

# “THEY ARE HOPING TO KEEP IT WELSH”: A DIALOGUE BETWEEN HISTORY AND LITERATURE IN *UP INTO THE SINGING MOUNTAIN*

“THEY ARE HOPING TO KEEP IT WELSH”: UM DIÁLOGO ENTRE HISTÓRIA E LITERATURA EM IN *UP INTO THE SINGING MOUNTAIN*

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**Abstract:** The overall context of this study concerns Wales history. More specifically, its locale regards the emigration of Welsh subjects to Argentina after the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. My purpose, during the analysis, is to investigate *Up into the Singing Mountain* (LLEWELLYN, 1960) as to identify how Welsh identity travels to Patagonia and the effect of the Pampas on the novel’s characters’ sense of national pride. Findings indicate how the Pampas transform characters’ idea of themselves, their language, and their habits: especially in what regards Huw Morgan, the narrator.

**Keywords:** Migration; Identity; Wales; Richard Llewellyn.

**Resumo:** O contexto geral desse estudo diz respeito à história galesa. Mais especificamente, ele se situa no processo histórico de emigração de um número de galeses para a Argentina depois da segunda metade do século dezenove. Meu propósito, na análise, é investigar *Up into the Singing Mountain* (LLEWELLYN, 1960) para identificar como a identidade galesa viaja até a Patagônia e qual o efeito dos pampas no sentimento de orgulho nacional dos personagens. Os resultados finais indicam como os Pampas transformam a ideia que esses personagens constroem de si mesmos, sua linguagem e seus hábitos: especialmente no que se refere à Huw Morgan, o narrador.

**Palavras-chave:** Migração; Identidade; País de Gales; Richard Llewellyn.

*“You speak like a foreigner,” she said. “You of the North kept more to yourselves,” I said. “The language has got more cut to the blade.” “So you are from the South,” she said. “From Tierra del Fuego?” “No,” I said. “South Wales, girl.” (RICHARD LLEWELLYN, 1960, p. 25).*

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

Literature is not only a source of meanings, but also the source of political act and performances. As Eagleton (1984, p. 62) puts it, “reading is an ideological decipherment of an ideological product; and the history of literary criticism is the history of the possible conjunctures between the ideologies of the text’s productive and consumptive moments”. As such, the literary objects, when set together as an association, become an institution, which changes and evolves with the passage of time, also reinforcing or contributing to the collapse of certain narratives and beliefs. Between the productive and consumptive aforementioned ideological moments, “there will be relations of effective homology, conflict or contradiction, determined in part by the history of ideological receptions of the text which has intervened between them” (EAGLETON, 1984, p. 62). Hence the relevance of literature to understand hegemonic discourses, master narratives, and the authority that has been granted to certain stories, in parallel with the subjugation, erasure, or mitigation of others.

Having said that, the overall context of this study concerns Wales history. More specifically, its locale regards the emigration of Welsh subjects to Argentina after the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In the words of Williams (1969, p. 19), “emigration was an ordinary aspect of life in nineteenth-century Wales. Economic hardship, above anything else, that caused thousands of Welsh people to leave their native communities in search of a better life”. Leaving home, the Welsh cross 6.089 mi and start living as foreigners in a completely different place – culturally and geographically. As such, curiously, the foreigners become even more foreigners, since “‘Wales’ is derived from the Anglo-Saxon ‘Wealas’ or ‘foreigners’” (EDWARDS, 2016, p. 6). Fictional, these foreign subjects analysed here are those found in Richard Llewellyn’s novel *Up into the*

*Singing Mountain* (1960). As characters get from Wales to Argentina, more specifically Patagonia, they discover a place full of people from distinct origins and, as it is very common in such situations, also a place full of conflict.

“Patagonia I always thought of in the same way as Brobdingnag, not existing,” I said. “Darwin and Swift made about the same impression. “The *Tehuelche*’s big feet gave Patagonia its name, so you have got a good parallel,” Mr. Phillips said. “But they are dying from the land the same as us, and the same reason. No brains. No ability in business. No professions. Not enough lawyers or doctors or accountants or engineers. No real education. Most of them go to Buenos Aires and live off the profits from here. You have seen all the Italians? Good they are, too. Spaniards and Basques in plenty, and everybody from the Arabian Nights is peddling safety pins one minute, and before you can turn, they have got a wineshop. But they have all come to a land ready cleaned and waiting. No trouble to them. And Buenos Aires is sending soldiers and *politicos* like the flood, a little at first, coming stronger, and after that over the roof. The language is losing, and religion will follow. And the strength that kept the old ones going went out on the flood to the Atlantic. No man has any faith in a god who robs him of everything. (LLEWELLYN, 1960, p. 45).

At the beginning of this excerpt, the novel’s narrator and main character Huw Morgan makes a comparison between Patagonia and the fictional place Brobdingnag, one among the many imaginary lands present in Jonathan Swift’s *Gulliver’s travels* (2003), originally published in 1726. As a parody for travel writers’ descriptions of regions and countries, Swift’s (2003) descriptions do indeed translate much of the feelings that some foreigners might have had towards these lands completely unknown and distance from their own. After that, Mr. Phillips says that both Swift and Darwin were right, matching fiction and evolution. More specifically, he brings up the Aónikenk people, also called by the exonym (i.e., an established, non-native name for a group of people or a geographical place) Tehuelche. Here, the character is referring to native peoples from Patagonia, more specifically within the southern borders of Argentina and Chile. Grouped together due to their cultural and geographical similarities, the “Tehuelche” became thus a generalisation for the people of the Pampas. Phillips

regrets that these peoples are perishing, but blame them for they have no brains, education, or ability in business.

Besides the Welsh and the natives, the place is also surrounded by Italians, Spaniards, Basques, “The Arabian Nights” (which is, again, another generalisation), among other immigrants. In Phillips’s discourse, as it is also true for the main character’s discourse and that of others, foreigners are the ones responsible for making the place not only inhabitable, but thriving. This is why he thinks, before their arrival, the land was indeed “nonexistent”, for natives are far too stupid and their manners, language, culture etc. are all doomed, bound to disappear. To think of the New World as a *tabula rasa* where Europeans can start over their own stories is second nature to the master narrative of colonisation and neocolonisation.

In cahoots with this tradition, Welsh pride serves as a weighty ingredient. “The Welsh Radicalism of the second half of the 19th century developed into a political nationalism” (EDWARDS, 2016, p. 28). Though it is fictional, Llewellyn’s (1960) novel deals with an important off-shoot of what Edwards (2016, p. 29) is calling here this new Welsh nationalism and radicalism: “a migration, mostly under Nonconformist leadership, to establish a settlement in Patagonia in South America. This settlement precariously survived, and their descendants still speak a Welsh Dialect”. My purpose, in the following analysis, is to investigate *Up into the Singing Mountain* (LLEWELLYN, 1960) as to identify how Welsh identity travels to Patagonia and the effect of the Pampas on the novel’s characters’ sense of national pride.

## 2 DISCUSSION

Though at first Huw thought life was going to be “easier” in the new land, as compared to his hardships in Wales, he soon realises his could not be farther from the truth. “There was plenty to be done, and only me to do it, never mind

that I offered free apprenticeship to any of our boys ready to work” (LLEWELLYN, 1960, p. 46). In Patagonia, the main character becomes an experienced woodworker – and, if in Wales, the slag heaps from the mines were the foreshadowing of tragedy, in Argentina the imminent and recurring floods take such place for the narrative. Since houses are cyclically destroyed by inundations, Huw knows that every pair of hands is needed on the land or the dam: “so I was up to my neck from just after dawn, making bedrooms’ suites, and china cupboards, and dressers, and all sorts of furniture for houses emptied by the water” (LLEWELLYN, 1960, p. 47).

Finding some trouble to adapt in the new land, what brings Huw some comfort is the fact that he is surrounded by Welsh people, even though they seem to have stopped in time. “I was in a new country, among people speaking the same language but of a hundred years before, with the manners of that time, and a wonder to me, as if the clock had slipped, and I had come from sleep” (LLEWELLYN, 1960, p. 14). As it often happens in the history of immigration, enclosed communities keep their language and even integrate words, or other linguistic traits, from the languages surrounding them. In comparison, the language spoken in their country of origin also changes and evolves, as a ramification which resembles the idea of a common ancestral language and two distinct ones that have surfaced from it. Suspicious, Huw tries to read these people before he opens up himself. “They were quieter, gentler, kinder than I had known, and I had to be silent, and listen, and try to make up my mind if they were really what they seemed, or only in pretence. It takes a long, long time to lose the poison of towns” (LLEWELLYN, 1960, p. 14). About this first Welsh migration to Patagonia, Williams (1969, p. xiii) provides us with a very descriptive and symbolic image.

A leaden grey dawn broke over the Patagonian coast on a mid-winter’s day, in 1865. Within the lee of a headland, a small barque rode at anchor. Sails furled, but with a green and white standard charged with a crimson dragon streaming at her masthead. On

board, there were one hundred and fifty Welsh to whom this was the culmination of a seven thousand miles' journey. They had come to this empty land to found a colony that would be a reincarnation of a past Wales, a Wales wherein dwelt only Welshmen.

Of course the idea of an “empty” land is profoundly equivocated: for it sets aside the obvious presence of Patagonian native peoples. Moreover, and notwithstanding the surface of splendour of such an image, this is a rather romanticised idea regarding not only these “colonial migrations”, but actually the very process of nation maintenance, making, or remaking. The reincarnation of a past Wales, occupied only by the Welsh, in the corner of South-America, is inconceivable, and actually futile when one thinks about it. Anderson (1996, p. 9) explains that this myth of origin is associated to the imagined community that the nation represents: “It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (ANDERSON, 1996, p. 9).

Sharing compulsory illusions, the imagined community makes its members feel valued and empowered: gives them something bigger to defend, even though it is invisible. Another character from the novel, Idris, appraises the economic situation of their community: “Two trains of wagons have gone over to Chile, and three to Buenos Aires, and a ship is coming for cargo to Europe. This year will be good for some, anyway. But most of us are without a buyer or a bid” (LLEWELLYN, 1960, p. 81). Hopeless, Idris wonders if it is even worth putting in the seeds in case the sacks will rot before they find a market. “And of course, the buyer knows it, too, so we take off our hats to his shadow if it only moves near us. Farmers are fools. We have got to scrape for every *centavo*. Beggars in gold, we are” (LLEWELLYN, 1960, p. 82). The Welsh came to a region where there was still much land to be occupied – and such land was

available precisely because of weather issues, which makes the life of farmers instable.

However, every person has to work: even when such work is fruitless for the farmer who has no buyer or the carpenter who is always making objects to be eaten by the water. Hay and Craven (2004, p. 2) make a long statement on the issue of labour coercion: a crucial element to the capital: “Labour market coercion has been the subject of a large, longstanding literature”. Such coercion varies depending on the operational system where it occurs, according to the authors (HAY; CRAVEN, 2004, p. 3): “The case of American slavery (and its aftermath) has received extensive study among economic historians, who have documented the extraction of work effort under the slave system, and attempts to preserve cheap labour under the institutions that replaced it”. Besides serfdom in Europe, which legally restricted labour mobility, the institutions of tied labour in agrarian settings have also been studied extensively. “However, the use of coercion in modern, industrial labour markets has not received much scholarly attention, and no quantitative economic history of its use exists” (HAY; CRAVEN, 2004, p. 2). Such coercion, nevertheless, is pervasive to European enterprises. This is one of the greatest reasons why the character Beretroff in *Up into the singing mountain* (LLEWELLYN, 1960, p. 157) looks for a way out.

Why would you think of marrying an Indio?” I asked him. “Because then, there is nothing to molest,” he said. “No more worry. A house, children, work. Finish. If other Indios look, my Indio takes a knife. After a time, I take another Indio. After that, more. Or how many I want. It is simple. They live better, I live better. We have tranquillity.” Thinking of ink silk, I knew half of what he meant, though a quick notion of Lal made me aware that danger is in the curiosity, not in the act. “But listen, Beretroff,” I said. “Why should a European mix himself? You produce children. What of them?” “I come to America to make my life better,” he said. “I find everything worse. No shops. No cities. No cafés. Nothing. But the country is new. The Indios, they are the people of the country, no? You are not. I am not. It is their country. If we are Europeans, we make it better. With children, and the school, we make them better.” He laughed, and shook his head, and his moustache curled up in the breeze. “But I think not,” he said.



“We make them worse.” With wine?” I asked him. He turned his eyes to me, and sunlight in a slant made them a shock of pale red. “We give them wine to take their land,” he said. “With the land, what do we do? Everything in the pocket, nothing for anybody. Where is the school for the Indio? Where is his house? Who is he? What are these women? For anybody? (LLEWELLYN, 1960, p. 157).

Huw Morgan, here, is no longer the cute innocent boy from *How green was my valley* (LLEWELLYN, 1939), but a man full of prejudice – against accepting Europeans “mixing” up with Patagonia natives. Beretroff is characterised as a sensible person, who finally understands Europe not as salvation for the new land, but as a bacterium which is actually killing it. The only lives Europeans are making better is their own. Those people really in need are about to need more because of the ungrateful visitors. However, some of them are actually grateful: and learn to be completely new people in the place they are now. In the novel, Huw Morgan is reunited with an old friend from the first book: the preacher, Mr. Gruffydd, who also comes to Patagonia, and joins the narrator for an *asado*. “The *asado*, which is Spanish word for roast, was in a pit at the end of the yard, a ring of burning logs, and on iron stakes, whole sheep and half a beef, and on an iron mesh, sausages and smaller fry” (LLEWELLYN, 1960, p. 21).

Talking about the past and about Wales while they eat, Mr. Gruffydd remembers how good a cook Beth, Huw’s mother, used to be: “A little different from your good mother’s table, Huw, but it fills, and it has an advantage: there is no washing up after. Wipe your mouth and your knife, and go, thankful” (LLEWELLYN, 1960, p. 22). After that, in a prolepsis, Huw moves up to the future and confesses “that *asado* is in my mind even now, not because the steak was the best I had ever put teeth into, but because from that moment I was ready to follow the wagon track across the desert to the Andes” (LLEWELLYN, 1960, p. 23). In Patagonia for a little more time than Huw, Mr. Gruffydd says that Autumn is best for travelling to the Andes, but never at night if one has cattle



with him/her for foxes and pumas' attacks are very common. "A man can lose his profit soon enough.' Funny it was to hear Mr. Gruffydd talking about pumas and cattle and profit. Another sort of language from a different man, and something in the voice not of him I remembered" (LLEWELLYN, 1960, p. 24). Mr. Gruffydd was no longer a man of the church, and, to Huw Morgan, sometimes it is as if Patagonia has made him a new man – and who would say this is not the case?

Something else that Huw realises, while living among the Welsh who long ago have made this same journey, is that marriages are still arranged, though somehow covertly. When talking to the three sisters Doli, Solva, and Lol, he asks if everyone was told who to marry there.

"Lal was cutting the bread thin, and Doli was putting tea-spoons in the saucers, and Solva was waiting for the kettle to boil with the teapot in her hand, and they all stopped and looked at me" (LLEWELLYN, 1960, p. 36). Without ever questioning their traditions, it seems these sisters are thinking about this for the first time. In doubt, Lal replies that they are not exactly ordered to marry this or that man. "But even with animals, the blood must be considered. I agree with that. Some of our girls have gone off with Latins and Slavs and who. You should see how they live" (LLEWELLYN, 1960, p. 37). Justifying their subjection, the girls try to see the bright side of having no voice when choosing a husband (or no husband whatsoever). In order to do so, Lal curiously relies on another prejudiced belief: that if women could choose, some would marry Latins and Slavs, which is something unacceptable. Welsh nationalism, here, is not on the brink of xenophobia: but actually analogous to it.

Later on, when talking about her brothers and her family's heritage, Lal repeats the same argument, but now bringing new elements: "Go down and look at where they were living,' she said, as if that was all the answer to be had. 'Both my brothers went off with Indio girls. I know what I say. Both of them died

in the camp” (LLEWELLYN, 1960, p. 92). The shares of the farm that Lal’s father gave to her brothers when they left were sold and turned into alcohol, and this is something the character does not accept. “Their children are white Indios. Where are they? What are their names? Sugar in your tea, Mr. Morgan?” (LLEWELLYN, 1960, p. 92). Regardless of how cruel her words are, Lal tosses her opinion recklessly and naturally, even offering Huw some tea at the end of her speech. However, it seems she channels her rage to the native people simply because she could not channel it to her father or her brothers, who are actually to blame for the dissipation of their money. It is also worth mentioning that, even though there is a specific focus on the relations between Welsh and Patagonian native peoples, the novel is surrounded by characters coming from many other places.

James Smalcote and Voldemar Zhdanov came alongside during the first mornings to give me a hand with the lifting. They were both big men, and bearded, with hair to the collar, and wearing leather trews and jackets well-sewn and fitted, and Indio slippers. They could have been brothers, but James was from London, and Volde was a Russian. They worked a home-made boat with squared ends, and oars like telegraph poles, but it floated, and the day’s catch of shrimp and lobster they sold round the farms for the week’s expenses. Voldemar spoke good English, and James told me he had been to a university and got into trouble about politics, and escaped, but he never talked about it. James said they had met in the south somewhere, both from a ship, without a *centavo* between them and getting work together, or starving and caring nothing, because to starve half and half is to share half a meal, and saving enough to come north into better land and more chance to work. In some part they helped a *Tehuelche* family, and one of the girls wanted to follow them and the father made a gift of her, so then there were three, and she made everything easier. She brought her own troop of horses and guanaco skins for a tent and sleeping rugs, and in buying and selling she got the Indio price, and more of everything, and if they wanted extra and had no money, she helped herself. (LLEWELLYN, 1960, p. 40).

There is also Russian and English presence in the narrative; and what makes characters’ construction even more interesting is the fact that they are built in the middle of that mess – that confusion of identities, beliefs, cultures etc. Despite of the native presence, historically, Williams (1969, p. iv) finds that

it was mainly the incursions of people from Argentina itself, and also from other European countries, that ends up putting the Welsh colony under a sort of pressure – given that they are so few and so powerless in relation to more organised colonists. As a result: “A significant proportion of Welsh settlers responded to this situation by emigrating from the colony, first to Andes, and then (a different group) to Canada” (WILLIAMS, 1969, p. iv). As a desperate attempt at surviving, Welsh immigrants believe their best shot is marry and mate “one another”, making every possible effort for their blood not to get mixed – along with their language, which, for them, needs to be preserved.

On the opposite direction, Huw is eager to learn how to speak Castellano. “I asked first about a teacher in order to learn Castellano. ‘To learn what?’ She said, as if she was deaf. ‘Why should you weigh your mind with something you will never use? Who would you talk to?’” (LLEWELLYN, 1960, p. 42). Huw is surprised by the reaction of his teacher-to-be. He argues the point that most people living where they live speak in Spanish and that, beyond the frontiers of their community, almost no one knows English well enough to engage in a conversation. “But which one of them could give you an order in Castellano? Paying what?” She said. “All the *Tehuelche* and the Basques and the Italians who deal with us, speak Welsh. Let it be good enough for you” (LLEWELLYN, 1960, p. 43). Annoyed by Huw’s preposterous idea, she says that knowing English is good enough, for this is the language of business: those who speak Spanish are not his clients, having no money, so why would he bother? Here the connection between language and power relations is evident: and such is a supreme order that Huw Morgan, and actually everyone, should learn to respect.

When Phillipson (2009, p. 4) discusses the spread of the English language, from British to what he calls corporate empire, he suggests that European expansionist policies in America sometimes aimed at the assimilation of natives, rather than their extinction: “European ‘values’ and Christianity were to ‘civilise’ the ‘savages’ to a capitalist economy and patriarchy, whether

through European or indigenous languages”. Nevertheless, this was generally just a first step in the colonial process. “When the pressure on land became fiercer, more liberal policies were replaced by cultural and physical genocide. In education English generally became the sole language used” (PHILLIPSON, 2009, p. 4). The English language emerges in the final step, as its hegemony is guaranteed by a linguistic policy that gradually causes the erasure of “minor” languages and, naturally, its peoples. Phillipson (2009, p. 15) even draws attention to the ironic usage of the term *lingua franca*: “as the term for the language of the medieval Crusaders battling with Islam, the Franks, and currently to refer to English as the language of the crusade of global corporatisation, marketed as ‘freedom’ and ‘democracy’” (PHILLIPSON, 2009, p. 15).

As he insists to learn Spanish, Huw is criticised by the other Welsh living in Patagonia. One of them, at a point, tells him to look out of the window: “If you can see a tree, it was planted by the Welsh. If there is grass, the Welsh put it there. If there is a flower, Welsh women brought the seeds in their bosoms. If there is water, the Welsh dug and ditched and dammed it” (LLEWELLYN, 1960, p. 43). Their cooperative is Welsh, staffed by the Welsh, and the books and accounts are written in the Welsh language. There is also a cemetery in their community: and, again, every dead person is Welsh. “These streets were planned and stamped out by the Welsh. These houses and the farmhouses outside are Welsh. The shops are Welsh. The railway was built by the Welsh. The sewers were dug by the Welsh. The Bank is Welsh” (LLEWELLYN, 1960, p. 44). Huw alleges, though, that there are nonetheless many people who are not Welsh, speaking a language that is not Welsh. So why is everybody against it? “‘They are hoping to keep it Welsh’, he said. ‘Remember, this is called the City of Lewis, in the Welsh language, not Castellano’” (LLEWELLYN, 1960, p. 45).

As mentioned before, *Up into the Singing Mountain* (LLEWELLYN, 1960) tells a fictional story, even though it is set in a realistic context. Agozzino (2016,

p. 58) poses that, today, “the Patagonian-Welsh community is simply one subset of a larger Argentine society. While the descendants of pioneers from Wales take pride in their ancestry, language, and history, they positively self-identify with the larger community in which they live”. Moreover, texts exclusively written in Welsh are no longer being written, as their social function becomes redundant: an indication of acculturation, and a predominantly Argentine worldview. Contrary to what Llewellyn’s (1960) nationalist characters desired, time has made integration inevitable, which has led to a synthesis of cultures also “resulting in a distinct Patagonian lifestyle that retains elements of all cultural contributors. However, traditional Welsh elements are waning as active tradition-bearers age and the Welsh language becomes standardized” (AGOZZINO, 2006, p. 59). As it happens to many enclosed communities, their survival has proved to depend upon their ability to integrate with other cultures and peoples.

Looking back in history, Welsh nationalism is explained by the need to survive, and the ominous threat of English assimilation. King Edward I conquest and settlement in North Wales, after the downfall of Llywelyn ap Gruffydd (1223-1282) in the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, was severe, but did not break Welsh pride – only made it grow. “It ensured English political authority – but a rather tenuous authority. The tribes continued to fight each other in the mountains, sometimes erupting into the valleys to harass the English or the Marcher Lords” (EDWARDS, 2016, p. 11). Given such historical memory, it is only natural that the Welsh in Patagonia feel threatened by other countries and languages. However, there is a big difference between the English crown, with its attempts at conquering all the other countries surrounding England, in relation to the peoples of Argentina. In spite of Llewellyn’s (1960) characters’ resistance, eventually the Welsh of Patagonia would understand this difference. According to Agozzino, in the last decades, for instance, Spanish language influence on the Patagonia-Welsh dialect is widespread; and, curiously, “while

the Welsh language is at a critical stage, as it is in Wales, the Welsh descendants in Patagonia do not express anti-Spanish language sentiment in line with the anti-English language sentiment of the Welsh speakers in Wales”. After all, in the former case there is something to blame, while in the latter there is not: “Although in decline, the Welsh language was never banned in Argentina as it was in Wales, and Patagonian-Welsh culture was never officially denounced” (AGOZZINO, 2006, p. 53). In the novel, within their new home, Welsh characters seem happy to be distant from England – although they are also haunted by brand-new invisible threats heralding disaster:

Tireder people I never saw, and quiet, and red copper with sun and the scorch of *El Pampero*, and thin, eating only meat, and little bread because women had no time to bake, and drinking tea or maté, or where there was enough, wine in spurts from the goatskin bag. Only one barrel I saw, and that was filled with spring water for the children. Through the day I worked, and worrying because there was so much to mend, and no spares, and more men and women came with broken shafts, and asking with their eyes if I would please be quick. No need to ask why because only to look up at the water would tell, even if the sound was not enough. Rain came down, not in sheets or torrents, or any ordinary way, but falling to splash on the ground, like a tap filling buckets, endless, and hitting the shoulders not with pats or drops, but like the hit of a hand, and making everything in front a grey fog, and people passing only a few yards away, moving shapes, a darker grey, and a sound like somebody thumping an empty cask always on the corrugated iron roof. But over everything we could hear the river, and when people came in to get their shovels, or leave the broken for repair, their faces turned to the sound, and their eyes said all their tongues would not. (LLEWELLYN, 1960, p. 226).

As, in *How green was my valley* (LLEWELLYN, 1939), the child Huw used to watch the slag heaps and dark river as a foreshadowing of the valley’s downfall, the adult Mr. Morgan listens to the obstreperous voice of the water and reads the expression of his friends. From the beginning to the end of both narratives, readers are informed that the end is near, it eventually comes, and there is nothing anyone can do to avoid it. Still about the sound of the water (LLEWELLYN, 1960, p. 228), Huw narrates how Doli, Solva and him have

breakfast silently, “though the river was with noise enough, and if you spoke, it would have to be in the ear of somebody next to you”. Huw (LLEWELLYN, 1960, p. 229) says that there was much more to the sound of that river than simply “water spreading to the horizon, and more than a white shrine between the hills, and not only the boil in the cliffs, or the smooth greenish run over the rocks of the dam, or the spouts between the stones, or the waves and spray near the canals”. Again, as it happens in the previous narrative when the kid tries to alert everyone about the slag and all the destruction coming from the mines, Huw knows people are simply pretending that the problem does not exist, when they know the dams are not able to hold all that water forever. “It was a true voice of natural warning, and nobody taking notice” (LLEWELLYN, 1960, p. 230).

Finally, it happens: and everything that has been built, every crop that has been planted, is destroyed by the water. As a symphony that moves from a smooth incipit to a strong motif, Huw shares with readers how it happens: “In the first of morning we saw the water coming through the cliffs, black, and smooth with force, like a street of marble, and spreading wide in foam where the dam had been, and so high that the hut was under” (LLEWELLYN, 1960, p. 249). Huw is chocked by how dark the sky is, as well as the hills beyond. No other sound could be heard, except the passing river. Nature was quiet: people were quiet. “Men and women stood looking, some in groups with arms about, and some only standing, and children by themselves, and little ones with their mothers, and they might everyone have been carved from misery” (LLEWELLYN, 1960, p. 249). Huw observes now these people’s physiognomy and realises something important: he knows they come from Wales, but they do not look Welsh – they look like the natives, and like the people from Argentina, and like Welsh.

The characters Huw analyses look like everything mixed together, congregated not in their race, but in their desperation. “Brown, all of them, planted solid on bare feet, and if they were Welsh it was only because the seed



had come from Wales, but they were a new sowing, born to Patagonia, and sprung in the heat of *El Pampero*, of heart and spirit fit for the work to be done” (LLEWELLYN, 1960, p. 250). Now, almost at the end of the narrative, Huw finally sees that he is no longer a foreigner in a new place, but actually an integral part of that place – and a foreigner to where he came from. Deep inside, Welsh blood did run in their veins. “Soul and spine, yes, but of a new country, and a new people risen up to be water carriers in the desert, and shepherds, and keepers of cattle, and reapers of all abundance. But standing there, hopeless, and in every face, loss” (LLEWELLYN, 1960, p. 250). Broken, Huw watches his furniture turn into wreck, as all the other workers also watch their work crumbling in their eyes. “No use to swear. When the river is at the old level we will start again, but higher up. If there was enough cement and railway lines we could build stronger, though the cost is too much” (LLEWELLYN, 1960, p. 249). Higher up, after the storm what was lost can be rebuilt. However, for money is short, nothing shall be much stronger than what is gone. Inevitably, then, what is to be rebuilt shall once again disappear, in an endless cycle of much work, and little gain.

### 3 FINAL REMARKS

The findings of this analysis indicate that Welsh identity seems indeed to travel to Patagonia in the migrant journey of characters within the events of *Up into the Singing Mountain* (LLEWELLYN, 1960). However, the Pampas prove to have an important effect on the novel’s characters’ sense of national pride: especially Huw Morgan, the narrator. Edwards (2016, p. 33) emphasises the relevance of such pride for the Welsh, which is actually still very much alive: “The investiture of Prince Charles as Prince of Wales at Caernavon Castle in 1969 was a great occasion, made memorable by the charm of the Prince who could address the Welsh in their own language”. Another example is the fact

that the National Eisteddfod has been fully restored to its former glory, not to mention Welsh pride regarding their triumphs in Rugby Football among other sports. Besides its football idols, such as Ryan Giggs, Gareth Bale, Ben Davies, Daniel James among others, the country also has many historical idols, such as the explorer Stanley, born in Denbigh, the painter Augustus John, born in Tenby, and the actor Emlyn Williams, born in Flintshire. In the literary realm, let us not forget “[...] the poet Dylan Thomas, born in Swansea and who spent some of his childhood on a Carmarthenshire farm” (EDWARDS, 2016, p. 33).

It is also true, however, that this sense of national belongingness and pride, as the history of the Pampas migration suggests, is no longer taken as relevant, nor efficient. Countries are composed of many countries, which makes such maths very difficult. Moreover, the somehow stubborn attempt at preserving identities while the world is changing works only to a certain extent – and, to another, should not be working at all. As the plot of the novel demonstrates, by enclosing their community, the Welsh people in Patagonia also enclosed their encounter with new possibilities of future and of meanings, recurrently moving against the direction of female emancipation, or a less biased approach towards racial issues, etc. In the words of Agozzino (2006, p. 45), “while the general decline in *Welshness* and the passing of an era may be noted with regret, it should not be viewed negatively but rather accepted as a natural phenomenon and as an ethnological opportunity”.

The researcher later explains his argument on the decline in Welshness by giving the example of his investigation in Patagonia: “Although I had gone in search of survivals of nineteenth century transplanted Welsh traditions, I found instead Welsh culture in an advanced stage of disintegration, superseded by the culture of a synthesized Patagonian society” (AGOZZINO, 2006, p. 46). No less, no more than the Welsh people of Wales, the Patagonia Welsh are something different: something that has also evolved eventually accepting a rather natural, and fruitful, contact with the surrounding communities. This is coherent to

what Anderson (1996, p. 123) considers the natural path of nationalism as a concept: “Since the end of the eighteenth century, nationalism has undergone a process of modulation and adaptation, according to different eras, political regimes, economies and social structures”. Weaponised, the national illusion has served fascist movements and helped problematic agendas such as wars and political persecutions to become part of people’s lives. “The ‘imagined community’ has, as a result, spread out to every conceivable contemporary society” (ANDERSON, 1996, p. 123). In the literary world, perhaps analysing processes of national dissolution, fragmentation, or simply consistent change, may prove to be a crucial step for the imagined community to be finally taken as what it really is: pure imagination.

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