

1975

# Coastal Village

Robin Munro

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support while you're here. A Green Man decides, as do a lot, that a God is the easiest way out of the problem. That is all I can tell you of the content for it's all I know. I understand my poems but I can't explain them minutely, I can only hope there are others like Mr. Munro who will derive an understanding from them, an understanding, that is, which suits their own particular needs.

The content of "Saturnalia" is less obscure. The Saturnalia is a reasonably well-known ancient festival in which a youth of good appearance had a whale of a time for one year and was ceremoniously killed at the end of it, for the usual reason of making the crops grow, etc. The poem is actually out of context, as it is part of a sequence of eleven poems about the winter festivals starting from All Hallows and going through to Christmas. To my mind obviously it reads better within the context of that sequence.

Robin Munro's point about producing pastiche of myself is a very valid one—one that I have been made aware of by several friendly critics. I can only hope that being aware of it will reduce the possibility of it happening over much.

Why is it always "this" he asks—because the things, creatures, persons and beings I write about remain to me always rather wraith-like; I can never quite pin them down to form or face.

As regards imagination and practicality, I personally don't find that one cancels out the other; I spend most of my time doing very practical jobs and thinking about them in a very practical way, but my imagination runs happily parallel to this, an imagination which I either enjoy or recoil from. Each needs the other to make it bearable, I suppose.

Robin Munro can sleep safe in the knowledge that I am far from being "explicitly meaningful," just "intensely poetic" (God am I really—how horrible).

Anyway I would like to thank him for his comments; it is obviously pleasing to me that he derived something from the poems. Also, I am in complete agreement with his remarks on logic and analysis.

One final note for out-loud readers—there are no rules, say them how you like.

## Coastal Village / Robin Munro

Between the Reath of wheat  
and the caring harbour  
braes resound in harebells,  
dancing in drifts, persuasions  
of air.

The salmon cobble slides in, slowing down.  
The morning slows down. (Why should  
mornings hurry? Evenings arrive  
in their own cool time.)  
The world slows  
well below the speed for dealing, right  
to ripen wheat,  
and grapes in the Moravian village,  
heavy with clover, remote  
from this northern one  
of the grinding mussel paths.

Our south side cottages  
formed like a friendship  
against the obvious gradient,  
with no more reason  
than to be when wanted  
for a time;  
till time *is* the reason.

“Before my mother or her mother’s time  
all men were fishermen  
here; and all things came and went by sea.”  
The woman who told me  
heaves her oldness  
over the jumping North.  
Far out at sea, the long ships,  
freight and container ships, angle  
towards Aberdeen. When you pick things out that clear,  
the clarity won’t last.

With all their sky blue confidence,  
the harebell skin is fragile for a wind.  
I listen to their inclination  
in the sea-breath, rising.

## Ancestors / Robin Munro

If they had the sea in their blood,  
what have we?  
There’s petrochemical in mine.  
I shiver to recognize something of me  
at Stevenston and Invergordon.