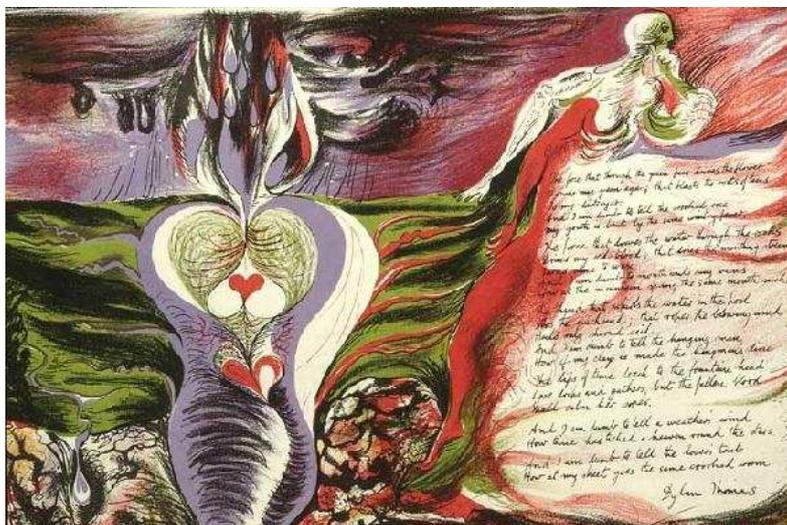


Dylan Thomas Centenary Weekend, Doncaster: Revised Programme

Tutor: Derek Summers



The Force that Through the Green Fuse by Ceri Richards, one of countless artists and musicians inspired by Thomas

Friday Evening

6.30pm Dinner

7.30 **Locating Thomas: reputation, range, divided opinions:** *“To suggest that Dylan Thomas, the most florid fabricator of bubbling fustian known to modern verse, has anything in common with a Donne or a Milton, a Blake or a Yeats, is plain absurd”*, **his readings:** *“I hadn’t heard anything like it before or since, and I’ve heard in person almost every major poet of this century except Yeats”*. **place in his period, Welshness:** *“one is given a foreign licence to be a Welshman, and the odder one is the more typical is it thought to be of the character and behavior of those brutal and benighted songbirds who cluster together, hymning on hilltops, in the woad and llanwigwams.”* [1952]

Saturday

8-8.30 Breakfast

9.30 **Poetic Life in ‘Heaven’ and darker places** Focus on ‘Poem in October’, ‘Poem on his Birthday’: *too obvious, “stale sentimentalism of language”* [Empson] ‘Ceremony After a Fire Raid’.

11.30 **Childhood in Prose and Poetry** ‘Fern Hill’: *“one of our literature’s most serious odes about growing and death”*, ‘A Visit to Grandpa’s’, ‘August Bank Holiday’.

1pm Lunch

Reading Time

4pm Tea

4.30 **Llaregyb, a Place of Love?** Part One of 'Under Milk Wood' ; views of David Holbrook: *"it is a kind of Toy Town....It is a cruel work, inviting our cruel laughter"*.

and Raymond Williams: *"The idea of a play for voices, primarily developed in terms of sound broadcasting, is one of many attempts to make a new convention in which the necessary explicitness [expected of 20thC naturalistic drama] is preserved, yet without limitation to a single dimension of reality"*

6.30pm Dinner

7.30pm **'Dazzling Obscurity'** [Robert Lowell] **and the Critics; the case of 'Light Breaks Where no Sun Shines'**. *"Few critics have agreed what the poem means"* [Ferris]

It "probably expresses something pretty trite & commonplace, in prose terms, about the foetus and the pre-natal state" but the machinery of the verse is so filled with energy that it arouses the same feeling in the reader as a "great and intelligible poem" [Glyn Jones]

9pm Bar

Sunday

8-8.30 Breakfast

9.30 **(Re)Appraisal: pulling together the strands; possible re-readings/listening from Caedmon Recordings.**

* * *

Laugharne (opening extract)

Off and on, up and down, high and dry, man and boy, I've been living now for fifteen years, or centuries, in this timeless, beautiful, barmy (both spellings) town, in this far, forgetful, important place of herons, cormorants (known here as billy duckers), castle, churchyard, gulls, ghosts, geese, feuds, scares, scandals, cherry trees, mysteries, jackdaws in the chimneys, bats in the belfry, skeletons in the cupboards, pubs, mud, cockles, flatfish, curlews, rain, and human, often all too human, beings; and, though, still very much a foreigner, I am hardly ever stoned in the streets any more, and can claim to be able to call several of the inhabitants, and a few of the herons, by their Christian names.

Now, some people live in Laugharne because they were born in Laugharne and saw no good reason to move; others migrated here, for a number of curious reasons, from places as distant and improbable as Tonypany or even England, and have now been absorbed by the natives; some entered the town in the dark and immediately disappeared, and can sometimes be heard, on hushed black nights, making noises in ruined houses, or perhaps it is the white owls breathing close together, like ghosts in bed; others have almost certainly come here to escape the international police, or their wives; and there are those, too, who still do not know, and will never know, why they are here at all: you can see them, any day of

the week, slowly, dopedly, wandering up and down the streets like Welsh opium-eaters, half-asleep in a heavy bewildered daze.

And some, like myself, just came, one day, for the day, and never left; got off the bus, and forgot to get on again. Whatever the reason, if any, for our being here, in this timeless, mild, beguiling island of a town with its seven public houses, one chapel in action, one church, one factory, two billiard tables, one St. Bernard (without brandy), one policeman, three rivers, a visiting sea, one Rolls-Royce selling fish and chips, one cannon (cast-iron), one chancellor (flesh and blood), one portreeve, one Danny Raye, and a multitude of mixed birds, here we just are, and there is nowhere like it anywhere at all.

Light Breaks Where No Sun Shines

Light breaks where no sun shines;
Where no sea runs, the waters of the heart
Push in their tides;
And, broken ghosts with glow-worms in their heads,
The things of light
File through the flesh where no flesh decks the bones.

A candle in the thighs
Warms youth and seed and burns the seeds of age;
Where no seed stirs,
The fruit of man unwrinkles in the stars,
Bright as a fig;
Where no wax is, the candle shows its hairs.

Dawn breaks behind the eyes;
From poles of skull and toe the windy blood
Slides like a sea;
Nor fenced, nor staked, the gushers of the sky
Spout to the rod
Divining in a smile the oil of tears.

Night in the sockets rounds,
Like some pitch moon, the limit of the globes;
Day lights the bone;
Where no cold is, the skinning gales unpin
The winter's robes;
The film of spring is hanging from the lids.

Light breaks on secret lots,
On tips of thought where thoughts smell in the rain;
When logics dies,
The secret of the soil grows through the eye,
And blood jumps in the sun;
Above the waste allotments the dawn halts.