What is this poem about?
Written in 1946. One of Judith Wright’s Australian Heritage Poems.

What is the speaker’s tone and point of view?
The speaker has a reverence for the old bullocky whose actions are described with admiration. She outlines the hardships of driving a bullock team with emphasis on the physical difficulties and the courage he has during lifelong adversity (drought and rain).

Three main images/analogies
Strong visual images of a noble occupation are elicited through a glimpse of the bullocky at night:
“While past the campfire’s crimson ring/ the star-struck darkness cupped him around,/ and centuries of cattle bells/ rang with their sweet uneasy sound.

The speaker completes the poem with an analogy – comparing Moses with the bullocky.

The speaker suggests that the bullocky’s old bones are a part of the ground now and that the growing vines should protect and preserve them as part of our heritage.

Notes: widdershins – NE England way of talking about somebody dancing “widdershins” at night to summon the fairies. The bullocky is characterised as a person who suffers so much and so long from Australia’s extreme weather “thirsty with drought and chilled with rain”, that he seems somewhat mad.

“All the long straining journey grew/ a mad apocalyptic dream,/ and he old Moses, and the slaves/ his suffering and stubborn team.” – the bullocky’s long life of journeys becomes like the journey of Moses leading his slaves to freedom. The bullocky emerges triumphant from his journeys.