

## PARRY, IDRIS FREDERICK (1916-2008), scholar of German literature, writer and broadcaster

**Name:** Idris Frederick Parry  
**Date of birth:** 1916  
**Date of death:** 2008  
**Spouse:** Eirwen Lloyd Parry (née Jones)  
**Parent:** William Parry  
**Gender:** Male  
**Occupation:** scholar of German literature, writer and broadcaster  
**Area of activity:** Literature and Writing; Performing Arts; Scholarship and Languages  
**Author:** Winifred V. Davies

He was born in Bangor, Caernarfonshire, 5 December, 1916, the son of William Parry, a postman, and his wife. After attending Caetop Primary School in Bangor he went on to Friars' Grammar School, and then the University College of North Wales in the same city. In 1939 he graduated with a first-class honours degree in German. In 1940 he was called up and, because of his knowledge of German, was seconded to the Political Intelligence Department of the Foreign Office. He returned to his academic career in 1947, at University College of North Wales, Bangor and remained there as lecturer, then senior lecturer, until 1963, when he was appointed to one of the two chairs of German at the University of Manchester, remaining there until his retirement in 1977. During his time in Bangor he gained an M.A. (1951) for a critical study of Rainer Maria Rilke's *Sonette an Orpheus*.

Idris Parry had wide-ranging literary interests but his major contribution to literary criticism was probably his work on Goethe and Kleist, and some of the major figures of German modernism such as Thomas Mann, Rilke, Hugo von Hofmannsthal and Kafka. He was a gifted translator: his acclaimed translation of Kafka's *The Trial* was published by Penguin Books in 1994 and Philip Pullman, the author of the trilogy *His Dark Materials*, has acknowledged his intellectual debt to Parry's virtuoso translation of Kleist's essay, 'On the Marionette Theatre' (first published in *Hand to Mouth and Other Essays* in 1981). He was a frequent broadcaster on the *BBC Third Programme* in the 1960s and 1970s and many of these broadcast essays were published (e.g. in *Speak Silence*, 1988). He was friendly with the German writer Elias Canetti and he was instrumental in ensuring that the importance of Canetti's work was acknowledged in the UK. Parry was awarded the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany in recognition of his services to modern German literature in 1981. His principal works were: *Animals of Silence: Essays on Art, Nature and Folk-tale* (OUP 1972), *Hand to Mouth and Other Essays* (Carcenet Press 1981), *Speak Silence* (Carcenet Press 1989), *The Trial* (translation, Penguin 1994).

During his time at Bangor he had met Eirwen Lloyd Jones from Penmaenmawr, Caernarfonshire (died 1992), and they married in 1941. They had two daughters. Idris Parry died in Frinton-on-Sea, Essex, on 25 January, 2008 and was cremated at Weeley (Essex).

### Author

Winifred V. Davies

### Sources

*The Independent*, 26 March 2008

personal knowledge

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