Theories and Methodologies

What Remains to Be Red

EDUARDO CADAVA

> The interlocution that I am posing here crosses its wires between the imperatives of reading and the goad to action.
>
> —Hortense Spillers, "The Idea of Black Culture"

> Even if they had been able to read, in the history books they would have found themselves only in the blank spaces between the lines, in the dashes, the pauses between commas, semicolons, colons, in the microcosmic shadow world between full stops. Between the interstices of every day on which a deed was done, they haunted the pages, imprisoned in mute anonymity, the done-to's who had made possible the deed.
>
> —Sylvia Wynter, *The Hills of Hebron*

> We are the makers of a history which exceeds our control, as well it must if we are not to descend into autocracy and terror.
>
> —Jacqueline Rose, *Women in Dark Times*

> Sharing is dispossession.
>
> —Fred Moten, "Violence and Physics: Notes on Genocide"

EDUARDO CADAVA is Philip Mayhew Professor of English at Princeton University. He is the author of *Words of Light: Theses on the Photography of History* (Princeton UP, 1997), *Emerson and the Climates of History* (Stanford UP, 1997), *Paper Graveyards* (MIT Press, 2021), and, with Sara Nadal-Melsió, *Politically Red* (MIT Press, 2023). He is the coeditor of *Who Comes after the Subject?* (Routledge, 1991), *Cities without Citizens* (Slought Foundation, 2004), and *The Itinerant Languages of Photography* (Princeton UP, 2013).

I begin with a cacophony of voices, as a way of entering this forum of other voices and as a way of pointing to the necessity of ongoing conversations with innumerable interlocutors. This necessity feels all the more insistent and compelling in the current moment, with all its moratoriums and shutdowns on speaking, thinking, and acting. For this reason, I am particularly grateful to Brent Edwards for making this conversation possible and for all the responses to our book that have enabled this engagement and elaboration. It is my contention that the work we do, in this conversation and elsewhere, is needed now more

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than ever. It is because we are told to believe that things are hopeless, that we are losing on several fronts, that we must continue doing our work in the face of what menacingly stands against it and against us. Our hope lies in precisely the reading, writing, and thinking in which we participate here—and not only here—and in the attendant actions, which, even with their unpredictable consequences, can perhaps be massified.

Each of the responses to *Politically Red* has its force, its logic, its singular strategy, which means that, in order to truly respond to them, it would be necessary to reread everything, to reconstitute each response and its trajectory, the themes and arguments of each, the discursive traditions and the many texts they set in motion, and this only to begin. This cannot be done here, so I can only signal, somewhat telegraphically, the beginnings of a response. This response—like those from which it departs—is therefore meant not to be the last word but rather to invite others to continue a discussion that, beginning here, can remain open and still to come, that can be continued in other fora. Indeed, no response, not even a collective one, can be the only one, for the one who writes is not just one, and not only because our book was cowritten but also because it was written by more than two, because it is countersigned, even if in displaced ways, by all the writers Sara Nadal-Melsió and I evoke and read. Nevertheless, among the many things that can be exposed in the unfolding of such a discussion are the symptoms that this scene of reading and writing can make legible. These symptoms would require the various forms of violence at work in conversations like this one to be acknowledged and analyzed, whether they are, in Jacques Derrida's words, "obvious or disguised, institutional or individual, literal or metaphoric, candid or hypocritical, in good or guilty conscience" (112).

I must ruefully acknowledge that my response therefore spends more time addressing presumptions, misunderstandings, and omissions than elaborating the confirmations and commendations that would be necessary to express my true gratitude for each response and for everything I've learned from them, but I wish to insist at the outset that nothing I say here does not emerge from this gratitude, even if, moving between affirmation and negation, I at times counter what is said in this or that response. For this reason, I begin by at least signaling some of the moments that not only resonate with *Politically Red* but also further it in directions we had not anticipated, enabling me to imagine where we might have gone if we had engaged in these discussions earlier. As we note in *Politically Red*, "texts have to be supplemented," "they have to be put in relation to other texts," because "they are never sufficient by themselves" (327). I would have loved to have been able to consider, while we were writing the book, among so many other things, Robert J. C. Young's suggestion that we think more about revolutionary writers from the political right and his insistence on a particular translation of a word in Walter Benjamin's notes to his essay "On the Concept of History"; Benjamin Kohlmann's counterreading of Abraham Bosse's frontispiece to Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan*, his philological work on Benjamin's relation to Bertolt Brecht, and his sense, like Young's, that we should think more about the reversibility between democracy and fascism; Filippo Menozzi's imaginative introduction of Ernst Bloch—and in particular Bloch's *Experimentum Mundi*, which, Menozzi reminds us, was dedicated to Rosa Luxemburg—into the red common-wealth, which deepens and extends it in a mode of reinforcement; Iyko Day's timely reading of the book in relation to the present genocide in Palestine, marking the shifts in "the conditions of revolutionary solidarity" from "the 2020 Black Lives Matter uprisings and the 2023–24 global Palestine solidarity movement"; Jeremy Matthew Glick's wonderfully inventive and performative exploration of laughter in Mao Tse-tung and W. E. B. Du Bois in relation to Amiri Baraka and Benjamin's improvisatory reflections on revolution and in relation to the multiplicity of red reading; Sara-Maria Sorentino's use of Afropessimism to press us on matters of racial capitalism, Blackness, and Karl Marx, and to ask us to consider what happens when we think red and black together in the way we do; Sarah Richter's beautiful meditation on angels, dreams, and anarchy and, in particular, her emphasis on the figure of the house on the sternum of

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Paul Klee's *Angelus Novus*, a house with wings that I had never noticed and that Richter reads in relation to innumerable motifs in *Politically Red*, opening its invisible doors and windows for us in surprising ways; Angeliki Spiropoulou's engagement with the book as a modernist montage, paying attention not only to its use of visual materials but also to its form, read in relation to its intervention in political and historical processes; and Branka Arsić's expansive reading of Bartolomé de las Casas's *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies*, which extends our discussion of what it means to trace what cannot be said or represented and, in this instance, how unspeakable violence can be conveyed, however infinite it may be.

Our book began in conversation, and it was sustained and developed by our conversations, and so the back-and-forth between these responses and mine is just another form of what made *Politically Red* possible. But, as we note, "this is what reading is: a process of amplification and massification that moves in a wandering wayward way, in an itinerant, incomplete, and asymmetrical exchange between the moment in which a text is written and the moment in which it is read, with these moments themselves permeated and fissured by other moments and other texts" (23). Or, as we put it elsewhere in the book:

> We always read through the medium of an increasing number of other readers and writers. Reading and writing are themselves labors of multiplication—and this multiplication is the direct effect of thinking with someone else's thoughts, someone whose "own" thoughts in turn also start elsewhere. Reading and writing are collaborative activities—they can become a means of massification, a matter of amplification, and, in the words of Walter Benjamin, a way of "setting the masses in motion." (9)

While not everything that the responses raise would need to have made its way into the book—it is not possible to include everything, although it is true that, in writing the book, we sensed that it could have kept growing indefinitely—what they each confirm in their own way is one of our more consistent and insistent claims: that political work can be done at the level of sentences and is inseparable from the labor of reading and writing, a labor that is not restricted to texts. Even when this or that response pushes back on something we say—and does so for political reasons—it reinforces this claim by enacting it, since any countermove is itself a response in sentences that seeks to stake out another position.

In the remaining space I have, I point to particular details in three of the responses—those of Young, Kohlmann, and Sorentino—because they allow me to make some of the stakes of our book more legible. In particular, I think about their questions about the political efficacy and breadth of some of our claims, emphases, and readerly strategies.

I want to begin with Young's beautiful reading of Benjamin's demand, in his "Paralipomena to 'On the Concept of History,'" that the historical materialist "brush history against the grain—even if he needs a barge pole to do it" (*Selected Writings* 407). Young amplifies our own reading by returning to Benjamin's German, emphasizing the more literal reading of "Feuerzange" as "fire tongs," instead of "barge pole," which we use—a translation that takes the German word to suggest an expression whose idiomatic equivalent in British English is "wouldn't touch it with a barge pole." In his account, the historical materialist must "brush history against the grain—even if he needs fire tongs to do it." As Young puts it, "[t]o brush history against the grain so as to reveal its dark underside of barbarism therefore requires not a barge pole but the spark of a burning coal that will detonate an explosive to bring a momentary flash of illumination." Although I stand by the reading we offer around the figure of the barge pole—like Fred Moten, I sometimes prefer "the particular kinds of precision that can follow from what some might dismiss as mistranslation" (193)—this explosive dimension of a present in the continuum of history is also registered at different moments in our book, even if not under the sign of a "burning coal": in the "explosive semantic violence of [the historical materialist's] sentences" (97); in the "insurrectionist" who "responds with an explosive force that, corresponding to a will to 'expansion'

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and 'intensification,' is most often legible in his writing" (147); in "the fire next time" that James Baldwin evokes and that we read in relation to the explosive demonstrations in the aftermath of George Floyd's murder (221–22); and in "the hidden kindling of a collective spark" that Fredric Jameson claims can be found in red texts (qtd. in Cadava and Nadal-Melsió 152). We could even say that criticism itself is a kind of fire and that reading is as destructive as it is generative. If we do not take advantage of the resources of Benjamin's "fire tongs" in the passage in which they appear, the traces of their appearance in our book remain legible in other passages, and even in what is not said in them—in the explosive, exorbitant, and expansive event within the very movement of language itself. This is fundamentally how citational practice works. Young's reading enhances ours, moving it in other directions, even if these directions can be traced elsewhere. It therefore enacts and intensifies a mode of citation, collaboration, and accumulation and, in so doing, participates in the transformations and multiplications that belong to the red common-wealth.

Still, Young productively asks if "the ways of reading advocated in *Politically Red*—the breaking up of totalities, the emphasis on locating fissures, and so forth—really constitute a threat" to "twenty-first-century capitalism." "Why does capitalism require totalities?" he adds: "Is it not adroit enough to immediately occupy and exploit fissures?" This question is often asked of radical texts. While Marx is well aware of capitalism's capacity to appropriate nearly everything in its path, to instrumentalize and monetize even what would counter it, including the fissures it exploits, this awareness does not deter him from looking for fissures that not only exist within capitalism but also can be the seeds of its destruction. If totalities were not full of fissures, neither history nor a future could ever happen. What's more, not all fissures are the same, and some are less susceptible to being economized within the system of capital. This difference is signaled in several places in our book but perhaps most extensively in our references to Marx's readings in the natural sciences and his suggestion that capitalism's voraciousness—its capacity for endless extraction and dispossession—has the potential to interrupt itself as it exhausts and destroys the very resources on which it depends. The point is not simply to seek the cracks in the system but to intensify them, to massify them, in order to prevent their easy assimilation. The strategy is not unlike Benjamin's effort to massify his sentences so that they cannot readily be instrumentalized in a single direction. Like Benjamin—and like Marx—we do not believe we can program the future, but there are several places in the book that point to moments in which a break occurs: when, according to Du Bois, the slaves put their tools down and, joining the Northern army, turn the tide of the Civil War and pave the way for Reconstruction; when Benjamin suggests, in "Toward the Critique of Violence," that the Spartacist uprising and Rosa Luxemburg's militancy give us a glimpse of what a total deposition might look like, an interruption that, he writes, has already been taking place "here and there" (qtd. in Cadava and Nadal-Melsió 115); and when, in the summer of 2020, global demonstrations emerged after the murder of George Floyd. While these events cannot be programmed or predicted, we argue, they can be intensified and massified if the movements that emerge from them are able to take advantage of what Benjamin calls "the wind of world history" (qtd. in Cadava and Nadal-Melsió 146).

Uncertain about this possibility, Young suggests that "[r]eading politically, reading red, should mean reading seriously not just the great revolutionaries of the left but also those of the right in order to begin to point the well-honed techniques of critique, fire tongs glowing red, in their direction effectively at last." While we cannot do everything (our book assumes that others will carry it forward in other directions), we can, within the practice of our readings, point to a mode of reading that can be directed not simply at "revolutionaries of the left but also those of the right." Indeed, the readings we offer are a kind of training ground for reading texts of all kinds and of all political stripes—because they suggest that there is never a pure and fixed political position but also because they attend to the mobility of language and to the history that is sealed in it. The

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writers we read are among the great analysts of the inevitability of complicity, what Benjamin identifies as the always present danger of, without knowing it, reinforcing the very thing one wishes to overcome (*Selected Writings* 391). If we take a risk—if the writers we read take a risk—it is because there can be no transformation without risk. At the same time, the readings we offer of "the great revolutionaries of the left" already trace their readings of the revolutionary right—as when Benjamin reads Las Casas as offering an account of the genocidal slaughter of indigenous populations in the Americas that is nevertheless complicit with the imperial project, or when he reads the politics of the Social Democratic Party's deployment of the general strike in order to maintain its dominance, or when Du Bois reads the conservative historians of Reconstruction in his "Propaganda of History" chapter, tracing the language with which they effaced Black agency; even Marx's reading of the Gotha Program implies something not only about how the language of the right might be read but also about how it might be anticipated.

If Kohlmann is correct to note that our reading of Benjamin emphasizes an interest in horizontalist masses—as when we consider a footnote to the second version of "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility" in which he writes that the "great achievement" of "the revolutionary leader" lies not "in drawing the masses after him, but in constantly incorporating himself into the masses, in order to be, for them, always one among hundreds of thousands" (qtd. in Cadava and Nadal-Melsió 129)—it is not the case, as Kohlmann suggests, that we read this horizontalism in either the doodle by Friedrich Engels with which we begin the book—a doodle composed of a series of heads within heads—or Bosse's frontispiece to Hobbes's *Leviathan*. One could read the doodled mass as a figure of democratic massification, but, while this is an element in the doodle, it does not exhaust it, because, as we note, Engels's mass can include "heads of those we dislike and with whom we might disagree, and even of our enemies" (12). This heterogeneity "is why the mass remains unstable and unbounded," we add; "Intentionality here proves to be multiple and impersonal, and not just human, since, beyond the animals that seem to be mixed in with the humans . . . the human figures themselves often have animal-like snouts and features." Marx often references the inhumanity or animality of capitalist sovereigns. He refers to the "animal kingdom of politics" that has thrived on the principle of a "dehumanized world" (qtd. in Cadava and Nadal-Melsió 12). There is therefore a vertical element in the dehumanization legible in Engels's doodle. We also read this dehumanization in the composite portrait of the sovereign in which Bosse represents the populace as faceless and anonymous, indicating their erasure and subjugation and the sovereign's sovereignty. Rather than as an image of horizontalism, the frontispiece can be read as a presentation of the dialectical relation between authoritarianism and democracy. At the same time, Hobbes's book and its frontispiece can be read as an argument for vertical sovereignty, even as our reading of Benjamin—in particular of his attention to the contradictions within the Socialist Democratic Party and of his use of the biblical story of Korah—allows for a tension between a vertical and hierarchical order of sovereignty and the potential for the emergence of democratic masses.

What all this has to do with practical politics (electoral or otherwise), statecraft or anarchism, utopia or dystopia, is worth further discussion, especially since the texts we are discussing here are wildly mobile. Now, I simply refer to Kohlmann's lovely reading of the Brecht line that is the source for Benjamin's claim that thinking politically involves "the art of thinking in other people's heads" (qtd. in Cadava and Nadal-Melsió 11). I wish we had pursued the Brecht texts that Kohlmann puts into play here, but we did not. This is why reading has to be collaborative, since no one can do everything on their own, as was palpable to us not just in writing the book together but also in the conversations we had with innumerable interlocutors along the way. I'm very glad to add Kohlmann's contribution here to what had remained unsaid in our book; it confirms the fact and necessity of collaboration and that reading can always only be cumulative. At the same time, it is not clear that, however indebted to Brecht Benjamin might be, he does not take what he inherits from

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Brecht, recontextualize it, and move it somewhere else. Brecht would have to be read even more closely in relation to a broader constellation of passages in Benjamin in order for this to be measured, and this work can now take place because of Kohlmann's wonderful antennae and his greater knowledge of Brecht than ours.

In a point that resonates with Young's argument but without replicating it, Kohlmann suggests that we should "come to terms with that other shade of red—socialism's historical dalliance with forms of authoritarian politics, the state, and mass indoctrination," that we should "attempt to think the dialectical reversibility of authoritarianism and democracy, the state and the mass, the one and the many." We discuss these reversals when we follow Benjamin's analyses of the dangers of complicity, when we note that we are often "forced to act" in the "comedy of despotism" (161), when we trace Du Bois's analysis of the North's complicity with the resistance to Reconstruction and point to the relays between socialism and capitalism (182), when we discuss the use by the Social Democrats in Germany of the general strike to suppress the Sparticists (65), and when we note the potential relations between the revolutionary aims and the potentially fascist program of indoctrination mobilized by the title character of Paul Scheerbart's *Lesabéndio* (375). Like Young, Kohlmann argues that the left should "allow for the constructive role of institutions and vertical organizational practices in supporting mass democracy." But we make this case in our discussion of Du Bois's account of Reconstruction in *Black Reconstruction*—of the building of schools, hospitals, and state institutions; the creation of the Freedman's Bureau; and the granting of the right to vote to emancipated slaves, all supported by the state and the result of "abolition-democracy" (qtd. in Cadava and Nadal-Melsió 217).

It is necessary to read across a text; reading takes time because meaning unfolds in time and not in a single moment within it, even if, within this or that moment, there is already a vast archive—an archive of invisibly mediated relations. Every text and every word has the structure of a palimpsest, which is why no sentence or word can be read in isolation; each must be read syntactically in relation to other sentences and other words. Going beyond the notion of the palimpsest, Francis Ponge uses the neologism *géné-analogie*: "Ainsi, comme les personnes ont des ancêtres, les mots aussi ont des ancêtres. Ils ont enfin un *arbre* oserais-je dire *géné-analogique*: celui des associations d'idées qu'ils développent chez le lecteur" ("Thus, just as people have ancestors, words also have ancestors. Anyway, they have, if I dare to put it this way, *a gene-analogical tree*: the ramifying associations of ideas that they develop in the reader"; 170; my trans.).

I turn now to Sorentino's response. Claiming to follow our reading protocols—reading in the margins and ellipses of our own text—Sorentino accuses us of dismissing Afropessimism altogether by relegating it to a footnote, arguing that, in doing so, we have produced an overdetermined reading, what Louis Althusser calls a "guilty" reading (qtd. in Cadava and Nadal-Melsió 17), born of our prejudices, which, according to her, remain unacknowledged. She suggests that we misread a number of passages, including a phrase from Baraka—"The Red what reading did"—from which we take the title of our introduction. She states that we refuse "logical analysis" of key Marxian terms, that we do not theorize antiblackness or race, that our analysis of race is restricted to the United States (which is patently not true), and that, because we are unable to engage Afropessimism in all its depth, the difficulty of reading the primary texts of this movement leads to our enactment of what Jared Sexton calls the logic of a "preemptive strike," whereby we simply reject Afropessimism, she argues, "before any engagement" with it and, in particular, without engaging the "nonrelational form of blackness."

We do not limit our engagement with Afropessimism to a footnote; we also reference it in our discussion of Du Bois's "The Comet"—a discussion mediated by Saidiya Hartman's reading of the story's relation to Afropessimism—and we use a passage from Frank B. Wilderson III as the epigraph to our section titled "Angelus Novus: A Militant Emblem." Sorentino neglects these references, which suggest that our estimation of Wilderson is not simply negative (something already legible in the last

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sentence of our footnote, which points to "the mobility within Wilderson's antagonisms—which," we say, "are spot on"—even as we try to see "how much is silenced by their essentialism" [370n12], suggesting there is an essentialism in these antagonisms without reducing them to it). At the opening of "Angelus Novus," we quote Wilderson's very moving line, "Afropessimism gives us the freedom to say out loud what we would otherwise whisper or deny: that no Blacks are in the world, but, by the same token, there is no world without Blacks" (233), which itself oscillates between affirmation and negation. We cite it to help us transition to an analysis of the way in which Black death can galvanize action "oriented toward an as-yet-undetermined future, turning the direction of anti-Black violence against the grain of the brutality that produces its particular forms and conditions" (Cadava and Nadal-Melsió 245). An attentive reading of our treatment of Afropessimism must not neglect these additional references to Wilderson or their relation to one another—a relation that alters each one, since none of them can be read on their own. There is no Wildersonian "nonrelationality" here.

Sorentino also claims that, emphasizing only a short phrase from a longer passage, we not only misread Baraka's intentions but also privilege red over Black and thus participate in the erasure of Blackness. "The Red what reading did" appears in Baraka's essay "The 'Blues Aesthetic' and the 'Black Aesthetic.'" There, Baraka famously writes, "The Blues is the first come from Black—Red, the last, going out to re-come. The cycle the circle. The Red what reading did re adding reproducing revolution, red, old going out into black and coming back through blue Mood Indigo" (26). Our extraction of a phrase from this passage does not efface what was left behind; what remains is always still legible, even if in displaced ways. This can be confirmed in any number of our readings in which we cite a passage and then reconstruct what is not visible in it—this making visible does not have to take place only in the immediate vicinity of the citation; it can take place elsewhere, as happens here. Our citational practices are themselves a form of reading and a call for reading. It is always "a matter of reading what is invisible, illegible, inaudible—what belongs to the structure of a text . . . what also functions like a clandestine infrastructure that binds the text with its silence" (Cadava and Nadal-Melsió 26).

Putting aside the fact that Sorentino turns the dash between "Black" and "Red" into a hyphen ("Black-Red"), suppressing that here black and red are not a couple but rather related to one another through the different parts of the sentence, the couple on which Sorentino wants to insist nevertheless is legible throughout *Politically Red*. It is legible, for instance, in Raya Dunayevskaya's discussion of the "Black Dimension," in Du Bois's extended discussions of Marx and race, in his (and our) readings of Marx's writings on the American Civil War, and in all the passages that, circulating throughout the book, bring Black and Red together. In answer to Sorentino's question, "[W]hy is this not a black, or 'Black-Red,' common-wealth?" then, it already is this, and so much more. It is therefore not a question of "sidelining" Afropessimism, as Sorentino alleges, but of evoking it and taking a distance from it at the same time, and this because—not surprisingly, given our insistence on relationality—we are more interested in "the incommensurability of entanglements that cannot be named or ordered in a manageable and predictable way" (Cadava and Nadal-Melsió 287), in the "loss of self that marks our belonging to communities far larger than us" (162), and in Moten's claim that "black life—which is as surely to say *life* as black thought is to say *thought*—is irreducibly social" (104). As Sorentino knows, Moten's statement is made in apposition to Sexton's claim that "black life is not social, or rather that black life is lived in social death" (28). Afropessimism's insistence on "the impossibility of political intersubjectivity" (204), Moten adds, cannot account for the "internal social relations" that "remain unstructured by the protocols of subjectivity" (205). It is precisely this loss of self that we call a "socialism of emotion that counters capitalism's wish to anaesthetize or deaden our passion" (162).

It is the very power of her mode of reading—and her insistence on "logic" and "science" in her reading

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of Marx—that makes it (let's say, preemptively) difficult for Sorentino to engage the more unruly parts of Marx's corpus and their circulation, often in a displaced manner, in the genealogies we trace. But this is not to diminish the force of her reading; I have learned a great deal from her response, as I have from all the others. Indeed, our book unfolded in exactly this kind of exchange of thoughts, this kind of plural conversation. When we ourselves disagreed on this or that point, we would keep talking until we arrived at a formulation on which we could both agree. At times, some of our strongest sections emerged from an initial disagreement, or a different sense of things; what was forged from this disagreement or difference made the argument more capacious and, I believe, more generous. Every reading must be open to what remains unsaid in it—even what is said in it without being heard. Every reading must be open to alteration or transformation; it is always a process of becoming. Our book is stronger because it emerged not from a single voice but, instead, from the most forceful elements of what we have called a "red common-wealth."

We scale up to the political, even to the matter of strategy and tactics, precisely through a praxis of reading, a sense of becoming in reading. As we note early in the book, "A text is not always what it can become, but what it can become is its greatest strength; its potential is what can transform it into an invitation to imagine a different future" (25). In many ways, the generosity of the responses we have received—the time and attention the contributors to this cluster have so patiently dedicated to *Politically Red*—has enabled the book to become something else. The responses all draw out its potential and take it to as many different futures as they can imagine, becoming a force of multiplication and accumulation that we insist belongs to the power of reading and writing. Indeed, we suggest that

> Marx's *Notebooks* show him thinking and writing like a mass. His last will and testament, they bequeath to us a fleeting vision of how a communist community might be assembled, one that refuses to be circumscribed by borders or identities of any kind and that, instead, moves in the direction of incalculable and unpredictable coalitions that have, as their aim and means, the destruction of all ends. (327)

As Marx and Engels put it in *The German Ideology*, "Communism for us is not a *state of affairs* which is to be established, an *ideal* to which reality [will] have to adjust itself," but rather "the *real* movement which abolishes the present state of things" (qtd. in Cadava and Nadal-Melsió 327). Like Marx, we have written our text in the conviction that "no one can do this work alone; it requires a mass." "What Marx learns," we suggest, or rather "what he reinforces throughout his *Notebooks* and his late works in general," is that "it is precisely because no commons can survive on its own that it has to be inscribed within a common-wealth. It must become part of an always fugitive, always transient, always moving international set of coalitions" (327)—and of exchanges between persons and texts, neither of which are ever entirely separate.

I close with this reminiscence: in December 2018, Angela Davis delivered the Eleventh Annual Nicos Poulantzas Memorial Lecture in Athens, Greece. Entitled "Abolition Feminism: Theories and Practices for Our Time," her lecture addressed issues of racial capitalism, the history of slavery and colonialism, the prison-industrial complex in the United States, the refugee crisis in Europe, the role of feminism in the organization of movements, and the need for solidarity with Palestine. Throughout her talk, Davis repeatedly interrupted herself to say, in relation to whatever it was she was noting, "This is where we should read Marx on . . . ," "The best essay on this is . . . ," "The best book on this is . . . ." What she makes clear in these asides is that her political activism is inseparable from a labor of reading, and, by implication, a labor of writing, hers but also that of the comrades she is reading at this or that particular moment. This relation between reading, writing, and political activism is at the heart of *Politically Red*, a book that arose from a collaborative reading and writing practice. It is my hope, our hope, that it can be kindling in our ongoing efforts to create a future beyond the present ruins accumulating all around us.

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The responses gathered together here help reinforce this hope, and I thank all the contributors again for this gift.

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