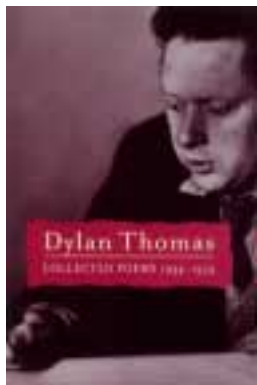


Dylan Thomas' Key Works

The following guide offers recommendations on the key publications currently available of Dylan Thomas's works and useful publications on Dylan Thomas. (Please explore the Bibliography section of www.dylanthomasboathouse.com for a complete listing of the publications on Dylan Thomas.)

1. Books & Audio Recordings: Recommendations

Poems & Stories



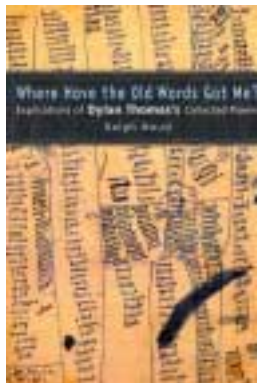
Many guides, Biographies, coffee-table books, omnibus editions and brief theses exist, yet the core to any readership of Dylan Thomas's poems will be the **Collected Poems, 1934-1953**. Ed. Walford Davies and Ralph Maud. London: Phoenix. Rpt 2001. The book contains a passionate seashore 'Prologue' (with facsimile), Dylan's last, unfinished poem 'Elegy', and the opening of 'In Country Heaven' – Thomas's ambitious project conceived after the dropping of the atom bomb. The book contains after the poems, a General Preface, Textual Preface to the Notes, and Notes which outline all the background material and where applicable visual illustrations of references relevant to Thomas's poems.

In the USA a new edition of **The Poems of Dylan Thomas, New Revised Edition** [with CD], Ed. Daniel Jones, Norfolk, CT: New Directions is available.

Of Dylan's prose **Dylan Thomas Collected Stories**, Introduced by Leslie Norris and Ed. by Walford Davies. London: Phoenix, 2000. [See link] presents the complete span of Thomas's stories from his first hallucinatory visions of the dark forces beneath the surface of Welsh life to the inimitable comedy of his later autobiographical writings.



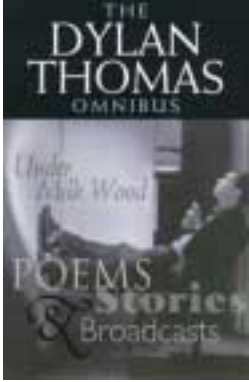
NEW BOOK:



Ralph Maud world-renown expert on Dylan Thomas and editor of the standard edition of Thomas's works **Where Have the Old Words Got Me? Explications of Dylan Thomas's Collected Poems** has recently been published.

Where Have The Old Words Got Me? is a detailed explication of every poem in Dylan's *Collected Poems 1934-1953*. Working from the principle that Thomas's life and experiences offer the key to his poetry, Ralph Maud combines critical commentary with biographical detail, to explain Dylan's works. His aim is to help readers improve their understanding of the complex imagery and narrative movements of Dylan's work, and to provide the basis for renewed critical investigation of the poetry.

2. Broadcasts, Film-scripts and Letters

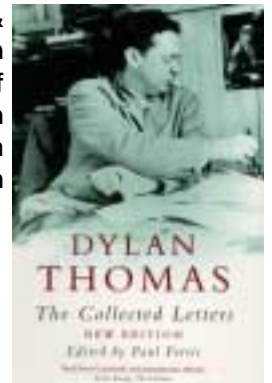


Dylan Thomas was not only one of the twentieth century's most celebrated poets. His flamboyant rhetoric created poems of gothic, mystical and surrealist imagery - nowhere is his language more evocative and fantastic than in his best-known work, *Under Milk Wood*. He was also a popular radio entertainer at the height of the Radio era. In this age of multi-media I believe that it is essential to read Thomas's broadcasts, film-scripts and letters to appreciate Dylan Thomas fully. *The Dylan Thomas Omnibus – Under Milk Wood, Poems, Stories and Broadcasts*, London: Phoenix Press, reissue 2001 is perhaps the most comprehensive book to own, above all others.

For the broadcasts, Dylan Thomas reveals not only his hilarious scripts but shows the remarkable developments in radio broadcasting and how Thomas contributed to breaking the austere atmosphere of British broadcasting in its early days. Following Thomas's progress of writing for radio reveals the tour de force of *Under Milk Wood* at the threshold of television. Unfortunately this must read book is now out of print, if you can obtain *The Broadcasts*. Ed. Ralph Maud. London: Dent, 1991 you'll be richly rewarded.

For the film-scripts readers are urged to read *Dylan Thomas: The Complete Screen Plays*, ed. John Ackerman, New York Applause Books, 1995 (this edition includes the previously published scripts of *The Doctor and the Devils*, London, Dent, 1953; *The Beach of Falesá*, New York, Stein and Day, 1963; and *Twenty Years A-Growing*, London, Dent, 1964).

The new revised and annotated *The Collected Letters*, ed. Paul Ferris, London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 2000. Ferris's remarkable and assured scholarship and access to new letters since Caitlin and Llewelyn's death brings a hundred new letters added since Paul Ferris edited the first edition of the *Collected Letters* in 1985. They cast Thomas's adolescence in Swansea and his love affair with Caitlin into sharper focus. Thomas's letters tell a remarkable story, each letter taking the reader a little further along the path of the poet's self-destruction, but written with such verve and lyricism that somehow the reader's sympathies never quite abandon him.



3. Audio recordings, broadcasts and readings

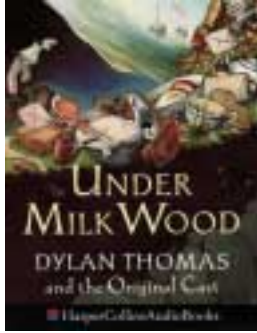
The Definitive Caedmon CD Collection



It was the end of January 1952 when Barbara Cohen and Marianne Roney sat with Dylan Thomas in the bar of the Chelsea Hotel and persuaded him to record some of his poetry. So, on February 22, 1952, Dylan Thomas made his first recording for Caedmon Records, *A Child's Christmas in Wales* and *Five Poems*. It was the first of many albums Thomas was to record for Caedmon. This recording launched not only Caedmon, but the spoken-word industry as well.

Caedmon released this collection as a celebration of 50 years of spoken-word publishing, *Dylan Thomas: The Caedmon Collection*. This collection includes Thomas' poetry: "Fern Hill" and "Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night," his prose: *Adventures in the Skin Trade* and *Quite Early One Morning*, and his final work - *Under Milk Wood*, a play. The recording of *Under Milk Wood* included here is the only one in existence with Dylan Thomas in the cast. It owes its remarkable existence to the serendipitous placement of a microphone at centre stage minutes before the curtain was raised.

This is the definite sound archive of Dylan Thomas and is highly recommended, all schools, universities and anyone interested in Dylan Thomas should own this. It contains 11 CD's of approximately twelve and half hours of Thomas (not something to listen to in one day, mind you) and each CD cover is a miniature reproduction of the artwork for the original covers.



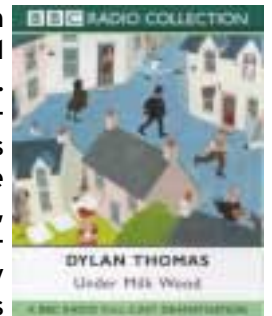
Under Milk Wood

Original cast (Harper Collins) and the BBC's radio broadcast of 1963 (BBC Audio)

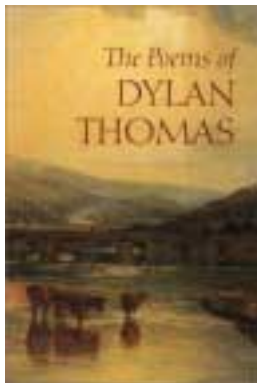
"To begin at the beginning: it is spring, moonless night in the small town, starless and bible-black, the cobble streets silent and the hunched, courtiers'-and-rabbits' wood limping invisible down to the sloe black, slow, black, crow black fishing boat-bobbing sea. [...] And all the people of the lulled and dumbfounded town are sleeping now."

Subtitled "A Play for Voices", Dylan Thomas's best known work, *Under Milk Wood*, carries the double legacy of the author's extensive work for radio - a medium for which, like the very different Samuel Beckett, he had an almost intuitive grasp - and his skill and ability as a poet. A polyphonic evocation of a day in the life of an imaginary small Welsh seaside town, Thomas's play - "a green leaved sermon on the innocence of men" - visits in turn the inhabitants of Llareggub (read it backwards for the joke) while they sleep, when they wake and go about their daily activities, as the night falls. Balancing a rhythmic, densely poetic language with a nuanced ear for the musical cadences of speech, the play's gentle, affectionate charm and humour resonate to create a deeply textured portrait of a community responding almost mythically to the awakening of spring.

Under Milk Wood, was composed in part as a response to the terrible inheritance of World War II in which the affirmative, redemptive cast of the play carries a moral dimension, an imaginative, lyrical empathy for the regenerative innocence of the average human being and their capacity for grace. Llareggub becomes a space in which eccentricity is tolerated, sin is forgiven and love is nurtured - or at least dreamt about and possible. Thomas has a democratic compassion for the small dramas of the everyday and a belief that what is commonplace unites us, all underscored by the transformative power of the language he bestows on each inhabitant. His characters - Captain Cat, Myfanwy Price, Organ Morgan, Willy Nilly the Postman, Polly Garter, Dai Bread, and others - generously animated and blessed by their author, have entered many people's affection and literary memory. In this light, it is easy to see why *Under Milk Wood* has remained one of the best-loved works of the 20th century and one of the great plays for radio.'



New Audio Releases:



The *Dylan Thomas at the BBC* (3 March, 2003) BBC Audio (Spoken Word); ISBN: 0563477326 releases and re-releases from the BBC Archives contain a wealth of material featuring Dylan Thomas - not only readings of his own work, but also dramatic readings of other work such as Dr Faustus. These, together with interviews with the poet, form a fascinating audio portrait.

Ed. Daniel Jones, *The Poems of Dylan Thomas*, New Revised Edition [with CD], Norfolk, CT: New Directions, 2003.

4. Biography

Here we delve deep into the stuff of myth and legend, the hungry hounds on the wolf of fame and relive through them the ferociously over-ambitious, tempestuous and meticulous artist's life – who unashamedly claimed that he had beast, angel and madman within him. Dylan Thomas's wild times his loves, hell-raising life, humour and rumour, inconsistent facts, torrid and the florid, asinine and the not quite libellous, the stuff in fact his legend is built on and careers by other writers made.



The two biographies that have withstood the test of time are Constantine Fitzgibbon's *The Life of Dylan Thomas*, London, Dent, 1965. (highly recommended, though shamefully out of print) and the revised and excellent Paul Ferris's *Dylan Thomas: The Biography*, New Edition, London: Phoenix, 1999 – this is an essential book to discover many of the contexts for Thomas's poems and prose, with Ferris clearly expanding on particular poems drawn from letters and the circumstances in which Thomas wrote them.

Fabulously rich with new revelations and exposé is the eagerly awaited forthcoming Andrew Lycett, *Dylan Thomas: A New Life* due in October 2003. As the book's pre-publicity attests "Since Thomas's wife, Caitlin, and his son Llewelyn, have died. Their surviving families have promised Lycett access to their papers. Lycett has also secured the backing of the Dylan Thomas trustees and of Thomas's daughter Aeronwy. The 50th anniversary is an ideal moment to reassess Dylan Thomas's his genius as a writer and his short but tragic life. This biography will provide a focus for a programme of Dylan

Thomas reissues (Orion control his books) and Dylan Thomas celebrations.'

The searing 'autobiographical' book by Caitlin Thomas, *Double Drink Story: My life with Dylan Thomas* makes painful reading of a life wedded to alcohol and is currently the only book by Caitlin Thomas in print. [Her better book with more information on Dylan is her finer and original book: *Caitlin Thomas, Leftover Life to Kill*, London, Putnam, 1957 has more revelations of episodes that contributed to Thomas' work, which has long been out-of-print.] The two key biographies of Caitlin are however long out of print, the moving semi-autobiography Caitlin Thomas and George Tremlett, *Caitlin: My Life with Dylan Thomas* and Paul Ferris, *Caitlin: The Life of Caitlin Thomas*, London: Hutchinson, 1993. These books are revealing testimonials of a celebrity wife's life in the middle years of the twentieth-century, footballers wives eat your heart out!



5. Further Reading

The indispensable *A Dylan Thomas Companion*, by John Ackerman, (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991) is recommended, this book provides an excellent approach to Dylan's life and a balanced and comprehensive view of his work, (currently, this too is out of print.)

Another companion, though extremely expensive, *A Reference Companion to Dylan Thomas* Professor James A. Davies, London & Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1998 is currently available in both the UK & USA.

For contemporary new critical essays on Dylan Thomas readers should look no further than the *New Casebook – Dylan Thomas, Contemporary Critical Essays*, Ed. John Goodby & Chris Wigginton, Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001.

Readers of this site should also explore for further research, the comprehensive Bibliography provided in the Education area.



7. Key Works

To provide in-depth annotations of Thomas's works is in the hands of scholars and is a lifetime's project. Readers are advised to seek one such lifetime's project Professor Ralph Maud new book *Where Have The Old Words Got Me?: explications of Dylan Thomas's Collected Poems*, Cardiff: UWP, 2003.

Students wishing to find out more should visit the Bibliography section of this website and the sample essays provided in the Education area of this website. Stories and poems, and *Under Milk Wood*, can be found in *The Dylan Thomas Omnibus*.

Poetry

1934 *Eighteen Poems*

[Key poems: 'The force that through the green fuse', 'I see the boys of summer', 'When, like a running grave', 'If I were tickled by the rub of love', 'Light breaks where no sun shines', 'in the beginning']

1936 *Twenty-Five Poems*

[Key poems: 'And death shall have no dominion', 'The hand that signed the paper', 'A grief ago', 'I, in my intricate image', 'Today, this insect']

1939 *The Map of Love*

1939 *The World I Breathe* (USA)

[Key poems: 'After the funeral', 'Because the pleasure bird whistles', 'How shall my animal', 'If my head hurt a hare's foot', 'I make this in a warring absence'. Prose included: 'The Tree', 'The Enemies', 'The Dress', 'The Visitor', 'The Orchards', 'The Mouse and the Woman', 'The Map of Love'.]

1943 *New Poems* (USA)

1946 *Deaths and Entrances*

[Key poems: 'The Refusal to Mourn the Death, by Fire, of a Child in London', 'Poem in October', 'Love in the Asylum', 'The hunchback in the park', 'Deaths and Entrances', 'On the marriage of a virgin', 'In my craft or sullen art', 'Ceremony after a fire raid', 'Among those Killed in the Dawn Raid was a Man Aged a Hundred', 'Ballad of the Long-legged Bait', 'Fern Hill']

1952 *In Country Sleep*

[Key poems: 'Over Sir John's Hill', 'Poem on His Birthday', 'Lament', 'In the White Giant's Thigh', 'Do not go gentle into that good night']

1952 *Collected Poems 1934-52* [Key poems: 'Prologue'.]

1954 *Collected Poems 1934-53* [Key Poems: 'In Country Heaven', 'Elegy'.]

Short Stories

1940 *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Dog*

[Stories included: 'The Peaches', 'A Visit to Grandpa's', 'Patricia, Edith and Arnold', 'The Fight', 'Extraordinary Little Cough', 'Just Like Little Dogs', 'Where Tawe Flows', 'Who Do You Wish Was With Us', 'Old Garbo', 'One Warm Saturday']

1955 *A Prospect of the Sea*

[Stories included: 'After the Fair', 'The Tree', 'The Enemies', 'The Dress', 'The Visitor', 'The Orchards', 'The Lemon', 'The Mouse and the Woman', 'A Prospect of the Sea', 'The Map of Love', 'In the Direction of the Beginning', 'A Story', 'The Followers']

1955 *Adventures in the Skin Trade*

[Semi-autobiographical novel: 'A Fine Beginning', 'Plenty of Furniture', 'Four Lost Souls']

Key Broadcasts

1944 'Quite Early One Morning'

1946 'Holiday Memory'

1947 'Return Journey'

1950 'A Child's Christmas in Wales'

1953 'A Story' written for BBC television; (later known as 'The Outing')

1953 'Under Milk Wood'

Filmscripts

1953 *The Doctor and The Devils*