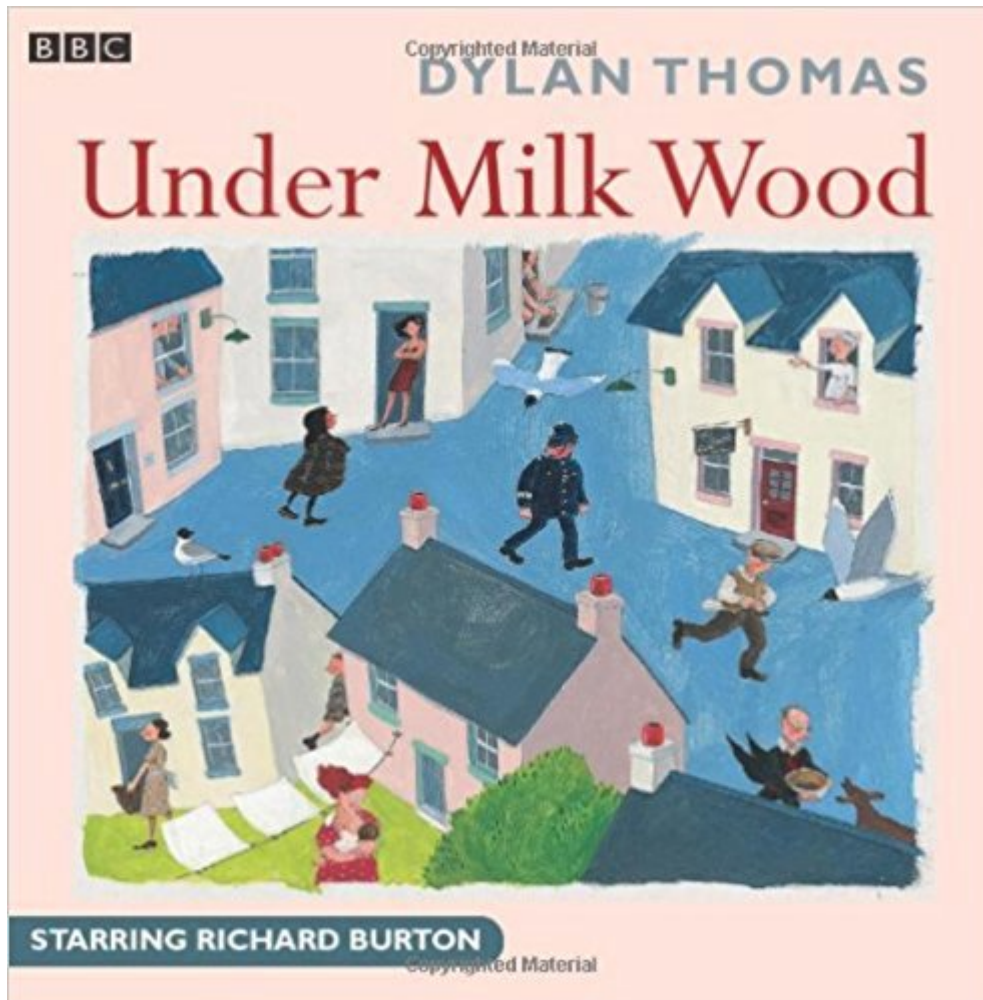




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Under Milk Wood (1963) (BBC Radio Collection)



Synopsis

'To begin at the beginning: it is spring, moonless night in the small town, starless and bible-black...'

When Richard Burton breathed the opening words of *Under Milk Wood* into a microphone, broadcasting history was made. For this 'play for voices' conjures up the intimate dreams and waking lives of the inhabitants of a Welsh seaside village in a remarkable way. It is bawdy and beautiful; its colourful characters lust and love, gossip and fantasise. Through the magic of language, *Under Milk Wood* creates a rich modern pastoral which, once heard, touches the listener with its poetry and haunts the imagination for ever. This radio drama is the completed version broadcast in 1963 which includes several passages that were omitted from the first recording in 1954. 2 CDs. 1 hr 41 mins.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Dylan Marlais Thomas was born in Swansea on 27 October 1914 and educated at Swansea Grammar School where his father was an English master. He did not learn Welsh although his language has often been described as Welsh written in English. He began writing poetry while a student and continued writing in his spare time when, after leaving school in 1931, he worked as a reporter for the *South Wales Daily Post* in Swansea. He moved to London in 1934, and in December of that year his first volume of verse, *18 Poems*, was published to critical acclaim. He then embarked on a career as a journalist and scriptwriter. As his reputation as a poet grew, so too did his personal popularity and he became well known for his exuberant and charismatic

personality. He married Caitlin Macnamara in 1937 and they settled in Laugharne, Wales which was the inspiration for the town in *Under Milk Wood*. He returned there after many travels in 1949. During the Second World War, he was declared unfit for service and stayed in London, working as a scriptwriter and broadcaster for Strand Films and the BBC. All the while he wrote his own material and published two volumes of short stories, *The Map of Love* in 1939 and *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Dog* in 1940. With the publication of *New Poems* in 1943 and two further volumes, *Death and Entrances* (1946) and *In Country Sleep* (1953), his reputation was established. His *Collected Poems 1934-1952*, published in 1952, was a critical and popular success. In the 1950s, Thomas conducted several reading tours of his work in the United States. They drew large audiences and confirmed his reputation as a charismatic and lyrical poet. In 1953, he returned for a fourth visit to America despite poor health and exhaustion. Here he revised his play for voices *Under Milk Wood* which he had worked on intermittently for ten years. It had its first reading on stage on 14 May 1953 in New York. The first BBC broadcast was in 1954, although several sections were omitted. In 1963, the producer revisited the project and recorded the full and complete play. Dylan Thomas died in New York on 9 November 1953 and is buried in Laugharne. He and Caitlin had three children.

So much of what Dylan Thomas (no relation, that I know of) wrote about this (small) Welsh town reminds me of the small English village I grew up in. But Dylan Thomas mixes reality with dreams, illusions, desire, obsession, money, religion, narrow-mindedness, free-thinking, morality, immorality...He uses language in a new way: like a painting, but with words splashed across the page. I used to sit on a style, overlooking my village, and imagine Dylan Thomas's words as colours: what colours would he use to describe the scene I saw below me. *Under Milk Wood*: 'Bible-black, sloeblack, slow, black, crowblack the black, dab-filled sea...Words that we are all familiar with, but joined together in completely new ways, to give a completely new meaning.

This "play for voices" by Dylan Thomas makes for an hour and a half of fascinating listening. In an age when we so often demand moving pictures to entertain us, it can be an amazing experience just to close your eyes and listen to the wonderful language and voice performances, letting your mind fill in with its own richness of experience. Richard Burton at his mellifluous best. Not to be missed.

One of the great poets both sublime and Humouress nobody uses words so dexterous a manner

Great

I am usually skeptical when philologists feel up to improving on the work of poets and writers. Dylan Thomas in particular was able to tell his better poems from the others, and his *Selected Poems* shows that. So I ordered this edition of *Under Milk Wood* with some hesitation. I am completely won over. The editors did a thorough and tasteful job bringing us a text that the author might have liked. I had planned to go for one of the early printings, but, remembering the paper quality prevalent back then, I most likely made the wisest choice. Thanks also to the seller for prompt service, the book is in excellent condition to boot. Good job all around.

This dramatization of Dylan Thomas' "play for voices" is wonderfully cast. The voices make the characters come to life. Thomas was a master of analogy. It helped to have the written text, as there are some references to Welsh place names which I had trouble distinguishing - more because of my reduced hearing than indistinct voices. A sheer delight.

A radio drama with humorous and inventive use of language. Thomas's characters, the inhabitants of a small Welsh village, demonstrate all the frailties and longings that make us human. This lyrical play is astonishing and beautiful. To enjoy the full impact of Thomas's poetic prose I would also recommend the recording of the play by Richard Burton (et alia), .

Here's the best part. I'm mostly Welsh and have learned a lot of Thomas's poetry through family, neighbors, church and, of course, my own reading. I just finished reading most of these reviews, and in almost every one, to a greater or lesser extent and with greater or lesser success, the reviewer has tried to write in something approaching a poetic style. Who else would inspire this in a reader? For that reason alone you should read this and then listen to it.

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