understand the nature of wind and its trajectories. From that point on, our understanding of the wind was shaped by meteorology, which mapped the flows of winds and currents around the globe. But while science has enabled us to understand the wind and, in some respects, to harness it, the wind has lost nothing of its mysterious force. It still has the power to destroy, and in the wind’s ethereal presence we can still feel its connection with creation and death.
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Alain Corbin is Emeritus Professor of History at the University of Paris I, Pantheon-Sorbonne.

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