

= Dylan Thomas =

Dylan Marlais Thomas ( 27 October 1914 ? 9 November 1953 ) was a Welsh poet and writer whose works include the poems " Do not go gentle into that good night " and " And death shall have no dominion " ; the ' play for voices ' Under Milk Wood ; and stories and radio broadcasts such as A Child 's Christmas in Wales and Portrait of the Artist as a Young Dog . He became widely popular in his lifetime and remained so after his premature death at the age of 39 in New York City . By then , he had acquired a reputation , which he encouraged , as a " roistering , drunken and doomed poet "

Thomas was born in Swansea , Wales , in 1914 . An undistinguished pupil , he left school at 16 and became a journalist for a short time . Many of his works appeared in print while he was still a teenager ; however , it was the publication of " Light breaks where no sun shines , " in 1934 , that caught the attention of the literary world . While living in London , Thomas met Caitlin Macnamara , whom he married in 1937 . Their relationship was defined by alcoholism and was mutually destructive . In the early part of their marriage , Thomas and his family lived hand @-@ to @-@ mouth , settling in the Welsh fishing village of Laugharne .

Thomas came to be appreciated as a popular poet during his lifetime , and he found earning a living as a writer difficult . He began augmenting his income with reading tours and radio broadcasts . His radio recordings for the BBC during the late 1940s brought him to the public 's attention , and he was frequently used by the BBC as a populist voice of the literary scene .

Thomas first traveled to the United States in the 1950s . This is where his readings brought him a level of fame while his erratic behaviour and drinking worsened . His time in America cemented Thomas 's legend , however , and he went on to record to vinyl such works as A Child 's Christmas in Wales . During his fourth trip to New York in 1953 , Thomas became gravely ill and fell into a coma , from which he never recovered . He died on 9 November 1953 . His body was returned to Wales where he was interred at the village churchyard in Laugharne on 25 November 1953 .

Thomas wrote exclusively in the English language . He has been acknowledged as one of the most important Welsh poets of the 20th century . He is noted for his original , rhythmic and ingenious use of words and imagery . Thomas 's position as one of the great modern poets has been much discussed , and he remains popular with the public .

= = Life and career = =

= = = Early life = = =

Dylan Thomas was born on 27 October 1914 in Swansea , the son of Florence Hannah ( née Williams ; 1882 ? 1958 ) , a seamstress , and David John Thomas ( 1876 ? 1952 ) , a teacher . His father had a first @-@ class honours degree in English from University College , Aberystwyth , and ambitions to rise above his position teaching English literature at the local grammar school . Thomas had one sibling , Nancy ( Nancy Marles 1906 ? 1953 ) , who was nine years older . The children spoke only English though their parents were bilingual in English and Welsh , and David Thomas gave Welsh lessons at home . Thomas 's father chose the name Dylan , which could be translated as " son of the sea " , after Dylan ail Don , a character in The Mabinogion . His middle name , Marlais , was given in honour of his great @-@ uncle , William Thomas , a Unitarian minister and poet whose bardic name was Gwilym Marles . Dylan , pronounced ? ( Dull @-@ an ) in Welsh , caused his mother to worry he might be teased as the " dull one " . When he broadcast on Welsh BBC , early in his career , he was introduced using this pronunciation . Thomas favoured the Anglicised pronunciation and gave instructions that it should be Dillan / ?d?l?n / .

The red @-@ brick semi @-@ detached house at 5 Cwmdonkin Drive , in which Thomas was born and lived until he was 19 , had been bought by his parents in the respectable area of the Uplands a few months before his birth . His childhood was spent in Swansea , with summer trips to Carmarthenshire to visit Fernhill , a dairy farm owned by his maternal aunt , Ann Jones , the memory

of which is used for the 1945 lyrical poem " Fern Hill " . Thomas had bronchitis and asthma in childhood and struggled with these throughout his life . Thomas was indulged by his mother and enjoyed being mollycoddled , a trait he carried into adulthood and he was skilful at gaining attention and sympathy . Thomas 's formal education began at Mrs Hole 's dame school a private school on Mirador Crescent , a few streets away from his home . He described his experience there in Quite Early One Morning :

Never was there such a dame school as ours , so firm and kind and smelling of galoshes , with the sweet and fumbled music of the piano lessons drifting down from upstairs to the lonely schoolroom , where only the sometimes tearful wicked sat over undone sums , or to repent a little crime ? the pulling of a girl 's hair during geography , the sly shin kick under the table during English literature .

In October 1925 , Thomas enrolled at Swansea Grammar School for boys , in Mount Pleasant , where his father taught English . He was an undistinguished pupil who shied away from school , preferring reading . In his first year one of his poems was published in the school 's magazine and before he left he became its editor . During his final school years he began writing poetry in notebooks , the first poem dated 27 April ( 1930 ) , is entitled " Osiris , come to Isis " . In June 1928 Thomas won the school 's mile race , held at St. Helen 's Ground ; he carried a newspaper photograph of his victory with him until his death . In 1931 , when he was 16 , Thomas left school to become a reporter for the South Wales Daily Post , only to leave under pressure 18 months later . Thomas continued to work as a freelance journalist for several years during which time he remained at Cwmdonkin Drive where he continued to add to his notebooks , amassing 200 poems in four books between 1930 and 1934 . Of the 90 poems he published , half were written during these years .

In his free time , he joined the amateur dramatic group at the Little Theatre in Mumbles , visited the cinema in Uplands , took walks along Swansea Bay , and frequented Swansea 's pubs , especially the Antelope and the Mermaid Hotels in Mumbles . In the Kardomah Café , close to the newspaper office in Castle Street , he met his creative contemporaries , including his friend the poet Vernon Watkins . The group of writers , musicians and artists became known as " The Kardomah Gang " . In 1933 , Thomas visited London for probably the first time .

= = = 1933 ? 1939 = = =

Thomas was a teenager when many of the poems for which he became famous were published : " And death shall have no dominion " , " Before I Knocked " and " The Force That Through the Green Fuse Drives the Flower " . " And death shall have no dominion " appeared in the New English Weekly in May 1933 . When " Light breaks where no sun shines " appeared in The Listener in 1934 , it caught the attention of three senior figures in literary London , T. S. Eliot , Geoffrey Grigson and Stephen Spender . They contacted Thomas and his first poetry volume , 18 Poems , was published in December 1934 . 18 Poems was noted for its visionary qualities which led to critic Desmond Hawkins writing that the work was " the sort of bomb that bursts no more than once in three years " . The volume was critically acclaimed and won a contest run by the Sunday Referee , netting him new admirers from the London poetry world , including Edith Sitwell and Edwin Muir . The anthology was published by Fortune Press , in part a vanity publisher that did not pay its writers and expected them to buy a certain number of copies themselves . A similar arrangement was used by other new authors including Philip Larkin . In December 1935 Thomas contributed the poem " The Hand That Signed the Paper " to Issue 18 of the bi @-@ monthly New Verse . In 1936 , his next collection Twenty @-@ five Poems , published by J. M. Dent , also received much critical praise . In all , he wrote half his poems while living at Cwmdonkin Drive before moving to London . It was the time that Thomas 's reputation for heavy drinking developed .

In early 1936 , Thomas met Caitlin Macnamara ( 1913 ? 1994 ) , a 22 @-@ year @-@ old blonde @-@ haired , blue @-@ eyed dancer of Irish descent . She had run away from home , intent on making a career in dance , and aged 18 joined the chorus line at the London Palladium . Introduced by Augustus John , Caitlin 's lover , they met in The Wheatsheaf pub on Rathbone Place in London 's West End . Laying his head in her lap , a drunken Thomas proposed . Thomas liked to comment

that he and Caitlin were in bed together ten minutes after they first met . Although Caitlin initially continued her relationship with John , she and Thomas began a correspondence , and in the second half of 1936 were courting . They married at the register office in Penzance , Cornwall , on 11 July 1937 . In early 1938 they moved to Wales , renting a cottage in the village of Laugharne , Carmarthenshire . Their first child , Llewelyn Edouard , was born on 30 January 1939 .

By the late 1930s , Thomas was embraced as the " poetic herald " for a group of English poets , the New Apocalyptics . Thomas refused to align himself with them and declined to sign their manifesto . He later stated that he believed they were " intellectual muckpots leaning on a theory " . Despite this , many of the group , including Henry Treece , modelled their work on Thomas .

= = = Wartime , 1939 ? 1945 = = =

In 1939 *The Map of Love* appeared as a collection of 16 poems and seven of the 20 short stories published by Thomas in magazines since 1934 . Ten stories in his next book , *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Dog* ( 1940 ) , were based less on lavish fantasy than *The Map of Love* and more on real @-@ life romances featuring himself in Wales . Sales of both books were poor , resulting in Thomas living on meagre fees from writing and reviewing . At this time he borrowed heavily from friends and acquaintances . Hounded by creditors , Thomas and his family left Laugharne in July 1940 and moved to the home of critic John Davenport in Marshfield , Gloucestershire . There Thomas collaborated with Davenport on the satire *The Death of the King 's Canary* , though due to fears of libel the work was not published until 1976 .

At the outset of the Second World War , Thomas was worried about conscription and referred to his ailment as " an unreliable lung " . Coughing sometimes confined him to bed and he had a history of bringing up blood and mucus . After initially seeking employment in a reserved occupation , he managed to be classified Grade III , which meant that he would be among the last to be called up for service . Saddened to see his friends going on active service , he continued drinking and struggled to support his family . He wrote begging letters to random literary figures asking for support , a plan he hoped would provide a long @-@ term regular income . Thomas supplemented his income by writing scripts for the BBC , which not only gave him additional earnings but also provided evidence that he was producing essential war work .

In February 1941 , Swansea was bombed by the Luftwaffe in a " three nights ' blitz " . Castle Street was one of many streets that suffered badly ; rows of shops , including the Kardomah Café , were destroyed . Thomas walked through the bombed @-@ out shell of the town centre with his friend Bert Trick . Upset at the sight , he concluded : " Our Swansea is dead " . Soon after the bombing raids , Thomas wrote a radio play , *Return Journey Home* , which described the café as being " razed to the snow " . The play was first broadcast on 15 June 1947 . The Kardomah Café reopened on Portland Street after the war .

In May 1941 , Thomas and Caitlin moved to London , leaving their son with his grandmother at Blashford in Hampshire . Thomas hoped to find employment in the film industry and wrote to the director of the films division of the Ministry of Information ( MOI ) . After being rebuffed he found work with Strand Films providing him with his first regular income since the *Daily Post* . Strand produced films for the MOI ; Thomas scripted at least five films in 1942 , *This Is Colour* ( a history of the British dyeing industry ) and *New Towns For Old* ( on post @-@ war reconstruction ) . *These Are The Men* ( 1943 ) was a more ambitious piece in which Thomas 's verse accompanies Leni Riefenstahl 's footage of an early Nuremberg Rally . *Conquest of a Germ* ( 1944 ) explored the use of early antibiotics in the fight against pneumonia and tuberculosis . *Our Country* ( 1945 ) was a romantic tour of Britain set to Thomas 's poetry .

In early 1943 Thomas began a relationship with Pamela Glendower , one of several affairs he had during his marriage . The affairs either ran out of steam or were halted after Caitlin discovered his infidelity . In March 1943 Caitlin gave birth to a daughter , Aeronwy , in London . They lived in a run @-@ down studio in Chelsea , made up of a single large room with a curtain to separate the kitchen .

In 1944 , with the threat of German flying bombs on London , Thomas moved to the family cottage

in Blaen Cwm near Llangain , where Thomas resumed writing poetry , completing " Holy Spring " and " Vision and Prayer " . In September Thomas and Caitlin moved to New Quay in West Wales which inspired Thomas to pen the radio piece Quite Early One Morning , a sketch for his later work , Under Milk Wood . Of the poetry written at this time , of note is " Fern Hill " , believed to have been started while living in New Quay , but completed at Blaen Cwm in mid @-@ 1945 .

= = = Broadcasting years 1945 ? 1949 = = =

Although Thomas had previously written for the BBC , it was a minor source of income and the occurrences intermittent . In 1943 he wrote and recorded a 15 @-@ minute talk entitled " Reminiscences of Childhood " for the Welsh BBC . In December 1944 he recorded Quite Early One Morning ( produced by Aneurin Talfan Davies , again for the Welsh BBC ) but when Davies offered it for national broadcast BBC London turned it down . On 31 August 1945 the BBC Home Service broadcast Quite Early One Morning , and in the three years beginning October 1945 , Thomas made over a hundred broadcasts for the corporation . Thomas was employed not only for his poetry readings , but for discussions and critiques .

By late September 1945 the Thomases had left Wales and were living with various friends in London . The publication of Deaths and Entrances in 1946 was a turning point for Thomas . Poet and critic Walter J. Turner commented in The Spectator , " This book alone , in my opinion , ranks him as a major poet " .

In the second half of 1945 , Thomas began reading for the BBC Radio programme , Book of Verse , broadcast weekly to the Far East providing Thomas with a regular income and bringing him into contact with Louis MacNeice , a congenial drinking companion whose advice Thomas cherished . On 29 September 1946 , the BBC began transmitting the Third Programme , a high @-@ culture network which provided opportunities for Thomas . He appeared in the play Comus for Third Programme , the day after the network launched , and his rich , sonorous voice led to character parts , including the lead in Aeschylus ' Agamemnon and Satan in an adaptation of Paradise Lost . Thomas remained a popular guest on radio talk shows for the BBC who regarded him as " useful should a younger generation poet be needed " . He had an uneasy relationship with BBC management and a staff job was never an option , with drinking cited as the problem . Despite this , Thomas became a familiar radio voice and within Britain was " in every sense a celebrity " .

Thomas visited the home of historian A. J. P. Taylor in Disley . Although Taylor disliked him intensely , he stayed for a month , drinking " on a monumental scale " , up to 15 or 20 pints of beer a day . In late 1946 Thomas turned up at the Taylors ' again , this time homeless and with Caitlin . Margaret Taylor let them take up residence in the garden summerhouse . In May 1949 Thomas and his family moved to his final home , the Boat House at Laugharne purchased for him at a cost of £ 2 @, @ 500 in April 1949 by Margaret Taylor . Thomas acquired a garage a hundred yards from the house on a cliff ledge which he turned into his writing shed , and where he wrote several of his most acclaimed poems . Just before moving into there , Thomas rented " Pelican House " opposite his regular drinking den , Brown 's Hotel , for his parents who lived there from 1949 until 1953 . It was there that his father died and the funeral was held . Caitlin gave birth to their third child , a boy named Colm Garan Hart , on 25 July 1949 .

= = = American tours , 1950 ? 1953 = = =

John Brinnin invited Thomas to New York , where in 1950 they embarked on a lucrative three @-@ month tour of arts centres and campuses . The tour , which began in front of an audience of a thousand at the Kaufmann Auditorium of the Poetry Centre in New York , took in about 40 venues . During the tour Thomas was invited to many parties and functions and on several occasions became drunk - going out of his way to shock people - and was a difficult guest . Thomas drank before some of his readings , though it is argued he may have pretended to be more affected by it than he actually was . The writer Elizabeth Hardwick recalled how intoxicating a performer he was and how the tension would build before a performance : " Would he arrive only to break down on the

stage ? Would some dismaying scene take place at the faculty party ? Would he be offensive , violent , obscene ? " Caitlin said in her memoir , " Nobody ever needed encouragement less , and he was drowned in it . "

On returning to Britain Thomas began work on two further poems , " In the white giant 's thigh " , which he read on the Third Programme in September 1950 , and the incomplete " In country heaven " . 1950 is also believed to be the year that he began work on ' Under Milk Wood ' , under the working title ' The Town That Was Mad ' . The task of seeing this work through to production was assigned to the BBC 's Douglas Cleverdon , who had been responsible for casting Thomas in ' Paradise Lost ' . Despite Cleverdon 's urges , the script slipped from Thomas 's priorities and in early 1951 he took a trip to Iran to work on a film for the Anglo @-@ Iranian Oil Company . The film was never made , with Thomas returning to Wales in February , though his time there allowed him to provide a few minutes of material for a BBC documentary entitled ' Persian Oil ' . Early that year Thomas wrote two poems , which Thomas 's principal biographer , Paul Ferris describes as " unusually blunt " ; the ribald " Lament " and an ode , in the form of a villanelle , to his dying father " Do not go gentle into that good night " .

Despite a range of wealthy patrons , including Margaret Taylor , Princess Marguerite Caetani and Marged Howard @-@ Stepney , Thomas was still in financial difficulty , and he wrote several begging letters to notable literary figures including the likes of T. S. Eliot . Taylor was not keen on Thomas taking another trip to the United States , and thought that if Thomas had a permanent address in London he would be able to gain steady work there . She bought a property , 54 Delancey Street , in Camden Town , and in late 1951 Thomas and Caitlin lived in the basement flat . Thomas would describe the flat as his " London house of horror " and did not return there after his 1952 tour of America .

Thomas undertook a second tour of the United States in 1952 , this time with Caitlin - after she had discovered he had been unfaithful on his earlier trip . They drank heavily , and Thomas began to suffer with gout and lung problems . The second tour was the most intensive of the four , taking in 46 engagements . The trip also resulted in Thomas recording his first poetry to vinyl , which Caedmon Records released in America later that year . One of his works recorded during this time , A Child 's Christmas in Wales , became his most popular prose work in America . The original 1952 recording of A Child 's Christmas in Wales was a 2008 selection for the United States National Recording Registry , stating that it is " credited with launching the audiobook industry in the United States " .

In April 1953 Thomas returned alone for a third tour of America . He performed a " work in progress " version of Under Milk Wood , solo , for the first time at Harvard University on 3 May . A week later the work was performed with a full cast at the Poetry Centre in New York . He met the deadline only after being locked in a room by Brinnin 's assistant , Liz Reitell , and was still editing the script on the afternoon of the performance ; its last lines were handed to the actors as they put on their makeup . In the wake of the play 's US success , the composer Stravinsky invited Thomas to write a libretto for an opera . Thomas spent the last nine or ten days of his third tour in New York mostly in the company of Reitell , with whom he had an affair . During this time Thomas fractured his arm falling down a flight of stairs when drunk . Reitell 's doctor , Milton Feltenstein , put his arm in plaster and treated him for gout and gastritis .

After returning home , Thomas worked on Under Milk Wood in Wales before sending the original manuscript to Douglas Cleverdon on 15 October 1953 . It was copied and returned to Thomas , who lost it in a pub in London and required a duplicate to take to America . Thomas flew to the States on 19 October 1953 for what would be his final tour . He died in New York before the BBC could record " Under Milk Wood " . Richard Burton starred in the first broadcast in 1954 , and was joined by Elizabeth Taylor in a subsequent film . In 1954 the play won the Prix Italia for literary or dramatic programmes .

Thomas 's last collection Collected Poems , 1934 ? 1952 , published when he was 38 , won the Foyle poetry prize . Reviewing the volume , critic Philip Toynbee declared that " Thomas is the greatest living poet in the English language " . Thomas 's father died from pneumonia just before Christmas 1952 . In the first few months of 1953 his sister died from liver cancer , one of his patrons

took an overdose of sleeping pills , three friends died at an early age and Caitlin had an abortion .

= = = Death = = =

Thomas arrived in New York on 20 October 1953 to undertake another tour of poetry reading and talks , organised by Brinnin . He was ill , complaining of chest trouble and gout while still in Britain , though there is no record he received medical treatment for either condition . He was in a melancholy mood about the trip and his health was poor , relying on an inhaler to aid his breathing and there were reports that he was suffering from blackouts . His visit to say goodbye to BBC producer Philip Burton , a few days before he left for New York , was interrupted by a blackout . On his last night in London , he had another , in the company of his fellow poet Louis MacNeice . The next day , he visited a doctor for a smallpox vaccination certificate .

His first appearance was planned to be at a rehearsal of Under Milk Wood at the Poetry Centre . Brinnin , who was director of the Poetry Centre , did not travel to New York but remained in Boston to write . He handed responsibility to his assistant , Liz Reitell , who was keen to see Thomas for the first time since their three @-@ week romance early in the year . She met Thomas at Idlewild Airport and was shocked at his appearance , as he " looked pale , delicate and shaky , not his usual robust self . " Thomas told her he had had a terrible week , had missed her terribly and wanted to go to bed with her . Despite Reitell 's previous misgivings about their relationship , they spent the rest of the day and night together . After being taken by Reitell to check in at the Chelsea Hotel , Thomas took the first rehearsal of Under Milk Wood . They then went to the White Horse Tavern in Greenwich Village , before returning to the Chelsea Hotel .

The next day Reitell invited him to her apartment but he declined . They went sight @-@ seeing , but Thomas was unwell and retired to his bed for the rest of the afternoon . Reitell gave him half a grain ( 32 @.@ 4 milligrams ) of phenobarbitone to help him sleep and spent the night at the hotel with him . Two days later , on 23 October , Herb Hannum , a friend from an earlier trip , noticed how sick Thomas looked and suggested an appointment with Feltenstein before the performances of Under Milk Wood that evening . Feltenstein administered injections and Thomas made it through the two performances , but collapsed immediately afterwards . Reitell later said that Feltenstein was " rather a wild doctor who thought injections would cure anything " .

On the evening of 27 October , Thomas attended his 39th birthday party but felt unwell and returned to his hotel after an hour . The next day he took part in Poetry And The Film , a recorded symposium at Cinema 16 , with panellists Amos Vogel , Arthur Miller , Maya Deren , Parker Tyler , and Willard Maas .

A turning point came on 2 November . Air pollution in New York had risen significantly and exacerbated chest illnesses , such as Thomas had . By the end of the month , over 200 New Yorkers had died from the smog . On 3 November , Thomas spent most of the day in bed drinking . He went out in the evening to keep two drink appointments . After returning to the hotel , he went out again for a drink at 2 am . After drinking at the White Horse , a pub he had found through Scottish poet Ruthven Todd , Thomas returned to the Hotel Chelsea , declaring , " I 've had 18 straight whiskies . I think that 's the record ! " The barman , and the owner of the pub who served him , later commented that Thomas could not have imbibed more than half that amount . Thomas had an appointment at a clam house in New Jersey with Todd on 4 November . When phoned at the Chelsea that morning , he said he was feeling ill and postponed the engagement . Later he went drinking with Reitell at the White Horse and , feeling sick again , returned to the hotel . Feltenstein came to see him three times that day , administering the steroid ACTH by injection and , on his third visit , half a grain ( 32 @.@ 4 milligrams ) of morphine sulphate , which affected his breathing . Reitell became increasingly concerned and telephoned Feltenstein for advice . He suggested she get male assistance , so she called upon the painter Jack Heliker , who arrived before 11 pm . At midnight on 5 November , Thomas 's breathing became more difficult and his face turned blue . An ambulance was summoned .

Thomas was admitted to the emergency ward at St Vincent 's Hospital at 1 : 58 am . He was comatose , and his medical notes state that the " impression upon admission was acute alcoholic

encephalopathy damage to the brain by alcohol , for which the patient was treated without response " . Caitlin flew to America the following day and was taken to the hospital , by which time a tracheotomy had been performed . Her reported first words were , " Is the bloody man dead yet ? " She was allowed to see Thomas only for 40 minutes in the morning but returned in the afternoon and , in a drunken rage , threatened to kill Brinnin . When she became uncontrollable , she was put in a straitjacket and committed , by Feltenstein , to the River Crest private psychiatric detox clinic on Long Island .

Thomas died at noon on 9 November , still in a coma . A post mortem gave the primary cause of death as pneumonia , with pressure on the brain and a fatty liver as contributing factors .

= = = Aftermath = = =

Rumours circulated of a brain haemorrhage , followed by competing reports that he had been mugged and even that he had drunk himself to death . Later , there was speculation about drugs and diabetes . At the post @-@ mortem , the pathologist found three causes of death ? pneumonia , brain swelling and a fatty liver . Despite his heavy drinking his liver showed no sign of cirrhosis .

Dylan 's legacy as the " doomed poet " was cemented with the publication of Brinnin 's 1955 biography Dylan Thomas in America , which focuses on his last few years and paints a picture of him as a drunk and a philanderer . Later biographies are critical of Brinnin 's view , especially his coverage of Thomas 's death . David Thomas in Fatal Neglect : Who Killed Dylan Thomas ? claims that Brinnin , along with Reitell and Feltenstein , were culpable . FitzGibbon 's 1965 biography ignores Thomas 's heavy drinking and skims over his death , giving just two pages in his detailed book to Thomas 's demise . Ferris in his 1989 biography includes Thomas 's heavy drinking , but is more critical of those around him in his final days and does not draw the conclusion that he drank himself to death . Feltenstein 's role and actions have been criticised by many sources , especially his incorrect diagnosis of delirium tremens and the high dose of morphine he administered . Dr B. W. Murphy and Dr C. G. de Gutierrez @-@ Mahoney , the doctors who treated Thomas while at St. Vincents , concluded that Feltenstein 's failure to see that Thomas was gravely ill and have him admitted to hospital sooner , " was even more culpable than his use of morphine " .

Following his death , Thomas 's body was brought back to Wales for burial in the village churchyard at Laugharne . Thomas 's funeral , which Brinnin did not attend , took place at St Martin 's Church in Laugharne on 24 November . Thomas 's coffin was carried by six friends from the village . Caitlin , without her customary hat , walked behind the coffin , with his childhood friend Daniel Jones at her arm and her mother by her side . The procession to the church was filmed and the wake took place at Brown 's Hotel . Thomas 's obituary in The Times was written by fellow poet and long @-@ time friend Vernon Watkins .

His widow , Caitlin , died in 1994 and was buried alongside him . Thomas 's father " DJ " died on 16 December 1952 and his mother Florence in August 1958 . Thomas 's elder son , Llewelyn , died in 2000 , his daughter , Aeronwy in 2009 and his youngest son Colm in 2012 .

Caitlin Thomas 's autobiographies , Caitlin Thomas ? Leftover Life to Kill ( 1957 ) and My Life with Dylan Thomas : Double Drink Story ( 1997 ) , describe the destructive effect of alcoholism on the poet and to their relationship . " But ours was a drink story , not a love story , just like millions of others . Our one and only true love was drink " , she wrote and " The bar was our altar " . Biographer Andrew Lycett ascribed the demise of Thomas 's health to an alcoholic co @-@ dependent relationship with his wife , who deeply resented his extramarital affairs . Thomas died intestate with assets to the value of £ 100 .

= = Poetry = =

= = = Poetic style and influences = = =

Thomas ' refusal to align with any literary group or movement has made him and his work difficult to

categorize . Although influenced by the modern symbolism and surrealism movement he refused to follow its creed . Instead Thomas is viewed as part of the modernism and romanticism movements , though attempts to pigeon @-@ hole him within a particular neo @-@ romantic school have been unsuccessful . Elder Olson , in his 1954 critical study of Thomas 's poetry , wrote " ... a further characteristic which distinguished Thomas 's work from that of other poets . It was unclassifiable . " Olson continued that in a postmodern age that continually attempted to demand that poetry have social reference , none could be found in Thomas 's work , and that his work was so obscure that critics could not explicate it .

Thomas 's verbal style played against strict verse forms , such as in the villanelle " Do not go gentle into that good night " . His images were carefully ordered in a patterned sequence , and his major theme was the unity of all life , the continuing process of life and death and new life that linked the generations . Thomas saw biology as a magical transformation producing unity out of diversity , and in his poetry sought a poetic ritual to celebrate this unity . He saw men and women locked in cycles of growth , love , procreation , new growth , death , and new life . Therefore , each image engenders its opposite . Thomas derived his closely woven , sometimes self @-@ contradictory images from the Bible , Welsh folklore , preaching , and Sigmund Freud . Explaining the source of his imagery , Thomas wrote in a letter to Glyn Jones : " My own obscurity is quite an unfashionable one , based , as it is , on a preconceived symbolism derived ( I 'm afraid all this sounds woolly and pretentious ) from the cosmic significance of the human anatomy " .

Thomas 's early poetry was noted for its verbal density , alliteration , sprung rhythm and internal rhyme , and he was described by some critics as having been influenced by the English poet Gerard Manley Hopkins . This is attributed to Hopkins , who taught himself Welsh and who used sprung verse , bringing some features of Welsh poetic metre into his work . When Henry Treece wrote to Thomas comparing his style to that of Hopkins , Thomas wrote back denying any such influence . One poet Thomas greatly admired , and who is regarded as an influence , was Thomas Hardy . When Thomas travelled in America , he recited Hardy 's work in his readings .

Other poets from whom critics believe Thomas drew influence include James Joyce , Arthur Rimbaud and D. H. Lawrence . William York Tindall , in his 1962 study , *A Reader 's Guide to Dylan Thomas* , finds comparison between Thomas 's and Joyce 's wordplay , while he notes the themes of rebirth and nature are common to the works of Lawrence and Thomas . Although Thomas described himself as the " Rimbaud of Cwmdonkin Drive " , he stated that the phrase " Swansea 's Rimbaud " was coined by poet Roy Campbell . Critics have explored the connection between the creation of Thomas 's mythological pasts into his works such as " The Orchards " , which Ann Elizabeth Mayer believes reflects the Welsh myths of the Mabinogion . Thomas 's poetry is notable for its musicality , most clear in " Fern Hill " , " In Country Sleep " , " Ballad of the Long @-@ legged Bait " and " In the White Giant 's Thigh " from *Under Milk Wood* .

Thomas once confided that the poems which had most influenced him were Mother Goose rhymes which his parents taught him when he was a child :

I should say I wanted to write poetry in the beginning because I had fallen in love with words . The first poems I knew were nursery rhymes and before I could read them for myself I had come to love the words of them . The words alone . What the words stood for was of a very secondary importance ... I fell in love , that is the only expression I can think of , at once , and am still at the mercy of words , though sometimes now , knowing a little of their behaviour very well , I think I can influence them slightly and have even learned to beat them now and then , which they appear to enjoy . I tumbled for words at once . And , when I began to read the nursery rhymes for myself , and , later , to read other verses and ballads , I knew that I had discovered the most important things , to me , that could be ever .

Thomas was an accomplished writer of prose poetry , with collections such as *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Dog* ( 1940 ) and *Quite Early One Morning* ( 1954 ) showing he was capable of writing moving short stories . His first published prose work was *After the Fair* , printed in *The New English Weekly* on 15 March 1934 . Jacob Korg believes that Thomas 's fiction work can be classified into two main bodies , vigorous fantasies in a poetic style and , after 1939 , more straightforward narratives . Korg surmises that Thomas approached his prose writing as an alternate poetic form ,



which allowed him to produce complex , involuted narratives that do not allow the reader to rest .

= = = As a ' Welsh ' poet = = =

Thomas disliked being regarded as a provincial poet , and decried any notion of ' Welshness ' in his poetry . When he wrote to Stephen Spender in 1952 , thanking him for a review of his *Collected Poems* , he added " Oh , & I forgot . I 'm not influenced by Welsh bardic poetry . I can 't read Welsh . " Despite this his work was rooted in the geography of Wales . Thomas acknowledged that he returned to Wales when he had difficulty writing , and John Ackerman argues that " His inspiration and imagination were rooted in his Welsh background " . Caitlin Thomas wrote that he worked " in a fanatically narrow groove , although there was nothing narrow about the depth and understanding of his feelings . The groove of direct hereditary descent in the land of his birth , which he never in thought , and hardly in body , moved out of . "

Head of Programmes Wales at the BBC , Aneirin Talfan Davies , who commissioned several of Thomas 's early radio talks , believed that the poet 's " whole attitude is that of the medieval bards . " Kenneth O. Morgan counter @-@ argues that it is a ' difficult enterprise ' to find traces of *cynghanedd* ( harmony ) or *cerdd dafod* ( tongue @-@ craft ) in Thomas 's poetry . Instead he believes his work , especially his earlier more autobiographical poems , are rooted in a changing country which echoes the Welshness of the past and the Anglicisation of the new industrial nation : " rural and urban , chapel @-@ going and profane , Welsh and English , Unforgiving and deeply compassionate . " Fellow poet and critic Glyn Jones believed that any traces of *cynghanedd* in Thomas 's work was accidental , although he felt Thomas consciously employed one element of Welsh metrics ; that of counting syllables per line instead of feet . Constantine FitzGibbon , Thomas 's first in @-@ depth biographer , wrote " No major English poet has ever been as Welsh as Dylan " .

Although Thomas had a deep connection with Wales , he disliked Welsh nationalism . He once wrote , " Land of my fathers , and my fathers can keep it " . While often attributed to Thomas himself , this line actually comes from the character Owen Morgan @-@ Vaughan , in the screenplay Thomas wrote for the 1948 British melodrama *The Three Weird Sisters* . Robert Pocock , a friend from the BBC , recalled " I only once heard Dylan express an opinion on Welsh Nationalism . He used three words . Two of them were Welsh Nationalism . " Although not expressed as strongly , Glyn Jones believed that he and Thomas 's friendship cooled in the later years as he had not ' rejected enough ' of the elements that Thomas disliked ? " Welsh nationalism and a sort of hill farm morality " . Apologetically , in a letter to Keidrych Rhys , editor of literary magazine *Wales* , Thomas 's father wrote that he was " afraid Dylan isn 't much of a Welshman " . Though FitzGibbon asserts that Thomas 's negativity towards Welsh nationalism was fostered by his father 's hostility towards the Welsh language .

= = Critical reception = =

Thomas 's work and stature as a poet have been much debated by critics and biographers since his death . Critical studies have been clouded by Thomas 's personality and mythology , especially his drunken persona and death in New York . When Seamus Heaney gave an Oxford lecture on the poet he opened by addressing the assembly , " Dylan Thomas is now as much a case history as a chapter in the history of poetry " , querying how ' Thomas the Poet ' is one of his forgotten attributes . David Holbrook , who has written three books about Thomas , stated in his 1962 publication *Llareggub Revisited* , " the strangest feature of Dylan Thomas 's notoriety @-@ not that he is bogus , but that attitudes to poetry attached themselves to him which not only threaten the prestige , effectiveness and accessibility to English poetry , but also destroyed his true voice and , at last , him . " The Poetry Archive notes that " Dylan Thomas ' detractors accuse him of being drunk on language as well as whiskey , but whilst there 's no doubt that the sound of language is central to his style , he was also a disciplined writer who re @-@ drafted obsessively " .

Many critics have argued that Thomas 's work is too narrow and that he suffers from verbal

extravagance . Those that have championed his work have found the criticism baffling . Robert Lowell wrote in 1947 , " Nothing could be more wrongheaded than the English disputes about Dylan Thomas 's greatness ... He is a dazzling obscure writer who can be enjoyed without understanding . " Kenneth Rexroth said , on reading *Eighteen Poems* , " The reeling excitement of a poetry @-@ intoxicated schoolboy smote the Philistine as hard a blow with one small book as Swinburne had with *Poems and Ballads* . " Philip Larkin in a letter to Kingsley Amis in 1948 , wrote that " no one can ' stick words into us like pins ' ... like he [ Thomas ] can " , but followed that by stating that he " doesn 't use his words to any advantage " . Amis was far harsher , finding little of merit in his work . In 1956 , the publication of the anthology *New Lines* featuring works by the British collective *The Movement* , which included Amis and Larkin amongst its number , set out a vision of modern poetry that was damning towards the poets of the 1940s . Thomas 's work in particular was criticised . David Lodge , writing about *The Movement* in 1981 stated " Dylan Thomas was made to stand for everything they detest , verbal obscurity , metaphysical pretentiousness , and romantic rhapsodizing " .

Despite criticism by sections of academia , Thomas 's work has been embraced by readers more so than many of his contemporaries , and is one of the few modern poets whose name is recognised by the general public . In 2009 , over 18 @,@ 000 votes were cast in a BBC poll to find the UK 's favourite poet ; Thomas was placed 10th . Several of his poems have passed into the cultural mainstream , and his work has been used by authors , musicians and film and television writers . The BBC Radio programme , *Desert Island Discs* , in which guests usually choose their favourite songs , has heard 50 participants select a Dylan Thomas recording . John Goodby states that this popularity with the reading public allows Thomas 's work to be classed as vulgar and common . He also cites that despite a brief period during the 1960s when Thomas was considered a cultural icon , that the poet has been marginalized in critical circles due to his exuberance , in both life and work , and his refusal to know his place . Goodby believes that Thomas has been mainly snubbed since the 1970s and has become " ... an embarrassment to twentieth @-@ century poetry criticism " his work failing to fit standard narratives and is thus ignored rather than studied .

= = Memorials = =

In Swansea 's maritime quarter are the Dylan Thomas Theatre , home of the Swansea Little Theatre of which Thomas was once a member , and the former Guildhall built in 1825 and now occupied by the Dylan Thomas Centre , a literature centre , where exhibitions and lectures are held and setting for the annual Dylan Thomas Festival . Outside the centre stands a bronze statue of Thomas , by John Doubleday . Another monument to Thomas stands in Cwmdonkin Park , one of his favourite childhood haunts , close to his birthplace . The memorial is a small rock in an enclosed garden within the park inscribed with the closing lines from *Fern Hill* .

Thomas 's home in Laugharne , the Boathouse , is a museum run by Carmarthenshire County Council . Thomas 's writing shed is also preserved . In 2004 , the Dylan Thomas Prize was created in his honour , awarded to the best published writer in English under the age of 30 . In 2005 , the Dylan Thomas Screenplay Award was established . The prize , administered by the Dylan Thomas Centre , is awarded at the annual Swansea Bay Film Festival . In 1982 a plaque was unveiled in Poets ' Corner , Westminster Abbey . The plaque is also inscribed with the last two lines of *Fern Hill* .

In 2014 , to celebrate the centenary of Thomas ' birth , the British Council Wales undertook a year long programme of cultural and educational works . Highlights included a touring replica of Thomas ' work shed , Sir Peter Blake 's exhibition of illustrations based on *Under Milk Wood* and a 36 @-@ hour marathon of readings which saw the likes of Michael Sheen and Sir Ian McKellen performing Thomas ' work . The Royal Patron of The Dylan Thomas 100 Festival was Charles , Prince of Wales , who made a recording of *Fern Hill* for the event .

= = List of works = =

The Collected Poems of Dylan Thomas : The New Centenary Edition . Ed. with Introduction by John Goodby . London : Weidenfeld and Nicolson , 2014 .

The Notebook Poems 1930 @-@ 34 , ed . Ralph Maud . London : Dent , 1989 .

Collected Stories , ed . Walford Davies . London : Dent , 1983

Under Milk Wood , ed . Walford Davies and Ralph Maud . London : Dent , 1995

= = = Posthumous film adaptations = = =

1972 : Under Milk Wood , starring Richard Burton , Elizabeth Taylor , and Peter O 'Toole

1987 : A Child 's Christmas in Wales , directed by Don McBrearty .

1992 : Rebecca 's Daughters starring Peter O 'Toole and Joely Richardson

2007 : Dylan Thomas : A War Films Anthology ( DDHE / IWM D23702 ? 2006 )

2009 : Nadolig Plentyn yng Nghymru / A Child 's Christmas in Wales , 2009 BAFTA Best Short Film , animation , soundtrack in Welsh and English , Director : Dave Unwin . Extras include filmed comments from Aeronwy Thomas . 5 @-@ 016886 @-@ 088457 .

2014 : Set Fire to the Stars , with Thomas portrayed by Celyn Jones and John Brinnin by Elijah Wood .