

Martin Robertson

Man in Nature

for Judith Wright

Nature is much to wreck, but man can do it—
his greatest and last proof of power and will—
and part of what we ruin, we shall rue it.

Is the wind free and strong? we must subdue it
“Blow this way, that way, cool or warm. Be still.”
Nature is much to wreck, but man can do it.

Barbarian or Greek, Gentile or Jew, it
comes to the same. Free? we are all bond still
and, part of what we ruin, we shall rue it.

He cracks the nucleus and cries “I knew it!
Nothing so subtle as escapes my skill.”
Nature is much to wreck, but man can do it.

Now we begin into clear space to spew it,
this speck’s contaminated overspill
and, part of what we ruin, we shall rue it.

The world’s our wilderness. Man fumbles through it,
blind Oedipus constrained to rape and kill.
Nature is much to wreck, but man can do it
and, part of what we ruin, we shall rue it.