



## STOCKCERO TEACHING KIT (151)

**TEXT:** *El nuevo romanticismo*

**AUTHOR:** José Díaz Fernández

**EDITOR:** Cesar de Vicente Hernando

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### PART 1: CONTEXT & CRITICAL ANALYSIS

#### 1. A CROSSROADS OF IDEAS (1930s Spain):

Published in November 1930, *El nuevo romanticismo* by José Díaz Fernández (1898-1941) is a seminal work situated at a pivotal moment in Spanish history, just before the proclamation of the Second Republic. It asserts a "total revolution" in art, politics, and literature, signaling a "new conception of life" and a radical shift in the "spiritual blueprint of the world."

Díaz Fernández, a journalist, politician, and intellectual associated with leftist movements, used this essay to articulate a new aesthetic and ideological position, aiming to redefine the role of art and artists in transforming society.

#### 2. REINTERPRETING ROMANTICISM: A DESTRUCTIVE AND CONSTITUENT IMPULSE:

Díaz Fernández's "new romanticism" is not a nostalgic return to 19th-century aesthetics (medieval imagery, lyrical narration). Instead, it's an embrace of the "destructive and constituent impulse" of historical Romanticism, aligning it with revolutionary movements.

He homologizes the construction of romantic aesthetics (revolutions of 1830/1848, critique of modernity for human ideals) with the materialist aesthetics emerging from the Russian Revolution (1917) and other European and Latin American movements, advocating for an art that expands life and freedom.

#### 3. THE FOUR POLEMICS: FEMINISM, AVANT-GARDE, LITERATURE & POLITICS, LIBERALISM:

##### **Feminism:**

Díaz Fernández critiques political feminism and the suffrage movement, arguing that women's emancipation stems from "social progress" and "mechanical progress" rather than political liberalism. He sees women's role as complementary and emphasizes their emerging sensibility in the modern world.

##### **Avant-garde:**

He distinguishes between "bourgeois avant-garde" (focused on form, snobbery, art for art's sake) and "communist avant-garde" (futurism's "serious and fruitful tendency" linked to social transformation). He advocates for "literatura de avanzada" (advanced literature) that actively participates in building a new civilization.



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**Literature & Politics:**

For Díaz Fernández, politics encompasses all human activity within social life. Literature, therefore, must reflect this, producing "ideas before images" and acting as a "prophetic" force that shapes a new "concepción vital en movimiento."

**Problem of Liberalism:**

He argues that liberalism failed to take root in Spain due to the Counter-Reformation, the monarchical Restoration, and its eventual corruption into an oligarchic system. He calls for a "political civilization" grounded in the integral freedom of man and rejects parliamentarism in favor of genuine popular representation.

**4. TOWARDS A PROLETARIAN ART AND DOCUMENTARY WRITING:**

Post-1930, Díaz Fernández's project evolves, attempting to integrate popular elements into the sharpening social struggle. The initial "literatura de avanzada" gives way to a proletarian art and documentary writing, especially after the failures of the Republic (Casas Viejas, Asturias).

His vision is for an art that is "constructed with all modern elements" (synthesis, metaphor, anti-rhetoric) and "organizes in artistic production the contemporary drama of universal consciousness," with "passion, sincerity, rebellion, and effort" at its core.

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## PART 2: TOPICS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

**Díaz Fernández's "New Romanticism":**

How does Díaz Fernández redefine Romanticism in his 1930 essay? What are the key differences between his concept of "new romanticism" and traditional 19th-century Romanticism?

**Art as a Revolutionary Tool:**

Discuss the author's vision of literature and art as instruments for social and political transformation. How does he differentiate between "bourgeois avant-garde" and "literatura de avanzada"?

**Feminism in the 1930s Context:**

Analyze Díaz Fernández's views on women's emancipation and political feminism. How do his arguments reflect the complex debates surrounding women's rights in early 20th-century Spain, particularly regarding suffrage?

**Critique of Liberalism:**

Explore Díaz Fernández's critique of liberalism in Spain. What historical factors does he identify as preventing genuine freedom and popular participation? What "political action program" does he propose for his generation?

**Relevance Today:**

To what extent are Díaz Fernández's polemics (e.g., about art, politics, social change) still relevant in contemporary discussions about literature and society?

**"El nuevo romanticismo" in the "Summer Reading" Bundle:**

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How does this essay, as a theoretical work, contribute to a bundle focused on "short and accessible works"? How might a literary theory text be "accessible" or "light" for certain students?

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### PART 3: SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

- **Díaz Fernández, José.** *El nuevo romanticismo*. Ed. Cesar de Vicente Hernando. Stockcero, 2013.
  - **Santonja, Gonzalo.** *La República de los libros: El nuevo libro español durante la II República*. Barcelona: Anthropos, 1989.
  - **Scanlon, Geraldine.** *La polémica feminista en la España contemporánea 1868-1974*. Madrid: Siglo XXI, 1986.
  - **Marx, Karl y Friedrich Engels.** *La ideología alemana*. Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1970. (For context on historical materialism).
  - **Ortega y Gasset, José.** *El tema de nuestro tiempo*. Madrid: Austral, 2006. (For "generation" theory).
  - **Zetkin, Clara.** *La cuestión femenina y el socialismo*. Madrid: Akal, 1978. (For Bolshevik critique of feminism).
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## PART 4: QUIZ BANK (Multiple Choice)

*In José Díaz Fernández's **El nuevo romanticismo**, what is the central aim of the "new romanticism" movement?*

- A) To return to the idealized aesthetic forms of the 19th century.
- B) To promote a form of art for art's sake, detached from social concerns.
- C) To achieve a total revolution in art and thought, leading to a new conception of life.
- D) To support the existing political and social structures of Spain.

**Correct Answer: C**

*How does Díaz Fernández critique the "bourgeois avant-garde" artistic movements of his time?*

- A) He praises their focus on pure aesthetic form and experimentation.
- B) He views them as too connected to traditional academic art.
- C) He dismisses them as snobbish, dehumanized, and lacking genuine social rebellion.
- D) He sees them as the true path to a new, progressive society.

**Correct Answer: C**

*Díaz Fernández argues that literature should be "profetic" and focus on producing "ideas before images." What is the ultimate goal of such literature?*

- A) To entertain and distract the masses from social problems.
- B) To serve as a tool for social transformation and a new "concepción vital."
- C) To accurately document historical events without interpretation.
- D) To reinforce existing conservative values and traditions.

**Correct Answer: B**

*According to Díaz Fernández, which of the following best describes the historical failure of liberalism in Spain?*

- A) Its excessive embrace of traditional Catholic values.
- B) Its inability to adapt to modern economic theories.
- C) Its failure to truly take root due to the Counter-Reformation and subsequent oligarchic corruption.
- D) Its over-reliance on international political alliances.

**Correct Answer: C**

*Díaz Fernández's essay is characterized as taking a clear stance on the need for a "new sensibility." This sensibility is described as:*

- A) Primarily focused on individual spiritual enlightenment.
- B) Emphasizing the exaltation of the human and a tension in all forms of existence.
- C) Advocating for a return to traditional family values.
- D) Promoting political neutrality in artistic expression.

**Correct Answer: B**



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