

***Posmorriña* in Ángel Rama's *Tierra sin mapa* (1959)**

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Abstract

The Uruguayan Ángel Rama (1926-1983) is widely recognised as a pioneer in the development of Cultural Studies in Latin America. This article proposes that there was a lesser-known side of the socially-conscious, historicist Rama that was expressed mostly in intimate writings, namely a romantic, essentialist Rama. The focus is a semi-fictional work, *Tierra sin mapa* (1959), which recreates the stories Rama's immigrant mother told him in Montevideo about her childhood in rural Galicia. In retelling her reminiscences, which were triggered by the homesickness which in Galician is termed *morriña*, Rama is in fact reliving his mother's experiences as his own. This process is here called *posmorriña*, in an echo of the term 'postmemory', coined by Marianne Hirsch to denote the experience of children of victims of trauma. The article argues that this maternal Galicia left a mark on the young intellectual that played a key role in his understanding of Latin American cultural identity. It further suggests that Rama's experience may well be paradigmatic of that of other writers in his time and place.

Keywords: Uruguayan literature, twentieth century, *morriña*, postmemory, *posmorriña*, identity, transculturation, exile, migration

Rama the socially-conscious critic

The Uruguayan Ángel Rama (1926-1983) is best known as a sophisticated commentator on Latin American literature and one of the pioneers in the development of Cultural Studies in the subcontinent (see *Ángel Rama y los estudios latinoamericanos*). He is mentioned as an example of the ‘long and distinguished history’ of literary criticism in *The Cambridge History of Latin American Literature*; and later in the same essay the author engages in a comparison between Rama’s approach to the field and that of his contemporary, compatriot and ‘lifelong adversary’, Emir Rodríguez Monegal, who are deemed ‘the two most eminent Spanish American professional critics of the 1960s and 1970s’ (González 1996: 425, 453). For his part, the author of the chapter on the modern essay in the same volume (who also compares the two Uruguayan critics), describes Rama’s approach as follows:

[he] envisioned literature as one thread in a broader social and historical tapestry; as a good social critic, he could not conceive of literature in any context that did not also make room for questions of ideology, political pressures, and the problematic, changing context of Spanish America. (Oviedo 1996: 418)

This claim is consistent with Rama’s own self-evaluation, as he pondered on his role as literary editor (1959-1968) of *Marcha*, a leading Latin American journal. In what seems already at that time (1972) to be an inevitable gesture, he also referred to his predecessor in the job, Rodríguez Monegal, who had assumed the task of expanding the local critical arena through the incorporation of international writers and the dissemination of the work of Borges and *Sur* magazine, as well as combatting the mediocrity of literary life and defending the traditional values of the ‘escritor puro’ [‘pure man of letters’]. By contrast, Rama’s editorial work, starting in the wake of the Cuban revolution, was to consider literature within its

historical context and to apply ‘métodos sociológicos’ [‘sociological methods’] to understand culture in a holistic manner. A natural consequence of this approach was to shift the focus towards Latin American authors (Rama 1985c: 231).¹

Rama began his career as a critic early, as editor of literary journals (starting with *Clinamen*, 1947-48) and as founder of publishing ventures, notably amongst them the influential house Arca (1962) and *Enciclopedia uruguaya*, an ambitious illustrated history of Uruguayan culture in sixty-three double (essay plus primary text) weekly instalments (1968-69). He spent several years at the National Library (1949-1965), where he was responsible for the editions of several volumes of the respected series of Uruguayan literary classics, Biblioteca Artigas (and wrote some of the prologues), and in the cultural press, notably, but not only, the aforementioned weekly *Marcha*. He also taught at secondary schools and later at the national university, where he directed the Department of Latin American literature (Blixen and Barrios-Lémez 1986: 9-67; Peyrou 2010: 39-45; Rama 1985c: 383-95; Rocca 1992: 133-89).

From the 1960s onwards, Rama travelled abroad regularly as a visiting lecturer and as a conference speaker at international gatherings until he settled in Venezuela after the 1973 Uruguayan coup. In Caracas he founded the Ayacucho collection, a major series of Latin American texts, and the highly regarded review, *Escritura*. He then moved to Washington DC to a post at the University of Maryland where he contributed significantly to the development of Latin American studies there and in the United States as a whole, until his visa was denied by the Reagan administration on the grounds of his leftist politics. Whilst an appeal was proceeding with the support of international intellectuals and politicians, he settled in Paris; as he was travelling to a conference of Latin American studies in Colombia, the plane that was carrying him and other fellow writers crashed soon after taking off from Madrid’s Barajas airport on 27 November 1983, killing him, his second wife and most of the other passengers

(Peyrou 2010: 45-51). In what follows we briefly review his work as a critic before considering a lesser-known and intimate area of his production. The latter, involving a connection with the land of his parents, turns out to be highly significant for understanding Rama's intellectual outlook on Latin American culture, in a pattern that, moreover, seems applicable also to some of his peers in the immigrant-rich River Plate area.

Three main and interrelated contributions can be highlighted from Rama's prolific production as a cultural commentator. The first is his work on Latin American *modernismo*, the movement of literary renewal which peaked around 1900 and was led by the Nicaraguan Rubén Darío, who introduced into Spanish literature features of French Symbolist and Parnassian poetry. *Modernismo* has traditionally been seen as detached from social concerns and representative of French ennui and metaphysical doubt, but Rama argued convincingly that there was a strong democratic aspiration in its deceptively anti-social demeanour (Rama 1970 and 1985b). The second area of Rama's influence relates to the interplay between tradition and modernity in Latin America, captured by the notion of 'transculturation', a precedent to the present-day interest in transnationalism. Inspired by the ideas of the Cuban intellectual Fernando Ortiz, Rama developed a theory of the relationship between cosmopolitan, Europeanising values and identity on the one hand and local, regional and Latin Americanist culture on the other. In his view, Latin American culture is not a mere recipient of outside influence but rather engages with it in a process of active adaptation. The concept of transculturation for Rama is built on a dual principle: on the one hand that Latin American culture, itself in constant evolution, has its own 'valores idiosincráticos' ['idiosyncratic values'] which are located in particular in rural areas, 'en las capas recónditas de las regiones internas' ['in the deepest layers of the interior']; and on the other hand, that it displays an 'energía creadora' ['creative energy'] which it applies both to its own cultural heritage and to new external forces (Rama 1982: 33-34).

These two concerns developed and culminated in Rama's most important work, his posthumous *La ciudad letrada* (1984; English translation, *The Lettered City*, 1996, source of translations below). This book expounds the view of the city as the locus through which elites have exerted power and control over the population in Latin America. The work is organised in chapters whose titles trace the development of this space, starting with 'La ciudad ordenada' ['The ordered city'], which designates the careful grid structure from which the colonial urban centres were born: quadrangles around the main square which contained the church, the barracks and the administration. The notion of 'order' is used in its complementary meanings of arrangement or disposition of things in relation to one another, and authoritative command or instruction (Rama 1984: 5; 1996: 3-4). For Rama the layout of the new cities unmasks the conquistadors' urban project: they have come from rural areas themselves but aspire to place enslaved Indians in their own old roles: 'Serán todos *hidalgos*, se atribuirán el *don* nobiliario, desdeñarán trabajar por sus manos y simplemente dominarán a los indios que les son encomendados o a los esclavos que compran' (1984: 15) ['All now aspired to be *hidalgos* – minor nobility with the title *don* attached to their names – disdain manual labor and lording it over their slaves and over the indigenous inhabitants who had been entrusted to them by the crown' (11)]. This arrangement would evolve and continue in Latin America into modern times and was most explicitly expressed by Sarmiento, who saw rural Argentina as the site of barbarism, and the cities as that of civilization (16-7; 12-3). The book develops other aspects of this overall idea using relevant chapter headings: 'La ciudad letrada' ['The city of letters'], 'La ciudad escrituraria' ['The city of protocols'] – both highlighting the role of intellectuals and administrators in shaping forms of control – followed by the city modernised, politicised, and revolutionised, as the elites in power adapt to, and in cases such as some *modernistas*, contest changing social and political landscapes.

One can detect a certain compatibility with his close contemporary Michel Foucault (quoted on pp. 4 and 7 [pp. 3 and 5 in the English version]; both were born in 1926, and Foucault died a few months after the Uruguayan) in Rama's analysis of power and, as with the French philosopher, there is also a penchant for wide historical sweeps (as well as not always crystal-clear expression). In the words of his translator, John Chasteen, generalisations can help 'in making sense of large, complex aspects of collective experience', and in his great book Rama provided 'a basic key to understanding the literature and history of an entire world region' (Rama 1996: xiv).

Rama's early criticism

The aforementioned works suggest a highly intellectual and critical mind, conscious of the strong controlling effect that social structures have had in shaping the destinies of Latin Americans who, in turn, have responded by supplying their own local views; the result of this confrontation is the rich and dynamic process that Rama termed 'transculturation'. Whilst the image of a historicist and culturalist Rama clearly applies to his mature writing, developed most powerfully after he left Uruguay to engage in his international Latin Americanist career, there were signs of the direction his critical work was to take in some of his earliest articles. It is important to provide evidence of such an incipient culturalist impulse before we embark on the analysis of a very significant counterexample to Rama's established persona, namely his 1959 semi-fictional work, *Tierra sin mapa* ['Uncharted Territory'], which as we shall see below provides a rather romantic and essentialist portrait of his mother's native Galicia. (I use the term 'romantic' in its general, dictionary sense of 'characterized by, or suggestive of, an idealized, fantastic, or sentimental view of life, love, or reality; appealing to the imagination and feelings' [meaning 2, *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*]). In other words: the historicist and the romantic Ramas cohabited from the start. The writing of *Tierra sin mapa* occupied

him in the 1950s; the following contemporary critical pieces, published between 1948 and 1960, can be drawn upon as early examples of Rama's sociocultural approach.

Rama's earliest critical work appeared in *Clinamen* (Blixen and Barrios-Lémez 1986: 89), a review by students at the Facultad de Humanidades y Ciencias which he edited with his future first wife, the poet Ida Vitale (b. 1923, and later in life the recipient of some of the highest literary accolades in the Spanish language, including the Octavio Paz and Cervantes Prizes), and two peers who read philosophy. The name of the journal, explained in an epigraph from Lucretius's *De Rerum Natura* (book 2: ll. 288-93) which appears in the first two issues, provides an intimation of the material inside. The passage is part of Lucretius's ontological discussion of the unexpected swerve in atoms which he labels *clinamen*. The epigraph, in English translation, reads as follows: 'For it is weight that prevents all things from being caused through blows by a sort of external force; but what keeps the mind itself from having necessity within it in all actions, and from being as it were mastered and forced to endure and to suffer, is the minute swerving [*clinamen*] of the first-beginnings at no fixed place and at no fixed time' (Lucretius 1992: 117, 119). The function of *clinamen* in Lucretius's theory is generally understood as an explanation of individual free will in a world controlled by atoms, as confirmed by two commentaries that follow the epigraph in the first issue, by Henri Bergson and Rodolfo Mondolfo (*Clinamen* I/1, March-April 1947: 3-4). As David Sedley (2018) explains, Lucretius's ontology is based on two entities: body and void. 'Nothing comes into being out of nothing or perishes into nothing. The only two *per se* entities are body and void; all other existing things are inseparable or accidental properties of these'. Moreover, and precisely in connection with the section of *De Rerum Natura* which contains the journal's epigraph, without the 'minimal indeterminacy' and 'unpredictable' swerve or *clinamen* 'we would all be automata, our motions determined by infinitely extended and unbreakable causal chains.' The title of this journal, therefore, suggests an engagement

with human action to change the world, which can be seen, in a modest but not insignificant way, as a precedent for a historicist stance on the part of its ‘redactor responsable’ or main editor.

Some at least of Rama’s writings for *Clinamen* are consistent with this view. He contributed seven items to the journal: two articles, one translation, three reviews, and one short story. One review and one article are particularly relevant for present purposes. The former deals with *La historia y la novela*, a short book by Carlos M. Rama, Ángel’s brother, a fact that must account for the reviewer’s signature using his second Christian name and his maternal surname, Antonio Facal (I/2, May-June 1947: 62-63; Blixen and Barrios Léméz 1986: 76). In line with a common feature of his generation, Rama engages in some criticism of the book, but he mostly approves of what is a discussion of the close interaction between the two realms of history and fiction. In particular, the reviewer cites the author’s view that ‘estamos en una etapa en que el Historicismo se plantea como el único conocer posible’ [‘we are at a stage where Historicism suggests itself as the only possible form of knowledge’], and adds that amongst the projects that the book inspires is the urgent critical edition of a collection of historical novels, which can be seen as a foreshadowing of the Ayacucho project.

Of Rama’s two *Clinamen* articles, it is true that the first, on the composition of *Martín Fierro* (I/2: 31-44), engages in a largely stylistic approach which has been seen as an indication that his interest in historically sensitive criticism had not yet developed (Rocca in Rama 2006: 10-11; Gómez 2017: 6-7); but his second article contains incipient signs of the contrary. ‘Generación va y generación viene’ (II/5, May-June 1948: 52-53) engages with an ongoing debate on the contemporary Generation of 1945 of Uruguayan intellectuals. It states that a major task for this group is to establish a cultural tradition, which is defined as the result of a movement of transformation and exchange: ‘Venimos de la gran vena cultural occidental, pero por nuestra libre actitud hemos recibido influencias prodigiosamente

variadas' (Rama 2006: 30-31) ['We come from the great cultural tradition of the West, but thanks to our open-minded stance we have received a prodigiously varied set of influences']. One can detect here the bare bones of what Rama would develop some three decades later, with the addition of the indigenist dimension, as the process of transculturation. Rama refers to the decline in the influence of France and to the complementary, and clearly unwelcome, impact of the United States (its 'ñoñez' ['insubstantial quality']) (31). Cultural development requires the constant work ('obra "de por vida"' ['"life-long" task']) of critical assessment ('[r]evisar y ordenar valorativamente' ['revision and classification in terms of value']) (Ibid.) of national literature, both in fiction and in criticism, and the creation of outlets in the form of publishing houses and newspaper supplements. He then declares that the same process needs to cover other art forms, notably music and art. Rather playfully but also as a sign of a serious commitment, the article ends with the declaration that in performing this task of cultural renewal, *Clinamen* represents a rejection of its own generation. Almost fifteen years later (1962) and in another literary review he co-edited, *Entregas de la Licorne*, Rama published a piece with the same title in which he cites and confirms his opinions in the first (Rama 2006: 36-37). Moreover, in an article between these two, dated March 1960, on the teaching of literature at secondary school, he pursues similar ideas. He is concerned about the meagre presence of Uruguayan material on the syllabus, since in his view literature both animates the life of a nation in progress ('un pueblo en un trance histórico' ['a people at a historical crossroads']) and represents a permanent search for the highest form of civilization ('búsqueda permanente de la más alta calidad civilizadora') (Rama 2006: 39).

In September 1955, the same year of his visit to the land where his mother was born and as he was writing *Tierra sin mapa*, which he had started earlier in the decade and was to submit to a competition in 1959, Rama published 'Temas tradicionales' in *Entregas de la Licorne* (Rama 2006: 63-76). The article opens with a section entitled 'Tradición y palenque'

(the latter term meaning ‘tethering post’ and thus a reference to gauchos, one of Rama’s longstanding concerns). The first sentence declares that tradition can be seen as a static world that functions as reassurance for present uncertainty: ‘quien se busca y no se encuentra trata de hallarse en el espejo bien pulido por la muerte que le ofrecen quienes fueron antes que él’ (63) [‘he who seeks himself and fails, then tries to find himself in the mirror polished by death which is offered by those who came before’], but this is a ‘forma falsa de lo tradicional’ (Ibid.) [‘a false version of what is traditional’]. The article moves on to state that true cultural tradition is instead the dynamic development by new generations of what came before them: ‘innovación original que cada generación impone al desarrollo de su propia cultura y cuya anterior y reiterada existencia histórica descubre luego’ (64) [‘original innovation which each generation brings to the progress of its own culture and whose earlier historical record it discovers later’]. The next section explores the baroque as a ‘signo de América’ (65) [‘icon of Latin America’], and states that by adopting this cosmopolitan mode Latin America was able to develop its own culture on a par with the rest of the West: ‘Al adoptar el esquema abstracto, universalista, del barroco, la colonia pudo acceder, con los mismos derechos y con aparente facilidad, al desarrollo universal de la cultura’ (68) [‘By adopting the abstract and cosmopolitanist structures of the baroque, the colonial world was able to achieve, with the same rights and with relative ease, access to universal culture’]. After a discussion of the changes effected on the Spanish language in the new continent by authors like José Hernández and Rubén Darío, who for Rama reenacted a practice of renewal that had been present in Cervantes and was evident in the recent poetry of Spain, there follows the last and most substantial section of the article, devoted to Uruguay. This begins with the proposition that, just like the River Plate upon which it lies, there are two different currents in the cultural tradition of the country, which he proceeds to associate variously with rationalism and romanticism, urban and rural forces, and the traditional parties of Europeanising Colorados

and Americanist Blancos, and concludes that both tendencies have remained: ‘Corregido el exceso, la situación debe señalarse como tendencia latente [...] que se atempera merced a la pugna histórica que nos singulariza’ (75) [‘Once the excess has been corrected, the situation can be understood as a latent tendency [...] that is tempered by the historical struggle that distinguishes us’]. Uruguay has kept traces of its origins as a frontier post, a harbour that both defended its territory from invaders and later accepted newcomers, so that its culture ‘queda señalada por ese acontecer dual’ (76) (‘is marked by that dual experience’).

As should be clear from these articles, Rama’s early criticism already contained the traces of the historicist-culturalist stance that he was to develop fully in the works for which he became a renowned commentator of Latin American literature. It is in this context that we need to examine next a work that displays a different side of the author: an aspect linked to the emotions and to personal identity which, albeit generally hidden from public view, was to remain in Rama for the rest of his life.

A little-known Rama: *Tierra sin mapa* (1959)

Tierra sin mapa was written and published around the same time as the statements of Rama’s historicist side discussed above. But unlike them, this work represents a romantic and essentialist attitude towards a culture, that of his Galician-born mother, which sits uneasily with his established image. *Tierra sin mapa* is a book of vignettes of rural Galician life in which the protagonist is Rama’s mother, Carolina ‘Lina’ Facal, as a young girl around ten years old.

Ángel Rama was born in 1926; according to the epilogue to *Tierra sin mapa* (‘Adiós’ [‘Farewell’]), the vignettes capture the stories his mother told him as a child, so sometime during the 1930s (Rama 1985a: 125-26).² His mother was born in 1896 and she had him when she was around thirty, having met and married her also Galician husband, Manuel Rama, in

Uruguay. She had three other children who all became recognised and successful in their chosen fields: Carlos, the respected historian and sociologist on whom Ángel wrote the *Clinamen* review cited earlier and also a heartfelt obituary (Rama 1981), in 1921; Lilia, a high-ranking librarian, in 1928; and Germán, an educationalist and education reformer, in 1932 (Domínguez Vaselli 2011). In the stories she told Ángel she was recalling her childhood spent in Galicia in the first decade of the twentieth century, as she emigrated ‘allá por mil novecientos diez’ (125) [‘around 1910’].

The main setting of the book is an area called Traba de Bergantiñas (*sic*, 126), a likely error for Bergantiños, which is an administrative region [‘comarca’] in the north of the Galician province of A Coruña. The region has two parishes named Traba, one in the municipality of Laxe, near the coast, where there is a beach of that name, and another in the municipality of Coristanco, further inland. Although *Tierra sin mapa* is vague on geographical detail – in line with its general tone and treatment of the subject matter, as we shall see – this latter seems the more likely setting. It is located around the coordinates 43.18 N, 8.73 W, where there are other places named in the book, such as the churches of San Roque (53) and Santa Marta (34, 53-56, 121, 126) and the villages of Coristanco (34) and Carballo (89, 108), as well as two that might correspond to other misspellings: Seavia, for the book’s Seaya (19-20, 78) and Agualada for Lagolada (65). The area lies some 40 km south west of the provincial capital A Coruña, 20 km south of Malpica (mentioned on p. 77) on the coast and 45 km north of Santiago de Compostela: Galicia *profonde* indeed. This location is consistent with a description of the train journey from Vigo that appears in the book’s epilogue: ‘El ferrocarril cruzaba por estaciones cuyos nombres conocía: veía las casas, las gentes, el puente sobre Lestrove, y para aquel lado Padrón, Santiago, Coruña’ (127) [‘The train went past stations whose names I knew: I saw the houses, the people, the bridge over Lestrove, and on the other side, Padrón, Santiago, Coruña’].

The book consists of fifteen vignettes, covering on average about half-a-dozen pages each, which relate episodes of daily life in rural Galicia, including the following: Lina, her three sisters and her mother gathering to shell peas during the day and then, using similar movements with the beads, saying the rosary together in the evening; a family trip to San Andrés de Teixido, a northern coastal town famed as a place of pilgrimage which all Galicians must visit, the saying goes, dead or alive (*'vai de morto quen non foi de vivo'* [*'he goes in death who has not been in life'*]), where the family includes the soul of the dead father, who had not been when he was alive and whose space in the group, including at the restaurant where they stop for lunch, is acknowledged throughout the journey; a visit to the coast to view the sea and the caves in the *rías* or fjords; rural festive occasions (Bonfire of St John, on 23 June; a *romería* or harvest festival; an outdoor dance); an encounter with the legendary Santa Compañía [*'holy procession'*] of the souls of the dead that come to announce a new death amongst the living.

The environment is therefore deeply rural and pre-modern: there is no mention of science and technology and no awareness of the encroachment of capitalism. Indeed, even though there are references to poverty and to people leaving the area for a better life elsewhere (especially in the final chapter, entitled *'Somos pobres'* [119-24] [*'We are poor'*]), the core of the material points to a world where time seems to have stood still. Significantly, the book foregrounds certain traditional traits of rural Galicia: the landscape, agriculture and animal husbandry, the weather (one vignette is devoted to the rain, another to the wind), the combination of Catholicism and superstition, and people's stoicism in the face of loneliness or death. These features combine into an overall impression of what Galicians, especially from rural areas, yearn for and idealise when they are away from their homeland and for which they have a specific term: *morriña*.³

Posmorriña

What actually happens in *Tierra sin mapa* is that the experience of homesickness is refracted through the thoughts and emotions of the child of the person who emigrated. The book is thus not about *morriña* proper, but rather about what is labelled here *posmorriña*, in an adaptation of the notion, coined by Marianne Hirsch, of ‘postmemory’. Hirsch (2008: 103) defined the term thus: ‘Postmemory describes the relationship of the second generation to powerful, often traumatic, experiences that preceded their births but that were nevertheless transmitted to them so deeply as to seem to constitute memories in their own right’.

There are several statements that justify an interpretation of *Tierra sin mapa* as a form of *posmorriña* in the two authorial texts that flank the stories, which indicate a double process of idealisation of the lost Galician world, and of assuming the homesickness of his mother by the son. The emphasis on each aspect roughly corresponds to the preface and the epilogue, but the two processes interact in each section.

The former, ‘Entrada’ [‘Entrance’] states that the land being described in the book exists not on a map but in the author’s mind: ‘Pero yo sé que existe y dónde. Yo sé el lugar donde sus pueblos se esconden en el campo [...]; sé de sus encinas plantadas en círculo y del sembradío minucioso que recubre sus tierras; sé de sus alamedas y también del mar que se abre entre montañas’ (9) [‘But I know that it exists and where. I know the place where its villages hide in the countryside (...); I know of its holm oaks planted in a circle and of the meticulous crops that cover its fields; I know of its poplar groves and also of the sea that can be glimpsed between the mountains’]. Moreover, even though Rama declares that the place is not his, but his mother’s (‘Es tierra de mi madre y no mía’ [10] [‘It is the land of my mother and not my own’]), the place also physically links Lina with her descendants, Ángel and his own daughter (b. 1951). The description is lyrical and ethereal: the ubiquitous rain becomes ‘el tiempo en que vamos perdiéndonos, donde también somos y estamos’ (Ibid.) [‘the time

where we become lost, where we also are and exist’]; the three figures appear to share the same identity: ‘nos reconocemos una última vez como los mismos’ (Ibid.) [‘we recognise ourselves as the same / for who we are one last time’] and all of their childhoods become joined: ‘Madre, hija, yo mismo: sangre de una infancia que a través de todos permanece’ (Ibid.) [‘Mother, daughter, myself: blood of a childhood that remains through us all’]. More explicitly, childhood becomes an invented, infinite and eternal memory and a place of salvation, as illustrated by a number of images that close the preface: ‘Para ella [la infancia] la tierra no alcanza y por eso cava en la memoria el acceso a otra en que seguir corriendo bajo el sol y la lluvia’ [‘The space provided by the land is not enough for childhood to exist / to flourish and hence it delves into memory to gain access to another realm where it is possible to continue to run under the sun and the rain’], ‘se extiende largamente’ [‘it extends widely’], ‘[n]o tiene fin’ [‘it has no end’]; ‘[la] hemos amasado durante una corta vida’ [‘we have amassed it during our short life’] (Ibid.). These comments display a strong idealising impulse; they also convey the hazy quality of memory that tends to trouble the document-based work of historians or social critics of the sort that Rama represented in *La ciudad letrada*.

These impressions are developed further in the epilogue. The text begins with the reflection that one’s childhood also contains the childhood of one’s parents, thereby confirming ideas expressed at the end of the preface. In the author’s own experience as a young boy figured in particular the sadness and nostalgia of a mother who had lost the locus of her childhood forever through emigration: ‘En [mi infancia] mi madre fue poniendo la suya con la melancolía de lo que no solo el tiempo ha dispersado, sino también de lo que ya no tiene tierra cercana que la nutra; la volcó en sus hijos para que algo se salvara en el recuerdo de ellos’ (125) [‘My mother placed her own childhood in mine, conveying a melancholy that was caused not only by what time had dispersed but also by the loss of the land that had nurtured it; she poured her melancholy into her children so that some of it might survive in

their memories’]. Unlike Rama himself, who was able to return to the district of Montevideo where the family had lived, his mother was permanently estranged from her own childhood world by the insurmountable combination of geography, time and forgetfulness: ‘ella no podía, estaba el mar de por medio, ese mes largo de atroz navegación [...], y el olvido’ (Ibid.) [‘she could not, separated as she was from it by the sea, by that dreadful month-long crossing (...), and by forgetting’].⁴

Rama’s *posmoriña*, moreover, occupies the space of the childhood the author himself forgot after reaching adolescence: ‘la infancia de mi madre fue un recuerdo tentador para iluminar la sombría ausencia de la mía’ (Ibid.) [‘my mother’s childhood became a tempting memory that illuminated the shadowy absence of my own’]. The process involved creating a world where memory and fiction intertwined: ‘un mundo ilusorio y rico donde ya no podía determinar qué era realidad y qué invención de la distancia y deformación de la memoria’ (126) [‘a rich world of illusion where it was impossible to establish what was real and what was invented by distance or distorted by memory’]. The key role of imagination comes through as Rama recounts how when he asked his mother to point to her homeland on a map, she refused and closed the atlas. The author, in turn, took his mother’s cue and recreated the world in his mind and tinged it with emotion: ‘Imaginé esa tierra como lo hacía ella: precisa en la memoria y hondamente querida, y al hacerla mía como un recuerdo algo más distante, me convencí de que ningún mapa podía contenerla’ (Ibid.) [‘I imagined that land as she had done herself: precise in memory and deeply loved, and as I made it my own like a distant remembrance, I persuaded myself that no map was able to contain it’].

Rama set himself the task of writing down his mother’s memories in order to return them to her, but in 1955, before he was able to show his notes to her, he won a scholarship from the French Embassy in Uruguay to study in Paris (Peyrou 2010: 41). He travelled with Ida Vitale and, poignantly, as their boat was entering the port of Vigo, Rama was handed a

telegram with the news of his mother's death back in Montevideo. The contact with the land he had dreamt about became marked by his mother's absence; his reaction was to revert to his imagined version of the place:

Yo salía del sueño de mi madre a la realidad y encontraba que no era otra cosa que la muerte; y quería volver atrás, borrar el tiempo, entrar al sueño otra vez, vivir dentro de él oyendo que su voz iba contando una tierra donde los objetos no tenían peso. Porque el peso de las cosas era ahora el de la pena. (127)

[‘I was leaving my mother’s dreamland and entering reality and found that it contained nothing but death; I wanted to return to the past, to erase time and enter the world of her dreams again, to live in that dream world and listen to her voice speaking of a land where objects had no weight. Because the weight of things was now the weight of sadness.’]

Rama’s writing of *Tierra sin mapa* therefore fulfilled two roles. Firstly, it became the means of coping with the pain of losing his mother; secondly, it was a way of bringing his mother home and addressing her own *morriña*: ‘Comprendo que me haya tocado a mí, que pesquisaba su tierra fantasmal, traerla aquí, de regreso a su pueblo’ (128) [‘I understand that it was my duty, as I was seeking that ghostly land of hers, to bring her here, back to her homeland’]. After his visit to his mother’s village and as he is on the train back, there are a number of references to a static world unaffected by change: Rama feels that time has stopped (‘se detiene el tiempo’) (129); he is reminded of a medieval painting of pastoral life; and he is aware that he has stepped outside of time (‘que nos hemos salido del tiempo, que todo esto que miro no está en la historia sino en la eternidad’ [Ibid.]) [‘that we have left time, that

everything I can see is not in history but in eternity’]). The book’s final reflection about his mother’s childhood occurs as Rama looks back to that afternoon’s visit and realises that he wanted to recover his mother’s childhood because her memories of it had provided her with solace during her exile: ‘Para que [a su infancia] no se la tragara la tierra, (...) para que de algún modo mágico que no quiero ni sé explicar, siguiera viviendo encerrada en una infancia que si tuvo amargura, le pareció por años el único reino de una segura gracia.’ (129-30) [‘So that the earth would not swallow her childhood, (...) so that in some magical way that I neither want nor am able to explain, she could continue to live enclosed in a childhood that, without being devoid of bitter experiences, seemed to her for many years the only domain which permitted her salvation.’]

Rama’s *posmorriña* is therefore also a process of closure on behalf of his uprooted mother, involving the fictionalisation and idealisation of her roots as well as his taking on the memories she had passed on to him. Before we consider the ultimate consequences for Rama himself of this process, let us highlight the contrast between the two sides of his work.

The reader of the socially-conscious critic Ángel Rama is likely to be struck by this text of creative recollection of his maternal world, as it clearly contrasts with his public figure in a number of interrelated aspects. Firstly, there is an opposition in terms of the attention given in each to social life. For someone who, as we saw earlier, would declare in his 1972 evaluation of his role in *Marcha* that his task was to study literature with a firm eye on the material circumstances within which it was created, and who in one of his earliest writings considered the marks left by colonial history on his own country, it is surprising to note a definite lack of interest in the specifics of context in the case of rural Galicia. The romantic and idealising tone of *Tierra sin mapa*, a title that literally rejects charts and geographical detail, as the adult Lina did towards the end of her life when her son showed her an atlas of her homeland, represents a remarkable contrast to the emphasis on forms of social control and

on the function of urban grids in *La ciudad letrada*. Particularly striking, alas, is the absence of any reference to the political situation of Spain at the time of his visit, under the Franco dictatorship.

Secondly, there is in the book of reminiscences no hint of the process of cultural development and interaction that Rama would later label transculturation and which would filter into most of his Latin Americanist work. Even though there is mention of poverty and the need for emigration in Bergantiños, there is no engagement in *Tierra sin mapa* with the economic and political background that led to it, or with any form of resistance on the part of the dwellers of that rural world. Indeed, Lina's Galicia seems to have remained unchanged for centuries and to exist in a sort of timeless limbo which appears to fascinate an author who in the contemporary article (1955) discussed above rejected the notion that tradition is a static realm, and who was later to engage positively with the turbulence as well as the diversity and effervescence of Latin American culture.

Thirdly, the two perspectives differ as regards subjectivity. In his 1983 prologue to Mario Vargas Llosa's novel, *La guerra del fin del mundo*, Rama recalled how he had criticised the Peruvian author for claiming that his plots came to him through a mystical force. The critic had argued instead that novels were the product of rational control and that they performed ideological tasks: Vargas Llosa was at the time imbued of 'subjektivismo astuto' ['clever subjectivism'] and believed that creativity came from 'los dichosos fantasmas o demonios' ['the blessed ghosts or demons'] (Rama 1985c: 345). In his new novel, Vargas Llosa moved in the direction Rama had suggested, and wrote a text which is like a weapon that helps analyse and interpret reality: 'Como toda arma producida por los lenguajes simbólicos de la cultura, procura introducir, en el vasto conjunto de los discursos intelectuales, una interpretación persuasiva que los oriente.' (346) ['Like every weapon produced by the symbolic languages of culture, it tries to introduce, in the vast set of

intellectual discourses, a persuasive interpretation that can guide them.’]. Albeit not quite up to this level of sophistication, Rama’s 1960 case for the function of teaching literature in secondary education (as a means to guide a nation in progress towards civilisation) prefigures these late ideas of his.

Such claims seem very far from Rama’s own writing in *Tierra sin mapa*, which strikes the reader as strongly permeated with the very subjectivism that he was criticising in Vargas Llosa. We may well wonder if there is a more fundamental explanation for his *posmorriña*.

An organic state of *posmorriña*?

It is interesting to note that not long after challenging the great Peruvian novelist, Rama the highly rational critic with a resolutely socio-political agenda declared privately that he was now inclined to reject that role. In a letter to his countrywoman (also of Galician roots), the poet Idea Vilariño, dated in Paris on 14 October 1983 (a little over a month before his death) and written as he was working on *La ciudad letrada*, Rama confessed his doubts about being an intellectual: ‘[trabajo] en un ácido libro sobre los intelectuales y el poder: compruebo que nunca sentí simpatía por los intelectuales y ni siquiera sé bien por qué soy uno de ellos, a pesar de que cumplo estrictamente con las exigencias de la casta.’ (Peyrou 2010: 107) [‘I am working on an acerbic book about intellectuals and power: I realise that I never warmed to intellectuals and I don’t even know why I am one of them, even though I comply strictly with the attributes of the species.’]

It follows from this claim that even though he engaged successfully in his rational, critical career, this did not fulfil a somewhat truer, more intimate side of Rama’s personality. This realm, involving the emotions, is at the centre of Rama’s task in *Tierra sin mapa*. We can further ask whether this was only a personal experience or whether – in line with Rama the transcultural critic – it might also apply to his Latin American, and specifically River

Plate, context more widely. The affective dimension is of course fundamental to both personal and collective identity, so that researchers speak of ‘subjective individual achievement’ as well as ‘social subjectivity’ (Wetherell 2010: 3).

Emigration, undergone on economic grounds by his mother and great numbers of her contemporary Galicians, was an experience that also affected Rama himself and many of his intellectual peers for political reasons during the period of dictatorships in the Southern Cone in the 1970s. The topic inevitably entered his critical work, in pieces such as ‘La riesgosa navegación del escritor exiliado’ (Rama 1978), where he stated that the experience of exile brought about ‘un peculiar desgarramiento entre la nostalgia de la patria y la integración, por precaria que parezca, a otras patrias’ (Rama 1998: 241) [‘a peculiar split between the nostalgia for the homeland and the integration, however precarious it may seem, within other homelands’] which was accompanied by ‘un estado de transitoriedad y de inseguridad que resulta constitutivo psicológicamente de esta circunstancia vital’ (Ibid.) [‘a state of transience and insecurity which is psychologically central to this life condition’]. This personal dimension comes through in other private writings, notably the diary that he kept during his years of exile until shortly before his death.

In one entry, dated 12 October 1974, he writes about the imminent death of his mother-in-law (who was living in Buenos Aires whilst Rama and his second wife, Marta Traba, the Argentinian writer and art critic, were in Venezuela). She represents for him a substitute for his own mother, whom he says he ‘always needed’: ‘Había devenido mi madre, esa figura que siempre necesito. La pierdo, más consciente aún que cuando murió mi propia madre, ahora que su presencia era nuevamente paz, tranquilidad, consuelo, refugio’ (Rama 2001: 53) [‘She had become my mother, that figure I always need. I am aware of losing her, even more so than when my own mother died, now that her presence once again represented peace, tranquillity, comfort, refuge’]. So, for Rama the disappearance of the mother entails the

dissatisfaction of elemental needs. Such a profound feeling of lack is implicit in the notion of *morriña*, a term that comes from the Galician-Portuguese *morrinha*, whose precise etymology, though unknown, may have some connection with the Latin *mori*, to die.⁵ If *morriña* is sorrow about the absence, and metaphorically the death, of a homeland, *posmorriña* transfers that feeling to the children of the uprooted.

In this scheme it is logical that an idealised Galicia should represent a form of heaven not only for Lina but, in the process of *posmorriña*, also for Rama. *Tierra sin mapa* closes with the message that the world of his mother's childhood that the son has been recreating actually matches that of the Galicia he has seen. Rural Galicia becomes the compensation for the labours of earthly life, both for Lina, and, it seems, also for Rama:

Pedía un cielo para ella y los demás, pedía otro paraíso que fuera como el de la infancia, lejano y próximo. Y cuando con más ardor el corazón decía que sólo un cielo esplendoroso podía compensar esta larga vida de trabajo constante, este injusto reparto del mundo, era este mismo suelo el que veía ascendido a la gloria, [...] era esta vida misma la que debía continuar perenne. Y así volvía a hallarme con la tierra, a la que estoy atado como un hombre. (130)

[‘I asked for a heaven for her and for the others, I asked for another paradise that was like that of childhood, both distant and near. And when with passion my heart said that only a magnificent heaven could compensate for this long life of constant labour, this unjust distribution of the world, it was this very ground that I saw ascend towards glory, (...) it was this very life that must continue forever. And so I returned to this land to which I am tied as a man.’]

If we take this literally, Galicia assumes the status of a heaven for this first-generation Uruguayan intellectual. Marianne Hirsch (1999: 16) draws on the work of the Freudian psychoanalyst Dominick LaCapra on coping with traumatic experience; according to LaCapra there are ‘two memorial positions: acting out (melancholia) and working through (mourning)’. The former is ‘based on tragic identification and the constitution of one’s self as a surrogate victim. It is based on overidentification and repetition. Keeping the wounds open, it results in retraumatization.’ The second, working through, ‘involves self-reflexivity, a determination of responsibility, some amount of distance. A goal and not an end, it is a process of evolution that is never fully accomplished – and therefore never free of some element of acting out.’

Rama appears to be somewhere between these two positions: he misses his mother’s home, on her behalf and also – especially at difficult times, such as when mourning her death or expecting his mother-in-law’s demise, or whilst experiencing exile in person – for himself. This is in line with LaCapra’s comment that ‘[a]cting out may well be necessary and unavoidable in the wake of extreme trauma, especially for victims’ (Ibid.). And yet, Rama also manages to work through his loss and establish ‘some amount of distance’ as he becomes fully engaged in forging a modern culture in his own environment. He does so first in Uruguay, as part of a group of like-minded intellectuals, the Generation of 1945 (Rodríguez Monegal 1966) or Critical Generation (Rama 1972), intent on revitalising national culture, and later taking as his target Latin America as a whole. Like the *modernistas* before him, and like other intellectual figures of his subcontinent, he engaged in transcultural understanding and became himself a dweller in a number of lettered cities.

We may wonder too if there is a more general, subliminal context for missing a parent’s homeland amongst the generation of Rama’s contemporaries, especially in a country such as Uruguay, where a significant proportion of the population was made up of recently

arrived immigrants and their children. There is at least one other example of a contemporary Uruguayan writer and intellectual who wrote creatively about his family's roots in Europe. José Pedro Díaz (1921-2006), a close friend of Rama's and like him at the time married to a poet of their shared generation (Amanda Berenguer), wrote a strongly autobiographical text that related a return to his family roots, also in a rural setting, this time in southern Italy. The work is *Los fuegos de San Telmo* (1964) and it recounts a journey by the author to the land of his ancestors and in particular that of his great uncle, Marina di Camerota, in the province of Salerno. The connection between personal experience and fictional account is clear from comments Díaz recorded in his own diaries. His plan to write a novel that would trace his family's journey from Italy to Uruguay was recorded as early as 1942, when he was twenty-one, and seven years later, after receiving the visit of a relative from the area, he wrote that a trip to the ancestral homeland would be a way of realising 'mi ser ya esbozado, y así yo me realizaría en el camino o en la dirección que ese camino de la memoria ya señala' (Azugarat 2012: 189-90) ['my self already in outline, so that I would be fulfilled / completed on the road or in the direction which that road of memory is already pointing me towards'].

The issue that comes through in these two contemporary authors and compatriots is identity, both personal and cultural, a subject that was core to Rama's ideas about Latin America and was also to assume a significant presence in his intimate writings in the diary he kept in exile. One recurrent commentary on his time in Venezuela is his criticism of the way local intellectuals treated their recently arrived foreign peers. The entry for 30 October 1977 shows this particularly strongly, as the diarist explains that during a bout of insomnia he confronted a series of mental images of 'los pseudo intelectuales (borrachos y xenófobos, incapaces de toda digna tarea intelectual) que han dominado y prostituido la vida cultural del país y se han ensañado contra nosotros' (2001: 79) ['the pseudo-intellectuals (drunkards and xenophobes, incapable of any worthy intellectual activity) who have dominated and

prostituted the cultural life of the country and who have been particularly unpleasant towards us’]. In the entry that follows (1 November) Rama tries to provide an explanation based on historical causes rather than essential characteristics of his host country, namely sudden wealth (occasioned by the abrupt increase in international demand for oil in the early 1970s), a wasteful attitude towards resources, and ‘la rapacidad cruda de la burguesía que se enriquece con esta coyuntura y nada hace para la educación del pueblo en otros valores’ (80) [‘the crude rapacity of the bourgeoisie who benefits from the circumstances and does nothing to instil values in the education of the people’]. Rama is particularly aware of the absence of an intellectual class who would take on the role of creating and maintaining high moral and critical standards: ‘Como el país carece de una vigilancia crítica seria, documentada y austera, independiente y sagaz, toda esa mediocridad sobrenada en una confusión generalizada’ (Ibid.) [‘Because the country lacks a group that would engage in serious, well-documented and austere, independent and judicious critical vigilance, all that mediocrity rules over a generalised confusion’] which ‘compromete a los buenos elementos y propaga un caos insincero que impide la formación de jóvenes generaciones renovadoras’ (Ibid.) [‘compromises the worthy elements and propagates an insincere chaos that prevents the training of young, renovating generations’]. He then reflects that whilst it is natural for an influx of immigration to cause some resentment amongst the locals, this should be only a temporary phase, and he cites the case of writers in the southern cone, such as Florencio Sánchez (notably in his 1904 play *La gringa* [*The Foreign Girl*]), who depicted a ‘solución armoniosa’ (81) [harmonious solution] involving the integration of the new blood into a common project for the future.

Rama moves on to discuss the relationship between tradition and cosmopolitanism, which had exemplary exponents in the Venezuelan generation that preceded the recent economic boom which brought ‘pueblerinos’ (82) [‘provincials’] into an unwelcoming

capital, ‘una ciudad notoriamente inhumana’ (Ibid.) [‘a notoriously inhumane city’]. The legacy of these more recent arrivals has been a defensive position opting for ‘la sacralización telúrica’ [‘consecration of telluric values’] which tended to ‘eliminar el panorama universal’ (Ibid.) [‘eliminate any universal outlook’]. He concludes his entry with a reflection that both respects the past and local tradition and looks outwards onto the world beyond. He states that only the harmonious development of both traditional values with a rural imprint (‘de una impronta rural’) and a cosmopolitan openness (‘una apertura universalista’) (82) would foster a national identity without the shackles of provincialism; a further consequence of this attitude is the welcoming and integration of newcomers: ‘Y de paso disolver la resistencia al elemento extranjero, reconociéndole su calidad de heraldos de ese mundo presente y dotándolos de una fuerte y sabrosa impregnación local.’ (83) [‘At the same time, it would dissolve the resistance to foreign influence, recognising its quality as a herald of that present world and providing it with a strong flavour of local values.’].

This message of conciliation between tradition and an outward and forward perspective, which echoes his 1955 article on Uruguayan identity, is reiterated during a sojourn in Barcelona a few weeks later. On Christmas day 1977, as he witnessed the time-honoured groups of dancers, of all ages, engaged in the *sardana* outside the Cathedral, Rama reflected on the cohesive function of communal values: the conservation of the dance, and the spontaneous enactment of it, is a feat of Catalan culture which demonstrates ‘la fuerza de su pasado, supervivencia bajo la cobertura industrial y comercial, y la confiada fe de sus hombres en su propia historia’ (98) [‘the strength of its past, its survival against industrial and commercial development, and the confident faith of the people in their own history’]. No doubt the context in which he observed the dance, only two years after the demise of Franco and of a dictatorship that had oppressed the Catalan nation for four decades, added a strong

emotional charge to Rama's perception. He might well have felt a mix of poignancy and of hope that his own exile would also come to an end one day.

Rama's experience as a foreigner in Caracas inevitably made him ponder on the situation of his own Galician ancestors in Uruguay, a different place and time which offered stronger social and cultural foundations than his current circumstances. He wondered whether his parents might have felt similarly alienated when they arrived and added that he was not aware of any prejudices against his family as a child. In corroboration of that lack of discrimination he cites the testimony of a Galician publisher, Benito Milla, who in a recent telephone call assured him that when he arrived in Montevideo in the 1940s he joined anarchist groups who expressed critical views about the country and its problems 'sin que nadie lo considerara extranjero' ['without anyone seeing him as a foreigner'] (93). This is consistent with the reflections of Rama's younger brother, Germán, who led a reform in Uruguayan education under the government of Julio María Sanguinetti in the 1990s. In a recent interview, he reflected on the situation of his parents and the educational opportunities they were able to provide their children. He came from a family who was escaping hunger in Galicia and managed to raise four highly respected professional children; asking himself how this could happen, he referred to the high-quality education provision in Uruguay: 'Porque hubo [...] un modelo de escuela francesa y esa escuela nos formó. Y en los liceos había profesores excelentes.' (Germán Rama 2013) ['Because there was a (...) model of French education that formed us. And the secondary schools had excellent teachers.']

Ángel confirms this portrait of peasant parents who supported their children's education in his obituary of his brother Carlos (Rama 1981). And like his younger sibling Germán, Ángel also stresses the role of historical context as he ponders the typical behaviour of contemporary Uruguayans, commonly described as rather sombre: 'Sí, en general tristes o (...) "grises" y aun algo desabridos. Es lo que captó [Mario] Benedetti en su literatura, pero

siempre he insistido en que es un rasgo epocal (histórico) y no consustancial: pienso en el suntuoso modernismo o en el desaforado siglo XIX' (2001: 90). ['Yes, in general they are sad or (...) "grey" and even somewhat bland. It is what (Mario) Benedetti captured in his literature, but I have always insisted that it is a historical feature rather than an essential trait: I can also think of the sumptuous *modernismo* or the wild nineteenth century.']

Conclusion

We have noticed two complementary impulses in Rama's work: the historicist or culturalist, on the one hand, and the romantic or essentialist, on the other. The former is expressed most thoroughly in the transcultural drive that we have catalogued and which corresponds to his most famous critical work, but there are clear signs of this worldview throughout his critical writings, including his very earliest ones; this is his exterior side. The latter impulse is illustrated by the ideas and images that come through so strongly in *Tierra sin mapa*, and continue in personal writings to the end of his life, as shown in his diary entries; this is his intimate side, strongly associated with emotions and personal identity.

We have also seen that Rama's parents, although uneducated themselves, and unlike the *hidalgos* of the conquest described in *La ciudad letrada*, chose not to foster 'pueblerino' ['provincial'] attitudes but rather they instilled in all four of their children a passion for learning, as declared by both Germán, above, and Lilia elsewhere (in Domínguez Vaselli 2011). As they became highly educated, the children assumed historically-aware and outward-looking attitudes about personal and cultural identity. They recognised the positive material circumstances of the country in which they were raised, and they drew on them to explain their own development, that of their own generation and, in the case of Carlos and Ángel in particular, the development of Latin America. Rama's ideas about transculturation

and intellectual ('lettered') urban centres are not incompatible with his own experience and that of his contemporaries in Uruguay and the subcontinent.

And yet, there is also in Rama a strong emotional connection with Galicia, the land of his mother. Traba de Bergantiños, as a romanticised and essentialised semi-fictional site of consolation for loss, referred to literally as a heaven, was a fundamental formative element for this first-generation Uruguayan intellectual. Indeed, two significant details underline the emotional significance of the connection with his Galician roots. One is factual; the other is a curious symbolic coincidence. The first is that the link is with the mother, the figure who has strong traditional associations with home and belonging, and not the father (d. 1942), who even though he also came from Galicia, does not figure in *Tierra sin mapa* at all. The second detail is the equivalence between his second wife's patronymic and his mother's birthplace. It is as if, through Marta *Traba*, Rama finally established a definitive bond with the land of Lina Facal. Indeed, the fact that the couple died together in the plane crash stresses and adds pathos to the connection.

Ángel Rama represents a felicitous amalgamation of the culturally sophisticated critic and the emotional son, father and lover. The entry on insomnia in his diary recalled above nicely captures the balance between the two sides: having described the frenetic succession of disturbing images that dominated his night-time, he moves to contrast the ease with which he is able to defend against them during wakefulness, 'apelando a razonamientos sociológicos' ['appealing to sociological reasoning'] (2001: 79). If, as it seems, *posmorriña* and transculturation are complementary processes, his maternal, Galician, roots played a rather crucial role in the formation of one of the most influential commentators on Latin American identity in the second half of the twentieth century. Galicia gave Ángel, through his mother, the aforementioned 'valores idiosincráticos' ['idiosyncratic values'] which he needed to complement the 'energía creadora' ['creative energy'] fostered by the educational facilities

and the welcoming atmosphere of the country which received his ancestors, the Ramas and the Facals.

Notes

1. Unless stated otherwise, all translations are my own.
2. A prefatory note in this edition states that the book was submitted for a prize at the Centro de Cultura Gallega in Buenos Aires in 1959, which it won. A first and a second edition came out in Montevideo in 1961, with publishers Asir and Alfa.
3. In her article on *Tierra sin mapa*, Sylvia Lago, who knew Rama, says in passing that she perceives in the book, as well as in the poetry of the fellow Uruguayan Juana de Ibarbourou, the subliminal ‘presencia tutelar y vitalizadora’ of the Rosalía de Castro (Lago 1997: 93). The point is interesting, as the image of rural Galicia in *Tierra sin mapa* is consistent with some poems of Rosalía de Castro’s emotionally powerful *Cantares gallegos* (1863), perhaps the quintessential lyrical statement of *morriña*. Both book and poet were well-known in the River Plate, so Rama must have been acquainted with them. But whilst he did write a subtly critical and ultimately positive prologue to an anthology of the Uruguayan’s poems (Ibarbourou 1968: 5-13) and he co-edited the official edition of her first collection (Ibarbourou 1963), there is no record of a specific study of Castro in Barrios-Lémez’s detailed bibliography.
4. The Rama family house was the one which Ángel listed as his own in the first literary review he edited, *Clinamen*, from 1947 to 1948: at Espinillo 1424, in a quiet street about one-and-a-half miles from the leafy Prado district and some three miles from the city centre.
5. According to the *Diccionario de la Real Academia Española* the term comes from the Galician-Portuguese *morriña*; a complementary meaning is a disease in cattle. Nascentes (1966) states that the etymology is uncertain (‘controversa’), 501, but the *Diccionario da Real*

Academia Galega has, as its second meaning, ‘Corpo morto en estado de descomposición’ [‘Dead body in a state of decomposition’].

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