Daniel G. Williams. *Wales Unchained: Literature, Politics and Identity in the American Century.* Writing Wales in English. Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2015. Pp. 224. $115.77 (cloth).
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Published in the wake of the 2014 Scottish referendum and in the midst of impassioned debates leading up to the recent referendum on Britain's membership in the European Union, Daniel Williams's *Wales Unchained* is a timely and provocative study of Welsh cultural, national, and political identity. Transnational and comparative in method, the chapters examine Welsh literary and public figures alongside English and American counterparts in order to assess discourses of Welshness from the late nineteenth century to the present moment. These have tended to fall within two broad categories: the first sees Welsh identity as indigenous, tied to the Welsh language and a literary history extending back to the sixth century; the second sees Welshness as a communal formation rising out of the political, industrial, and social tensions of the South Wales valleys over the past two centuries. If the first category is often linked with ethnic and territorial nationalism, the second is often tied to working-class political movements and subsequent strains of progressive thought. However, Williams's nuanced arguments question these divisions and work to synthesize categories. He rejects the notion that nationalism is necessarily divisive and separatist, or that it is incompatible with political and social liberalism; indeed, Williams argues that a broadminded, inclusive cultural nationalism is the key to the very political autonomy a diverse Wales requires in order to "unchain" itself from controlling and assimilationist views about race, gender, language, and class and emerge as a truly democratic nation within a global context.

*Wales Unchained* grows naturally out of Williams's previous books, among them *Ethnicity and Cultural Authority* (2006), a transatlantic study of race and society, and *Black Skin, Blue Books* (2012), which examines cultural exchanges between Welsh and African American writers. Like those books, *Wales Unchained* explores identity within a global framework rather than a strictly British one, freeing Welsh writers from the shackles of parochial and colonial narratives and revealing their sympathies with figures from other cultural backgrounds. He shows, for example, R. S. Thomas describing his own sense of cultural loss through his reading of Dee Brown's *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*. He examines Dylan Thomas's reception in New York alongside Charlie "Bird" Parker, showing how both artists were appropriated and mythologized by the Beat Generation to serve various cultural agendas, revered or rejected by turns as bohemian iconoclasts, boundary-crossing tricksters, or conduits for primitive folk wisdom. We read about Paul Robeson's fondness for Wales and his friendship with Aneurin Bevan, founder of the National Health Service, and as we compare their differing strands of socialist thought, we are forced to rethink relationships between nationalism and socialism, between civil rights and class-based politics. Indeed, a call to reassess drives Williams's book throughout. Whether exploring literature about boxing as a site for working out racial tension or showing how Welsh writers visiting the United States mapped their own identities against American myths and legends, Williams breaks down long-standing barriers between cultural positions. The Welshness he champions is therefore not dependent on geography, language, or history (though it is aware of the cultural importance of all of these) but instead created through points of cultural correspondence.

One point to which Williams returns throughout the book is the danger of yoking culture and race and of making the Welsh language the marker of both. If, he reasons, the Welsh are viewed as a minority race within a wider British civic culture—as they are, for example, in the fiction of Rhys Davies, who takes cues from his friend D. H. Lawrence—then Welsh culture is not open to outsiders, and the Welsh can be dismissed as homogenous and "other" within an ostensibly multicultural Britain. Consequently, Wales itself cannot be a multicultural nation, and the Welsh language cannot cross ethnic, racial, and cultural lines. Wales becomes a walled garden with a language reserved for a specific race.

Perhaps the most interesting chapter in *Wales Unchained* deals with bilingual women writers, notably poets Gwyneth Lewis and Menna Elfyn, who have had successful careers writing in both Welsh and English. Williams shows that by writing in both languages, these poets are able able to resist the romanticization of Welsh-language culture on one hand and the dominance of British Anglophone norms on the other. Rather than choosing sides, so to speak, they are creating a bilingual cultural space characterized by openness and dialogue. And by writing from a self-consciously feminist position, Lewis and Elfin not only create a translingual poetic dialogue within Wales and challenge cultural norms in two languages, but they also enter into a global conversation about gender and its relationship to language.

At the heart of *Wales Unchained* is a defense of Raymond Williams, from whom Daniel Williams clearly derives many of his own theoretical positions. In short, Daniel Williams contends that his namesake has been misread. Far from being blind to questions of imperialism and identity—an accusation made by Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Paul Gilroy, among others—Raymond Williams drew upon his own experience of growing up in Welsh border country in his defense of diversity and cultural difference. In fact, it was Raymond Williams who first navigated the internal tensions between progressive and nationalist thought. He came to identify himself as "Welsh-European," which Williams uses as a model for a pluralistic conception of nationhood.

At the time of this review, the United Kingdom has voted to leave the European Union. Parliament has not yet invoked Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty, which would officially trigger an exit from Europe, but there is a sense of instability and flux as the nations of Britain react and debate their futures within (or without) the United Kingdom. Amidst these responses and negotiations, Williams's thoughtful and provocative study of Welsh identity challenges readers to reevaluate longstanding views about culture and nationhood. It resists those insular and exclusionary discourses of identity that impede the development of a diverse, multicultural Wales and instead analyzes significant cultural exchanges between Wales and other nations to argue that cultural identity should be a matter of assent rather than descent. In the wake of the Brexit referendum and its polarizing, binary, and frequently ugly debates surrounding culture and nationhood, Williams's refreshing vision is of a multicultural, multiethnic Wales that can remain diverse and open-minded without sacrificing its distinctive cultural and linguistic identities or its desire for political autonomy. In this sense, *Wales Unchained* resonates not only with current conditions in Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland, but also beyond Britain, speaking to the predicaments and possible futures of endangered cultures everywhere.

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