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## Idyllic Self in Africa (2000), by Ken Taylor and in Boy (2010), by Taika Waititi: a literary-cinematographic dialogue

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### ABSTRACT:

The idyllic approach of this article deals with the dialogue between two distinct artworks: poems from the book *Africa* (Taylor, 2000), emphasizing the poem 'Waikiki', by the Australian poet, journalist and filmmaker Ken Taylor; and the movie *Boy* (Curtis, Gardiner, & Michael, 2010), directed by the New Zealander film-director, actor and writer Taika Waititi. The poems and the movie are connected by synesthetic perceptions, mostly related to painting, colorizing and shaping that are displayed in the described scenarios. Hereby, these aspects were theoretically reviewed by the following authors: Rimbaud (1966), Kandinsky (1977), Ostrower (1977), Bachelard (1986, 2011), Cytowic (1993), Berger (2008), Lambert (2010), among others. The method of analysis includes the concepts in which the art producers uncovers the relationship between nature and the self, considering the fact that beyond poet and director, respectively Taylor and Waititi are also painters. Nature is widely open before their meditative eyes, therefore rather than outreaching the natural world with motionless expectations; both portray idyllic wonders related to individual/cultural scopes. As a result, from its amorphous state, words transmute themselves into landscapes, sensations, and forms. The aim was to follow the paths that image evokes in the description of each author, since they share contemplativeness, surrounded by consciousness, perceptions and freedom, all demanded during the creative process.

**KEYWORDS:** poetry, cinema, idyllic, sensations, dialogues.

### RESUMO:

A abordagem idílica relacionada a este artigo lida com o diálogo entre duas obras: poemas do livro *Africa* (Taylor, 2000), com ênfase em 'Waikiki', do poeta, jornalista e cineasta australiano Ken Taylor; e o filme *Boy* (Curtis, Gardiner, & Michael, 2010), dirigido pelo cineasta, ator e escritor neozelandês Taika Waititi. Os poemas e o filme estão conectados em razão das percepções sinestésicas, amplamente relacionadas à pintura, às cores e às formas disponibilizadas nos cenários descritos. Aqui, tais aspectos foram teoricamente revisados pelos seguintes autores: Rimbaud (1966), Kandinsky (1977), Ostrower (1977), Bachelard (1986, 2011), Cytowic (1993), Berger (2008), Lambert (2010), entre outros. O método de análise inclui conceitos nos quais os produtores de arte revelam a relação entre a natureza e o eu, considerando-se o fato de que, além de poeta e diretor, respectivamente Taylor e Waititi são também pintores. A natureza se abre, amplamente, diante de seus olhos meditativos, de modo que, ao invés de apenas projetarem o mundo natural com expectativas estáticas, ambos retratam as maravilhas idílicas nos âmbitos individual/cultural. Como resultado, da condição amorfa a palavra se transmuta em paisagens, sensações e formas. Buscou-se seguir o percurso que a imagem evoca na descrição de cada autor, visto que dividem o ato contemplativo, cercado pela consciência, pela percepção e pela liberdade demandadas ao longo do processo criativo.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** poesia, cinema, idílico, sensações, diálogos.

### INTRODUCTION

Nothing about a fear of timeless tropic seas

(Ken Taylor in 'Waikiki', 2000, p. 67)

'Timeless tropic seas': an everlasting picture of beauty created before readers' eyes, in a way the ones who are into the paths of reading 'Waikiki' seem pleased to feel. The poem, written by the Australian journalist, poet and filmmaker Ken Taylor, invites us to a gazing journey. At the same hand, the movie *Boy* (Curtis, Gardiner, & Michael, 2010), directed by film-director and actor Taika Waititi, welcomes viewers to a landscaping voyage, showing the beauties and natural wonders of his native place, New Zealand. Both artworks gather

their perspectives in the realms of idyllic senses, and this dialogue unfolds experiences by focusing on how images create poetic narratives that build natural identity concepts.

The second stanza of this dialogue establishes the appraising of the natural world as an action bounded with imaginative constructions that produce joy and complacency, as well as positivity and a sense of freedom. This process of recreating beauty from observation and imagination upgrades a link with the natural world through which its art producers find their intimate reliance on nature itself. However, Taylor and Waititi do not limit themselves to the myth of a man who sees in nature the revelation of divine – as their romantic ancestors did, such as Blake, Wordsworth, and Shelley (Lundin, 1996).

Indeed, it must be explained that the idea of idyllic hereby exposed is not the traditional one adopted in old Arcadia, described as the perfect harmony between utopian shaped spaces merged in natural beauties. Neither we are about to retrieve the 'heroic-idyllic' found in Nietzsche, as we read in one of his personal notes from July-August 1879: "The heroic-idyllic is now the discovery of my soul; and everything bucolic of the ancients was all at once unveiled before me and became manifest" (Nietzsche apud Ansell-Pearson, 2014, p. 240).

It is appropriate to say that the idyllic notion in this article is linked with the concept of consciousness developed during the process of art production. Notably, this process gets unfolded in such a dynamic way that art producers (writers, filmmakers, painters, and so on) capture the nuances of nature, and from their own experiences, put their souls as integrating parts of the environment. Through a permanent feeling of excitement, the reading of instants are the doors to perceive the idyllic, and so the synesthetic manifestations. Ostrower observes that sensibility (including our deepest sensations) is bounded both with our consciousness and with our perceptions, that "[...] comprehends the intellectual being, for our perception is the mental elaboration of the sensations"<sup>[1]</sup> (Ostrower, 1977, p. 34 – our translation).

Regarding Taylor, despite the idyllic self who admires the beauties and calmness of the Hawaiian sea in 'Waikiki', it must be considered under which circumstances the poem was created. Published in Africa (Taylor, 2000), by Five Islands Press, it emerges as the first book Taylor produced after a fifteen-year absence period from public, mostly due to the Ash Wednesday fires in 1983, when he lost his home and possessions – amongst them, a considerable part of his writings. On March 1, 2003, John Bartlett interviewed the poet for the renowned Australian literary journal *Meanjin*. Taylor addressed this devastating episode:

I was burnt out here on Mount Macedon in the Ash Wednesday fires of 1983. I lost not simply a house and possessions, paintings and library but journals and notebooks [...]. I think I lived through the creative use of depression, not depression as melancholy but depression as a condition of survival and eventual recovery (Taylor apud Bartlett, 2003).

Undoubtedly, this is the immediate feeling of the book: in order to replace sorrow, woefulness and loss, the poet writes. He is eager to trace an idyllic journey that ranges from mounts, hills, shores, cities, straits, creeks, volcanoes and districts. Deliberately, out of the thirty-nine poems of Africa, twenty-three have geographical titles, as: 'At Tolka', 'Out of Africa', 'Toscana', 'Maui', 'Tahiti', 'Bass Strait', 'Arapiles', 'Osaka', 'Awaji', 'Wakayama', 'Mount Koya', 'The Gion', 'Kyoto', 'Tokyo', 'Tamachi', 'Paris', 'Mount Defiance', 'Anglesea', 'Cinema Point', 'Merrijig Creek', 'Lara', 'Waikiki', and 'Tilly-sur-Seulles'. In his trajectory, the poet mixes bucolic views with a sense of rebirth and faith, as it can be noticed in the final strophe of 'Now hear the Hollow Hills':

Clocks start again.

There will be seasons,

the smell of earth,

so many flowers to

beguile the word (Taylor, 2000, p. 7).

This poem, which opens the book, is remarkable for the author:

The first poem in the new book, *Now hear the hollow hills*, was the poem I had to write to get rid of the fire, to deal with an enduring, pervasive sense of depressive grief.

This poem is about the need to deal with grief in order to live. I had the aftermath of the fire all about me but I needed images of crucial upheaval and transformation and I found them in memories of the time I worked my way round the world at the age of nineteen as a fireman / wiper on British meat boats. That was in 1949 (Taylor apud Bartlett, 2003).

Supported by the poet's memories, *Africa* does not only moans tragedy, but radiates paradisiacal spots, Edenic views, colors, and landscapes that lead readers to the senses of sharing the 'joys of creation', in a dialogical tune that both writer and reader experience the same protrusion, as it contemplates Bachelard in *Marc Chagall: drawings for the bible*:

He who loves painting knows that painting is a source of words, a source of poetry. Whoever dreams in front of the picture showing Paradise hears a chorus of praise. The marriage of forms and colors is a prolific union. Creatures come off the painter's brush, as alive and as fertile as the creatures that issued from the hand of God. The first animals of Genesis are words from a vocabulary that God has taught men. An artist feels every impulse of creation. Implicitly, we sense that he can conjugate all the tenses of the verb to create; he revels in all the joys of creation (Bachelard, 2011, p. 77).

Methodologically speaking, Waititi and Taylor sustain a grounded color and shape dialogue. The artists are in hunger for the poetic contemplativeness. Here is an example: right in the first minutes of the movie, when the protagonist, 'Boy', is sad because he had a school fight, the sky is captured in a light royal blue, soft blue, sparkled with golden rays, marking precisely the end of the day. The same moroseness accompanies 'Waikiki': "[...] the constant still clouds above island / volcanoes – / 'the unimaginable sadness of the Pacific'" (Taylor, 2000, p. 67). 'Still clouds' are up above the poet's eyes, tempting us to the fact that he may be comfortably laying down. The sky is open, widely open before his meditative eyes. It is a concomitant contemplativeness surrounded by the awareness that is demanded by the poetic-self during his creative process, in such a stream of consciousness and descriptive enterprises that lapse from the dynamics of an intuitive literature. All this performed in a Pacific ambiance – and here Taylor's metalinguistic experience encounters the words of *The Island of the Colorblind and Cycad Island*, by Oliver Sacks (1998): 'the unimaginable sadness of the Pacific'. Personification is the key to build the scene, once 'sadness', a truly human feeling, is attributed to the ocean. Colors make this feeling possible.

Both 'Waikiki' and *Boy* are artworks that invite the reader/spectator to draw sharper looks of the literary/cinematographic scenes. It is a look hurled not only with the physic eyes, but with the whole body and senses, flesh and soul, comprehending beauty, spirituality, and calmness. It is certainly a slow look that demands a certain period of introspection. And just like the Creator had brought to life mankind and all elements of Nature, Taylor and Waititi blow inside the 'nostrils' of their painting-texts the breath of creation. From its isolated, amorphous condition, the word transmutes itself into landscapes, sensations, perspectives, and forms. According to Drebes (2005), in Hebraic the term *ruah* corresponds to the spirit, deriving from the natural phenomena such as the wind and the respiration. So, from the flow of a mutable, ethereal ambiance, 'Waikiki' brings the eagerness of colors and poetical words weaved in a sonorous fiesta: "[...] only nineteen, ninety-nine and / hundreds of short simple words / to place on the door of the / refrigerator" (Taylor, 2000, p. 66).

It is not an overstatement to say that Ken Taylor himself sees his poetry as drawings. In *Africa*, he does not constrict himself only into the domains of poetry, but he allows his Poetic Genius to wander around the realms of painting and colorizing, shaping his verses with kinesthetic accuracy. The poet states:

On the top of my list was learning to draw. This desire to draw drove me back to the world of adult education and the start of a new career, a new way of dealing with the world.

I found an English drawing teacher, Stephen Leadbeater, who was highly trained and who preferred to teach adults. For me it was a transforming experience. I felt I had learnt to see for the first time. [...] One day I became conscious I could see colour in the world about me [...] (Taylor apud Bartlett, 2003).

Everything seems to breathe in *Africa*. The author seduces readers in a way he produces the effects of approximation, sending the ones who decode the text to an exciting trip to the islands of colors and lights, as we picture in the poem 'Tahiti' (Taylor, 2000):

Old  
volcanoes,  
wave crescents,  
crab holes,  
the red island  
of Gauguin.  
Can you  
hear  
the space you  
leave? (Taylor, 2000, p. 46).

In this poem, as along the whole book, we perceive Taylor's idyllic aptitude to unfold nature and feelings. The New Zealander director also shows his abilities to mix colors with sensations, as we observe in one of the scenes of *Boy* (Curtis et al., 2010): the protagonist's grandmother is about to leave. She owns an old Humber 80. "Bye, bye, my mogos" <sup>[2]</sup>, she says to her five grandchildren. The car is brown, and so is her cardigan. Through the unpaved road, five children push the car, in order to help activating its motor. They are all barefoot. The sky is blue. Either way, synesthesia is the poetical matter – hearing the space; absorbing colors, combining forms. The Greek origin of the term comprehends *syn* (together) + *aesthesis* (perception), meaning "[...] the involuntary physical experience of a cross-modal association" (Lambert, 2010, p. 159).

According to Richard Cytowic, in *The man who tasted shapes* (1993), synesthesia is characterized by an involuntary association phenomenon, however an elicited, projected, durable, and memorable experience; sensed externally in peri-personal space. Nonetheless, it is not only metaphorically that both the Australian and the New Zealander authors capture synesthesia in their art constructions, whilst their travelling experiences bring the idea of translating colors and shapes into words and scenes, as if they were brushstrokes illustrations.

Concerning the movie, despite *Boy's* social content, we will appraise here only the idyllic scenes that narrate the protagonist's hard, but wishful life. We are limited to trace up a dialogue between poetry's and cinema's natural senses and views. Just like in *Africa's* epigraph, that praises 'the lived instant'; the epicurean feeling is also contemplated in *Boy's* Waihou Bay astonishing scenes, as in the beginning of the movie: the first shot shows a landscape surrounded by mountains and the sea. The waters of the ocean are calm, golden-colored. Next scene opens in a wide, golden prairie. The predominance of gold emphasizes the lightness of a sunrise instant. The stillness of the prairies stamps the scenes. Clouds domain the sky, nevertheless the golden atmosphere is enhanced by the camouflage of the sun. It is no surprise that director Taika Waititi himself is also a writer and a painter.

Effectively, the key to understand the connection between Taylor's poetry and Waititi's movie is image. Transmuting mental sceneries into concrete products (words and cinematographic shots) is the process accomplished by both creators. These two products do not only allow the approach of the works at hand, as they also permit that selves/egos partake of synesthesia, for "the way we see things is affected by what we know or what we believe". Yet, "[...] images were first made to conjure up the appearances of something that was absent. [...]. An image became a record of how X had seen Y. This was the result of an increasing consciousness of individuality [...]" (Berger, 2008, p. 8-10).

With the ideas of consciousness and sensibility in mind, this article will look into the role of nature to explain the artistic paths traversed by the two represented modes: poetry and cinema. The main questions that surround these aspects are: How is the motif of idyllic applied in the selected works? How do their peculiar ways of gazing nature extend the feelings of amusement? How do images of nature framework these poetical narratives of life, beauty, loss, and passage of time?

### ‘WAIKIKI’ IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Deservedly, the book *Africa*, by Ken Taylor (2000), achieved a goodly success, being rewarded with the famous Kenneth Slessor Prize for Poetry in 2001. When the poet calls forth the reader to “hear the space” (as mentioned before in the poem ‘Tahiti’), it is clear his language tendency approaches the Heraclitus idea of logos, namely “hear the logos” (Audi, 1999, p. 409), emphasizing the fundamental nature of the ontological thought. Taylor writes/paints in a state of streaming, following the flow of contemplation – and this is exactly the point set in ‘Waikiki’:

In Waikiki,  
a magnetic poetry kit,  
only nineteen, ninety-nine and  
hundreds of short simple words  
to place on the door of the  
refrigerator  
so  
that, in the  
morning, I could tell you again  
of seals  
at play  
in surf and  
the waves that  
make it  
across the wide  
rock platform  
It would all be  
simple,  
direct,  
like  
sand and spade,  
sunglasses and  
ripe mangoes.  
Nothing about a fear of  
timeless tropic seas,  
the constant still clouds above island  
volcanoes –  
‘the unimaginable sadness of the Pacific’.  
Just pictures of play,  
endless perfect days  
on the shoreline,  
yellow and white  
and blue.



Something to remember  
 in four days shift of  
 sirens, lights and glasses on  
 blood-wet asphalt,  
 car versus pole,  
 head-ons, t-bones, hips,  
 fights,  
 'all that shit',  
 extrications, air bags,  
 jaws, masks and  
 big injections.  
 Sometimes  
 the thump of life  
 perhaps once,  
 perhaps twice,  
 like perhaps as  
 transient as that seal's  
 passage over  
 the rock  
 platform (Taylor, 2000, p. 66-68).

Hereby, the yellowish/golden scenery can be interpreted according to Bachelard's analysis in 'The painter solicited by the elements'. In this text, the philosopher expatiates on what he calls "fundamental alchemical themes" arisen from the painter's intuition. He considers specifically Van Gogh's search for yellow, defined as "an alchemical gold, harvested out of a thousand blossoms". In this study, he points out the Dutch painter found a "gold richness" that is "the heritage of the whole humanity" <sup>[3]</sup> (Bachelard, 1986, p. 26 – our translation).

Other than coloring, musicality is also an idyllic element that complements the view – both hearing and looking are essential senses for the poetic-self. When reading 'Waikiki' we are in touch with an extremely energetic poem due to the cadency of words, which in turn distribute vocal quantities; which, for their turn, spread vocal qualities – such as: the wheezing sound of the 's', provoking a sibilant call, plus the pace of the oral skills marked by the prolific encounters of the alliterations and assonances, all evidenced in the following verses of the last strophe:

Something to remember  
 in four days shift of  
 sirens, lights and glasses on  
 blood-wet asphalt,  
 car versus pole,  
 head-ons, t-bones, hips,  
 fights,  
 'all that shit',  
 extrications, air bags,  
 jaws, masks and  
 big injections (Taylor, 2000, p. 68).

The poem is not only visually chromatic but also rich in the use of phonic, rhythmic and metaphoric substances. In his famous letter to Paul Demey – *Les lettres du Voyant* (May 15, 1871) –, Rimbaud underlies the transcendence of its own origin, considering the poet's language is expressed "from" the soul "to" the soul, abstracting everything: "perfumes, sounds, colors, thoughts". The Poet must then become a

“clairvoyant” through a long, immense, and self-taught “dissoluteness of all the senses”: “All the forms of love, of suffering, of madness; he searches himself, he consumes all the poisons in him, to only keep their quintessences” (Rimbaud, 1966, p. 307).

In art, ‘quintessence’ can be regarded as the purest essence of a substance, the purest embodiment of the mind. In ancient times, the fifth essence was supposed to be the constituent matter of heavenly, ethereal bodies. Today, it is a fact that all art manifestations achieve their paradox, tension, ambivalence and ambiguity; and all these paradigms are concerned essentially with articulating the very ‘poem-ness’ – the formal quintessence – of the poetic, as Selden, Widdowson and Brooker regard in *A reader’s guide to contemporary literary theory* (2005).

In a far-reaching lecture, ‘Waikiki’s’ proparoxytone constructions (‘Waikiki’, ‘sunglasses’, ‘unimaginable’, ‘shoreline’, ‘something’, ‘extrications’) demand the penultimate syllable to be light, so the words are stretched, in a way we feel the stillness of the poetic voice. The dynamics of the words express a multi-colored sonority. The thought merges from the writer/painter, who is faithful to his boosts: “It would all be / simple, / direct, / like / sand and spade, / sunglasses and / ripe mangoes” (Taylor, 2000, p. 67). The sibilance of the verses, plus the prevalence of assonant vowels, conducts readers to the Hawaiian paths of Honolulu. The etymology of *Waikiki* refers to ‘spouting fresh water’ (*wai*: ‘fresh water’; and *kiki*: reduplication of *kī* ‘to shoot, to squirt’), for springs and streams that once fed the region’s wetlands (Bright, 2004).

Although Taylor is an Australian writer, his poetic soul drifts across outside sceneries, as if he could find freedom in idyllic views. This is, for sure, one of the most predominant actions of the lyric voice, as we can notice in other writers, such as the contemplative mindset of Virginia Woolf in *The waves* (1931), when describing, in a long paragraph, the light metamorphosis of the sun:

The sun had not yet risen. The sea was indistinguishable from the sky, except that the sea was slightly creased as if a cloth had wrinkles in it. Gradually as the sky whitened a dark line lay on the horizon dividing the sea from the sky and the grey cloth became barred with thick strokes moving, one after another, beneath the surface, following each other, pursuing each other, perpetually. [...].

The surface of the sea slowly became transparent and lay rippling and sparkling until the dark stripes were almost rubbed out. Slowly the arm that held the lamp reused it higher and then higher until a broad flame became visible; an arc of fire burnt on the rim of the horizon, and all round it the sea blazed gold. The light struck upon the trees in the garden, making one leaf transparent and then another. One bird chirped high up; there was a pause; another chirped lower down. The sun sharpened the walls of the house, and rested like the tip of a fan upon a white blind and made a blue fingerprint of shadow under the leaf by the bedroom window. The blind stirred slightly, but all within was dim and unsubstantial (Woolf, 2016, p. 14).

Mrs. Woolf and Taylor reflect on the nature, caught by its slam-bang forces – in the approach of Taylor, the sea’s oomph; in the view of Woolf, the sun’s poetical changes and colors. Both are into understanding nature, as if it explained time and space; as if the landscape were a metaphor of a life. The final verses of ‘Waikiki’ share a positive thought about life, even though ‘sometimes / the thump of life’ affects one’s destiny. “While human forces are always at work centralizing, quantifying, and coding phenomena, other human forces are always challenging, and breaking up such reductions and constructions in order to sustain themselves” (Murphy, 1995, p. 4). Taylor seems to be the ‘challenging’ case, ‘painting’ his shoreline image of ‘yellow and white / and blue’, as Woolf colorizes ‘the surface of the sea’ on the commands of the sun: “Colour is the key. The eye is the hammer. The soul is the piano with its many chords. The artist is the hand that, by touching this or that key, sets the soul vibrating automatically. Abstract art places a new world [...]”, as envisions Kandinsky in *Concerning the spiritual in art – painting in particular* (Kandinsky, 1977, p. 63).

Other than its colors and senses, Waikiki’s natural beauties are a kind of token bottled away in the layout of the lyric landscaping. At the end of the first strophe, the predominant figure is the undulant, as the poet slowly captures – almost like a shot: “[...] the waves that / make it / across the wide / rock platform” (Taylor, 2000, p. 68). For a wide range of cultures, the overlapping of waves stands for the infinite motion that



comprehends all evolution forms. Mircea Eliade, in *The myth of the eternal return: cosmos and history* (1959), considers the vision of infinite and of the endless cycles of creations and destructions as means to liberation. Cosmologically speaking, the Divinity guides its circular revolution entirely; and it then begins to turn in the opposite direction. This change of direction is accompanied by gigantic cataclysms, followed by a paradoxical “regeneration” (Eliade, 1959, p. 120-121). Abridging it, this is what it happens to the marine tidal movement. Not coincidentally, the epigraph of *Africa* is an Eliade’s fragment that celebrates the instant: “[...] the Greeks learned that the surest way to escape from time is to exploit the wealth, at first sight impossible to suspect, of the lived instant” (Eliade apud Taylor, 2000, n/p.).

Notwithstanding, *Africa* (Taylor, 2000) is the result of the lived instants that Taylor captured through his concomitant real and imagined experiences, thus ‘Waikiki’ stands as a forceful example of how a poem can be resurrecting. Undoubtedly, the poet offers readers the ride of following his cycles of destruction and regeneration, all in harmony with the laws of nature.

## BOY

The movie *Boy* (Curtis, Gardiner, & Michael, 2010), directed by the New Zealander film-director and actor Taika Waititi, shares the same predisposition about the forces of Nature that is found in *Africa*, by Ken Taylor (2000). It shows the adventures of character Boy (James Rolleston), also called Alamein, an 11-year-old pre-teen who lives in Waihau Bay, located in the Bay of Plenty (BOP), a region of New Zealand. It is 1984. The protagonist lives there in a small property with his grandmother, with his 6-year-old brother Rocky, and with several cousins. He spends his days conceiving about his reckless father – actually Boy keeps making up to his classmates that his old man escaped from prison and took him to a Michael Jackson’s concert. Unexpectedly, one day the father, also named Alamein (Waititi plays the role), returns to look for a bag of money he had buried before being arrested. He comes with his ‘gang’, called the ‘Crazy Horses’. After a sequence of hapless episodes, Boy starts drinking and smoking marijuana. His father’s figure collapses, and he discovers how wicked life can be. The main character’s fantastic world (which includes not only Boy’s funny thoughts, but Rocky’s belief that he has magical powers and he can change reality by raising ahead his hand) is idealized in a way soft irony places the harshness of the ‘real’ world. Although the movie is surrounded by a strong humorous appeal, it is undercut with highly dramatic scenes – so the social content prevails. The story ends up with a trace of poetic hopefulness: Boy and his brother visit their mother’s grave (who died after giving birth to Rocky). Her death was devastating, and it brought the father into depression. Alamein is there too, staring at the tomb. The kids join him silently.

The *New York Times* review of the movie points that although the protagonist faces adult responsibilities, he is only a sensible child:

*Boy* is also blessed with two gentle and lovely performances by inexperienced child actors. In the title role (an 11-year-old everyone calls Boy), James Rolleston is an unaffected natural. He seems responsible beyond his years when caring for his family of younger siblings, yet he’s able to play the fool when romancing a schoolmate or pretending to worldliness. To watch him puzzle over his returned dad (Taika Waititi, the director and writer) is to see wishes become thinking and then epiphanies. Yet never does Boy seem to be a little adult; this is a child, with a child’s acute passions and disappointments (DeWitt, 2012).

It must be elucidated that the children of the movie were non-professional actors: “[...] with a cast and crew drawn from local communities, Boy is deeply embedded in a local sense of place [...]” (Smith and Mercier, 2012, p. 1). In fact, the story reflects “on the current state of representations of the Māori, Māori screen production, and the relationship between Māori popular culture, New Zealand national culture and the more global forces that help shape contemporary media” (Smith and Mercier, 2013, p. 1).

Waititi wrote such a screenplay that the characters were not defined by stereotypes but by the singular delicateness of childhood. Boy is a dreamer. Creatively, the movie opens with the protagonist saying a Māori greeting:

*Kia ora.* My name is Boy, and welcome to my interesting world. My favorite person is Michael Jackson. He is the best singer and dancer in the world. Last month, he put out a record called *Thriller* that sold a gazillion copies, and now he lives in a castle with a snake and a monkey (Curtis et al., 2010).

Boy's presentation ranges from nonsense comedy to naivety when he begins talking about his father, Alamein, "[...] named after some place where the Māori battalion fought during World War 2" (Curtis et al., 2010). He goes on: "My dad's not here right now. He's a busy man. He's a master carver, deep sea treasure diver, the captain of the rugby team [...]" (Curtis et al., 2010). The kid simply refuses himself to accept the burden of reality, so he conceives his father as a multitasking man. Furthermore, he says: "My dad is my hero" (Curtis et al., 2010). Our interpretation of this appeal is that we are to regard the kid's attitude towards his dreams. On the contrary to what it seems, the slumber which typifies Boy's spirit is not only embedded in mere illusion but it is also the inspired reverie of a fragile pre-teen who chooses delirium instead of the cruelty of facts (e.g. his father's bad behavior and his lack of love/sense of caring).

The study 'Growing-up in the countryside: children and the rural idyll' contemplates that "[...] there is not a universal childhood [...]" and that "[...] children do not possess one homogeneous voice or culture. Even macro social constructs such as age, gender and class mask the diversity and difference of each child's upbringing" (Matthews et al., 2000, p. 145-151). In other words, Boy's idealization of the facts is very particular, and so is his idyllic contemplativeness. The following sequence may characterize Boy's epiphany: the girls' high school choir interprets 'Amazing Grace', in Māori, while Alamein, kneeling on the ground, shouts: "I am the Crazy Horses! I'm the Shogun! I'm alone on this planet!" (Curtis et al. 2010). Notably, the movie review written by Aaron Bells, Boy, for Paste Magazine, understands

[...] it's a cry into the darkness that might also be a prayer. It's the last gasp of Alamein's pride as Boy moves toward its close, where in the final scene the hope suggested by the soundtrack becomes more evident: Boy and Rocky sitting at their mother's grave, Alamein also finally there. If it looks like they're sitting around a kitchen table, it's no accident. Director Taika Waititi has an even keener sense of symbolism than he does of comedy (Bells, 2012).

The last scenes do mark the sense of an unexpired idleness that encircles the movie. At the tomb of the mother, father and his two children are gathered. At the uterus of a grave the three of them recognize, this time, the 'real world'. Alamein is not pictured anymore by Boy wearing a white Michael Jackson's suite. At this point, *Boy* meets 'Waikiki', or should we say Literature meets Cinema, as it clinches 'Waikiki's' verses:

Sometimes  
the thump of life  
perhaps once,  
perhaps twice,  
like perhaps as  
transient as that seal's  
passage over  
the rock  
platform (Taylor, 2000, p. 68).

The idyllic substance is safeguarded by the ritual of 'passage' – both in the poem and in the movie. That idea may be connected with the two-thousand-year-old rites of Ta Moko practiced in the Māori culture. According to *The tattoo history: a source book*, Ta Moko is the process of what the modern world calls "tattooing" (Gilbert, 2000, p. 47). The Māori women and men had Moko over their entire bodies, and each area had special significance. This practice was lost during colonization in the mid-1800's, however it was recovered during the Māori resurgence in 1980. As a way to find his Māori, native identity, the character

Boy tattooed himself, an ancestral ritual of passage to look alike his father. That is to say that the protagonist can be described as “[...] the first act of living as a synesthete: recognizing one’s singularity and preferring to guard one’s secret. It is why telling one synesthesia is revolutionary” (Lambert, 2010, p. 164). Moreover, contrary to what praises Nietzsche about his ancient heroes and masters, all philosophers and poets (apud Ansell-Pearson, 2014), Boy’s father is the typical antihero. Simultaneously, as Boy shows the real face of his father, he evidences his humanity, mostly due to his failures.

Not by coincidence, just like Ken Taylor’s book, Waititi’s movie was broadly awarded: AFI Fest Audience Award (Best International Feature Film); Berlin International Film Festival (Best Feature Film); Melbourne International Film Festival (Most Popular Feature Film); Sydney Film Festival (Audience Award - Best Feature Film); New Zealand Film and TV Awards (Best Feature Film, Best Director, and Best Screenplay, among other four categories). The enormous success of the film is mainly related to the fact it explores the poverty of the area, and so the misery of its population, however without ignoring its natural beauties and the dramatic sense of humanity that shapes its folks. Instead of penury, cry, and sadness, we find hope – and this is what makes this unpretentious story of a Māori young boy a surprise: humiliations, deprivations, and losses never come alone; however all these lower feelings are positively aligned with happiness, joy, and faith. The backdrops are as positive and beautiful as the messages of hope – even in the most difficult situations faced by the characters.

Actually, Waititi took a risk when writing and directing *Boy*: the movie shows neglected children, bullying cases, gangs, thievery, kids smoking weed. How did he get rid of the critics and of the polemic reviews? The answer is clear: the film chose comedy and naiveté when dealing with ‘heavy’ issues. Nevertheless, all reality shadows are brightened with the feelings of laugh and lightness that surround the protagonist’s life. And just as poet Ken Taylor survived the Ash Wednesday fires of 1983, when he lost his home and possessions, Boy is also a survivor. Both chose to contemplate life instead of cursing it – and this is where poetry resides. The idyllic selves flow in beautiful scenarios with gifted feelings of faith, confidence and wishful thinking – no matter how destroying life can be. No demagogies. No cries. This is the magic of art: resurrection in the place of sorrow, beauty and contemplativeness in the place of destruction – all fulfilling the daily cycle of nature.

## CONCLUSION

The outcome of this paper is that either the lived or the ‘produced’ memories of idyllic times and spaces – both in the movie and in the book –, including the sea, villages, exotic countries, fine weather, and coziness are bounded with positive descriptions. We have outreached the hypothesis that artistic selves wonder through idyllic spaces fostering a sense of freedom and hope that surrounds happiness, even in the darkest times.

The approach of Taylor and Waititi is not merely due to their nationalities nor geographical proximities, but it is justified in the patterns of Art, as Kandinsky exposes: “All arts come from the same and unique root. Thus, all Arts are identical”. The painter follows on: “However, the mysterious and invaluable fact is that the fruits that come from the same branch are different. The peculiarities are manifested by means of each art in particular – by their means of expression” (Kandinsky, 1977, p. 23).

It is provident to realize Ken Taylor’s *Africa*, mainly the poem ‘Waikiki’; and Taika Waititi’s *Boy* share a principle of essential simultaneity, in which the idyllic touch of creation conquers unity. Way beyond conventions and terminologies, both the text and movie refuse arbitrariness about imagery and ravings, especially if we concern the creative method adopted, that is to say: the ‘coloring’ of the scenes – mind scenes. We could say both of them refuse the ‘framing’. Surely, each one of them particularly pictures and translates the idyllic predominance. Indeed, images speak more than words in Waititi, as words build images in Taylor – both convert symbols and figures into a fertile sensational ride. Hope in life is the key to enjoy the chosen artworks.

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## NOTES

- [1] Original text in Portuguese: “[...] compreende o ser intelectual, pois a percepção é a elaboração mental das sensações”.
- [2] Here, ‘mogo’ is a loving slang used by the character to call the Aborigines.
- [3] Bachelard’s fragments were adapted by us from the French version translated to Portuguese by José Américo Motta Pessanha. In *O direito de sonhar*, 2nd edition, São Paulo: Difel, 1986. Here is the Portuguese version: “temas alquímicos fundamentais” / “um ouro alquímico, ouro colhido de mil flores” / “riqueza dourada” / “é a herança de toda humanidade”.