

Darkness in the Seasonal Savannah: The Brazilian Cerrado in Stories by Hugo de Carvalho Ramos


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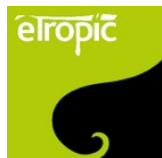
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Abstract

This article analyzes the feelings that emerge in savannah landscapes, specifically in the Brazilian savannah (Cerrado), through the short stories *Dias de Chuva* and *Gente da Gleba*, by the writer Hugo de Carvalho Ramos (1895—1921). The two stories, which are part of the collection *Tropas e Boiadas* (1917), contain traces of Tropical Gothic literature. The Cerrado landscape is marked by climatic seasonality that manifests itself in two well-defined seasons: humid summers (where there is plenty of rain) and dry winters (with no rain and the incidence of large fires). In the analyzed works, blue and red are considered fundamental colours that help us understand the sentiments that mark the landscape in each season. It is suggested that yearnings and expectations about the future are feelings strongly manifested in the wet season and are associated with the processes of gestation and dissolution of life promoted by water. Fears and regrets, on the other hand, emerge with more force in the face of the destructiveness of fire in the dry season, under the red that dominates the landscape. Loneliness and indifference are two feelings that are omnipresent in both seasons and manifest as blue and red indifference.

Keywords: Brazilian Savannah (Cerrado), Climate, Water, Fire, Savannah Landscapes, Tropical Gothic Literature

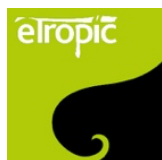


Introduction: Sentiments of Savannanah Landscapes

There is an ongoing discussion about the sentiments that emerge in savannah landscapes. The savannah hypothesis affirms that environments of this type innately tend to provoke positive emotions, as they were fundamental to the story of human evolution in Africa (Orians, 1980; Orians, 1986). However, empirical studies show mixed results, many of them incompatible with the savannah hypothesis (Lohr & Pearson-Mims, 2006; Hartmann & Apaolaza-Ibáñez, 2010). In turn, the aesthetic experience of the Cerrado (Brazilian savannah) has been associated with a diversity of feelings that include enchantment, surprise, peace, fear, and mystery (Iared, et al., 2017). These sentiments can also be seen in different arts, such as painting, films and literature, and complexify the traditional picture of the tropics as a wet place with dense and exuberant forests, instead, illuminating its dry and planar dimension that emerges on the savannah.

This article follows a distinctive methodological and theoretical path, suggesting other sentiments that may emerge in the savannah landscape and that are present in literature. Here, we analyze the short stories *Dias de Chuva* (Rainy Days) and *Gente da Gleba* (People of the Glebe), which are part of the collection *Tropas e Boiadas* (1917), the principal work of writer Hugo de Carvalho Ramos (1895—1921). *Dias de Chuva* and *Gente da Gleba* highlight the feelings provoked by climatic seasonality in the Brazilian savannah, especially (but not limited to) the wet season.

We understand landscape in this article via geographer Eric Dardel, as the convergence of an experienced, lived moment, a totality in motion that materially traverses and constrains those within it with fundamental hues and colours that evade the purely representational universe (Dardel, 2013). In this sense, Ramos's broad life experience and intellectual trajectory are relevant to locating his feelings and perceptions about the Cerrado landscape. Hugo de Carvalho Ramos was born in Goiás in 1895, he lived at the same time as important Goiás writers from the first half of the 20th century such as Cora Coralina and Leão Caiado, and studied law in Rio de Janeiro, the then-capital of Brazil. In 1917, he published the collection *Tropas e Boiadas*, which was well received by the national critics. Ramos died young, in 1921, after committing suicide due to depression. His work belongs to a transitional period between romanticism and realism in Brazil, sketching denunciations and criticisms of the abandonment of populations in the interior of the country by public authorities (Carneiro, 2014). More than this, Ramos' works, especially *Dias de Chuva* and *Gente da Gleba*, embody anxieties and traces of feelings such as loneliness, yearning, and

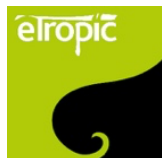


the perception of the transience of life that emerge from intimate contact with the Cerrado landscape, its climate, waters, droughts, and wildfires.

As these texts contain Gothic literary characteristics, these sentiments are found at the margins of his stories by bringing forth ghosts, monsters, and inner darkness that manifest themselves in lush landscapes, both during wet summers and in sunny winters (Edwards & Vasconcelos, 2016; Lundberg, Ancuta & Stasiewicz-Bieńkowska, 2019). Ramos' work abounds with references to human misadventures in the face of a grandiose, unpredictable, and uncontrollable material universe, where violence and horror often prevail (Murari, 2009, pp. 134-135). Loneliness, yearning, and regret are evident sentiments in the case presented here, and our analysis provides possible explanations for the phenomena in addition to indicating parallels with realities in other savannah areas.

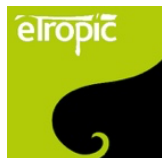
Our analysis intends to go beyond the interpretation that the feeling of loneliness expressed by members of Goiás' elites results from the isolation of the state of Goiás at the beginning of the 20th century. This is usually highlighted as a reason for local economic decay and its backwardness when compared to the great coastal centres (McCreery, 2006).¹ Our analysis also goes beyond understanding this feeling as arising from a trend of literary realism that, in some way, yearns for the production of regional and national identity (Murari, 2009). The hypothesis proposed here is that loneliness, yearning, remorse, and other negative sentiments expressed in Ramos' work also refer to the effects of the immersive lived realities of the Cerrado environment. The general feeling of indifference, which permeates all the elements that make up the landscape, is central to this immersion. Thus, our analysis turns to the dark dimension of human experience, dominated by feelings such as anxiety, fear, loneliness, and horror. It is an approach that is linked to feelings emerging from an alien dimension of the landscape, which underlines the different manifestations of non-human materiality in everyday life (Ağın Dönmez, 2015). In this sense, stories that humans produce about a landscape on a rainy or dry day are, above all, stories about water, in its presence or absence, that tell us about humans (Duckert, 2014, p. 115). As much as they are part of the Cerrado ecology, rainwater—in the wet season—and fire, smoke, and solar activity—in the dry season—present themselves as events. These events permeate all aspects of life, constraining the production of meaning while evading language and human control (Kolozova, 2014; Kolozova, 2016).

¹ Appropriating the classic concept of the Frontier, and similar to the considerations and readings of Alistair Hennessy (1978) on Latin America, the North American historian David McCreery stated that Goiás encompassed an even more rudimentary condition in geopolitical terms within Brazil. The cattle frontier in Goiás placed the state in a condition marked by geographic distance and social, economic, and political isolation. For McCreery, distant and isolated Goiás was the frontier of the frontier.



The colours blue and red are proposed here as fundamental tones that saturate the sombre conditions of the Cerrado in the wet and dry seasons, respectively, in the work of Hugo de Carvalho Ramos. Both blue and red are understood as effects arising from different manifestations at the heart of human experience (Northrop, 1961). Thus, both colours help to explain a set of sensations that emerge in the wet season, which are associated with the action of rain, clouds, and low light, among other phenomena, and in the dry season with fires, smoke, and lack of rain—annual occurrences in the Cerrado. Of course, both seasons manifest a profusion of colours within the blue and red spectrums (such as intense greens and the different shades of grey in the wet period and yellows and browns in the dry season). Nevertheless, the colours blue and red, with their ability to produce certain specific emotions, work as a metaphor that highlights a landscape-feeling or the execution of the wet and dry period of the Cerrado in the formation of sensations and affections. This perspective, in part, is inspired by Graham Harman's proposition that understands metaphor as the fusion of different feelings that perform in individuals, which says more about the performance of things themselves in the world than about human capacities (Harman, 2015). Thus, both colours and their association with wet and dry periods seek to suggest aspects related to "forms of enchantment" (Bennett, 2016) or how each season can affect individuals. As a result, blue and red emerge as distinct dimensions of the landscape that remain contiguous, mixed and overlapping (Cohen, 2013). This overlap is most evident in the Cerrado in the case of feelings of loneliness and indifference, familiar to both seasons, but with subtle differences. In the wet season, loneliness and indifference emerge as processes of gestation and dissolution of life, while in the dry period, the intense destructiveness of fire feels like an alien force associated with human activities.

Our argument is developed in three parts. In the first, the work of Hugo de Carvalho Ramos is analyzed considering aspects of its Gothic style and how this manifests through the landscapes of the tropics, the national context of Brazil, and context of the state of Goiás. This state was marked by political, economic, and social isolation, resulting, in large measure, from hydrographic characteristics, as well as bearing the historical marks of vicissitudes related to the climate. Second, sentiments of the wet season are addressed through the short stories *Dias de Chuva* and *Gente da Gleba*. These feelings are linked to the ambivalence of the gestation of new realities induced by water, simultaneously foreshadowing the possibilities of death through the memory of the past and expectations of the future. In the third part, the sentiments of the dry season are analyzed through the story *Gente da Gleba*, drawing parallels and comparisons with traces of the same sentiments in other art forms in different savannah areas and in different periods (such as in the current oak savannah of California and in the Australian savannah of the mid-20th century). However, in this case, remorse and fear are sentiments that manifest themselves in an intense and



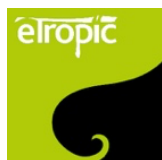
explosive form in the face of the smoky sky and the dry burning land. Loneliness and indifference are constants that constitute blue and red in both seasons.

Tropical Gothic in the Brazilian Cerrado

Death, fear, and darkness have always been aspects dear to Gothic literature. Gothic literature's emergence emphasized contradictions (mixing real-fictional, rational-irrational) and instabilities in opposition to the optimistic scientific discourse and contained the passions consolidated in the Enlightenment and scientism of the 18th and 19th centuries (Vasconcelos, 2016, p. 201). Gothic literature emerged in Europe amidst the crisis of the Old Regime, marked by the advance of industrialisation, capitalism, liberal revolutions, advances in science and technology, as well as the imperialist race to colonize Africa and Asia (Carneiro, 2019). From the beginning, landscapes, places, and regions played a fundamental role in the Gothic atmosphere, usually associated with the sublime, the shadowy, the decadent, or even reinforcing senses of mystery and human alienation in the face of the size and dynamism of geographic space (Edwards, 2016).

In the tropics, more specifically in Latin America, the Gothic—whether in literature, cinema, or other media—went through a process of “tropicalization” as it was adapted to different circumstances and concrete local experiences, producing very specific meanings and ideas that emphasized the complexity and uniqueness of places, regions, and nations (Edwards & Vasconcelos, 2016). In most cases, what is present in these texts is an anxiety resulting from the search for the construction of a national or regional identity against geographic spaces that are resistant to and evade attempts to decipher them (Edwards, 2016; Edwards & Vasconcelos, 2016). The emergence of Gothic style in Brazil, throughout the 19th century, was also linked to anxieties regarding the construction of national identity, as well as the country's history (Vasconcelos, 2016). The same trend is also visible in areas of the interior of Brazil, where some authors have sought to produce a regional identity, denounce the miseries and abandonment of local populations, or highlight mysterious, dark, reckless, and indecipherable aspects of specific geographic spaces (Carneiro, 2019).

This is the case for writers who produced literary works with Gothic style traces in the Brazilian Cerrado, especially in the state of Goiás, which is completely inserted within this biome. The critic, Fabianna Carneiro, is the author of rare works that analyze the Gothic side of Goiás regional literature and, here, she highlights the presence of longing, memories, death, loneliness, and fear as evidenced in works by authors such as Bernardo Élis, José J. Veiga, and Hugo de Carvalho Ramos himself (Carneiro & Silva, 2012; Carneiro, 2014; Carneiro, 2015; Carneiro, 2020). These works focus

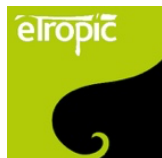


mostly on the political, economic, and social aspects that permeate the narratives, leaving aside the relationship with the Cerrado landscapes, something also seen in studies that prioritize the regional aspect of Ramos' work (Vicentini, 1997). On the other hand, Luciana Murari analyzes the environment in the works of Hugo de Carvalho Ramos but from the perspective of conceptions/representations of nature found in both the different literary traditions, as previously mentioned, that arrived in Brazil and the attempts to construct nationality (Murari, 2009).

Moving away from these approaches, our analysis understands that the sentiments expressed in the work of Hugo de Carvalho Ramos also refer to more primary attempts to understand the landscape manifesting as a reality that drives the production of meanings, concepts, and language that are always surprising and disruptive. From a realist/materialist perspective, it is possible to say that these are attempts to understand and create truths, by means of language, about the experiences of the body itself in physical space (Kolozova, 2014, p. 132). Although political, economic, social, and cultural aspects are present in Ramos' work, what is highlighted here is the suggestion that the activity of material phenomena themselves in the constitution of sentiments are expressed through language in his work. Further, these sentiments—which compose possibilities—are immersed in the Cerrado landscape.

The state of Goiás is located in an area of the Brazilian central plateau. In Ramos' lifetime, the state's economy revolved around livestock, which developed after the mining crisis in the 18th century (McCreery, 2006). It was a region difficult to access both because of the characteristics of the rivers and the terrible conditions of the roads that had suffered from the weather and flooding rivers in the wet season as well as the lack of financial resources for maintenance (Chaul, 1997; Dutra e Silva, 2017).

The territory of Goiás is almost entirely located in the biogeographic formation of the Cerrado. The Cerrado is considered the most biodiverse tropical savannah on the planet and, simultaneously, is one of the most threatened ecosystems. This savannah extends over two million km², forming a complex ecological mosaic of botanical formations such as fields, grasslands, bush, and tropical forest, among others. The Cerrado is incredibly biodiverse, with almost 1,000 species of birds and around 300 mammals; most of which are important for the perpetuation of this unique ecosystem (Eiten, 1972; Oliveira & Marquis, 2002; Dutra e Silva, 2020). In relation to its seasonality, the Brazilian tropical savannah was often mistakenly described as a semiarid region. However, it is a seasonality marked by very well-defined rainy and dry seasons, which demarcate significant changes in the landscapes and in human perceptions. Discussing the descriptive complexity of the Cerrado, especially in

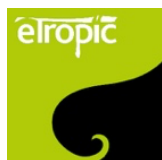


understanding narratives and historical accounts, Dutra e Silva defines the imperative seasonality and its changing landscape thus:

Changes and transformations are ongoing: there is a time for rain, and a time for drought. A time for flowers, and a time when the foliage is dressed in a deep green. A time when the vegetation burns in the fire, leaving traces of ash and devastation. A time when waters and springs run slowly over pebbles in a calm that breaks the drama of the hostile scenery. A time when the swirling winds carry the dry leaves and dust of the earth in the dryness of August and September. Thus, the landscapes follow cyclical rhythms based on natural patterns of seasonality. (Dutra e Silva, 2020, p. 92)

Despite the cyclical rhythm of seasonality in the Cerrado, the occupation of this space from the 18th century onward was marked by contingencies and several breaks in the universe of meaning produced by the colonizers. An example of these breaks is found in the representations of the hydrographic disposition within the limits of the state of Goiás. Ironically, the limits of the state were fixed in the area of headwaters of the main hydrographic basins of the rivers Da Prata, São Francisco, and Tocantins-Araguaia (at the time understood as part of the Amazon basin). This hydrographic arrangement in the form of a water divide of the basins of the largest rivers in South America, had, from the 18th century, fed several fantasies about this area being the most favourable region for settlement. This supported the claim that it should be elevated to the country's capital, due to the supposed ease of communication with all parts of the country via river navigation (Garcia, 2010, pp. 127-131; Vital et al., 2017). However, the problem was, that despite this hydrographic arrangement, most rivers were not navigable, and the attempts to establish river transport were marked by several failures that constituted a crisis of understanding about local hydrography. Thus, Goiás in the 19th and early 20th centuries, was considered by some historians as being the “frontier of the frontier” due to its isolation and distance from the capital (Hennessy, 1978; McCreery, 2006). Although the state of Goiás is considered the cradle of the waters of the main hydrographic basins in South America, this does not translate into ease of communication; rather, its history is marked by severe river floods that caused destruction in its capital (Cavalcanti, Lopes & Bridges, 2008; Oliveira, 2014).

On the other hand, the history of Goiás is also marked by devastating droughts and warnings about the possibilities of desertification due to periodic fires. The most famous and serious of these was the great drought during the period 1773—1776, distinguished by months of uninterrupted fires, which were followed by three years of



intense rains (1779—1782), destroying bridges and paralyzing mining work, especially in 1782 (Bertran, 1991, pp. 42-43). In the 1910s, local populations and scientists from the federal capital who travelled through the state, raised fears about the area's possible process of transformation into a semi-arid area due to a supposed decrease in annual rains and an increase in the incidence of fires (Neiva & Penna, 1916, p. 76). It is important to emphasize that these fears occurred at a time when some politicians and scientists in Brazil were fearful about local and regional climate changes caused by deforestation (Vital, 2018). Hugo de Carvalho Ramos, as an inhabitant of Goiás and also immersed in the concerns of the time about desertification processes, outlines in his works the anxieties that emerged from his experiences in the Cerrado climate.

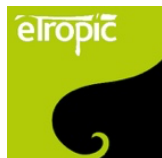
Figure 1. *Rain and fire smoke in the Brazilian Cerrado*



Chapada dos Veadeiros National Park, Goiás State, Brazil. Photograph by Vivian da Silva Bráz

Blue Indifference in the Wet Season

The tale *Dias de Chuva* begins with a character, in the first person, inside a room, watching the rain hit the window and listening to a complex set of sounds produced by the falling water outside. There is an autobiographical tone here, resembling the



author's own memories of the time he travelled on horseback along the roads of Goiás during the first days of the rainy season, in October. "Vejo, através duma tela úmida, as paisagens distantes do meu torrão natal, e afaz-se-me a que ando viajando, como antigamente, por esses sertões, sentindo sob o pala de viagem a água cirandar forte" (Ramos, 1917/2020, p. 83). What stands out in this memory is the immersion of the character/author in water: the sensation of the drops falling in different shapes and intensities on his clothes, the vision of it stretching to the distant horizon and the sounds it makes falling on the treetops, always in discontinuous movements that are emphasized in the text. On the bleak red clay road, a typical composition of the Cerrado soil, what is seen, heard, and felt is the water that falls from the sky, producing multiple connections on the earth. The author continually highlights the different sounds that the rain produces, the different movements that emerge from the water as it meets the earth, flora, fauna, and his own clothing: "E o aguaceiro molinhando, desce manso e manso, como se uma grande e fantástica mó andasse remoendo cristais pelo céu cinábrio, e sobre a extensão imensamente esmeralda daqueles desertos rincões" (p. 83).

Furthermore, the author emphasizes how the elements of the fauna and flora respond, in profoundly ambivalent and different ways, to immersion in rainwater and mist. The gestational appeal of water or how it induces the production of life after months of dry, is present in the flight and song of birds, the intense green of the fields dominating the horizon, the opening of flowers, and the appearance of the first fruits in different plant species. All these produced intense sounds, smells, and visual effects in the traveller's memory; however, they also clashed with another set of feelings expressed by the author. With his head bowed, the character continues to disregard the world around him, mulling over the past and thinking about the future. The horse he rides, head down and completely wet, displays an apparent indifference to everything. Indifference is a term that appears at various times in the story. Sleepy hawks are seen atop dry tree branches at the crossroads, cattle graze lazily and indifferent to the rain: "Gaviões estanguidos, quedavam-se sonolentos e marasmáticos...um e outro mestiço zebu passeia pachorrento e indiferente ao borrito" (p. 83). In the dense forest, the character follows a carpet of dry leaves. And here, in contrast to the profusion of sounds, colours, sensations, in the extreme processes of life and death in the humid Cerrado landscape, an absolute silence emerges: "Em torno, silêncio absoluto; muricizeiros abriam-se em flor, nessas primeiras chuvas de outubro, e, com eles, paineiras esgalgadas e pequizeiros copudos dos cerrados" (p. 83). The character feels a yearning in the silence of his absolute solitude. The fauna and flora are also perceived as immersed in silence, indifferent towards each other, manifesting themselves in a universe of solitude: "E a floresta prosseguia, interminável e profunda, no silêncio eterno da sua solidão" (p. 83).

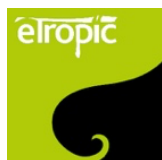


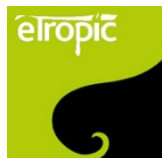
Figure 2. Cerrado in the wet season



Chapada dos Veadeiros National Park, Goiás State, Brazil. Photograph by Vivian da Silva Bráz

Dias de Chuva, suggests two complementary fundamental aspects about water and the feelings that may emerge in the Cerrado during the wet season. The first of fundamental aspect is the radical intimacy that pervades human sentiments in an aquatic reality. The interior silence amid the liquid flow that runs vertically, diagonally, and horizontally across the landscape suggests tranquility in contrast to an apparent turbulent intensity in the memoried events experienced by the character that manifest themselves in a longing: “e, no silêncio eterno da minha solidão, prosseguia, sob o pala, ruminando saudades” (p. 84). From immersion in the rain and darkness of a cloudy day, there is a dramatic release of tensions, turning the individual inward and into the vast density of the present moment, reinforcing abstractions about the past and the future (Abram, 2009).

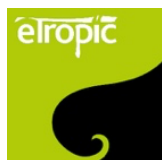
Mist and clouds (visible forms of agglomerates of ice and water particles) show the limits of human perception and loneliness in the face of multiple possibilities for generating and breaking future expectations. Hopes and traumas arise in this contact with clouds and mists (Yates, 2013). It is not by chance that this story emphasizes aspects such as the character’s plans for the future and the longing for someone or



some past event. There is a strong tension between the desire for permanence against the sense of impermanence imposed by a world where all things are presented as neither necessary nor impossible, that is, as contingencies. However, unexpected permanence (such as memories) in a transient world also present themselves as disturbing. The second fundamental aspect, therefore, is the feeling that the world is formed by contingencies where uncertainties are confused with the very processes of life. The different references to longing suggest a condition of non-linearity in life, that is, of experiences formed by overflows, unforeseen events, and ruptures in different forms and intensities. However, there is a mutual indifference that governs these experiences, an indifference of the world in relation to the yearnings and expectations created in the universe of ideas and meanings, reinforcing the sense of loneliness. This indifference has a colour, a blue indifference.

Blue, as William Gass (1991, p. 75) suggests, is the colour of the ambivalence of inner life, of the deepest and unspoken emotions. Blue is the truth, the colour that occurs most in the landscape, as in the sky during the day and the colour of the planet (Gass, 1991; Jarman, 1995). In the short story *Dias de Chuva*, yearning is a vague term that refers to the character's unspoken memories and deep emotions arising from the finitude of something (death). Gass (1991) associates the colour blue with a vision of death as a possibility, memory of a *fait accompli*, incompleteness, an abrupt sexual or loving conclusion that leads to feelings of deep melancholy, disappointment, loss, emptiness, longing, loneliness. Furthermore, Jarman (1995, p. 114) states that "blue is darkness made visible", a darkness that transgresses boundaries and challenges possibilities for solutions. Thus, blue is closely linked to feelings of transience and finitude (Kusek, 2017). Blue is the colour of paradox, at the same time celestial light, life, intensity, excitement, possibility, promise; and the deepest darkness, cold, emptiness, melancholy, loss, illness. It is, simultaneously, the promise of life and the inevitability of death (Kusek, 2017).

For this reason, the strong ambivalence in the description of the Cerrado in *Dias de Chuva* can be understood as a phenomenon typical of the blue indifference that marks the possibility of a group of sentiments connected to the Cerrado landscape in the wet season. Blue is associated with surprise for the birth of what is unique, signifying, to a certain extent, a break with the past. However, this singular event goes hand in hand with speculation about its end. As much as the October rains are part of the seasonality of the Cerrado, the experience lived in each moment of the wet season and by each individual is unique, producing different feelings about the gestation and dissolution of singular moments. This highlights water as a phenomenon that unites life and death. The profusion of life gestated amid the torrential rain and longing, thus manifests itself

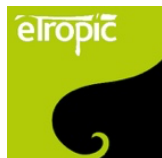


as a constant reference to death as a *fait accompli* in the past and possibility in the future.

The ambivalence of the wet season in the Cerrado can also be glimpsed in the tale, *Gente da Gleba*. The wet season in this story is seen as a “ressurgimento da Terra” (resurgence of the earth) resulting from clouds that feed on the evapotranspiration of the waters of the Amazon, Prata, and São Francisco basins (Ramos, 1917/2020). Here, water is the manifestation of life after a period of desolation. At a certain moment in the story there is a narrative of the first rains of the wet season in the Cerrado. These rains, as the author emphasizes, are much greater in volume and violence than those that occur on the Brazilian coast, an area where the large urban centres and the then-capital of Brazil were located: “Não essa chuvinha miúda, comum às plagas do litoral...mas aquela pancada pesadona, cortada de relâmpagos ziguezagueantes e estampidos de trovão, que emudece a natureza” (p. 64). Here, life and death are present with the silence of nature in the face of lightning, thunder, gales, and heavy rain that overflows rivers (producing life) and destroys crops (producing death and hunger). It is at this moment that memories, regrets, longing, and different internal ghosts emerge in the characters’ minds. Thus, death or its possibility manifests itself in a similar way to the definition given by the philosopher Jane Bennett: a condition for life in a broad sense, which is filled with different meanings in the face of enchantment, or the way it affects each individual (Bennett, 2016, p. 84).

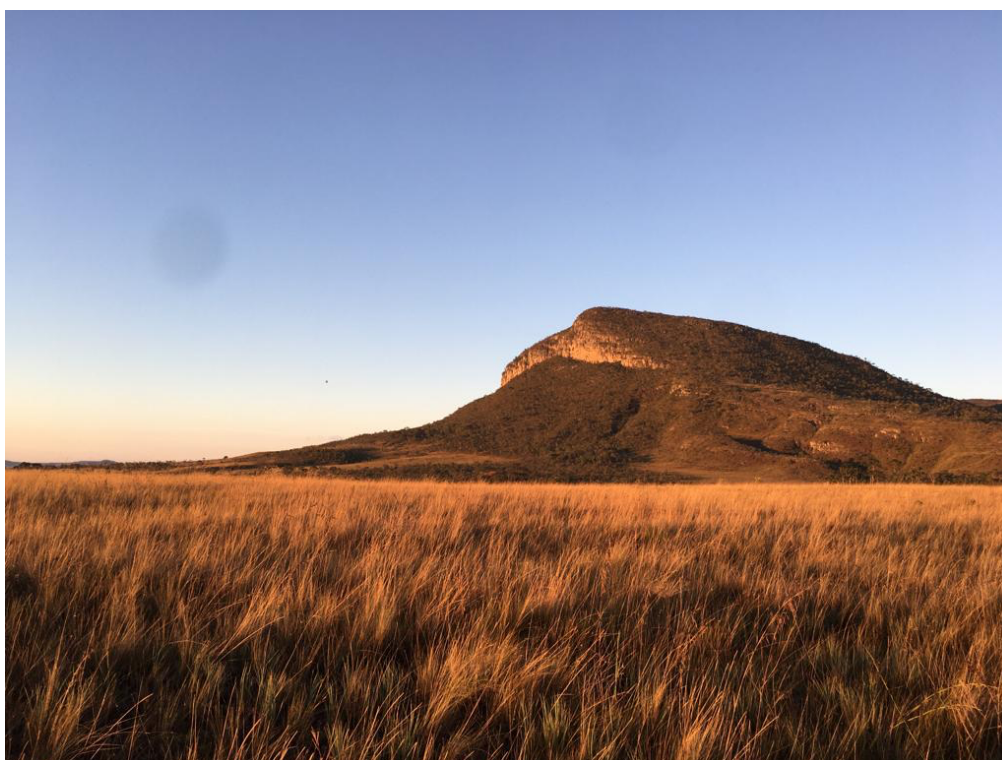
The Persistence of Blue in the Dry Season’s Red Destructiveness

If, on the one hand, a feeling of melancholy emerges from the landscape in the wet season related to loneliness, memory, and the transience and dissolution of life (somehow induced by the strong presence of water), the dry season is associated with destruction in a visceral and oppressive sense, without ambivalence. This condition is quite evident in *Gente da Gleba*, as the story runs from the end of the wet season, in April, until the return of the rains in October and November. In one section, Hugo de Carvalho Ramos describes what he calls the emigration of life in the Cerrado when large fires, many of them caused by humans, destroy the vegetation, chasing away and killing animals, while dense smoke covered the sun and the stars in the month of August. “Pelos dias de agosto, todo o horizonte goiano é um vasto mar de chamas: fogo das queimadas que ardem, alastrando-se pelos gerais dos tabuleiros e chapadões a afugentar a fauna alada daqueles campos” (p. 57). Amidst the arid landscape marked by smoke, there arises intense sorrow and remorse for the losses in agriculture and livestock, as well as expectations for the return of the rains: “Também o homem, agente irresponsável naquela desolação, ressurte-se molestamente da mágoa que ressuma errante na natureza” (p. 58). In *Gente da*



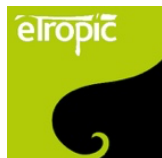
Gleba, there is a strong criticism of the Cerrado inhabitants who cause fires during the dry season, and the remorse the author refers to is as much about their possible responsibility for the fires as about the individual traumas remembered or experienced during the peak of that season. Thus, guilt and fear are prominent sentiments in a solitude that reflects the desolation of the landscape at the height of the dry season: “Através do espesso lençol de fumaça que à noite encobre o lume das estrelas, o sol semelha de eito a eito um enorme carvão aceso e sangra pelos flancos a sua luz avermelhada e mortíça, numa atmosfera de forja, que nenhum sopro de aragem alenta” (p. 57).

Figure 3. Cerrado in the dry season



Chapada dos Veadeiros National Park, Goiás State, Brazil. Photograph by Vivian da Silva Bráz

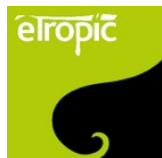
The savannah landscape in the dry season is marked by fire and its effects, an element that, as Bachelard (1994, p.11) points out, comprises simultaneously good and evil, paradise and hell. In the savannahs, this contradiction is historically little understood, thus reinforcing feelings of fear and remorse. *Gente da Gleba* offers a true denunciation of the local inhabitants because of the fires in the Cerrado. This denunciation occurs because the fire emphasizes the feelings of guilt present in the population in July, August, and September. Across the other side of the world, in the early 20th century, British colonial settlers in Australia likewise outlined various fears and anxieties about the periodic destruction caused by fire, blaming Aboriginal



populations for the losses – even though the settlers were largely responsible for changes in the burning regime (Pyne, 1991). Fire is an intangible, intense, untamable, and fleeting force that burns, destroys, and creates, connecting through lethal transformation and disappearance, and existing as trauma and memory (Cohen & Trigg, 2013). Thus, indifference, in this case, manifests itself in a destructive and territorial manner, rare and cataclysmic, explosively intense and instantaneous, like the colour red (Jarman, 1995, pp. 32-37). Remorse and fear in *Gente da Gleba* emerge from the action of fire that destroys, kills, corrodes life, and is misunderstood and uncontrollable, both in the aspect of language and representation, and in the handling of the element itself.

The association of the main characteristics of the dry season in the Cerrado (such as smoky skies and dry vegetation) with intense individual feelings such as fear and remorse can also be seen in other art forms that portray savannah landscapes, including in current pop culture. A contemporary example is the music video for the song Black Diamond by DJ Stargazers in partnership with singer Kate Louise Smith, directed by Anton Polygalov and recorded in 2015 in the evergreen oak savannah of the California coast (Polygalov, 2015). The California oak savannah is visually similar to the Brazilian Cerrado but has a Mediterranean climate characterized by the cold, wet winters and hot, dry summers that last, on average, six months a year (Allen-Diaz, Bartolome & McClaran, 1999). Both the lyrics and the music video for Black Diamond present a visceral involvement with tensions, turmoil, problems, and individual anxieties, which Lawrence Williams (2016) highlights as a fundamental characteristic of the progressive variant of trance music. The video addresses the tragic end of a romantic relationship between two women when one discovers she has been betrayed, using the coastal California savannah landscape in the dry season as a backdrop. The storyline is developed through images in various frames and visual effects of the sunny environment (marked by a coastal fog reminiscent of fire smoke) depicting the betrayed woman dressed in black on a cliff facing the sea, and the woman who betrayed her, in tears, running aimlessly through the dry vegetation. Thus, the intense pain of remorse is felt by the latter woman at the end of the relationship (and the probable suicide of her partner), while the aridity of the savannah in the dry season amplifies the drama of the event.

Black Diamond's music video, like Hugo de Carvalho Ramos' texts, focus on fear and remorse in the immensity of the dry savannah landscape. However, they are also about loneliness in a biome that, in this period, is marked by fire. In art works with Gothic appeal produced in the Australian tropical savannah in the mid-twentieth century, more specifically in the state of Queensland, solitude is also a striking aspect in a sinister landscape marked by red earth under blue skies in the wet season, and



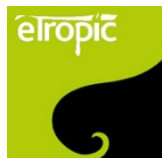
red fire in the dry season (Wolff, 2019). Therefore, the feeling of loneliness expressed in Ramos' work finds a parallel in other arts that focus on immersion in savannah environments. Solitude reinforces the notion of indifference that crosses the multiple relationships that make up the landscape. This indifference, as highlighted by Ramos, even permeates the renewal of life in the wet season after each destruction that takes place in the dry season, renewing the memories of everything that once existed, but will never return (Ramos, 1917/2020). Loneliness and indifference can thus be considered two central aspects of Savannah Gothic.

In the Cerrado, the peak of the dry season occurs in the months of July, August, and September, extinguished, along with the fires, by the first rains of October. As Jarman (1995, pp. 36-37) points out, the manifestation of red is momentary, and snuffed by blue, as blue is constant. In this way, water is the central element that governs the Brazilian savannah landscape, whether due to its abundant presence in the wet season or its absence in the dry season.

Final Considerations: Gothic Savannah of the Cerrado

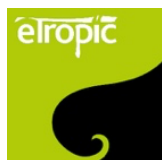
Through the works of Hugo de Carvalho Ramos, we can verify that, from the humid season in the Brazilian savannah, sentiments that are associated with waterscapes and the meanings of gestation and dissolution of life emerge. Memories of significant events that had abrupt conclusions are expressed in diffuse memories and nostalgia in his work, along with prospects for the future that are thought of in a melancholic way because they are in the shadow of the perpetual possibility of dissolution. Thus, internal ghosts and traumas emerge in a profusion of memories, regrets, and melancholy in the ambiguity of death as a condition for life that marks the intimacy with the water element, present in the mist, clouds, rain, and low light that marks the landscape in the wet season. The universe of the savannah in the wet season is one of contingencies. On the other hand, feelings in the dry season are related to a sense of destructive oppression that induces fears and remorse, traumas that are related to more immediate aspects in intimacy with the effects of the presence of fire in the landscape. An element that manifests itself in an uncontrollable way, whether in its handling or in its meaning, fire imposes itself, consuming life forms and filling the landscape with smoke, making it a constant presence inducing the horrors of fear and guilt.

Loneliness and indifference are sensations that constantly express themselves in the landscape in both seasons. A sense of loneliness expounds from blue indifference and persists even in the face of the red destructiveness that emerges in dry season fires. An indifference that is universal: each element or combination in the landscape



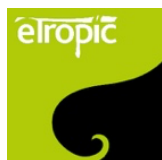
constitutes itself as solitary, an ambiguous solitude marked by multiple crossings, but even so, is evidenced in the indifference of one to the other. Therefore, the landscape oppresses more positive sensations related to human longings for stability and certainty, whether at the level of meanings or in life itself. There is, however, a subtle difference in the feelings of loneliness and indifference in both seasons. While in the wet season, loneliness and indifference emerge from the movements of gestation and dissolution associated with the very logic of life, the fire that destroys elements of the landscape in the dry season is felt like an uncontrollable force, somehow induced by human activities, although it is part of the ecology of the Cerrado biome. Thus, anxieties are distinct in both seasons: melancholy, nostalgia and perspectives of dissolution emerge in the wet season, while trauma, fear and remorse are more evident in the dry season.

The results of this analysis do not lead to another hypothesis of the savannah. However, they draw attention to the sentiments that emerge in the savannah Gothic indicating other possibilities for savannah landscapes in their intimate relationship with climatic seasonality. These sentiments are considered peripheral because they are uncomfortable and are often understood as hostile or useless for the conservation of these areas. Here, we suggest the opposite: by emphasizing the alien dimension of savannah landscapes, which act daily to produce feelings considered negative, the strength of these landscapes in the daily experience of their inhabitants is reaffirmed. Thus, the Gothic Savannah of the Cerrado, as well as other savannah areas, are more than the basis of life, they constitute life itself.

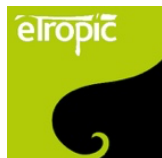


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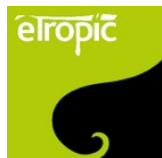
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