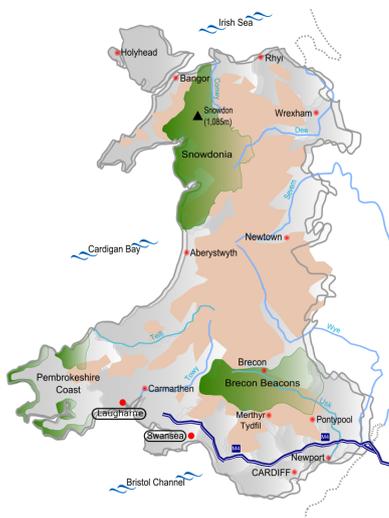


**Preliminary question:** A small number of poems from various collections: to what extent is it, or is it to be treated as, one work? Can a unified reading of them be achieved, should we even aim at one?

### Biographical elements

Cf. chronology in Phoenix edition and notes to various poems. (N.B.: Laugharne is pronounced /la:n/.)

*“One: I am a Welshman; two: I am a drunkard; three: I am a lover of the human race, especially of women.”* (DT in an American conference)



*The UK, Wales, and DT*

## Social and historical background

- Wales under English rule from 1282 (Edward I; cf. title of Prince of Wales), *i.e.* part of England (not on the Union Flag). Tudor dynasty of Welsh descent (Henry VII, 1485). A strong Nonconformist (esp. Calvinist Methodists) tradition from 18th century. Devolution since 1999, with a National Assembly for Wales.
- Heavily industrialised region with the Industrial Revolution, esp. in South Wales (including Swansea). Steel industries and coal mining particularly. Expansion of Socialist movements and the Labour Party; decline of Welsh language and traditions in the early 20th century. Hard times with the Depression in the 1930s, then decline of coal and steel industries after WW2; unemployment, see 1984–85 miners' strike (Thatcher). Rise of the nationalist movement (Plaid Cymru party) mainly from the 1950s.
- The UK in general: overall prosperity between the two World Wars, rule of the Conservative Party mainly. Labour victory after WW2, nationalisations and creation of the NHS (Clement Attlee).
- The Blitz: “the sustained strategic bombing of the United Kingdom by Germany during the Second World War” (Wikipedia), 1940–41. Mainly London, but also Belfast or Swansea, key industrial cities.

## Literary context and references

- Probable influence of Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844–89): an English poet who knew Welsh and wanted to go back to pre-Norman prosody. Used *sprung rhythm*: not the repetition of a fixed foot, but a fixed number of *stresses* in a line, regardless of the number of syllables. Also importance of alliterations and assonances in his poems.
- Through Hopkins rather than direct knowledge, influence of traditional Welsh poetic forms. Wikipedia: “*Englyn* (plural *englynion*) is a traditional Welsh and Cornish short poem form. It uses quantitative metres, involving the counting of syllables, and rigid patterns of rhyme and half rhyme. Each line contains a repeating pattern of consonants and accent known as *cynghanedd*”.

## Additional resources

Several poems read by DT himself can be found on Youtube. A few examples:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ruh7uQ9hSQk>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g2cgcx-GJTQ&list=PL357B8E17F4CC718C>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EnoHCSU5yn8>