

**Modalities of Cultural Identity in the Writings of
Idris Davies and Alun Lewis**

**Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

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Er cof am fy nhad

In memory of my father

DECLARATION

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

Signed (candidate)

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STATEMENT 1

This thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. Where ***correction services** have been used, the extent and nature of the correction is clearly marked in a footnote(s).

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STATEMENT 2

I hereby give consent for my thesis, if accepted, to be available for photocopying and for inter-library loan, and for the title and summary to be made available to outside organisations.

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Summary

This thesis compares and contrasts the subtle modes and inscriptions of cultural identity in the work of two English-language writers from Wales – Idris Davies (1905-1953) and Alun Lewis (1915-1944). It also deconstructs, and contests, the normative paradigms attached to their personalities and literary work – paradigms that construct Davies as an authentic spokesman for industrialised south Wales, and Lewis as an archetypal soldier-poet. These inherited paradigms, the thesis contends, are limiting and untenable; accordingly, the work of both writers is placed in new and challenging conceptual frames, and viewed in unfamiliar cultural contexts – with the result that each is wholly defamiliarised. In performing this critical act, the thesis makes use of a range of published and unpublished material, including poems, essays, short stories, diaries, journals, letters, and visual images. Its six paired chapters explore this material within three main conceptual frames: the origins and development of Davies’s and Lewis’s critical/cultural profiles; their mediations of Wales; and their representations of wartime experience.

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Parts of this thesis have appeared, in an earlier form, in *Almanac: A Yearbook of Welsh Writing in English – Critical Essays*, 14 (2009-10). I am grateful to the two external readers for their valuable comments on my original essay, which have usefully inflected arguments made in this study.

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Note on Texts

Wherever possible, quotations from the work of Idris Davies are taken from *The Complete Poems of Idris Davies*, ed. with Introduction and Notes by Dafydd Johnston (1994); this is currently the authoritative edition of his verse. Likewise, most quotations from Alun Lewis's poems and stories are cited from *Collected Stories* (1990) and *Collected Poems* (1994). Both are edited by Cary Archard, and form part of Seren's 'Uniform Edition' of Lewis's writings. Some additional prose material by Lewis is quoted from *Alun Lewis: A Miscellany of His Writings*, ed. by John Pikoulis (1982). Where reference is made to uncollected/unpublished material by both writers, the source is given in an accompanying footnote.

A word of explanation is necessary concerning my approach to letters. Whenever it has been possible, I have quoted from the original manuscript text; however, in the case of Lewis's letters to his wife – and to Keidrych Rhys and Lynette Roberts – the lack or incomplete availability of manuscripts has led me to quote from the standard printed texts. As far as dating is concerned, the letters of Idris Davies pose no difficulty: dates are invariably clear and complete. The dating of Lewis's, however, is more problematic: his letters often carry no more than a day and month, with no precise indication of year. Many, moreover, carry no date at all. In this thesis, my standard practice has been to give the information Lewis provides; however, I occasionally make use of additional information appended to letters by their recipients – but only where this data seems plausible. Where I have done so, the data is given in square brackets. With regard to Lewis's letters to Brenda Chamberlain and John Petts, attempts were made at full dating in *Alun Lewis and the Making of the Caseg Broadsheets* (1970), edited by Chamberlain herself. Later scholarship, however, has shown this dating to be faulty. For this reason, her surmised dates are not used in this study.

One other special case should be mentioned here. Where this thesis draws on material in Lewis's personal notebooks – books containing rough notes, journal entries, and drafts of poems and stories – I quote from the manuscript; Lewis's original spelling and punctuation have been retained. Since all but one of the books lack pagination, I have used my own to facilitate accurate referencing.