

MACMILLAN STUDIES IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY LITERATURE

D. H. LAWRENCE: THE EARLY FICTION *Michael Black*

PATRICK WHITE'S FICTION *Carolyn Bliss*

THE NOVELS OF VLADIMIR NABOKOV *Laurie Clancy*

IRIS MURDOCH: THE SAINT AND THE ARTIST *Peter J. Conradi*

GRAHAM GREENE'S CHILDLESS FATHERS

*Daphna Erdinast-Vulcan*

SHORT STORIES AND SHORT FICTIONS, 1880–1980

*Clare Hanson*

D. H. LAWRENCE: NEW STUDIES *Christopher Heywood* (editor)

OWEN THE POET *Dominic Hibberd*

SHADOWS OF THE PAST IN CONTEMPORARY BRITISH

FICTION *David Leon Higdon*

A CRITICAL INTRODUCTION TO HENRY GREEN'S NOVELS

*Oddvar Holmesland*

THE SECOND WORLD WAR IN FICTION

*Holger Klein with John Flower and Eric Homberger* (editors)

THE ROMANCES OF JOHN FOWLES *Simon Loveday*

THE LITERARY ACHIEVEMENT OF REBECCA WEST

*Harold Orel*

THE PROSE WRITING OF DYLAN THOMAS *Linden Peach*

WOMEN IN THE POETRY OF T. S. ELIOT *Tony Pinkney*

GEORGE ORWELL: AFTER 1984 *Alan Sandison*

SECRET AGENTS IN FICTION *Lars Ole Sauerberg*

BRITISH POETRY OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR

*Linda M. Shires*

THE ENGLISH NOVEL OF HISTORY AND SOCIETY, 1940–80

*Patrick Swinden*

VIRGINIA WOOLF: A CENTENARY PERSPECTIVE

*Eric Warner* (editor)

PHILIP LARKIN AND ENGLISH POETRY *Terry Whaten*

LITERATURE OF CRISIS, 1910–22 *Anne Wright*

*Further titles in preparation*

**Series Standing Order**

If you would like to receive future titles in this series as they are published, you can make use of our standing order facility. To place a standing order please contact your bookseller or, in case of difficulty, write to us at the address below with your name and address and the name of the series. Please state with which title you wish to begin your standing order. (If you live outside the UK we may not have the rights for your area, in which case we will forward your order to the publisher concerned.)

Standing Order Service, Macmillan Distribution Ltd,  
Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, RG21 2XS, England.

# The Prose Writing of Dylan Thomas

---

Linden Peach

*Senior Lecturer in Continuing Education  
Goldsmiths' College, University of London*

**M**  
MACMILLAN  
PRESS

©Linden Peach 1988

Softcover reprint of the hardcover 1st edition 1988 978-0-333-43835-0

All rights reserved. No reproduction, copy or transmission of this publication may be made without written permission.

No paragraph of this publication may be reproduced, copied or transmitted save with written permission or in accordance with the provisions of the Copyright Act 1956 (as amended).

Any person who does any unauthorised act in relation to this publication may be liable to criminal prosecution and civil claims for damages.

First published 1988

Published by  
THE MACMILLAN PRESS LTD  
Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 2XS  
and London  
Companies and representatives  
throughout the world

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data  
Peach, Linden

The prose writing of Dylan Thomas.—  
(Macmillan studies in twentieth-century  
literature)

1. Thomas, Dylan—Prose

I. Title

828'.91208 PR6039.H52Z/

ISBN 978-1-349-09407-3

ISBN 978-1-349-09405-9 (eBook)

DOI 10.1007/978-1-349-09405-9

For Vicky

# Contents

---

<i>Preface</i>	ix
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xi
1 Dylan Thomas and Wales: the Love–Hate Relationship	1
2 Religion, Repression and Sexual Violence	15
3 Dream and Reality	46
4 Community and Individuality	61
5 Looking Outward: Dylan Thomas’s Portrayal of Men and Women	87
6 R. S. Thomas: Dylan’s Successor?	106
Conclusion	130
<i>Notes</i>	134
<i>Selected Bibliography</i>	137
<i>Index</i>	140

# Preface

---

The way in which their Anglo-Welsh backgrounds bear upon the work of two Welsh writers, both of whom were born in the Anglicised suburbs of South Wales cities, is the subject of this study.

The major focus is upon Dylan Thomas's prose for it is through his prose rather than his poetry that Thomas developed his concern with Wales. In the past most criticism of Dylan Thomas's work has concentrated upon his poetry. This is not surprising for, among other reasons, Thomas has always been regarded as a difficult poet. Like Emily Dickinson and Gerard Manley Hopkins, cut off from the main cultural stream, he developed an idiosyncratic style that despite the plethora of criticism remains, as C. B. Cox has said, 'confusing, disturbing, never completely explicable'. Yet the prose is no less deserving of attention and, at least as far as the early work is concerned, is no less difficult.

The study seeks to define precisely an area that critics have tended to circumvent. Previous attempts at a definition of Thomas's Welshness have been based upon aspects of his poetry, and even then rarely discussed in the light of the total development of his work. In attempting this definition, the study also seeks to show that, thematically, Dylan Thomas's prose has much in common with R. S. Thomas's early poetry which has tended to be placed only within a vague tradition that includes Edward Thomas and Wordsworth. Both Dylan Thomas's prose and R. S. Thomas's poetry betray an abiding concern with Wales, rooted in a love-hate relationship with the Principality, and embracing a quarrel with the lingering influence of its puritanism, that places both writers within a tradition of Anglo-Welsh writing that can be traced back to Caradoc Evans.

An appreciation of the recurring themes and preoccupations of Dylan Thomas's prose, apart from illuminating Dylan's literary career as a whole, sheds light upon those areas which have confounded critics for some time: the enigmatic surrealism of the early stories; the conspicuous avoidance, even in the realistic prose, of subjects such as poverty, unemployment and industrialism, with which other writers from South Wales concerned

themselves; the suddenness of the transition to a more realistic type of writing and the relationship between *Under Milk Wood* and the earlier prose.

In tackling the prose of Dylan Thomas and the poetry of R. S. Thomas in relation to each other the work breaks new ground in three respects: it attempts a long overdue evaluation of Dylan Thomas's prose; it sets both writers in a wider Anglo-Welsh rather than specifically Welsh context; and, not least, it explores in detail the contribution of both writers to the abiding Welsh concern with the twin themes of culture and identity.

*Goldsmith's College  
University of London*

L. P.



# Acknowledgements

---

The author and publishers wish to thank the following who have kindly given permission for the use of copyright material: J. M. Dent and Sons Ltd and the Trustees for the Copyrights of the late Dylan Thomas, for the extracts from Dylan Thomas, *The Collected Stories*, foreword by Leslie Norris, 1983, Dylan Thomas, *Quite Early One Morning*, ed. Aneurin Talfan Davies, 1954, Dylan Thomas, *Under Milk Wood*, 1954 and Dylan Thomas, *The Poems*, ed. Daniel Jones, 1971; New Directions Publishing Corporation, for the extracts from Dylan Thomas, *The Collected Stories* (copyright, USA, 1938, 1939, 1940, 1946, 1954, 1955, 1964, 1971 by New Directions Publishing Corporation; 1952, 1953 by Dylan Thomas; 1984 by the Trustees for the Copyrights of Dylan Thomas), Dylan Thomas, *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Dog* (copyright 1940 by New Directions Publishing Corporation), Dylan Thomas, *Under Milk Wood* (copyright 1954 by New Directions Publishing Corporation), Dylan Thomas, *Quite Early One Morning* (copyright 1954 by New Directions Publishing Corporation), Dylan Thomas, *The Poems of Dylan Thomas* (copyright 1939, 1943 by New Directions Publishing Corporation; 1945 by the Trustees for the Copyrights of Dylan Thomas); R. S. Thomas and Grafton Books, for the extracts from R. S. Thomas, *Song at the Year's Turning* (1955), *Poetry for Supper* (1958), *Tares* (1961), *The Bread of Truth* (1963) and *Not That He Bought Flowers* (1968).

Finally, like all who write on Dylan Thomas, I am indebted to the seminal work of Professor Walford Davies.

*Certainly, the Anglo-Welsh writer may have a horizontal similarity to regional English writers (as he would, perhaps, to a working-class writer in English, or any other language); but he has a vertical relationship to the cohesive national dilemma of Wales, that places him historically apart from English regional writers.*

(Bobi Jones)