

David Craven's Future Perfect: Tensions between Political Engagement and Art History

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The fact that a work of art has a politically radical content therefore does not assure its revolutionary value. Nor does a non-political content necessarily imply its irrelevance to revolutionary action. It is in the larger context of the social movement and its positive historical results that the practical significance of partisan art has to be judged.

Meyer Schapiro¹

I. Against the Grain: The Education of a Progressive Art Historian

Art, however, is social not only because of its mode of production, in which the dialectic of the forces and relations of production is concentrated, not simply because of the social derivation of its thematic material. Much more importantly, art becomes social by its opposition to society, and it occupies this position only as autonomous art. By crystallizing in itself as something unique to itself, rather than complying with existing social norms and qualifying as 'socially useful,' it criticizes society by merely existing, for which puritans of all stripes condemn it... Art's asociality is the determinate negation of a determinate society.

Theodor Adorno²

David Craven, a subtle and deeply nuanced scholar, engaged in a sustained critique of socio-political structures during an epoch characterized by a pernicious form of late capitalism and aggressive imperialist motives in the name of globalism. For the past three decades Craven characterized the potential and power of the role played by art in the ongoing formation of socially just communities. Although he focuses on specific geopolitical regions (namely the Americas and Western Europe), Craven routinely offers a Marxist-inflected postcolonial analysis of the relationship between the arts and the social situations of all cultures. He reads art through the lens of a non-normative formal analysis based in historical materialism, assesses the impact of 'uneven development' on art in the Third World, and frequently writes about artists who champion causes that address the conditions of the working classes and indigenous peoples throughout the world. Whether he is writing about local *engagé* art advancing the Sandinista revolution in 1980s Nicaragua, the political aspirations of such New York School figures as Barnett Newman and Ad Reinhardt, or the impact of Shepard Fairey's poster of *Barack Obama: Hope* (2008), Craven routinely shows that a close formal analysis of art objects need not be divorced from political action and social change but can serve as a potent catalyst.³

In 1977, while a graduate student at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, Craven published two articles that demonstrated his commitment to a method that would later be labelled the New Art History: 'Towards a Newer Virgil – Mondrian De-Mythologized' and 'Ruskin vs Whistler: The Case against Capitalist Art'. In both instances, Craven took on a key art critic to query basic assumptions about the formal nature and social features of

artworks. In his first publication, Craven boldly challenged Clement Greenberg's insistence that a work's formal features can (and must) be separate from a work's political implication and broader significance:

It becomes obvious that Greenbergian formalism is one of the more transparent myths of our epoch when we employ Barthes's definition of myth as depoliticized speech. To read the French semiologist's reasons is to read a recapitulation of our critique: 'Myth does not deny things, on the contrary, it purifies them, it makes them innocent, it gives a natural and eternal justification...myth acts economically: it abolishes the complexity of human acts, it gives them the simplicity of essences.' Because [orthodox] modernist formalism has unremittingly obscured the political overtones in modernist art, it authenticates Barthes's position.⁴

Craven's ideological critique, in this passage, is an initial attempt by an art historian to apply Barthes's insights to art historical analysis.⁵

Craven's second publication, a distillation of his Master's thesis in art history at Vanderbilt University, also examines the work of another art critic, John Ruskin. Craven's reading of Ruskin's defence against James McNeill Whistler's charges of libel demonstrates that the critic's position was neither unreasonable nor inconsistent (given his prior public support of J M W Turner whose work on occasion also lacked *finish*), but rather a reasoned response to the political implications of 'art for art's sake'. Reading against the grain of conventional thought, at the age of twenty-three, Craven wrote:

One of the first to claim that the state of art delineates the cultural conditions from which it arises was Ruskin. As Arnold Hauser has written, he was also one of the first people in England to emphasize the cultivation of art as one of the most important tasks of the state. In the 1850s, Ruskin had graduated from the class of sheltered aesthete to that of quixotic social reformer. His politics became more idealistic, his art criticism more visionary... The real issue between Ruskin and Whistler was whether art should be committed to rectifying social ills or whether it should be created autonomously – an issue of increasing significance to contemporary society.⁶

Here, we find a nascent scholar deeply concerned with the social and political implications of art arriving at a disciplined, if idiosyncratic, position by maintaining a firm commitment to his values, which contradict prevailing wisdom. Few art historians in 1977 contradicted Greenberg's normative formalism, and fewer still sympathized to a certain extent with Ruskin in his 'libel' against Whistler.

Craven's subsequent publications continued to offer highly original analyses of significant art critics, specifically 'The Critical Writings of Adrian Stokes', 'The 'Critique-Poésie' of Thomas Hess' and 'John Berger as Art Critic'.⁷ These early publications staked out a profoundly rigorous position that that went against the grain of the normative formalist dogma then dominant in the discipline of art history by emphasizing art's political implications – even, or especially, of abstraction itself. Among the earliest scholars to demonstrate the efficacy of the Frankfurt Institute's potential for art historical analysis, Craven, in his review of the writings of Adrian Stokes, a too rarely cited and discussed art historical *Privatgelehrter*, compares this critic to Walter Benjamin by looking at their mutual interest in the means by which art can improve the conditions of daily life. Craven, in his survey of Stokes, writes: 'We are first informed of how art, especially that of the avant-garde, as Benjamin was

one of the first critics to note, is intended to transform life.⁸ And, 'transform[ing] life' is the preoccupation of Craven's art historical analysis.

Craven maintains that empiricist methods which stake out a priori historical outcomes are not only misguided but fail to account for the vagaries of uneven development across cultures and nations. Craven's article on Thomas Hess reveals the degree to which this critic tied the New York school artists to existentialist angst as a manifestation of 'a new interpretation of man and nature' that eschews a reductive Hegelian dialectics or metaphysical schema with pre-ordained outcomes. Instead, Craven posits that Hess

understood dialectic as an expendable tool that could disclose complex dimensions of art, though not necessarily its 'essence'. Hess's post-Hegelian view was in keeping with what Kierkegaard first understood: the dialectical concept is valid only when it relates directly to concrete experience. Thus, Hess spoke for himself as well as de Kooning when he used a remark by Nietzsche as an epigraph for his first book about the artist: 'The will to a system is a lack of integrity.' Similarly Hess's admiration of de Kooning's art... can be seen as a relating to a dialectic without preconceptions.⁹

This is a key concept in Craven's writings. No methodology, especially if it is to assist in the construction of egalitarian societies, should historically foreclose unforeseen outcomes.

In his thorough review of John Berger's *About Looking*, Craven, taking an idiosyncratic, unorthodox stance against both art historians and Marxist scholars in 1980, concludes:

The strength of Berger's art criticism is his perceptual acuity coupled with his ability to go beyond localized perceptions. The way Berger deals with particular artists is important because of the concrete grounding he achieves – a concrete grounding unknown to orthodox Marxists. Nicos Hadjinicolaou's dismissal of any psychoanalytic or psychological approach in favor of a monolithic 'class' interpretation, is based on the hardly plausible view that 'one cannot use a problematic centered on the analysis of individuals as a means of interpreting history, this is to falsify the nature of history.' Not only does he engage in a narrow *a priorism* concerning the 'nature' of history and the individual's 'necessary' relation to it. Hadjinicolaou defines art in terms of class ideology even as he denies the artist self-consciousness about intentionality. His only recourse, as is the case with other orthodox Marxists, is to the *deus ex machina* of historical determinism paraded as 'scientific' criticism. Thus, in contradistinction to Berger, 'scientific' Marxists are merely the reverse of conventional empiricists. Both reify art by denying subjectivity in any open-ended sense... By reaffirming the richness of experience, Berger deftly illuminates the revolutionary potential in art and in our present situation – a situation we have not completely chosen, but in relation to which we must continually choose.¹⁰

This sense of obligation to the exploited popular classes may seem to be a strained political position coming from someone not only supported by academia but also whose academic discipline contributes to the privileged status and concentration of surplus value in art objects. Art is generally, but by no means exclusively, *consumed* by those whose leisure time far exceeds the need to engage in wage labour.

However, Craven's biography demonstrates that one can study art history and reconcile doing so with one's political beliefs linked to activism:

From the time I was around eighteen or nineteen, I knew I was a partisan of the left, a *socialist* if you like. My views on political economy emerged from a quite concrete observation that I still find valid about the

South (and indeed about the USA more generally): only an egalitarian process involving the wholesale re-structural *re-distribution* of land-holding and wealth, coupled with a sharply graduated income tax nationally, would even come close to solving the economic underside of institutionalized racial discrimination that remains a tragic everyday fact of the USA.¹¹

At a very early date (in 1974/1975), Craven learned to use ‘critical theory’ at the University of North Carolina (UNC). Although he originally went to UNC to study Baroque art, Craven took a class with a newly arrived faculty member, Donald Kuspit, and found not only his most important mentor but a kindred spirit.¹² At this time, Craven was exposed to and began to read in earnest the writings of Theodor Adorno and other figures associated with the Frankfurt Institute (Kuspit earned his doctorate in 1965 in philosophy under Adorno’s tutelage). The ‘critical theory’ and negative dialectics practiced by this group of socially engaged scholars provided a very new and challenging methodological foundation for Craven’s budding career.

These ideas were coupled with Craven’s growing interest in and concern for the negative impact of US imperialism on underdeveloped countries. Craven vividly recalls leaving a Vanderbilt seminar in September 1973 when a friend informed him of the first ‘9/11’. A chilling day on which US forces helped overthrow the democratically elected government of Salvador Allende and installed the neo-fascist dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet in Chile. Coincidentally, Craven gained his doctorate in the year of the Sandinista Revolution in Nicaragua (1979). Determined to examine the impact of anti-imperialist policies on the popular arts and culture, Craven devoted his energies and resources to going to Nicaragua. By this time, Craven had secured a tenure-track position at the State University of New York (SUNY) Cortland – he was hired in 1978 – and was well on his way to what was to become an international career as an educator and scholar. One of the most important steps in Craven’s professional development occurred in the summer of 1982 when he flew to Nicaragua with his colleague John Ryder for a month of field work that resulted in the co-authored monograph *Art in the New Nicaragua* (1983). This brief, informative document funded by the New York Council for the Humanities – with the support of Edward Said, Toni Morrison and other board members – outlines the efficacy of the cultural policies promoted by the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) after the 1979 Revolution.

II. A Dialogical Approach: Nicaragua and Revolutionary Art History

The present, in all its openendedness, taken as a starting point and center for artistic and ideological orientation, is an enormous revolution in the creative consciousness of man.

Mikhail Bakhtin¹³

Craven and Ryder demonstrated the revolutionary government’s commitment in Nicaragua to realize Paolo Friere’s ‘dialogical approach’ whereby cultural and educational progress is promoted not by top-down decree but through open dialogue with the citizenry itself so that the resulting arts are simultaneously ‘intellectually complex’ and ‘publicly intelligible’. The National Reconstruction Government of the FSLN established and promoted twenty-six Popular Centres of Culture (Centros Populares de Cultura – commonly referred to as CPCs)

which provided free instruction in music, dance and visual arts to all citizens. Encouraging hybridity between indigenous visual culture praxis and Western traditions and materials, the Ministry of Culture's commitment to a 'dialogical approach' resulted in a

Nicaraguan art since the revolution [that] has become more affirmative than the alienated art of the West without having lost its critical edge. This is because the revolutionary art of Nicaragua exists in contradiction to the dominant world economic order. This fundamental difference is illuminated by the distinction between the oppositional origin of much Western primitivist art and the affirmative nature of most Nicaraguan primitivist painting (or 'pintura primitivista' as it is known locally).¹⁴

Such politically engaged, analytical insight demonstrated Craven's departure from his doctoral dissertation at UNC which employed Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology to reveal the formation of artistic identity through a case study entitled 'The Art of Charles Biederman'. Notably, this dissertation was the first in art history to use Merleau-Ponty for such exegetical purposes. However, Craven's initial foray in Latin America confirmed his belief in Meyer Schapiro's critical directive: 'It is in the larger context of the social movement and its positive historical results that the practical significance of partisan art has to be judged.'¹⁵ Such a position served as a guiding beacon for Craven during his extended research trips to Nicaragua in 1982 and 1986.

These extended stays resulted in Craven's first significant book in 1989, *The New Concept of Art and Popular Culture in Nicaragua Since the Revolution in 1979*. This lengthy treatise examines the policies established by the government to promote the arts and popular culture without adopting an official 'revolutionary style' and reveals the efficacy of a national dialogue that simultaneously encouraged theoretical debate, revived indigenous cultural practices and promoted cross-cultural innovation in the spirit of worker/peasant, male/female, indigenous/non-indigenous alliances to realize self-determination. This work not only established Craven as the leading expert on the art and cultural aspects of the Sandinista Revolution in the English-speaking world, but elevated his stature as one of the most penetrating voices demonstrating the value of a dialogical approach to the social history of art, establishing the viability of a Marxist-accented postcolonial analysis. His deft prose and gift for drawing parallels between the artist (as labourer) in the Third World and the artist (as intellectual) in industrialized Western nations paved the way for a younger generation of scholars to practice this method. In a review, Robert Morgan wrote:

One cannot leave this book unconvinced of the originality and timeliness of the Sandinista experiment in the arts and its transformative cultural aspirations. It is an important statement on the growing need for a more democratized art that would really connect with people on an everyday level of necessity.¹⁶

Craven not only outlines the extraordinary steps taken by the FSLN to avoid an ahistorical populist idealization regarding past cultural manifestations of literature, music and the visual arts, but also details a wide range of innovative artistic production, especially in the form of mural painting and campesino theatre. Craven's summary of the promise and fruit of the FSLN's approach to cultural policy became, in part, a lens through which he assessed the power of the visual arts to effect social change. He writes:

Revealingly, the FSLN-led Nicaraguan Government has not instituted an official style, thus constricting the subjective dimension of art, which is a key dialogical component for extra-personal cultural progress and also something quite at odds with the artistic subjectivism intrinsic to the making of *objets d'art* in the West. Such an official 'revolutionary style' would have spawned an unacceptable division of labor *within* the production of art by giving exclusive intellectual control over aesthetic problems to an elite sector, while regulating all artists, whether professionals or amateurs, to the alienating status of being mere manual object producers under someone else's direction. Throughout the period since 1979, then, there has been an emphasis on art as a fundamental mode of human existence, rather than on art production as a professional affair leading to prescribed objects.¹⁷

Crucially, too, it was in Nicaragua that Craven was first introduced to the leftist writings of José Carlos Mariátegui ('the Gramsci of Latin America') who helped Craven frame his analysis in terms pertinent to the 'larger context of the social movement' peculiar to Latin American revolutionary movements within the emergent discourses of unorthodox Marxism and postcolonialism.

III. Mariátegui's Exemplary Values

Practical men's vision is always too heavily dominated by the superficial things to be truly profound. In some questions, theory penetrates much deeper than experience.

José Carlos Mariátegui¹⁸

To clarify the lessons he learned from Mariátegui, Craven claimed:

Mariátegui endorsed various avant-garde tendencies in the visual arts and he thought that the ideas of Sigmund Freud would have a place on the left in conjunction with the writings of Marx... A proponent of historical materialism [a counter to the orthodox Marxism of the Soviet Union and Dialectical Materialism] in the most nuanced sense, Mariátegui embraced 'socialist pluralism' in the arts. If you look at the articles in *Amauta*, his groundbreaking journal of the late 1920s, you will find that he welcomed the avant-gardes of Europe and Latin America in the broadest sense, from critically saluting Constructivism and Expressionism, on the one hand, to engaging positively with Surrealism and Mexican Muralism, on the other hand.¹⁹

So begins Craven's lifelong commitment to a postcolonial reading of historical materialism that perpetually champions dialogical solutions to tensions within the class struggle between indigenous (and working class) labourers and their domineering overlords in our age of advanced capitalism. This concept of freedom differs radically from the 'freedom' so vociferously championed, if improperly understood, by the most reactionary politicians in the United States, the Republican Party in general and the Tea Party branch in particular.

Perhaps the best way to understand Craven's multiple commitments and the types of intersection they elicit across different fronts is simply to summarize the quite eventful nature of his trip to Central America in the summer of 2011. Serving in three distinct roles, Craven's extra-academic activities reveals a steadfast effort to integrate belief with action by embodying and performing Mariátegui's core values.



David Craven with Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega and Professor Christine Wade of Washington College, Maryland, in Managua, Nicaragua, June 2011

First, he went to Nicaragua as part of a team of twelve scholars linked to Nicaragua Network (an organization based in Washington DC and directed by Katherine Hoyt) most of whom had published scholarly books on various aspects of Nicaraguan history. The aim of these scholars and labour leaders was to investigate whether the US Government was engaging in unethical or inappropriate intervention in the upcoming presidential elections in Nicaragua slated for 8 November 2011. Their concern was based on the fact that in past elections the US Government – in 1990 under President Bush Sr, and in 2001 and 2006 under President Bush Jr – had massively interfered in the Nicaraguan national elections in a manner that made local democracy all but impossible. These Republican Administrations did so each time to support a very rightwing candidate opposed to the Sandinista (FSLN) candidate, Daniel Ortega. For decades, US involvement to influence electoral results in Central America had thus been a byword for deeply *anti-democratic* behaviour throughout the region.

In addition to meeting with several different parties, various political foundations, different human rights groups, and diplomatic personnel, the scholars of Nicaragua Network were interviewed in *El Nuevo Diario*, one of the two main national newspapers.²⁰ These scholars also wrote a news release that was circulated internationally. Their report states their findings as follows, including the interchange below at the US Embassy in Managua, where they encountered Bush-era appointees (who were in office because the Republicans in Congress blocked President Obama's nominations):

Last week [June 24, 2011], a top official of the U.S. Embassy in Managua dismissed Nicaragua as no longer important to the U.S. and told the Nicaragua Network delegation from the United States that he wanted nothing to do with the country's political parties, all of which he characterized as 'feckless, corrupt, nasty, and worthless'. Despite these comments by Matthew Roth, the political officer of the U.S. Embassy, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) is funding Nicaraguan groups [with around \$20m in taxpayer funds] to provide training in 'democratization' and media skills. Media programs, such as these offered by the International Republican Institute, are supposedly designed to play a 'double role' as reporters and unofficial electoral observers. Jan Howard, the USAID officer for the Embassy, acknowledged, 'Sometimes they [the people the Republicans are funding] get a little carried away.'²¹

Professor Craven's second of three roles while in Central America consisted of serving as a Human Rights Observer for the Alliance for Global Justice (based in Tucson, Arizona) in Honduras at Palmerola, the huge US military base.²² Craven witnessed a political rally that occurred on the second anniversary of the 28 June 2009 military coup in Honduras, when the democratically elected-government of Manuel Zelaya was overthrown. He, alongside a dozen or so Human Rights Observers, functioned as a 'shield' between the 200 student/activist demonstrators and the hundred or so Honduran military personnel and national police stationed in front of the US-funded military outpost. The events of this demonstration were covered on national television in Honduras. For much of the day, the situation was calm; then students tried to graffiti the wall in front of the military base and a conflict occurred that led to students being beaten and tear-gas being fired at the demonstrators – and indirectly at the Human Rights Observers – many of whom were hit by the lachrymator (as was Craven, though not directly). Fortunately the Honduran military refrained from further aggression – a fact that the demonstrators from Honduras attributed to the presence of the Human Rights Observers from the US. In fact, at least 400 political dissidents (labour organizers, journalists, student dissidents and indigenous leaders) in Honduras have since been killed by paramilitary squads linked to the military junta in Honduras.²³

Finally, Professor Craven's third role during his time in Central America was as a visiting scholar invited to give a public lecture in the main national museum, the Museo Nacional para Identidad Nacional (MIN) in Tegucigalpa, on 30 June – two days after being tear-gassed by the Honduran military dictatorship. He spoke in Spanish to a capacity crowd of 150 people in the museum's main auditorium on the topic of 'El Prometeo: un discurso anti-militar en la historia del arte de América Latina' ('Prometheus: an anti-military lecture on the history of art in Latin America'). Revealingly, when Craven's lecture was covered in the two main newspapers of Honduras (both of the political right) – *El Heraldo* and *La Tribuna* – they misreported the content of his talk, suppressing any mention of the theme of anti-militarization (championed by opponents of the military coup) and reporting instead that his talk was about the 'personaje griego' ('Greek character') of Prometheus as the protector of human civilization. Yet those who showed up for the public lecture clearly understood that the content of Craven's lecture did not confirm the conservative twist given to it by the rightwing press.²⁴ The enthusiastic interchange with the audience afterwards was linked to the actual substance of his talk and popular opposition to the military dictatorship.

These three roles illustrate the degree to which Craven synthesized his scholarly ambitions with his political beliefs. Most importantly, it is the education that Craven received during his numerous trips throughout Latin

America that enabled him to successfully integrate theory with praxis. And it was his close reading of Mariátegui that informed and shaped this life-long commitment to use academia to help create a more equitable world.

I will sketch Mariátegui's influence on Craven's development as a scholar, but first this social philosopher's significant position on effective applications of Marxist ideas in general, and socialism in particular, in Latin America and other developing nations, merits further analysis. Anticipating Friere's 'dialogical approach', Mariátegui was a tireless champion of critically engaging with indigenous culture and practices; his journal, *Amauta*, promoted a version of socialism that respected, honoured and promoted the rights of the Incan descendents of his native Peru to improve their own lives, and by extension, all indigenous peoples in the Third World as well as the popular classes in general. In the editorial introducing *Amauta*, Mariátegui wrote:

The object of this journal is to set out, clarify and gain knowledge of Peruvian problems from political and scientific points of view. But we will always consider the Peruvian within the world panorama. We will study all the great movements of renewal – whether political, philosophical, artistic, literary or scientific. The whole human sphere is ours. This journal will link the new men of Peru first with those of the other peoples of America, and then with those of the other peoples of the world.²⁵

During Mariátegui's short life (1895–1930), this autodidact (a typographer by trade) travelled to Europe in his twenties to meet with Italian and German Socialists. His best-known work is *Siete ensayos de interpretación de la realidad peruana* (*Seven Interpretative Essays on Peruvian Reality*). Mariátegui's unique take on socialist approaches to redefining the class-based tensions between the popular classes and their oppressors served as a beacon for revolutionaries throughout Latin America.

Mariátegui's championing of a radical indigenist movement as critical to the successful emergence of a socialist Peru (and by extension all New World countries) stems from the fact that four-fifths of the Peruvian working class was composed of First Nation peoples. In a spirited defence against allegations that he was an 'Europeanizer' by Luis Alberto Sánchez (a Peruvian politician who briefly became Prime Minister in 1989), Mariátegui wrote:

Our socialism would not be Peruvian – nor would it be socialism – if it did not establish its solidarity principally with the Indian's vindications... Do not call me, Luis Alberto Sánchez, 'nationalist,' 'indigenist' nor 'pseudo-indigenist'. These terms are not necessary to classify me. Call me simply, Socialist.²⁶

This line of thinking remained critical to Craven's own postcolonialist vision of socialism. Most importantly, Mariátegui's political analysis was not divorced from aesthetics but recognized the significance of the arts in producing and protecting equitable societies. In the seventh essay of his classic work, 'Literature on Trial', Mariátegui assesses Peruvian literature with specific attention to the manner in which the working classes are characterized and the role of the arts in general to the creation of a national identity. To do so, Mariátegui utilized Benedetto Croce's aesthetics inflected by historical materialism (they allegedly met during Mariátegui's travels in Europe); he cites Croce as he claims 'historical and aesthetic criticism are one and the same'.²⁷ This belief is also

a thread that weaves throughout Craven's work. Mariátegui clarifies that class-based analyses need not determine pre-established outcomes:

I shall not use the Marxist classification of literature as feudal or aristocratic, bourgeois or proletarian. In order not to strengthen the impression that I have organized in my case [only] along political or class lines, I shall base it on aesthetic history and criticism. This will serve as a method of explanation rather than as a theory, that *a priori* judges and interprets works and their authors.²⁸

This approach parallels Craven's analysis of the visual arts and its capacity to reveal and underscore complex political realities in a non-reductive manner.

Perhaps this is most clearly articulated in Craven's magisterial essay 'Abstract Expressionism and Third World Art: A Post-Colonial Approach to "American" Art'.²⁹ Although he does not directly cite Mariátegui in this essay, Craven utilizes a similar methodology that bears many affinities with Mariátegui's commitment to recognizing the ongoing cultural contributions of indigenous peoples to contemporary art in particular, and the cultures of the labouring classes in general. As a testament to its significance, this essay was singled out by Michael Hatt and Charlotte Klouk in their *Art History: A Critical Introduction to Its Methods* as a prime example of how postcolonial methods can reframe and redirect art history. These scholars noted Craven's importance to the 'social history of art' through his emphasis on a *multi-causal* use of Marxism to analyse history. Their analysis of Craven's postcolonial method also implicitly underscores the values and imperatives of Mariátegui's New World socialism, with its inflected awareness of cross-cultural dialogics as values to celebrate and promote. Hatt and Klouk write:

...it is hard to see how [Jackson Pollock's] all-over drip painting could be discussed in relation to the interests of postcolonialism. This, in part, is Craven's point. Abstract Expressionism has long been seen as the epitome of modernism, the end point of a teleological process whereby painting becomes less and less representational and more to do with the materiality of paint on canvas... Abstract Expressionism is viewed as a sign of cultural imperialism, and yet a majority of Americans are indifferent or hostile to it....

Craven's article is wide-ranging in the material it covers, but here we examine his account of Jackson Pollock as exemplary of his general approach. By trying to view and analyse Pollock's work from the margin rather than the centre, he seeks to show that this is neither the pure Western art modernists would have us believe, nor is it only implicated in the global politics of the developed world. Craven discusses Pollock's long-standing interest in Native American cultures, and argues that Pollock's famous 'drip' paintings are modeled on Navajo sand paintings. Pollock does not, however, simply absorb Navajo art as a visual novelty; unlike some modernist painters he does not view the Navajo as an exotic 'other', as happens in Orientalism. Instead, he identifies with the Navajo. Rather than emphasizing the cultural distance between him and the Navajo, he seeks out commonality.

What is crucial to Craven's argument is another historical detail. Pollock immersed himself in Navajo art at a time when Native Americans' traditional cultural forms were being discouraged and the state was actively creating an acceptable Indian idiom. Art schools for Native Americans, for example, were teaching different forms of representation that were more acceptable to the state and which suggested assimilation rather than difference. Craven sees Pollock's use of Navajo culture as a challenge to this racism. Pollock is not simply copying visual motifs; he is absorbing Navajo values and representing them in his canvases. This is politically motivated. He sees his own left-wing values as consonant with Navajo values, as if both he and they presented a challenge to the increasingly repressive cultural agenda of the USA which reached its apogee in the early 1950s.³⁰

As this reveals, Craven, like Mariátegui, concentrates on the manner in which local and indigenous cultures can and should influence so-called national identities based, in part, on cultural production as a critical form of labour. Indeed, a critical component of Craven's approach is to distinguish various types of nationalisms, along with different types of modernisms.

Unusually, Craven emphasizes the abstract artist as a representative of the working classes (even if his/her labour is not disalienated). Craven adopts this position not only from his reading of Mariátegui, but also from his study of Meyer Schapiro, whose Marxist approach enabled this renowned art historian to perceive his New York School contemporaries as engaging in a form of disalienated labour resulting in an 'immanent critique from within of the overall logic and attendant ideological values of the corporate capitalist mode of production'.³¹ In each case, these three writers look to Marx for a theory of labour that informs their own art historical analyses. As Craven writes:

Marx observed how the antidemocratic and dehumanizing logic of capital would increasingly cause wage laborers to be alienated in four ways: (1) from the object of production, (2) from the process of production, (3) from each other, and (4) from themselves (as thinking, feeling, and physically developing human beings who were capable of doing far more than this system allowed.)³²

This analysis echoes Mariátegui's own assessment of how the 'yankee formula of capitalist renaissance... would place the laboring masses forever out of the reach of Marxism'.³³ Both Mariátegui and Craven (and many of the artists he writes about) endeavour to ensure that such a bleak future is not realized.

One of Craven's fondest accomplishments as an art historian was his documentation demonstrating that Diego Rivera and Mariátegui were in close contact with one another during the latter half of the 1920s. In the essay 'Postcolonial Modernism in the Work of Diego Rivera and José Carlos Mariátegui, or New Light on a Neglected Relationship', Craven distinguishes between Rivera and Mariátegui's 'heterodox views of socialism' and 'alternative concept of *indigenismo*' which differed substantively from the far more centrist position of José Vasconcelos, the Mexican philosopher and politician who served as Álvaro Obregón's Minister of Education from 1920 to 1924.³⁴ This distinction is important because Vasconcelos' concept of *mestizaje* (ethnic fusion) and *raza cósmica* (cosmic race) differed substantively from Mariátegui's own formulation in key ways. Given that Vasconcelos was an early supporter of Rivera (he encouraged the artist to travel to Italy and study Renaissance fresco painting) and, as a government official, established the conditions that enabled the Mexican Muralist Movement to occur, Rivera's paintings are often misinterpreted as an extension of Vasconcelos' centrist position. However, Rivera's form of dissident *indigenismo* showed much greater kinship with Mariátegui's alternative formulation than with that of Vasconcelos.

These differences with Diego Rivera revolve around Vasconcelos' racial essentialism, paternalism towards Natives and an anti-Marxism connected to his faith in a Western economic ideology of modernization – none of which were embraced by the muralist.³⁵ Craven's careful reading of Rivera's divergent relationship to both of these philosophers sheds new light on how scholars may interpret Rivera's alternative modernism; and, more importantly, Craven demonstrates the philosophical and political influences that allowed this artist to emerge as one of the first truly postcolonial artists. Turning his attention to the murals from the Ministry of Education (a

project initiated when Vasconcelos was Minister of Education and from which nine images were reproduced in Mariátegui's *Amauta*), Craven notes key parallels between Mariátegui's writings and Rivera's paintings:

...the Rivera murals from the Ministry of Education were ones that addressed many of the same themes that were handled with such acuity in Mariátegui's *Siete ensayos*, namely (1) class-based inequities as a motor of historical change, (2) indigenous traditions as a means of constructing a new trans-regional social bond within disruptive circumstances, and (3) the fundamental role of militant teachers as 'organic intellectuals' not only for spreading literacy, but also for mobilizing the popular classes...³⁶

Rivera scholars, Craven asserts, have for too long neglected this close relationship between the Peruvian philosopher and Mexican painter. However, as Craven demonstrates, Rivera's numerous contributions to *Amauta* provide for a more precise understanding of the manner in which Rivera's art 'creates theory, without ever simply illustrating or mechanically reflecting theory'.³⁷

IV. Deferred Conclusions: Historical Materialism as Art Historical Method

Even if under certain social conditions everyone were an excellent painter, this would not prevent everyone from also being an original painter, so that here, too, the difference between 'human' and 'individual' work becomes sheer nonsense... In a communist organization of society there are no painters; at most there are people who, among other things, also paint.

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels³⁸

Even before travelling to Latin America, Craven initiated his 'new left type' of Marxist analysis in his review of Herbert Marcuse's *The Aesthetic Dimension: Toward a Critique of Marxist Aesthetics*. Revealing his own commitment to the relative autonomy of art (as opposed to the so-called 'absolute' autonomy of art), and opposition to absolute outcomes and teleological solutions in any socio-political analysis, Craven's deft analysis betrays his own awareness and commitment to deferred conclusions and to the open-endedness of history. Deference, in Craven's hands, need not be seen as an intellectual weakness but rather as a strength to hold out hope for a future perfect state in which equity for humanity is fully achieved (if not properly restored):

...the failings of Marcuse's own subtle and incisive study result from certain inadequacies of his argument for the autonomy of art – the very concept with which he combats the reification of art. Ultimately, Marcuse restores the uncircumscribed complexity of the creative process, yet he does so in part by circumscribing the consummative experience of viewers whereby art achieves historical pertinence.³⁹

This review essay, written while Craven prepared to go to Nicaragua in 1982, reveals a scholar seeking a Marxist methodology that truly embraces the best possibilities of dialectics through attention to the dialogical role of reception without sliding into vulgar orthodox Marxism (ie dialectical materialism) as practiced by believers in Stalin's reformations in the Soviet Union. Again, as with his analyses of Ruskin, Greenberg, Hess and Berger, instead of remaining in the thrall of an exalted champion of the left, in this case Herbert Marcuse, Craven discovers a critical edge that clarifies his own commitments:

While he derides the 'illusory autonomy' of much abstract art, Marcuse also argues that the 'categorical imperative of autonomy' is 'things must change'. However true this was for much avant-garde art, it is now too much divorced from concrete situations to be of real value.⁴⁰

Craven goes on to assess the degree to which the avant-garde has been usurped and thereby undermined by the values and motivations of the ruling classes, while still holding up the art of Hans Haacke and Nancy Spero among others as exemplars of artistic resistance to the status quo.

In distinction to Marcuse's premature optimism, Craven maintained: 'Art is significant only insofar as it initiates various dialogues, some of them political, which keep it open-ended and historically pertinent.'⁴¹ Craven recognized that Marcuse's solutions fuse arts' objecthood and subjectivity as opposed to celebrating a sustained mediation between the two by his exclusive reliance on artist statements and critical interpretations of the art itself as something both intrinsically and extrinsically revolutionary. Craven maintains, however, that the experience of the viewer's reception of the autonomous art object cannot be so reductively simple. Rather, he reveals that committed art contains multiple ambiguities that foreclose any single reading – be it from the artist, the critic or audiences, but rather always already occupies multiple positions simultaneously. Nevertheless Craven is able to assert: 'Although Marcuse's discussion of the relationship between art and audience tends to eliminate one in favor of the other, his discussion of how negativity and affirmation interpenetrate each other in art is incisive.'⁴² In spite of his penetrating, subtle criticisms, Craven ultimately concludes:

One of the most significant aspects of Marcuse's important book is his refusal to ignore art's concrete, sensuous, and semi-autonomous character, that which causes us to perceive art qua art, as well as art as critical theory, social commentary, and the expression of Eros. By refusing to codify the irreducible complexity of art, Marcuse gives the dialectical approach to a art a strong self-critical turn, making it both less 'conclusive' and more enlightening than the stultifying certitude of orthodox Marxists.⁴³

And it is precisely such certitude that Craven targets in his numerous publications that articulate his unorthodox Marxism and a 'negative dialectics' throughout the remainder of his career.

Just as José Carlos Mariátegui served as a theoretical foundation supporting Craven's analysis of revolutionary art in Latin America, Meyer Schapiro's example became the leading example of how to apply Marxist theory effectively to art historical scholarship. Schapiro's scholarship in Craven's hands is routinely accented by the critical theory of the Frankfurt Institute, particularly the writings of Theodor Adorno and Walter Benjamin. For instance, in 1994, Craven served as the guest editor of the *Oxford Art Journal* for a special issue on Meyer Schapiro and contributed the informative essay (he also contributed translations and interviews) 'Meyer Schapiro, Karl Korsch and the Emergence of Critical Theory' that carefully examines Schapiro's Marxist inflected methods. In this essay, Craven clarifies the importance of distinguishing differences to avoid the trap of reductive solutions prescribed by a priori systems of social analysis. In contrast to dialectical materialism (vulgar Marxism), Schapiro advocated historical materialism. According to Craven, Schapiro's distinctions between these two theoretical approaches to Marxism are essential:

Schapiro considers himself an ‘unorthodox Marxist’, yet he has invariably approached art in a way that is fundamentally at odds with the controlled reflectionism and epistemological realism of what is normally termed ‘dialectical materialism’. Hence, Schapiro’s distinctive deployment of Marxian concepts, which had been a constant if variegated aspect of his thought from the 1920s up to the 1990s, helps us to remember that Marx himself never referred to his own historically materialist method as the all-encompassing or absolute system called ‘dialectical materialism’ nor did he ever consider his critical project to be finalized... The phrase ‘dialectical materialism’ was after all coined by [Georgi] Plekhanov and then codified only later as a closed teleological system by such figures as [Karl] Kautsky and [Joseph] Stalin, who transformed Marx’s probing and self-critical mode of historical inquiry into an ironclad and self-assured form of ‘complete science’ that reified dialectics into a purported ‘law of nature’, all of which not only imparted closure to the whole but also situated humanity in a relatively resigned, largely *non*-dialectical relation to a course of history subsequently deemed ‘inevitable’.⁴⁴

Craven reveals that Schapiro’s unorthodox Marxism recognizes that human history is multi-directional and defies the so-called ‘objective’, predetermined essences celebrated by empiricist versions of pseudo-scientific applications of Marxist theory.

When Schapiro applies these concepts to art, he emphasizes concrete formal analysis of an artist’s technique and attention to craft to demonstrate that human labour is never merely mono-directional (as scientific management or Taylorism suggests) but rather ‘an open-ended interchange between material conditions and the human effort to shape them – all of which actually entails a struggle that is both subjective *and* objective in nature’.⁴⁵ Craven’s analysis of Schapiro’s application of critical theory to art history emphasizes the social function of art to unite people through common experience. That is, art objects have the unique ability to connect an audience to artists’ ‘thinking and feeling and perception’.⁴⁶ For Schapiro and Craven both see art as the manifestation of ‘a social bond that furthers in aesthetic terms the process of human self-realization through the non-instrumental refinement of the senses, and through the critical engagement of the intellect’.⁴⁷ This concept serves Craven as the core value of artistic production and the critical response that it engenders. Far from being a mere decoration or idle by-product created by a privileged sub-set of citizens, art and the conditions of its production allow for a means of dialogical communication that enable a critical engagement with reality that offers a glimpse of what a truly equitable free society could be – in contrast to oligarchic notions of *laissez-faire* freedom; an unfettered capitalism that requires the exploitation of alienated, dehumanized labourers.

Craven’s commitment to social justice, working in tandem with his scholarly rigour, is most clearly demonstrated in his survey essay ‘Marxism and Critical Art History’, his original contribution to *A Companion to Art Theory*.⁴⁸ In this essay, Craven is quick to point out that no Marxist analysis can proceed without acknowledging the numerous contradictions, and thereby perceived weaknesses, of Marxist methodology. For, in Craven’s hands, Marxist methodology is never a ‘closed “scientific” system, such as that of so-called “dialectical materialism”’, but rather a ‘dense cluster of collateral, yet often competing, positions. These positions, with their subtle shifts and turns, do not add up to a single system of seamless views, so much as a broad-ranging set of profoundly suggestive points of departure.’⁴⁹ As we have seen, Craven is most adept at using these points of departure for his own peculiar and incisive brand of ‘new art history’.

In his writings and teachings, Craven routinely points out that Marx’s ‘materialist conception of history’ never relied on the ahistorical premise of a Hegelian dialectic (thesis, antithesis and synthesis) and accepts that

materialist methods preclude any ‘ready-cut pattern on which to tailor historical facts’ (to quote Friedrich Engels).⁵⁰ This is not to deny, however, that Marx and Engels did on occasion fall prey to just such reductive analyses in their writings. Craven frequently utilizes Schapiro’s retelling of Bertolt Brecht’s metaphor that art is a hammer not a mirror in the construction of historical reality.⁵¹ This kernel of truth stems from Marx’s *Introduction to a Critique of Political Economy* (1857–1859) in which he wrote:

An *objet d’art* creates a public that has artistic taste and is able to enjoy beauty... Production accordingly produces not only an object for the subject, but also a subject for the object.⁵²

For Marx, art enjoyed ‘relative autonomy’, a key premise for historical materialists who emphasize ‘uneven development’ whereby the power of individual agency is independent of superstructural forces over which it has no control and does not deny class struggle but rather produces the very tension (or engine) by which such struggle can proceed.

V. Alternative Modernisms: Baranik’s Poetics and Rivera’s Epic

An artist who does not teach other artists teaches no one.

Walter Benjamin⁵³

Craven employed this precept in his books on Rudolf Baranik and Diego Rivera. And, although these artists may seem disparate subjects for study, there are many common themes between them that demonstrate Craven’s capacity to select subjects who share his socio-political activism. Craven’s books present these politically engaged artists not merely as the producers of art objects with socialist themes but as artists trapped by reductive art historical readings of modernism that scorn figuration, such as ‘social realism’, in favour of ‘pure’ abstraction as the final culmination of late modernism.

Outlining Baranik’s friendship with Ad Reinhardt (in which their differences of opinion were not only respected but encouraged), Craven draws out distinctions whereby reductive modernists insist abstraction must eclipse figuration with the similar didactic simplicity of Social Realists who believe narrative alone can produce *engagé art*:

Reinhardt’s utter emphasis on *art as affirmation* – he claimed that, ‘in its dissatisfaction with ordinary experience, the impoverished reality of present-day society, an abstract painting stands as a challenge to disorder and disintegration’ – placed him at odds with Baranik’s belief that an artwork must be *both an affirmation and a negation*. Accordingly, even as Baranik’s works affirmed sensory engagement, and indeed beauty, these paintings were also meant to function as an ideological critique, however indirect, of historical structures. Thus while Baranik’s was not topical enough for many partisans of ‘socialist realism’, his paintings were too topical for Reinhardt’s concept of an uncompromising, *radical distance* from ‘the impoverishment of present-day society’.⁵⁴

Carefully delineating similarities and distinctions between ‘realism’ as a narrative mode of image-making that can be harnessed to illustrate a specific ideological agenda and ‘abstraction’ as an expressive, formal means of

achieving an apolitical 'art-for-art's sake' (a concern that extends from Craven's first publication on Ruskin to his current unpublished research agenda), Craven offers a dialectical conversion in which these two polarities merge to underscore Ludwig Wittgenstein's assertion: 'Ethics and aesthetics are one and the same.'⁵⁵ Baranik expresses this relationship by the term 'socialist formalism':

Aesthetics is not apart from ideology, but ideology is not apart from aesthetics... I want an approach to art which is *socialist* and *formalist*: 'socialist' [in] standing guard over art's moral responsibility, 'formalist' [in] standing guard over art's poetic assumptions...⁵⁶

In his discussion of Baranik's *Napalm Elegies*, which obliquely draw inspiration from a photograph of a Vietnamese boy struggling to stay alive despite being disfigured beyond recognition by napalm, Craven demonstrates that Baranik's 'socialist formalism' exemplifies Marx's own request that artists 'Shakespearize':

Then you could have expressed, and in much greater measure, the most modern ideas in their purest form, while actually, as it is, the main idea with you, aside from religious freedom, remains civil *unity*. You would have to Shakespearize more, while at present I consider Schillerism, making individuals the mere mouthpieces of the spirit of the times, your main fault.⁵⁷

Baranik's poetics, as analysed by Craven, do not reduce to mere didactic hectoring but promote the highest ideals of the avant-garde to provoke a reconsideration of how to best integrate individuals into equitable societies in which dehumanizing exploitation is eliminated. However, as Craven asserts, this cannot be achieved by fiat but must emerge organically: 'Baranik's paintings both challenge conventional wisdom yet refrain from outlining solutions, dependent as this art is upon viewer engagement for constructing new values through altered cultural practices.'⁵⁸ Baranik's 'Socialist Formalism', in Craven's analysis, operates as a kind of *engagé* Venn diagram whereby the '*transcendent* ideological critique' of abstraction overlaps 'with a timely *immanent*, ideological critique' of figuration.⁵⁹ This correspondence strengthens Baranik's repudiation of both the revolutionary sloganeering of the dialectical materialist and the despairing existentialist concept of the human condition: 'Baranik's work has always been to address alienation as an historical problem demanding activist efforts at resolution, rather than as a "human condition" necessitating accommodation or resignation.'⁶⁰ Baranik's art is dialogical and interrogative as it places viewers in active, interpretative roles which are denied to audiences of 'Socialist Realism'. In this regard, Baranik's oeuvre shares affinities with Diego Rivera who also 'Shakespearizes' *and* refuses to present the human condition as a *fait accompli*.

Both artists challenge reductive definitions of modernism that do not always account for the ideals of the avant-garde (especially as defined by Peter Bürger and Renato Poggioli) which deny that art merely serves as the mouthpiece of official institutions and reveal it as a 'formative force of a new society'.⁶¹ These conceptions of the avant-garde diverge considerably from Greenberg's dogma of medium purity to which modernist painting can be reduced: "'Purity" meant self-definition, and the enterprise of self-criticism in the arts became one of self-definition with a vengeance.'⁶² Such complications between what constitutes and defines modern art reappear in *Diego Rivera as Epic Modernist* and serve as one of the more significant contributions Craven makes to art theory. For, as Craven repeatedly demonstrates in his numerous publications, modernism is not a monolithic entity but a multiplicity of 'alternative modernisms'. Moreover each of these various (if occasionally competing)

conceptions of modernism carry the capacity to transform society. ‘Socialist formalism’, or *engagé* art, eschews closed readings of ‘Social Realism’ by embracing polyvalence as a worthy outcome of a dialogical reception that has the potential to animate civic discourse and thereby energize the public sphere.

The rhetoric of alternative cosmopolitan modernisms is not merely an academic’s stylistic excess leading to hair-splitting obscurantism. Rather, the plural ‘s’ serves to emphasize that no foreclosed outcome can be predicted and anticipated given the political reality of ‘uneven development’ both within the advanced nations of the West as well as among the developing nations of the Third World. In Craven’s book on Rivera, he traverses this field:

Rivera and the Mexican Muralists forged an ‘alternative modernism’ that we can also give the paradoxical label of ‘populist modernism’. It was Rivera’s populist use of figurative historical references that has caused many commentators to overlook the modernist components and avant-garde concerns of his murals and to label them simply as examples of ‘social realism’, which they are not. Since populism and modernism have normally been antithetical to each other, the antimodernist designation of ‘social realism’ has served as a superficial and unsuccessful way for some people to ‘resolve’ the interpretative problems posed by Rivera’s murals, which are both modernist *and* populist in varying degrees depending on the mural in question.⁶³

Once again, Craven utilizes Meyer Schapiro’s example of theoretical guidance by citing the essay ‘The Patrons of Revolutionary Art’ to advance his argument in both books.⁶⁴

In this too rarely discussed treatise, Schapiro criticizes flaws in ‘committed’ art for privileging artistic intention over reception in a work’s meaning. Craven quotes this passage in his book on Baranik to tease out distinctions between ‘Socialist Realism’ and ‘socialist formalism’:

It is conceivable that art which avows a socialist doctrine may support attitudes dangerous to the working class... The ease with which slogans of socialism are appropriated by the fascists indicates how great is the gulf between slogans and action, between general assertions and effective tactics... works without political intention have by their honesty and vigor excited people to a serious questioning of themselves and their loyalties; they have destroyed the faith in feudal or bourgeois values and helped to create the moral courage necessary for revolutionary action and will.⁶⁵

Advancing the implications of this optimistic prognosis for *uncommitted* art in the public sphere, in *Diego Rivera as Epic Modernist* Craven quotes Schapiro’s assessment of the Mexican muralist as an exemplar of the kind of socially engaged art which he advocates – an ‘engaged modernism’ that Schapiro further refines as ‘epic modernism’:

[Rivera’s] murals produce a powerful impression of the density of historical life... No other painter of our time has been so prolific and inexhaustibly curious about life and history. With all its limitations, Rivera’s art is the nearest to a modern epic painting.⁶⁶

Again, as with his assessment of Baranik’s poetics, Rivera’s epic modernism enables Craven to assert:

The meaning of an artwork is a *site of contestation*... Thus, the meanings of the monumental public murals by Rivera can hardly be reduced to the ideological needs of the Mexican state any more than one can automatically assume that artistic intent alone is what matters.⁶⁷

The context in which art is received is never eclipsed by an artist's intentions – reception and intention remain the obverse and reverse of the same coin. Both must be accounted for in definitions of modernisms. Although certain artistic intentions may adhere more closely to modern art theory, no such theory can adequately account for the vagaries of reception across time and space – while an artist's intentions may be fixed, an audience's reception is perpetually in flux. There can be no single conception of modernism that properly accounts for all that belongs to the category; rather, as Craven argues, there exist multiple, alternative modernisms.

One consistent theme in Craven's scholarship is a resolute attention to the etymology of key terms – especially *modernism*. Most importantly, Craven notes:

Despite the fact that modernism, modernity and modernization are routinely used as synonyms in much art historical literature, it must be emphasized that they *have always existed only in asymmetrical and unsettled relation to each other*.⁶⁸

Contrary to what we might expect, Craven traces the invention of this term (as a distinct variant of 'modern' and 'modernity') to the new world, Nicaragua more precisely. Rubén Darío first used the neologism in 1885/1886 to describe the work of Ricardo Contreras, a Mexican author. By *modernismo*, Darío accounted for divergent elements he noted in the work of Contreras, as well as that of Rivera and Auguste Rodin: a hybrid synthesis of Western and Non-western heterogeneity that is simultaneously pre-colonial, colonial and postcolonial. In this sense, modernism is a theory that embraces anti-imperialism and racial harmony through artworks that celebrate a multicultural mosaic that portrayed the 'New Person' and his or her aspirations as neither alienated nor repressed.

In Craven's assessment, Darío's *modernismo* merits a place in discussions of modern art alongside Charles Baudelaire's initial formulation of modern life and Greenberg's homogenous, orthodox formalism: 'We need to discuss modernism in a far more stringent and differentiated way than has occurred in recent years.'⁶⁹ Craven seeks to correct a misconception that Baudelaire's canonical essay 'The Painter of Modern Life' defined modernism. Baudelaire's conception of modernity as the alternate to timeless beauty – 'the ephemeral, the fugitive, the contingent'⁷⁰ – articulates the social experience of economic modernization and the means through which artists can offer a dissident resistance to the values of the dehumanizing impulses of capitalism (and one must note that even Marx recognized that capitalism was not exclusively repressive but offered an opportunity for socialism to realize its full potential in the future). Determined to counter a facile opposition between modernism and postmodernism in the discourse of art history during the late twentieth century, Craven demonstrated that Darío's conception of modernism (and, most importantly, the first published use of this term, albeit as the Spanish equivalent of 'modernismo') already incorporated key concepts incorporated into theories of postmodernism as described by such figures as Charles Jencks, Fredric Jameson and François Lyotard.⁷¹ Craven writes:

We need to advance beyond modernism critically, rather than be dismissive of it (which would not constitute a legitimate advance). To do so, we must begin by avoiding sweeping referendums and *ad hoc* tribunals that simply decide for or against modernism, as if modernism itself were not a deeply contradictory project marked by a plurality of divergent tendencies, thus being constituted by both progressive and regressive moments simultaneously.⁷²

In Craven's writing, we encounter numerous adjectives before the term modernism – alternative, epic, engaged, populist, cosmopolitan. In each of these cases Craven reveals the contradictory and pluralist nature of the concept so as to underscore his own commitment to interpreting art formally through the historical materialist lens of uneven development. As in his analysis of 'realism' in the work of Baranik and Rivera, Craven endeavours to demonstrate the power of the dialogical response; that is, the means by which audiences are invited to interrogate the works of art they see, and, by extension, the societies and their values (both manifest and latent) in which they live and which foster their production.

Both Baranik and Rivera produce works of art that depict uneven historical development through the poetic and epic use of allegory (in accordance with the views of Walter Benjamin), and as a result require their viewers to interrogate the meaning of a mural or painting in their own time and place, in their own context.⁷³ In a passage that reiterates Craven's core beliefs, he writes:

This conception of uneven historical development – which underscores the *inconclusiveness* to date of *every* moment in history from antiquity to the present – helps us to understand why Rivera's use of allegory, like his project of 'epic modernism' that calls for spectator consummation, is about history as a field of fragments and as a composite of incomplete lessons, all of which await some greater degree of unity in a future phase of history.⁷⁴

This strand of Craven's thought was fully realized in his essay 'Realism Revisited and Re-theorized in "Pan-American" Terms'. This critique of Georg Lukács' distinction between 'realism' and 'naturalism' reveals the significance of parsing modernism's plurality of competing strands. As Craven writes, "'realism", pace Lukács, from Courbet onwards was a type of "modernism", sometimes cosmopolitan, other times provincial and often compromised, but always with multiple strains, like modernisms in general'.⁷⁵ Just as Craven emphasizes multiple modernisms, he also acknowledges a multiplicity of realisms.

'Realism', in Lukács' analysis, must be distinguished from 'naturalism', for the 'realist' assesses what is common in society to reveal patterns of class-based hierarchies that are sustained by an economics of inequity. And 'naturalism' for Lukács levels all manifestations of

...society to the same level of significance on behalf of a 'cult of the average' that actually hides the uneven and hierarchical nature of society, and thus how it treats people unequally in economic and political terms'.⁷⁶

'Naturalism,' in this sense, amounts to a system in which everyone is believed to be the same in a society that simply does not (and cannot) treat citizens in such a manner – for ethnicity and one's parental economic standing preclude an even playing field from birth onwards. In Craven's estimation 'Social Realism', as he demonstrates in his analysis of Baranik and Rivera, 'cannot mean merely one strict visual language but rather a broad-ranging cluster of idioms'.⁷⁷ In this, Craven adheres to Patricia Hills's insight that social realism is less a style than 'an attitude toward the role of art in life'.⁷⁸

If both Rivera and Baranik are 'Social Realists', this is the case only insofar as they avoid the reactionary tendencies of 'naturalism' and embrace the progressive possibility of 'realism'. But Lukács' binary formulation is

too narrow and lends itself to ahistorical analysis of art (ie normative, universally valid, class-contingent) far too easily; for, if ‘Social Realism’ is redefined as an ‘attitude’, then an affinity between realism as icon and abstraction as index is made possible. Indeed, abstraction can reveal that which does not yet exist by ‘communicat[ing] a relationship of humanity to the world that transcends a given historical moment’.⁷⁹ Taking his cue from Adolfo Sánchez Vázquez, Craven emphasizes that *engagé* art requires engaged audiences as there can be ‘no partisan art without partisan interpretations to propel it’.⁸⁰ To reveal this important symbiosis, Craven points to the reception of Abstract Expressionism in Latin America as a beacon for stimulating social change, contrary to the claims of mainstream scholarship.

VI: Abstract Expressionism and/as Anti-Imperialism

This artwork [Abstract Expressionism] is a ‘national’ signifier abroad for a nation that has not generally embraced it and the ‘international’ signifier elsewhere for a principled opposition to the nation that originally produced it.

David Craven⁸¹

Unlike the ‘naturalism’ of Social Realism as promoted by Stalin’s cultural policies in the Soviet Union, Craven shows that many Nicaraguan and Cuban artists on the left embraced the New York school as a point of departure for articulating dissident ideological value and forging an anti-imperialist visual language. In a manner that diverges from Baranik’s contest with Reinhardt, Craven argues that social activists in Latin America embraced Abstract Expressionism as a ‘potent signifier for opposition to mainstream culture from the dissident margins’.⁸² Craven demonstrates that throughout Latin America

Abstract Expressionism represented a refutation of the mainstream culture in the United States to which art was nevertheless connected... Abstract Expressionism embodied a negative visual language on behalf of ‘una dimensión interior’ with dissident import and in opposition to ‘una interioridad’ of fetishized subjectivity more characteristic of bourgeois values in the West.⁸³

Craven’s insistence that alternative modernisms are in fact negations of dominant cultural values in a capitalist democracy draws not only on Darío’s initial conception of modernism but also on his own insightful analysis of the Abstract Expressionists working in New York during the 1950s and their ambiguous relationship to the US government – simultaneously championed by the CIA through the ‘long leash’ policies of the Cold War abroad and, at home, subjected to espionage by the FBI as a threat to the government during the decade of anti-Communist witch hunts of McCarthyism.⁸⁴

Craven’s first publication on Abstract Expressionism, ‘The Disappropriation of Abstract Expressionism’ reviews three publications.⁸⁵ The most significant among them, Serge Guilbaut’s *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art*, serves as a counterpoint to Craven’s careful reading of the political imperatives motivating the New York School, particularly the members of the so-called first generation. In both this review essay and his book on Abstract Expressionism, Craven acknowledged that Guilbaut’s book elevated scholarship on Abstract

Expressionism by questioning the appropriation of Abstract Expressionism to promote US Cold War foreign policy abroad not as a ‘casualty’ of Cold War liberalism but as its ‘carrier’.⁸⁶ However, Craven faulted Guilbaut for (1) utilizing a Neo-Hegelian (ie ahistorical) theoretical framework to position Abstract Expressionism as a reflection of ideological ‘centrism’ (‘a style equally aloof from the right and left’),⁸⁷ (2) uncritically accepting Greenberg’s extension of an art for art’s sake rhetoric to explain the New York School; and (3) ignoring the actual material conditions that circumscribed the reception of Abstract Expressionism (in spite of his professed goal ‘to give a materialist history of the New York school’).⁸⁸ While Craven credited Guilbaut for effectively detailing the conditions of the post-war art market in the US, he suggests Guilbaut

...fails to delineate the role of ‘new liberalism’, hence of the *material* interests it has represented, because he does not discuss in depth the nature of its relationship to monopoly capitalism.⁸⁹

Craven, in contrast, emphasized that ‘new liberalism’ supported conservative efforts to extend monopoly capitalism worldwide, especially as embodied by the Truman Doctrine which, more than any other US foreign policy, produced the material conditions of the Cold War. Craven’s emphasis on the well-documented anti-imperialism (as well as anti-Stalinism, anti-capitalism and anti-dogmatism) of most first generation Abstract Expressionists offers a very different reading of the politics of many (but not all) New York School participants.

Utilizing a dialogical method, Craven’s reading of Abstract Expressionism, in contrast to Guilbaut’s more one-dimensional approach, requires a multipoint interchange that accounts for the artistic intentions, the aesthetic results, the aims of those who promote the art, the interests of those who buy it, *and* the various interpretations of the numerous constituencies who respond to its divergent meanings. And, most importantly, this multipoint interchange transcends national borders, as Craven reveals how some artists in Latin America discovered an ‘insurrectionary’ meaning in Abstract Expressionism. This recognition of artistic dissidence ran counter to the government propagandists who sent Abstract Expressionist works abroad through the CIA-financed auspices of the Congress for Cultural Freedom as signifiers of ‘total freedom’ in the United States in contrast to the repressive policies of the Soviet Union.⁹⁰ Craven cites Latin American scholars (largely unread in the US), notably Juan Acha in Peru and Marta Traba in Colombia, who admired the New York School’s oppositional stance to ‘the salient ideological attributes in the West of the corporate capitalist mode of production (specifically its pervasive instrumentalist thinking as manifested in scientism, technophilia, and positivism)’.⁹¹ Again, Craven’s dialogical analysis demonstrates that works of art are ‘decentered and open-ended sites of construction’ wherein numerous cultural practices can coalesce, if only temporarily.⁹²

To demonstrate this thesis, Craven turns to the FBI files on artists of the New York School – namely Adolph Gottlieb, Lee Krasner, Norman Lewis, Robert Motherwell, Ad Reinhardt and Mark Rothko.⁹³ Despite the CIA’s covert support for the movement in Europe and Latin America, the FBI files on these artists (some of whom participated in exhibitions organized by the Museum of Modern Art with funds supplied by the Congress for Cultural Freedom) reveal a concerted effort to investigate them as national security threats (as a result of which Lee Krasner was even falsely accused of being a Soviet spy in 1957). In spite of the Freedom of Information Act of 1966, the documents, ranging from Reinhardt’s extensive 123-page dossier to Gottlieb and Krasner’s briefer

files (five and two pages long respectively), were excessively redacted, often to protect a 'confidential source'. By attempting to cast suspicion of treasonous criminality on these artists, the FBI's investigations were intended to threaten and silence the Abstract Expressionists in general (whether they were directly investigated or not) and their anti-Imperialist beliefs in particular.⁹⁴

This attempt to shape public opinion was spearheaded by US Representative George Dondero, who on the floor of Congress insisted on a 'link between the Communist art of the "isms" and the so-called modern art of America'.⁹⁵ In an interview published by *Harper's Magazine*, Dondero intensified his suspicions: 'Modern art is Communistic because it is distorted and ugly, because it does not glorify our beautiful country.'⁹⁶ In this sweeping generalization, Dondero labelled all modern artists as 'enemies' of the nation. And, as Craven reveals, Dondero's assertions were used and directly referenced in the FBI files as justifications for investigating Motherwell and Reinhardt.⁹⁷ Dondero (and other right-wing politicians) confuse a commitment to the promise of socialism (in its various forms) with an allegiance to the Soviet Union – a confusion that persists to this day in US political discourse. It does not follow that the pro-socialist *and* anti-imperialist stance of most Abstract Expressionists led directly to the support of the former Soviet Union's own imperialist aspirations. Craven illustrates this point best in his catalogue essay 'Myth-Making in the McCarthy Period' for the Tate Liverpool exhibition 'Myth-Making: Abstract Expressionist Painting from the United States'. Craven cites a letter from the African American Norman Lewis:

...even though he considered himself a Marxist he disagreed with the Communist Party's position on art because their view was based on 'no universal consideration'. In a word, the C.P.'s populist endorsement of 'socialist realism' (which Lewis practiced in the 1930s) was ethnocentric and narrow-minded in a way that contradicted his more international synthesis of Western and non-Western (specifically African and African-American) visual traditions...⁹⁸

Moreover, as Craven reveals, the artists of the New York School were not only strongly committed to the civil rights and anti-war movements of the 1960s and 70s, they also hoped the fruit of their labour would result in an opportunity for a more just and equitable society: 'their art was not just about expanding the communicative resources of art but also about reconstituting community by means of it.'⁹⁹

Craven insists that among the Abstract Expressionists' various political beliefs, one of the most forceful was their particular support of the Civil Rights Movement. Perhaps the most notable evidence of this was the endorsement of the 'Freedom Rides' sponsored by the Congress of Racial Equity (CORE) by Mark Rothko and Ad Reinhardt and other notable members of the New York School who donated paintings for a sale to raise money for the cause. Another art sale to support Civil Rights was sponsored by the artists' committee of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (Jacob Lawrence, chair and Ad Reinhardt, vice-chair) benefited from similar contributions. Although little socializing across ethnic lines occurred during the 1950s, due to social barriers erected long before the artists of this generation came of age, there were several black artists who incorporated Abstract Expressionist techniques into their work. Norman Lewis, with whom Ad Reinhardt maintained a lasting friendship, is now recognized as rare in having overcome these social barriers. However, it is

largely due to Craven's own efforts that Lewis is today acknowledged as a significant figure of the era, even though he showed at the Marian Willard Gallery from 1946 to 1964.

Not only does Craven discuss Lewis' work in *Abstract Expressionism as Cultural Critique*, he also ensured that Lewis was included in the Tate's landmark 'Myth-Making' exhibition. Although Lewis had been omitted from all prior post-1960 exhibitions of Abstract Expressionism, Craven requested that two of Lewis's paintings be included in the Tate Liverpool exhibit. Nicholas Serota, Director of the Tate, granted this wish and the British responded to these canvases as revelatory discoveries. Finally, in 1998, the Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, presented a retrospective of Norman Lewis' paintings and requested that Craven contribute to the catalogue.¹⁰⁰

VII. Craven's Future Perfect: When the Revolution Will Have Succeeded

Intellectual advances have always consisted of making distinctions, rather than in suppressing them, and some ways of distinguishing differences are clearly more incisive than others.

David Craven¹⁰¹

Craven's capacity to distinguish differences between similar positions is precisely why he has generated numerous intellectual advances that lend shape to the discourse of art history today. One of the primary ways Craven achieves this is through a careful etymological tracing of the key terms he uses. Clearly inspired by Raymond Williams' *Keywords* and Baranik's imaginary *Dictionary from the 24th Century*, Craven routinely emphasizes the need for a critical understanding of the denotative/connotative as well as the synchronic/diachronic values of the terms he employs.¹⁰² Another example can be found in his precise analysis of the term 'avant-garde' in *Diego Rivera as Epic Modernist*. Not only does Craven utilize the classic studies by Peter Bürger and Renato Poggioli (both titled *Theory of the Avant-Garde*)¹⁰³ but he makes a point of quoting one of the earliest usages of the phrase 'avant-garde' by Désiré Laverdant to underscore that art has long been conceived of as a formative force in society and not merely a reflection of existing society:

Art, the expression of society, manifests in its highest soaring the most advanced social tendencies: it is the forerunner and the revealer... *to know whether the artist is truly of the avant-garde, one must know where humanity is going.*¹⁰⁴

The historical development and cultural significance of the avant-garde in the visual arts fuelled Craven's career. Perhaps this can be most clearly demonstrated by detailing how and why Craven carefully unpacks the etymology of the term 'revolution' in his most widely read book: *Art and Revolution in Latin America, 1910–1990*.¹⁰⁵ By doing so, Craven reveals the degree to which the arts have long been progressive, dissident and politically engaged.

Craven initiates his historical definition of 'revolution' by acknowledging the debated meaning of the phrase 'Mexican Revolution'. On the one hand, Octavio Paz suggested the historical events should be renamed 'Mexican Revelation', as it was more an example of Mexicans discovering Mexico than a concerted effort by a unified insurgent force. On the other hand, some have suggested it should be reframed as a rebellion (even if qualified by

the adjective ‘great’). In distinction, Carlos Fuentes advocates for the plural ‘Mexican Revolutions’ and outlines three distinct, if simultaneous, revolutionary processes. But, to wade in – and even settle – this debate, Craven traces the term ‘revolution’ to the fourteenth century, well before it began to take on its denotative value of radical and programmatic, political change. Careful to distinguish between English, German and Spanish uses of the Latin variant of *revolvere*, Craven examines the correlative term ‘rebellion’ to chart the diachronic alteration of ‘revolution’ as it takes on the denotative value of political insurgency. Craven even cites Cesare Ripa’s essential text for art historians, *Iconologia* (1593, second edition in 1603). Notably, the second edition includes an entry on rebellion but not revolution.¹⁰⁶

Craven instructs us that ‘revolution’ only took on radical connotations in the seventeenth century, during the 1640s, when Oliver Cromwell overthrew the monarchy and initiated the new use of the term ‘revolt’. Curiously, the reversal of the Cromwellian Republic by Charles II was associated with *revolution*, whereas Cromwell’s insurgency was called a *rebellion*. It is not until the late eighteenth century that *revolution* undergoes a diachronic shift to take on a denotative meaning regarding the ideologically-charged overthrow of tyrannical leaders. Further, Craven’s historical analysis suggests that ‘revolution’ first took on the additional connotative value of achieving social justice regarding the natural rights of all people during the eighteenth century. Focusing on the role of the arts in fomenting and promoting the French Revolution of 1789, Craven reveals that the relationship between etymological conceptions of revolution and the visual arts have *always* been linked. Moreover he draws a connection between revolution and ideology by pointing out

When they wrote *The German Ideology* in 1846, Marx and Engels not only multiplied the meanings of the word ‘ideology,’ but also definitively linked ideology with revolution, so that since the mid-nineteenth century, it has no longer been plausible to speak of a ‘non-ideological’ revolution.¹⁰⁷

The alliance between revolution as radical politics and the arts compels Craven to offer a succinct analysis of the role of the arts to promote social transformation in one of the most profound passages in his published writings:

This Marxian reconceptualization of history, humanity, and artistic practice as interdependent, dynamic, transfiguring forces helped to give the word ‘revolution’ two new dimensions: First, there was a fresh sense of the structuring logic of social transformation beyond even that of the view of the Enlightenment. And, second, there was a novel sense of the self-determining immediacy of ordinary labor that made it an inherently reconfiguring force – especially when tied to an accelerated project of wholesale change called ‘revolution’. A further consequence of both tendencies within the revolutionary process was the new challenge to spawn different, experimental types of cultural practices to accommodate this new concept of art as socially transformative. Such a humanly self-empowering process would thus help to create the creators of society along more open and visionary lines. In this way the ‘natural order’ of the Revolution of 1789 suddenly acquired a range of natural possibilities and a well of natural potential that made nature itself far more subject to mediation and even alteration, yet without the revolutionary process itself becoming ‘unnatural’ – even as it changed what had been the ‘natural order’ of a society in a prerevolutionary world.¹⁰⁸

This encapsulates Craven's deepest beliefs and most profound insights. The potential alliance between artists and the working classes – the correspondence between alienated and disalienated labour – remains a theme that runs throughout Craven's oeuvre.

Although Craven concedes that the relationship of the arts to labour is both ill-defined and contradictory in contemporary Western society, he emphasizes parallels in production to advance a theory of 'Romantic anti-capitalism'.¹⁰⁹ In contrast to the scientific management of labour (Taylorism), the modern artist produces work for others (dealers, museum directors, patrons) who have access to the financial means to sell, collect, exhibit and lend art, but the artist is simultaneously free of managerial command and enjoys, as a result, greater access to workplace democracy.¹¹⁰ These alternative working conditions, in contradiction to capitalist modes of production, offer hope to the working classes. This conception runs parallel to the role of the artist as revolutionary. After tracing the emergence of *guerrilla* as synonym for 'revolutionary' (noting that the former term was coined by Augusto Sandino) and the means by which Che Guevara harnessed the term to denote fighters engaged in ideologically consistent class-based warfare, Craven points out that Che

...emphasized anew the connection between artistic production within a revolution and the revolutionary production of the New Person. The creation of one, he maintained, presupposed an immediate creative engagement with the other.¹¹¹

Craven's etymological survey of the term 'revolution' is never far removed from an accounting for the role artists can and do play in communicating the value and potential outcomes of such political operations.

And here we return to one of Craven's key arguments: the dialogical interplay of the artist's intentions with the artwork's reception results in cultural advance that offers the future perfect promise of democratic socialism whereby exploitation and alienation is not only eliminated but (it is hoped) almost forgotten – such is the optimistic promise held out by Baranik's *Dictionary from the 24th Century*. That is, a world in which uneven development is overcome and the concept of revolution is rendered obsolete. What Craven's scholarship reveals is not only that the arts have a role to play in such a historical progression, but that they offer one of the essential means of realizing the promise of such a society. For the arts, as Craven repeatedly demonstrates in all his publications, contribute to

...the challenge of constructing one's own identity as part of a national project [that] is inextricably linked with the larger concern of self-representation in the intertwined spheres of politics, economics and culture. Accordingly, the relationship of revolution to democracy in all its various forms is at issue, both within the state and beyond it – in civil society and the workplace. A barrier to any mainstream analysis of democratic self-representation in a revolutionary process has long been the purported monopoly on definitions of 'democracy' possessed by the Western world, especially the United States. Yet, what generally passes for all-encompassing 'democracy' in the mainstream West, namely, free parliamentary elections based on universal suffrage and presided over by 'neutral' state institutions, has long been attacked in Latin America as a very limited and exploitative form of 'democracy' that generally reproduces the inequitable relations upon which the capitalist mode of production so *undemocratically* depends... Particularly in Latin America and the rest of the Third World, this distorted, largely nonrepresentative form of 'democracy' occurs when parliamentary democracy is isolated from other forms of popular democracy. The resulting system is thus put into place, as if democracy and capitalism did not contradict each other structurally in a fundamental way.¹¹²

- ¹ Meyer Schapiro, 'The Patrons of Revolutionary Art', *Marxist Quarterly*, vol 1, no 3, October – December 1937, p 465
- ² Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory* (1970), *Theory and History of Literature* 88, Robert Hullot-Kentor, ed and trans, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1997, pp 225–226
- ³ See David Craven, 'Present Indicative Politics and Future Perfect Positions: Barack Obama and *Third Text*', *Third Text* 100, vol 23, no 5, pp 643–648. In this essay, Craven demonstrates why Shepard Fairey's *Hope* poster is not an example of plagiarism, even though it used an Associated Press photograph as source material. Craven's analysis of the poster was initially requested by Fairey's legal defence team.
- ⁴ David Craven, 'Towards a Newer Virgil: Mondrian De-Mythologized', *Journal of Fine Arts*, vol 1, no 1, spring 1977, p 17
- ⁵ This article confirms that Craven was the first art historian in the United States to incorporate Jacques Derrida's theories in a published article (the essay was originally written in 1976): 'Jacques Derrida in his brilliant critique of Husserl's approach [has] long since ceased searching for 'essences'', in *ibid*, p 23. It is important to note that this was two years before Derrida published his landmark critique of Claude Lévi-Strauss's anthropological structuralism, 'Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences', in *Writing and Difference*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1978; although this paper was first delivered in 1966 at a Johns Hopkins University symposium, it was the widely accessible print version that prominently placed him on the radar of scholars outside the discipline of philosophy in the US). Similarly, Craven was also one of the earliest art historians in the US to incorporate the ideas of Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Roland Barthes in print.
- ⁶ David Craven, 'Ruskin vs. Whistler: The Case against Capitalist Art', *Art Journal*, vol 37, no 2, winter 1977–1978, p 143
- ⁷ David Craven, 'The Critical Writings of Adrian Stokes', *Art Journal*, vol 38, no 2, winter 1978–1979, pp 142–3; David Craven, 'The 'Critique-Poésie' of Thomas Hess', *Art Criticism*, vol 1, no 1, spring, 1979, pp 83–100; and David Craven, 'John Berger as Art Critic', *Telos*, vol 46, winter 1980–1981, pp 209–220.
- ⁸ Craven, 'Adrian Stokes', *op cit*, p 143
- ⁹ Craven, 'Thomas Hess', *op cit*, p 97
- ¹⁰ Craven, 'John Berger', *op cit*, pp 219–220
- ¹¹ 'An Interview with David Craven' in Brian Winkenweder, ed, *David Craven: A Bibliography*, Editorial Arte, Albuquerque, New Mexico, 2011, p 127
- ¹² See David Craven, 'Introduction: Donald Kuspit's Achievement', in David Craven and Brian Winkenweder, eds, *Dialectical Conversations: Donald Kuspit's Art Criticism*, University of Liverpool Press, Liverpool, 2011, pp 1–40.
- ¹³ Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, Michael Holquist, ed, Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, trans, University of Texas Press, Austin, Texas, p 38
- ¹⁴ David Craven and John Ryder, *Art of the New Nicaragua*, New York Council for the Humanities, New York, 1983, p 17
- ¹⁵ Schapiro, *op cit*, p 465
- ¹⁶ Robert Morgan, Review of *The New Concept of Art and Popular Culture in Nicaragua Since the Revolution in 1979*, *M/E/A/N/I/N/G* 9, 1991, p 48
- ¹⁷ David Craven, *The New Concept of Art and Popular Culture in Nicaragua Since the Revolution*, Latin American Studies, vol 1, The Edwin Mellen Press, Lewiston, New York, 1989, p 261
- ¹⁸ José Carlos Mariátegui, *Obras Completas de José Carlos Mariátegui*, from vol 11: *Peruanicemos al Perú* (second edition), Biblioteca Amauta, Lima, 1972. Cited in Harry E Vanden, *National Marxism in Latin America: Jose Carlos Mariátegui's Thought and Politics*, Lynne Reiner, Boulder, Colorado, 1986, p 84
- ¹⁹ Angela Dimitrakaki, 'An Interview with David Craven' in Winkenweder, *op cit*, p 116
- ²⁰ 'Ciudadanos de EU fiscalizan ayuda a la democracia', *El Nuevo Diario*, 23 June 2011
- ²¹ 'US Delegation Finds Inappropriate US Involvement in the 2011 Nicaraguan Electoral Process', Nicaragua Network Press Release, 1 July 2011
- ²² For more information visit the Alliance for Global Justice's website: <http://www.afgj.org>.
- ²³ For more documentation on this, visit the news reports on the internet from such international groups as the *Honduran Solidarity Network* (<http://www.hondurasresists.org>), Honduras Human Rights (<http://www.hondurashumanrights.wordpress.com>), and *Grassroots Global Justice Alliance* (<http://www.ggjalliance.org>).
- ²⁴ On the misleading coverage in Honduran newspapers, see the newspaper articles about Craven's lecture in the 29 June 2011 edition of *La Tribuna*: 'Conferencia Arte Griego'; and that of 30 June in *El Herald*: 'Descubra la historia de Prometeo: El doctor David Craven ofrecerá una conferencia sobre el personaje griego', Sección Sociedad, p 1.
- ²⁵ Editors' translation into English. Original Spanish:
'El objeto de esta revista es él de plantear, esclarecer y conocer los problemas peruanos desde puntos de vista doctrinarios y científicos. Pero consideraremos siempre al Perú dentro del panorama del mundo. Estudiaremos todos los grandes movimientos de renovación – políticos, filosóficos, artísticos, literarios, científicos. Todo lo humano es nuestro. Esta revista vinculará a los hombres nuevos del Perú, primero con los de los otros pueblos de América, en seguida con los de los otros pueblos del mundo.' José Carlos Mariátegui, Editorial, *Amauta*, vol 1, no 1, September 1926, p 1
- ²⁶ José Carlos Mariátegui, *Obras Completas de José Carlos Mariátegui*, from vol 13: *Ideología y política*, third edition, Biblioteca Amauta, Lima, 1971. Cited in Vanden, *op cit*, p 53.
- ²⁷ José Carlos Mariátegui, *Siete ensayos de interpretación de la realidad peruana* (1928), Marjory Urquidi, trans, University of Texas Press, Austin, Texas, 1971, p 183.

²⁸ Ibid, pp 190–191

²⁹ David Craven, 'Abstract Expressionism and Third World Art: A Post-Colonial Approach to "American" Art', *Oxford Art Journal*, vol 14, no 1, 1991, pp 44–66

³⁰ Michael Hatt and Charlotte Klonk, *Art History: A Critical Introduction to its Methods*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2006, pp 232–233

³¹ David Craven, *Abstract Expressionism as Cultural Critique: Dissent during the McCarthy Period*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1999, p 34

³² Ibid, p 145.

³³ José Carlos Mariátegui, 'Yankeeland and Marxism', in Luis E Aguilar, ed, *Marxism in Latin America*, Alfred A Knopf, New York, 1968, p 95

³⁴ David Craven, 'Postcolonial Modernism in the Work of Diego Rivera and José Carlos Mariátegui or New Light on a Neglected Relationship', *Third Text* 54, spring 2001, pp 3–16

³⁵ Ibid, 5. See also Alberto Hijar, 'Diego Rivera: contribución política', in *Diego Rivera Hoy: simposio sobre el artista en el centenario de su natalicio*, Palacio de Bellas Artes, Mexico City, 1986, pp 37–72.

³⁶ Ibid, 15

³⁷ Ibid, 5

³⁸ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology* as reprinted in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Literature and Art: Selections from Their Writings*, International Publishers, New York, 1947, p 76

³⁹ David Craven, Book Review of Herbert Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension: Toward a Critique of Marxist Aesthetics* (Beacon Press, Boston, Massachusetts, 1978) in *Theory and Society*, vol 11, no 1, January 1982, p 109

⁴⁰ Ibid, p 112

⁴¹ Ibid, p 112

⁴² Ibid, p 113

⁴³ Ibid, 114

⁴⁴ David Craven, 'Meyer Schapiro, Karl Korsch, and the Emergence of Critical Theory', *Oxford Art Journal*, vol 17, no 1, (special issue on Meyer Schapiro edited by David Craven), 1994, p 42

⁴⁵ Ibid, p 43

⁴⁶ Ibid, p 51 (as quoted by Craven). Meyer Schapiro, "'Art and Society"', February 1939 Lecture and Introduction to the Fine Arts Lecture Series at the Brooklyn Academy of Music', unpublished four page typewritten manuscript in Folder #17, *The Personal Papers of Meyer Schapiro*, New York City

⁴⁷ Ibid, p 51

⁴⁸ David Craven, 'Marxism and Critical Art History', in Paul Smith and Carolyn White, eds, *A Companion to Art Theory*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 2002, pp 267–285.

⁴⁹ Ibid, p 268

⁵⁰ In a letter of 5 June 1890, Engels wrote 'the materialist method is converted in its opposite if, instead of being used as a guiding thread in historical research, it is made to serve a ready-cut pattern on which to tailor historical facts.' Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Selected Correspondence*, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1953, p 493

⁵¹ Craven, 'Marxism', op cit, p 271; Craven, 'Meyer Schapiro', op cit, p 43. See also David Craven, *Art and Revolution in Latin America, 1910–1990*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 2002, p 9.

⁵² Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works*, vol 28 (Karl Marx, 1857–1861), International Publishers, New York, 1975, p 30.

⁵³ Walter Benjamin, 'The Artist as Producer' (1934), *Reflections*, Edmund Jephcott, trans, Harcourt, Brace and Jovanovich, New York, 1978, p 233

⁵⁴ David Craven, *Poetics and Politics in the Art of Rudolf Baranik*, Humanities Press, Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey, 1997, p 38

⁵⁵ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1921), D F Pears and B F McGuiness, trans, Humanities Press, Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey, 1961, 6.421

⁵⁶ As quoted by Craven, in *Baranik*, op cit, p 6. See also Rudolf Baranik, 'A Socialist Formalist View on Berger and Fuller', *Art Monthly* 60, October 1982, pp 5–6.

⁵⁷ Karl Marx, letter to Ferdinand Lasalle, 19 April 1859 in Marx and Engels, *Literature and Art*, 1947, p 48

⁵⁸ Craven, *Baranik*, op cit, p 86

⁵⁹ Ibid, p 71

⁶⁰ Ibid, p 62

⁶¹ David Craven, *Diego Rivera as Epic Modernist*, G K Hall, New York, 1997, p 57

⁶² Clement Greenberg, 'Modernist Painting' (1965) in Gregory Battcock, ed, *The New Art*, Dutton, New York, 1966, p 102

⁶³ Craven, *Rivera*, op cit, p 59

⁶⁴ Meyer Schapiro, 'The Patrons of Revolutionary Art', *Marxist Quarterly*, vol 1, no 3, (October–December 1937), pp 462–70

⁶⁵ Schapiro 'Patrons', op cit, p 465, as quoted by Craven in *Baranik*, op cit

- ⁶⁶ Schapiro, 'Patrons', op cit, p 463, as quoted by Craven in *Rivera*, op cit, p 60
- ⁶⁷ Craven, *Rivera*, op cit, p 62
- ⁶⁸ David Craven, 'The Latin American Origins of 'Alternative Modernisms'', *Third Text* 36, autumn 1996, pp 29–44, emphasis in the original
- ⁶⁹ Craven, 'Alternative Modernisms', op cit, p 30
- ⁷⁰ Charles Baudelaire, 'The Painter of Modern Life' (first appeared in *Le Figaro*, in three instalments on 26, 28 November and 3 December, 1863) in *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, Jonathan Mayne, ed and trans, Da Capo, New York, 1964, p 13
- ⁷¹ Dario anticipates such key postmodern concepts as double coding, pastiche, and metanarrative as developed in Charles Jencks, *What Is Post-Modernism?* (1986) revised edition, Academy Editions, London, 1996; Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Duke University Press, Durham, North Carolina, 1991; and Jean-François Lyotard, 'The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge' (1979), in *Theory and History of Literature*, vol 10, Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi, trans, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1984.
- ⁷² Craven, 'Alternative Modernisms', op cit, p 30
- ⁷³ Walter Benjamin's works are replete with theories of allegory. To begin, see Walter Benjamin, 'Allegory and Trauerspiel' in *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* (1963), John Osborne, trans, London: Verso, 2009
- ⁷⁴ Craven, *Rivera*, p 162.
- ⁷⁵ David Craven, 'Realism Revisited and Re-theorised in Pan-American Terms', *Third Text*, vol 21, no 3, May 2007, p 307.
- ⁷⁶ *Ibid*, p 307
- ⁷⁷ *Ibid*, p 311
- ⁷⁸ *Ibid*, p 311
- ⁷⁹ Dimitrakaki, op cit, p 114
- ⁸⁰ *Ibid*, p 114
- ⁸¹ David Craven, *Abstract Expressionism*, op cit, p 18
- ⁸² David Craven, 'A Legacy for the Latin American Left: Abstract Expressionism as Anti-Imperialist Art', in Joan Marter, ed, *Abstract Expressionism: The International Context*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey, 2007, p 80
- ⁸³ *Ibid*, p 81
- ⁸⁴ Craven's landmark book, *Abstract Expressionism as Cultural Critique: Dissent During the McCarthy Period*, stands out as one of his most important contributions to the history of art in the twentieth century as it draws on this scholar's accumulated knowledge, wisdom and facts gathered from each of the numerous areas of specialization to which he contributed.
- ⁸⁵ David Craven, 'The Disappropriation of Abstract Expressionism', Book Review of William Seitz, *Abstract Expressionist Painting in America* National Gallery of Art, Washington DC, 1983; Annette Cox, *Art-as-Politics: The Abstract Expressionist Avant-Garde and Society*, University Microfilms International, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1982; and Serge Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1983. *Art History*, vol 8, no 4, December 1985, pp 499–515
- ⁸⁶ Craven, 'Disappropriation', op cit, p 507
- ⁸⁷ Guilbaut, op cit, p 3
- ⁸⁸ Craven, 'Disappropriation', op cit, pp 507–512
- ⁸⁹ *Ibid*, p 511 and Craven, *Abstract Expressionism*, op cit, p 43
- ⁹⁰ *Ibid*, pp 9–20. See also Eva Cockcroft, 'Abstract Expressionism: Weapon of the Cold War', *Artforum*, vol 12, no 10, June 1974, pp 39–41
- ⁹¹ *Ibid*, p 11
- ⁹² *Ibid*, p 17
- ⁹³ Craven alone was responsible for the declassification of these documents. Through legal advice, patience and persistence, his demand for their release was eventually successful, even though, up until the moment he held these redacted documents, he was uncertain such files even existed. This contribution of unknown primary documents to the field is a rare and significant achievement insofar as the relationship between the Abstract Expressionists and the government remains a popular topic of the study of twentieth-century modernisms, both within the literature of art history, but also in the discourse of such disciplines in the social sciences as political science, sociology, and history.
- ⁹⁴ *Ibid*, pp 79–104
- ⁹⁵ George Dondero, 'Modern Art Shackled to Communism', *Congressional Record*, 81st Congress, First Session (1949), vol 95, pt 9, pp 11584–11585; reprinted in Herschell Chipp, *Theories of Modern Art*, University of California Press, Berkeley, California, 1968, pp 496–497.
- ⁹⁶ Emily Genauer, 'Still Life with Red Herring', *Harper's Magazine* 199, 1949, p 89
- ⁹⁷ Craven, *Abstract Expressionism*, op cit, pp 98–100
- ⁹⁸ Norman Lewis, 'Letter to James Yeargans' circa 1967 in *Norman Lewis*, Kenkeleba Gallery, New York, 1989, p 64. See also David Craven, *Myth-Making: Abstract Expressionist Painting from the United States*, Tate Gallery, Liverpool, 1992, p 20.
- ⁹⁹ Craven, *Abstract Expressionism*, op cit, p 131

¹⁰⁰ Craven's commitment to advancing awareness of African-American artists' contribution to the art of alternative modernisms in the United States is not limited solely to his 're-discovery' of Norman Lewis. He also published 'Art and Apartheid' in *Arts Magazine*, vol 60, no 2, October 1985, pp 98–100, that examined the connection between corporate sponsorship of art exhibitions and the support by those same corporations for Apartheid in South Africa. The African National Congress (ANC) cited this article on the United Nations General Assembly in support of its call for a cultural boycott of Apartheid South Africa.

¹⁰¹ Craven, 'Meyer Schapiro', op cit, p 42

¹⁰² Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (1976), revised edition, Oxford University Press, New York, 1983. Craven included selections from Baranik's *Dictionary from the 24th Century* in Craven, *Baranik*, op cit, pp 93–107.

¹⁰³ Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant Garde* (first edition 1974, second edition 1980), *Theory and History of Literature*, vol 4, Michael Shaw, trans, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, Minnesota, 1984. Renato Poggioli, *The Theory of the Avant-Garde* (1962), Gerald Fitzgerald, trans, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1968.

¹⁰⁴ Gabriel Désiré Laverdant, *De la mission de l'art et du role des artistes*, Aux Gureaux de la Phalange, Paris, 1845. Cited by Craven in *Rivera*, op cit, p 57 and Poggioli, op cit, p 9, emphasis in the original

¹⁰⁵ David Craven, *Art and Revolution*, op cit, 2002

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid*, p 6

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid*, p 8

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid*, p 9

¹⁰⁹ Craven, *Abstract Expressionism*, op cit, p 134

¹¹⁰ *Ibid*, pp 138–140

¹¹¹ Craven, *Art and Revolution*, op cit, p 13

¹¹² *Ibid*, p 20

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