

The Genealogy and Praxis of New Romanticism From the Nineteenth Century to a New Vanguard

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El ensayo se propone explorar la posible relación entre el romanticismo decimonónico español e inglés y el nuevo romanticismo español (1926-1936). Al pesimismo que empapaba el romanticismo del siglo XIX se contraponen el impulso optimista nacido de la resacralización del proletariado efectuada por el nuevo romanticismo. En esta literatura la celebración rehumanizada de la acción colectiva y su promesa marcan la distancia entre el movimiento de preguerra y el romanticismo decimonónico. Un afán de síntesis caracteriza el movimiento neorromántico: síntesis de lo real y lo poético informada por la síntesis que implica en sí la sacralización del proletariado, que une la realidad y la ilusión, lo genérico y lo particular. El nuevo romanticismo politiza más abiertamente la emoción, que se vincula plenamente con el entorno social. El escritor comprometido es agente de la transformación social. Cara al futuro, el nuevo romanticismo se desentiende del pasado, a diferencia del romanticismo burgués del XIX. Sin embargo, en su propensión por la síntesis y su monismo se acusan en el nuevo romanticismo ecos del romanticismo anterior.

M. H. Abrams's statement that, «the English romantic era, which occurred hard upon the French Revolution, amid war and the rumors of war, and in the stress of social and political adjustments to the Industrial Revolution, was comparable to our own period between the two World Wars...» (326), has great relevancy for a genealogical study of Spain's *Nuevo Romanticismo* (1926-1936), itself an *entre-guerre* cultural effort. His assertion prepares the ground for literary critics and historiographers to explore the relationship between these two Romanticisms. It is a relationship that critics have treated too synoptically, and in some cases have either ignored or even outrightly denied. No investigator has explored the deeper links between nineteenth-century Romanticism and the more revolutionary New Romanticism that celebrated the pro-

letariat and rehumanization of culture; turned Orteguian precepts of dehumanization around; and attempted to approach language and representation in a new conciliatory key that wedded pragmatized writing with certain aspects of a vanguard, self-referential program.

Although certain critics such as Juan Fernando Jiménez, Pablo Gil Casado and particularly, David Herzberger, have initiated efforts in explaining the kindred relationship between the two Romanticisms, they, nevertheless, stop short of a full and thorough undertaking of this comparative project. The insights they offer and the questions they tentatively pose, however, are not without interest, and have led to this present study, which will discuss in some detail the relationship between the poetics and aesthetic longings of the writers of the first half of the nineteenth-century and those of the emerging, «re-humanized» authors in pre-Civil War Spain. It is to be hoped that this essay can account for some of the reasons that José Díaz Fernández chose the word «Romanticism» as part of the name for the new literary effort. Romanticism, according to the author, refers to a spent sensibility, to the past, all of which Díaz Fernández abhors and is pleased to gainsay throughout his seminal book of essays, *El nuevo romanticismo* (1930). Despite their professed antipathy toward Romanticism, the New Romantics are very much rooted —albeit at times contrarily— in the aesthetic practices and theories of their nineteenth-century predecessors. Furthermore, no careful discussion of New Romanticism can be deemed complete without considering the role vanguard literature plays in shedding light on the genealogy and praxis of this new writing. Theorists have often linked avant-garde sensibilities and ideology to Romanticism, as well as to New Romanticism, whose writers reacted strongly to the literary vagaries of the vanguard. In having done so, they form a parallel generation, cleverly dubbed by Fuentes, «la otra generación del 27».¹

¹ For further discussions on the *other* designation for *Nuevo Romanticismo* —«La otra generación del 27»— see FUENTES, VILCHES and SCHNEIDER.

Díaz Fernández, although responsible for naming the new rehumanizing literature «Nuevo Romanticismo», does not offer much assistance to our inquiry into his deep thinking about the choice of the term, or about the less obvious affinities between *his* Romanticism and *that other one* from more than a century and a half ago. In fact, he remains almost completely silent about, and curiously recalcitrant toward, the positing of any definitive kindred spirit between the two sensibilities. Although the few sanguine statements that he makes: «El romanticismo no ha sido tanto la exaltación de lo individual como de lo humano» (41); or, «no puedo menos de apreciar en aquella generación arrebatada y triste el anhelo ideal que ha faltado a las posteriores» (42); and finally, «[los románticos] volverán al hombre y escucharán el rumor de su conciencia» (57), may lead us to a purposeful discussion about the genealogy of nineteenth-century Romanticism and its ties to the Revolutionary Romanticism of the 1930s, most other statements by the author about Romanticism are not as flattering. In fact, the following representative observations made by Díaz Fernández are flatly contradictory to the above kind words: «Yo no quiero hacer una defensa del romanticismo al que acuso de hinchazón retórica, de borrachera pasional, de gesticulación excesiva y ociosa» (42); or, «Pienso que los nuevos románticos han de parecerse *muy poco* a los románticos del XIX. Carecerán, afortunadamente, de aquel gesto excesivo, de aquella petulancia espectacular, de aquel empirismo rehogado en un mar de retórica» (57; italics mine). As a result, critics remain confounded by these captious and apparently unfriendly assertions about romantic practices in the nineteenth-century, and thus they have been content not to pursue the issue any further. How then to make sense of this contradictory set of evaluations? Why the inclusion of «Romanticism» in Díaz Fernández's New Romanticism?

Although critical shibboleths encountered in romantic criticism such as «liberty», «rebellion», «communication», «passion», «lyricism», are all frequently used by critics who want to demonstrate quickly some sort of linkage between the two Romanticisms, there exists, nevertheless,

a more solid ground on which to build a satisfying approach in order to establish the rather complicated relationship that New Romanticism shares with nineteenth-century Romanticism. Since the two literary movements share analogous relationships to the avant-garde, the starting point of such a discussion should begin with Díaz Fernández's ambivalent views and shifting assessment of the vanguard. In this regard, Renato Poggioli —an astute critic of vanguard sensibility— demonstrates most convincingly that Romanticism has been a necessary precedent for the avant-garde (46). He argues that Romanticism was able to flourish only in a culture that was «conquered by liberty» (105), an assertion that is also valid for the avant-garde and, especially, for the writers of the «Other Generation of 27», who seek to extend the fever of freedom even further by including all segments of society: the new romantic writer embraces proletarian culture, for which the avant-garde generally had little patience or respect. Poggioli also indicates that Romanticism was the first cultural movement to triumph without support from the hegemonic elements of society, an observation undoubtedly true of the avant-garde, as well as of New Romanticism (104-105). The similar nature of the relationship that both Romanticism and New Romanticism share with the avant-garde supports the notion that New Romanticism —itself a transformed and radicalized re-incarnation of the nineteenth-century sensibility— is genealogically linked to Romanticism.

Díaz Fernández remains venomously critical of most vanguard writers who embrace dehumanized art. He accuses them of being uncaring formalists and «decadent» intellectuals, incapable of freeing themselves from the shackles of a useless autoreferentiality, and yet as a committed New Romantic he is not perfectly categorical or consistent in his position toward the avant-garde. In fact, not only does Díaz Fernández champion Russian futurism² —a vanguard sensibility, to be certain— he

² It is interesting to note that although Díaz Fernández is eager to praise Russian futurism, he condemns the futurism of the Italian poet Marinetti.

also insists that it is deeply *neo-romantic* and that it speaks most eloquently for contemporary society:

El futurismo es la tendencia más seria y más fecunda de cuantas figuran en el índice de la nueva literatura [...] Fue el futurismo el que creó las metáforas maquinistas, las imágenes simultáneas, el dinamismo lírico, y ese entusiasta desplazamiento del poeta hacia temas multitudinarios. Algunos críticos de entonces acusaron de neo-románticos a los futuristas, con gran indignación de algunos de éstos. Yo creo que el futurismo tuvo un perfil poderoso precisamente porque era neo-romántico y venía a deshacer con gesto duro las espumas irisadas del modernismo. (51)

In insisting that futurism is neo-romantic, Díaz Fernández prefigures Poggioli's claims about the interconnection of Romanticism with the vanguard. Although Díaz Fernández attacks the avant-garde for being bourgeois and *romantic*, he surprisingly asserts that his neo-romantic enterprise is the authentic vanguard: «La verdadera vanguardia será aquella que ajuste sus formas nuevas de expresión a las nuevas inquietudes del pensamiento. Saludemos al nuevo romanticismo del hombre y la máquina que harán un arte para la vida, no una vida para el arte» (58). In short, what links Romanticism to Díaz Fernández's progressive and radicalized vanguardism—that is, to New Romanticism—is the movement's need to fuse art with life, literature with real-world events, the text with the *hors-texte*.³

Peter Bürger, who has also written extensively on the avant-garde, argues that this need to coalesce art and life is one of the most basic, moving forces of vanguard culture, and that only traditional (i. e., bourgeois) art sponsors—paradoxically—a separation of art from praxis by being (pseudo)mimetic and «faithfully» representational (48-50). The vanguard aesthetic calls into question the way art «traditionally» functions

³ This point, central to HERZBERGER's essay, further clarifies the complicated relationship of New Romanticism to Romanticism.

in society. It is perhaps for that reason that Díaz Fernández can assert that New Romanticism's goals are *truly* vanguard since this new aesthetic, like the avant-garde, critiques the social functions of art and literature in a similar way, proposing that art must transform society and see the world in its totality, that is, as synthesis. For its part, nineteenth-century Romanticism had also changed the rules of representation and reception by offering a unified, monistic and dynamically organic world-view.

Most literary historians of European Romanticism, as well as those of Spanish New Romanticism, are fully in accord that both the Romantic and New Romantic projects are desperately in search of synthesis. Commenting that the conciliatory goals of Romanticism include synthesis and monism, Henry H. H. Remak tersely notes:

Romanticism is the attempt to heal the break in the universe, it is the painful awareness of dualism coupled with the urge to resolve it in organic monism, it is the confrontation with chaos followed by the will to reintegrate it into the order of the cosmos, it is the desire to reconcile a pair of opposites, to have synthesis follow antithesis. (35)

Even more succinct is Díaz Fernández's statement about his own beliefs pertaining to the «new art»: «Sostengo que hay una fórmula eterna de arte: la emoción. Y otra fórmula actual: la síntesis» («Nota» to *El blocao*, 26). Díaz Fernández dutifully argues for a synthesis that will annihilate the prevailing decadence that has existed since the second half of the nineteenth century, when Flaubert «initiated a subjectivistic transformation of realism» (Murphy 54). Thus, synthesis and a monistic world-view become the principal aims of the endeavors of the New Romantics, who take their lessons from the Romantics.

In a pioneering article on new romantic poetry, Anthony L. Geist views the Romantics' and New Romantics' desire for the coalescence of life and literature, of the «word and the world» —to use Herzberger's phrase (89)— as proof of their «profunda afinidad espiritual» (Geist, 101). Although his statement that «el "yo" romántico renace en la litera-

tura de esta década [of the 1930s]» may not be perfectly on target, Geist's remaining insights on the romantic ethos —the ethical aspect of art, the artist's passions as a protagonist of his own work, and, most of all, the desired fusion of life and art— lead him to posit cogently that an interrelationship of Romanticism and New Romanticism is all but obvious. In addition, he intuits some differences, which have great import regarding the New Romantics' method in changing certain aesthetic practices of the Romantics:

El acercamiento de los valores vitales y los valores estéticos en el arte va a caracterizar gran parte de la producción poética de los años 30. Los románticos «literaturizaron» la vida y vivieron «románticamente» (Byron, Shelley, Larra); los poetas comprometidos del siglo XX, en cambio, en un movimiento semejante hacia la fusión del arte y vida, van a politizar o «socializar» su obra. (101)

Geist's comments are instructive for many reasons. It soon becomes apparent that although both groups of Romantics —Old and New— are in search of a unified world vision, their respective aesthetic practices take them in different directions. That is to say, nineteenth-century romantic practices lead the «poet» to the internal world of the self, which occasions the crisis of a subjective, even solipsistic writing at the end of the century, finally culminating, after World War I, in the dehumanized literature that Díaz Fernández and his coterie of socialist writers abhorred, and against which they began to write. In other words, Romantics created a life for art: they lived *romantically*, as Geist observes. On the other hand, the members of the «Other Generation» change the intentionality and direction of their writing; the vectors and focus of their literature proceed outward —from deep, personal commitment to the external world of social and political activity—. They contract an art for life, a stipulation that returns us to Díaz Fernández's important, and now celebrated, phrase of intent: «Un arte para la vida, no una vida para el arte» (*Nuevo* 58).

Both the process of privileging external reality, and the change of direction of where (and how) art is to function, most emphatically distance New Romantics from Romantics. New Romanticism, turned at all times toward *the real*, is socially and politically based, and highly critical of all contemporary cultural structures, thereby remaining an optimistic enterprise precisely because it espouses transformation and truth. In short, New Romanticism celebrates the new, the synthetic, and the dynamic. Recognizing that this new literary sensibility shares some of these fundamental points of contact with Romanticism, Díaz Fernández, nevertheless, dismisses Romanticism as being dreary, pessimistic: «El arte romántico era pesimista por exceso de individualismo» (138), and individualism, he claims, eventually leads to hermeticism and unbridled subjectivity, which New Romantics disdain.

The newly found optimism of Díaz Fernández and his «fellow travelers» is located in the resacralization of the proletariat—the collectivity—, which, as it did for their mentor Marx and other more contemporary Russian theorists of Communism, affords these moderns consolation. When Díaz Fernández asserts that «todo arte verdaderamente humano es expresión de un sistema de acción colectiva», in some very perceptive way he is glossing Marx's analogous disappointments with the excesses and futility of Romanticism. Díaz Fernández, like Marx before him, fights to rehumanize and critique the exaggerated efforts of the romantic movement that unrelentingly set about «to realize the redemption of the Divine» (Wessell, 38). In their «vuelta a lo humano», the New Romantics echo the beliefs of Marx, who also sought to desacralize the divine and to show humanity how its own alienation could cease by forming a collectivity of creators. Those silent masses of men and women are now poised for realizing their own «material» redemption. Thus, the New Romantics, by placing the proletariat at the heart of the creative project, follow a Marxist agenda. The proletariat, which ironizes the critical gap between the *is* and the *ought* (Wessell, 198), is the only truly *real* concept by which the Hegelian ideals of synthesis are able to be *realized*.

In one other important sense, the proletariat becomes a seminal emblem of both Marxist and new romantic longings for synthesis. The notion (or even myth) of the proletariat is in itself a conceptualization marked by synthesis, since it is principally a «union of particularity and universality, is and ought, existence and essence in an absolute state of opposition» (Wessell 198). It is interesting to note that all the terms of this union inform the problematics of representation in the novels of the radical writers in the decade of the Thirties, and are strenuously debated by leftist theorists and critics. Thus, the privileging by the New Romantics of the proletariat, from which their entire project is spawned and takes its nourishment, inextricably links them to Marx's critique of Romanticism's unbridled subjectivity. If Wessell's contention that «the proletariat was Marx's socioeconomic version of the romantic poet as a historical force» is valid, then it soon becomes apparent that the real duty of the proletariat is to take on the fight «for the emancipation or poetization of human existence» (46). Furthermore, the new romantic writers ask the proletariat to wage war against the bourgeoisie in order to gain «ownership» and to achieve the definitive legitimization of culture, of which they are the rightful proprietors and heirs. It is in this sense that the new romantic writer becomes a visionary poet of the real, an insightful agent of transformation, obligated to lead the half-comprehending and downtrodden masses down the path to a more assured and articulated redemption, but one which is now secular in nature.

Critics who have written about Díaz Fernández and the writers of the «Other Generation» have often observed the peculiar blend of the romantic and the real that New Romanticism supports and sustains. In spite of being a movement dedicated to the real and to the proletariat, New Romanticism is at the same time an attempt to poeticize, even aestheticize its involvement with the current problems of the day. Aphoristically, it might be said that New Romantics «romanticize» their milieu, unlike Romantics who romanticize nostalgia itself. There is an uncanny sense of poetry to their agitprop, hard-boiled incursions into

reality, a fact noticed by many critics who wrote on the leftist, revolutionary literature of the 1930s. Maxim Gorki, who sees the analogous conflation of Classicism and Romanticism (his terms for «the real» and «the poetic») as a necessary and productive set of circumstances, states the proposition most simply, allowing us to appreciate the monistic thinking that links the «new» proletarian writers with that of the nineteenth-century Romantics: «This fusion of romanticism and realism is highly characteristic of our great [Western] writers, imbuing their works with an originality and a forcefulness that has extended an ever mounting and telling influence on the literature of the entire world» (33). Although Gorki is making a categorical statement about *all* great writers, his statement nevertheless has implications for our argument that links the poetic (the romantic) to the real (the classical), since he defines «great writers» as those who belong to «socialist romanticism». In turn, Díaz Fernández also acknowledges and approves of this fusion between the real and the poetic, or what he terms «lo ideal»: «La concatenación, o mejor expresado, mezcla de idealismo [the poetic] y realidad —que no es ya propiamente la deformación expresionista— típica del arte actual ¿no significará la aspiración del hombre de hoy en lo que atañe a las formas sociales venideras?» (197). Díaz Fernández insists throughout *El nuevo romanticismo* that this fusion between the real and the poetic is primary. This view constitutes, according to Vilches de Frutos, «uno de los principales hallazgos» of his book of essays (38). The return to realism—qualified as it may be—is the great constant of Díaz Fernández's essay.⁴

The New Romantics' need to poeticize—in a sense, to idealize—is not necessarily as contradictory as it may first appear. In fact, their poeti-

4 For a provocative critique of Romanticism and a cogent argument for linking Realism to Marxism, see TAGGARD. Of equal interest are the editors' comments at the end of the article, which take Taggard to task for giving short shrift to the Marxist possibilities of Romanticism.

cizing not only gives New Romanticism its iconoclastic and particular bent, but links it in a very precise way to early romantic theory, which can be seen in Wessell's very instructive discussion about the synonymy of poetry and reality. He reminds us that both Novalis and Schlegel find identity in what is real and what is poetic: Novalis confidently asserts that, «Poetry is genuinely absolutely real. [...] The more poetic, the more true». In turn, Schlegel concurs: «No poetry, no reality» (qtd. in Wessell 25). The desire to blend the real and the poetic is the starting point for both Romantics and New Romantics, permitting them to synthesize objectivity and subjectivity, which, unfortunately, have often been separated by an enormous abyss. The differing solutions of how to account for the abyss, and then to fill it, distinguish these two groups of writers. This allows us to return to the useful construction of the proletariat, Marx's creative answer for the filling of this abyss. Both Marx's and the New Romantics' discomfort and disappointment with Romanticism can be seen in their privileging of the proletariat, which they then hypostatize as an amalgam of the poetic and the real.

Víctor Fuentes's astute observations about the problematics of genre and the categorial indeterminacy of Díaz Fernández's «novel», *El blocao* (1928), generally considered to be the first masterpiece of New Romanticism, extend the discussion on how the New Romantics' desire for synthesizing informs their aesthetic practices.⁵ His comments also suggest how the poetic is a valid goal for New Romantic writing, which purports to uncover and correct the sociopolitical injustice and corruption of contemporary Spanish society. Fuentes observes: «A pesar de estar rotulada como novela, *El blocao*, en esa zona intermedia entre la narrativa y la poesía en que se sitúa la novelística de vanguardia, más que como género literario puede definirse como “comunicación del artista,

⁵ For a fuller discussion on the ideological implications of the novelistic structure and the categorial indeterminacy of *El blocao*, see SCHNEIDER.

sensible e intuitiva, con el alma del prójimo" [*Nuevo* 87]» (17). By stating that *El blocao* assumes an intermediate position between narration and poetry, Fuentes affirms the synthetic nature of Díaz Fernández's project. As accessible and hard-hitting as it may be, Díaz Fernández's slender volume, a self-styled novel, is at the same instant a lyrical collection of seven discrete tales about the colonial war that Spain waged against Morocco in the 1920s. *El blocao* remains enigmatic regarding genre and its place in the vanguard literature then in vogue. The novel is transitional, and therefore emblematic of New Romanticism itself. As it attempts to write against the intentions of the vanguardists, the work appropriates some of their strategies. In other words, the very ontology and genealogy of the work are themselves the products of fusion and synthesis: the poetic is wedded to the real; Neo-romanticism to the avant-garde, a late manifestation of Romanticism.

Fuentes's comments on Díaz Fernández's lyricism and poetic bent have other implications. When Fuentes reminds us that Díaz Fernández defines his lyrical efforts as a form of sincere and heartfelt communication between *real* authors and *real* readers, he leads us directly to Wordsworth—the dean of British Romanticism—or at least to the theorizing Wordsworth of the Preface to his and Coleridge's *Lyrical Ballads* (1802). Díaz Fernández argues in *El nuevo romanticismo* against a literature that is epistemological and driven solely by autoreferentiality and aestheticism by campaigning for a «literatura de avanzada» that sponsors communication. Likewise, Wordsworth in the Preface argues against all literature that is inaccessible and not capable of reaching his readers who are all *real* men and women. The British poet embraces communication and affect, not bookish intelligence removed from the realm of experience. His well-known definition of «good poetry» as «the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings» (246) is a convincing premise from which he launches a literary revolution. Coincidentally, Wordsworth's definition is uncannily calls to mind the description of the proletariat by the Jewish-American proletarian novelist of the 1930s, Michael Gold,

who in turn asserts that proletarian culture is the «*spontaneous* expression of a naturally acquired class-shared instinct or intuition» (Murphy 67; italics mine). Gold's Wordsworthian assertion hinges on intersubjectivity, the communication between men and women of like opinion. Having adopted «the very language of men» (250), which is natural and spontaneous, Wordsworth is proud that his «language is near the language of men» (251), and tells his readers that, «I wish to keep my Reader in the company of flesh and blood» (251). The latter phrase —«flesh and blood»— has deep resonance and high currency in Díaz Fernández's often repeated «carne y hueso».

Because it is suasive, communication becomes a rhetoric of passion and emotion for both Wordsworth and the New Romantics, and is most intimately related to the representation of the external world. Although Wordsworth may be reluctant to politicize passions demonstratively, he recognizes that they are «undoubtedly [connected] with our moral sentiments and animal sensations, and with the causes which excite these; with the operations of the elements and the appearances of the visible universe» (261). New Romantics, on the other hand, eagerly and openly politicize sentiment and emotion which they undauntedly link to real-world activities. In their prologues to *El blocao* and *Siete domingos rojos* (1932), two novels that exemplify this new aesthetic sensibility, Díaz Fernández and Ramón J. Sender, respectively, give primacy to the role of emotion in the representation and reception of *hors-texte* and text. Sender pleads the stronger case: he rejects intellect, imploring the reader to judge his novel affectively. The author explains:

Claro que el libro no se dirige expresamente al entendimiento del lector, sino a su sensibilidad, porque las verdades humanas más entrañables no se entienden ni se piensan, sino que se sienten. Son las que el hombre no ha dicho ni ha probado decir porque cumplen su misión en la zona brillante y confusa del sentir [...]. Dirigirse a los sentidos, a la sensibilidad y no al entendimiento, al «intelecto», tiene para mí además la ventaja de que nadie podrá llamarme «intelectual» con la plena razón. (10)

The importance that Sender gives to emotion and sentiment in his portrayal of the chaos of the current sociopolitical reality allows him to offer a mediated representation of the world, which is then made immediately available for reception. Invoking the names of Coleridge and Wordsworth, Herzberger describes this process perfectly while discussing Díaz Fernández's theories on discursive practices:

Díaz Fernández does not propose merely a reflection theory of literature. He proposes a reflection theory coupled to something else. This in turn [...] involves a synthesis with language in which the word does not simply correspond (as in classical theory) to some other thing. Instead, as in the Romantic thinking of Coleridge or even Wordsworth, words *mediate* between mind and world, and make this relationship *immediately* available within the paradigmatic relations that are formed within discourse. (87)

As is noted, the new romantic reflection theory of literature revolves around the delicate interaction between the «poet's» subjectivity or passion and the uncompromising «real reality» of real-world events. The synthesis of the private and the public that Díaz Fernández wishes to effect is to be appreciated in the final sentences of his «Nota»:

El blocao tiene que parecer un libro huraño, anarquizante y rebelde, porque bordea un tema político y afirma una preocupación humana. Me siento tan unido a los destinos de mi país, me afectan de tal modo los conflictos de mi tiempo, que será difícil que en mi labor literaria pueda dejar de oírse nunca su latido. (28)

Díaz Fernández also links the role of emotion to form. And yet, he is by no means a formalist, an apparent paradox that informs the aesthetic principles of New Romanticism. Díaz Fernández writes:

Sostengo que hay una fórmula eterna de arte: la emoción. Y otra fórmula actual: la síntesis. En la primera edición de mi libro lo decía, dando a entender que ésa es mi estética. Trato de sorprender el variado movimiento del alma humana, trazar su escenario actual con el expresivo rigor de la

metáfora; pero sin hacer a ésta aspiración total del arte de escribir, como sucede en algunas tendencias literarias modernas. [...]

Eso no quiere decir que no dé importancia sobresaliente a la forma. Así como creo que es imprescindible hacer literatura vital e interesar en ella a la muchedumbre, estimo que las formas vitales cambian, y a ese cambio hay que sujetar la expresión. («Nota» 26)

Díaz Fernández accords form a privileged position in his aesthetic project. For New Romantics, form is prescient, vatic, thereby becoming a powerful second-order signifier, which alerts the collectivity to what is transpiring in the real world. Artistic forms announce to readers what the future may be and are even capable of shaping and prefiguring the coming events of history. Díaz Fernández asserts: «Las formas artísticas son, pues, con relación a la vida social, unas preformas, una anunciación de las posibles» (*Nuevo* 81).

It is to be remembered that although emotion and passion are cherished by the writers of the «other Generation», new romantic literature is always wary of falling into the trap of a rampant, sentimental subjectivity. With this in mind, Díaz Fernández goes on to elucidate further in his «Nota» about his craft: he rejects the traditional novel; he is disdainful of plot and heavy description; and most importantly, he wishes to create a novel—in spite of how critics may have categorized the seven discrete tales— whose unity is sustained only by «la atmósfera» (27).

Díaz Fernández's ideas on novelistic unity contain a possible safeguard against senseless subjectivity, a bane of the New Romantics and of all Marxist-socialist thinkers. The idea that the unity of the novel is created out of a sustaining, elusively conceived «atmósfera» oddly enough directs us to the equally elusive notion of the objective correlative of T. S. Eliot, a High Modernist, to be sure, but one who is inextricably beholden to, and preoccupied by, romantic aesthetics, not unlike Díaz Fernández. Although the New Romantics recoil from Modernist sensibilities, they, nevertheless, share with Modernists the desire to control sentimentality and to objectify subjectivity by paying scrupulous attention to form.

T. S. Eliot's critical construct of the objective correlative is pertinent to the project of the New Romantics not only because they seem to make inadvertent use of it, but also because it sheds further light on their relationship to romantic theory and practices. (That is not to say, of course, that Sender or Díaz Fernández would have ever approved of the conservative American-British poet, sympathetic—in the opinion of many critics—to fascistic ideology). The objective correlative is a way to control or objectify sensations and emotions in literature by ensuring that writers provide an adequate external or visual outlet for these sensations. In his essay on *Hamlet* (which he pointedly considers a failed play for its lack of an objective correlative), Eliot succinctly gives a definition of this term:

The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an «objective correlative»; in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events [i. e., Díaz Fernández's «atmósfera»] which shall be the formula of that *particular* emotion; such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked. (486)

Like the New Romantics, Eliot offers here a critique of Romanticism although, in many of his own critical writings he advocates that thoughts are to be felt, and that the origin of our intellect is always sensation, two related concepts that provide the basis for romantic representation in the nineteenth century. It is a position that is provocatively close to Sender's in his Preface to *Siete domingos rojos*, discussed above.

In fact, Eliot's vexed and at times paradoxical relationship to Romanticism mimics that of the New Romantics in that it is one of admiration and disdain. In the final analysis, Eliot is attached to the fundamental practices of Romanticism: sensation as our primary experience, visionary writing, the need for organic form, and the synthesis of word and world. Yet at the same time, he is critical of Romantics because he finds their method of representation ultimately neurotic, uncontrollably temperamental, and *unrealistically* disengaged from the objects and events of the real world.

Although Eliot's philosophical or sociopolitical position is far from that of the New Romantics, it appears that some of their aesthetic theories and stances are uncannily similar to his. The following excellent appraisal by Mowbray Allan of Eliot's attitudes toward «Literature» is a convincing summary of just how similar the attitudes of this «high priest» of Modernism are to those of Díaz Fernández and his circle:

Seen in its overall outlines, Eliot's position vis-à-vis romantic aesthetics is analogous to [F. H.] Bradley's [twentieth-century idealist philosopher on whom Eliot wrote his thesis] position vis-à-vis the German idealism of the first half of the nineteenth century. Eliot believed that literature should deal with ordinary reality and not with an «artificial world» but that it must not degenerate into realism. And literature is to be sustained at a level above realism not, as in Romantic theory, by Imagination but by Form. (37)

Who could not say as much about Díaz Fernández and his fellow radical writers? In their own way, New Romantics rejected the artificiality of an imaginary world; they embraced everyday reality (and people) with poignant lyricism, throwing away certain idealistic premises of the Romantics; and they always kept a steady eye on form in order to communicate forcefully with their readers so that they might help to create the new ideas of the volatile decade for the 1930s.

New Romanticism, although only a short-lived cultural effort, represents a significant moment of transition and coming of age for the committed writer. New Romanticism shuns the past by looking toward the future; this radical sensibility reproaches the bourgeois Romanticism of the past, and yet appropriates its name and much of its spirit for the needs of a more modern era. New Romanticism has its origins in the theories of Wordsworth, England's «first» Romantic, and its ends in the praxis of Eliot, perhaps Britain's «last» Romantic. If Romanticism is the first trenchant «self-critique of modernity» (Wessel 16), then New Romanticism is a pioneering onslaught against Modernism. As such, *Nuevo Romanticismo* is indeed a new vanguard and deserves much more scrutiny and careful critical study than it has so far received.

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