Karl Marx, Lucretius, and the Other Residents of Lisa Robertson's Archives

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In the spring of 2022, when I began my research in the Lisa Robertson fonds held in the Special Collections and Rare Books Division at Simon Fraser University, I was searching for Charles Baudelaire: the French poet appears throughout Robertson's work. The writer whom I found in her papers, however, was Karl Marx. His presence there is unobtrusive and could have easily been missed, since he lays no claim to a box or even to a file of his own. Instead, he appears as a stowaway, riding on the draft versos of Robertson's poem, "The Present," which would eventually appear in her 2010 published collection, *R's Boat*. Turning over the pages of this manuscript, I realized that she had drafted her poem on the endnotes to Marx's dissertation, *The Difference Between the Democritean and Epicurean Philosophy of Nature*. Examining the names in these endnotes—Plutarch, Cicero, Plato, Lucretius—I understood the connection between Robertson's text and that of Marx is more than material. Like Marx, she makes observations about each of these authors throughout her text. This interdependence of meaning and materiality conveys much about the poet herself—her reading history, for example, and her engagement with philosophy—as well as about the nature of her archive. Robertson's use of "scrap" paper thus makes legible the sociality of her archival materials, and, by extension, the discursive practices that bear upon her fonds. Reading Karl Marx's endnotes back into *R's Boat* illuminates atomism as a core motif in this collection, as well as a method through which her writerly self-mediation can be understood.

Many researchers studying Robertson's fonds have already analyzed her papers alongside the other scholarly, artistic, and literary groups to which she belongs. Certainly, this conversation is mutually constitutive: it is in part the result of her influence upon these communities, but it is also the result of their influence upon her. As one example, in his paper "Minutes Over Monuments," Jason Wiens reads the shifting pronoun usage in early drafts of Robertson's *XEclogue* in conversation with personal notes made in its margins. Wiens writes of this archival discovery, "just as Robertson vacillates between 'I' and 'we' in the drafts […] so too do we need to read these texts dialectically between the writing subject and the collective in which she is embedded" (5). Examining the larger context of her fonds at Simon Fraser University, Wiens asserts that the proximity of Robertson's records to other writers in the Kootenay School of Writing (KSW), such as Jeff Derksen, as well as their publisher, Tsunami Editions, supports readings of the singular as a collective—and vice versa. Wiens' dialectical reading may be applied more broadly to Robertson's archive. His logic introduces an important consideration of archival proximity: namely, that readings of such collections are shaped by the discourse of the institution within which they are held. Relationships in the archive, therefore, extend well beyond collected correspondences and other overt indexes of communication.

This same complexity of pronoun use may be seen in "The Present"; however, here the references are not to other members of the KSW in the poems themselves or the margins of the page. Instead, "The Present" opens with the lines, "You step from the bus into a sequencing tool

that is moist and carries the / scent of quince" ("The Present" 1-2). These lines immediately introduce a perspectival shift, for the distant "you" is accompanied by an intimate sensory familiarity. The reader is placed in a position that is neither strictly that of a third-party person, nor Robertson's point of view, but rather some kind of balance between them: that is, she rereads her history through the senses of another subject. Her adoption of the second-person pronoun is maintained throughout the first quarter of this poem, perhaps indicating a past self to which Robertson is referring—perhaps the "you" of Robertson's own archive. In this poem, there is already an acute sociality of selves, although they are ones without definite pronouns and certainly ones without concrete names, apart from the authors with whom she converses. This convergence between selves and authors is further problematized throughout Robertson's extended project of reauthoring in *R's Boat*.

Other critics have also identified the sociality of Robertson's writing. Julia Polyck-O'Neill, for example, similarly considers the embeddedness of Robertson's relations within her work in her article, "Lisa Robertson's Archive, Singular and Collective." She writes, "Robertson's formal poetry and poetry collections […] are themselves permeated with the sense of an archival unconscious, connecting her writings to real life events and rendering them creative records of her thoughts, relationships, and daily interactions" (92). Polyck-O'Neill observes here how the writing process is in itself a practice of archivization, one later reified by the formal accrual of these writings. The critical work of Wiens and Polyck-O'Neill together render it apparent that some scholarly attention has already been paid to the sociality of Robertson's papers—internally, through their poeticization of the quotidian and personal, as well as externally, through their reaching across material records. I posit that this reading of the discursive relationships within Robertson's record may be extended further—from the artists and writers she worked alongside in Vancouver, to the philosophers with whom she has engaged in an ongoing dialogue across space and time. This is not ordinarily a privilege of the authorial archive, but rather of their personal library. Robertson's archive (helpfully) blurs this boundary, affording researchers the possibility of situating key texts throughout her writerly practice.

The versos of Robertson's fonds offer promising insight into her work, first and foremost as they function as a bibliography to which she references throughout her work. Marx is not the only writer whose text can be found within Robertson's papers. Other versos contain the works of Jean Starobinski, Caroline Bergvall, and Denise Riley. Starobinski's text is the aptly titled *Words upon Words: The Anagrams of Ferdinand de Saussure.* The anagrams in question are drawn from notebooks of Saussure dating back to as early as 1906, and, throughout this text, he engages closely with classical poets. Bergvall's *Drift* engages with historical literature via the tenth century poem, *The Seafarer,* and its relationship to contemporary Mediterranean immigration. Denise Riley's *Impersonal Passion: Language as Affect* explores the personal and political valences of language. And there are many more—even only within one box. For the purposes of this article and to offer a template for future readings of Robertson's archive, I will focus on Karl Marx's unexpected presence within Robertson's papers.

Undocumented presences such as this, by Ann Laura's Stoler's formulation, are an inevitability in the colonial archive. In *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense,* she conveys how colonial papers contain traces of subjects often purposefully omitted. For Stoler, their presence is symptomatic of the anxieties and affects for which the institution cannot account (48). This analysis directly resists the Derridean notion of the archive, which purports that from its stability it derives a kind of authority. Stoler writes of

this resistance, “Derrida’s evocative image of the archive as a site of ‘house arrest’ […] suggests no entry for the wayward, no access to intruders. But the paper trails left by European colonial projects could never be sealed that tight” (31). This porousness allows for divergent narratives, and, as Stoler demonstrates, illuminating ways of reading “along the grain,” that is, across the material and semiotic contours of the historical record. Despite the stark differences between the Dutch colonial archive of Stoler’s research and Robertson’s papers, Stoler’s method for reading “along the grain” of the archive also offers a method for reading across Robertson’s papers—recto to verso and back again—and, in so doing, bringing light to relationships that exist between the categorized and the uncategorized.

Marx himself first appears as a kind of intruder in Robertson’s archive, although further analysis suggests this presence may be strategic and one possibly bestowed by the author herself. The bulk of her materials are documented in the finding aid written by archivist Laura Fortier. The endnotes, as with the rest of Robertson’s versos, are undocumented in the aid, yet they remain highly consequential. Reading along this grain means reading on the opposite side of these vital papers, the scraps upon which these drafts were written. Through this process, these scraps not only gain meaning in themselves, they also shed light on the papers that assure their preservation in the first place. Stoler describes her own method of analysis as such: “My interest is not in the finite boundaries of the official state archives, but in their surplus production, what defines their interior ridges and porous seams, what closures are transgressed by unanticipated exposition and writerly forms” (23). Here surplus production denotes material generated as an excess of archivization: to take a more explicitly Marxist reading of this phrase, the means by which capital is produced, unbeknownst to the worker, or, in this case, the work itself. Reading around the standard boundaries of the page allows for this surplus value to be apprehended. This writerly transgression, however, remains a crucial component to this collection. These works were not reproduced by an estate, nor were they collected and culled by a proprietor. Instead, Robertson’s archive is a keen expression of self-authorship that involves strategic excess literary capital.

R’s Boat, the 2010 collection wherein “The Present” appears, is itself produced from her own personal archive. In one interview, for example, Robertson explains how this book was the result of keyword searching through at least twenty years of notebooks (Queyras). Specifically, this collection grew out of a chapbook, *Rousseau’s Boat,* written using the same processes six years prior. In this chapbook, Robertson includes just three poems: “Passivity,” “Face,” and “Utopia.” Each of these poems verge on the confessional through their use of “I,” which comes to suggest a more specific poetic representation of Robertson rather than a generalized speaker. In “Passivity” she writes, “I’m forty-one. It / gets more detailed. I feel an amazement” (25-26); and in “Face,” she reflects with a similar optimism that, “I’ve been lucky and I’m thankful […] I stole butter and I studied love” (65; 67). “Utopia,” more explicitly than the preceding two poems, orients its stanzas around years and seasons, albeit still from the material of the author’s memory: the poem opens “[i]n the spring of 1979,” shifts forward into “1993,” and concludes in “1980” (1;169; 285). Throughout each of these fractured stanzas, vignettes from Robertson’s early life are abstracted, interwoven, and philosophized. *Rousseau’s Boat*, in spite of the displaced ownership in its title, operates as a vessel through which Robertson navigates her own memories.

In *R’s Boat*, Robertson expands upon the project she introduced with the chapbook years prior. She removes the poem “Passivity,” including instead “Of Mechanics in Rousseau’s

Thought," "A Cuff," "Pallinode," and "The Present." These poems elaborate upon the affective and archival nature of her previous work. Where they differ, however, is in their referentiality. The original chapbook, *Rousseau's Boat*, makes no mention of other texts, writers, or anyone, for that matter, other than the ambiguous "You" and the proximate "We." *R's Boat*, in contrast, makes frequent references to Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Titus Lucretius Carus, Caroline Bergvall, Plato, Plutarch, Macrobius, Lactanius, and, indeed, many more. Jean-Jacques Rousseau is joined by a wider cast of authors, and, logically, in the book's title, Rousseau is exchanged simply for the "*R*" of the title. This change marks the shift from one philosophical approach, clearly articulated on the back flap of *Rousseau's Boat*, to the multitudinous perspective of *R's Boat*. In effect, through the network of intellectual relations presented by this longer project, *R* eventually comes to signify "Robertson" rather than just "Rousseau." While this longer collection maintains the archival reinscription at its core, it thus also incorporates the work that Robertson was reading. In this way, the archive within this poem (and without) widens to accommodate the authors to whom Robertson makes reference throughout her work; however, their position is still deferential to the author and her memories. In this manner, the last page in *R's Boat* depicts a black-and-white photo of a young, smiling, Robertson sitting at the stern of a motorboat. Her arm is reaching back behind her toward the motor, gently steering its direction.

The direction that the book takes lands somewhere between philosophy and autobiography. In an interview with Sina Queyras, Robertson notes of *R's Boat*, "I wanted to make an autobiographical book that was not self-referential." Robertson also confirms that she used the same method that she had adopted for the chapbook years earlier, composing it "from the archival gleanings" of "sixty-odd notebooks" (Queyras). Working across texts and time, these poems often collapse such boundaries. "The Present," however, maintains a clear temporal structure throughout. She begins her poem with gestures toward childhood, or, at least, with the recollection of childhood: she writes, "as in the first line of a nursery rhyme / against cyclic hum of the heating apparatus / you're resinous with falsity" (6-8). These lines point toward her memories, as a kind of land *far far away* and borne of dubious credibility. She additionally makes use of the second-person pronoun, despite working from her own notebooks and memories, again as a kind of separation of selves. Working toward a form of futurity, this poem concludes with a trace of the afterlife: "Of sulfur emanating from / A dream of paradise" ("The Present" 135-36). A clear beginning, middle, and end are articulated by this temporal structure, and yet each are contained within the broader category of "The Present."

Such phases of the poem can be distinguished by Robertson's use of pronouns. The poem opens with "you," employs "we" throughout its midpoint, and concludes with "I." These shifts are perspectival, but they are also temporal. The "you" in the opening lines of this poem is the past-self, also found within Robertson's notebooks; the "I," the dreams of a future self; and the "we," the present between those two polarities, mediated by her archive. The overall project of "The Present" is one grounded in dialogue with self, throughout time. "The Present," therefore, signifies a moment wherein multiple time periods meet. This articulation of a subject's stability, even across broad temporal periods and relative forms of transformation, hints at the atomism that undergirds her verse.

Of relevance here is Karl Marx's thesis on the atomists, in which he discusses the differences between the Democritean and Epicurean philosophies of nature. Each of these two philosophers are materialists, albeit not the kind with whom Marx would later come to be associated. Both Democritus and Epicurus subscribed to the belief that all things were composed

of tiny, indivisible particles called atoms, ideas that are significant to Robertson's work. She engages with these theories throughout her text in ways both referential and distant. On the first page of "The Present," she introduces the reader to Titus Lucretius Carus, another Roman poet and atomist. She writes, "You read Lucretius to take yourself towards death, through the streets and / markets / In a discontinuous laboratory towards foreignness" ("The Present" 15-16). Robertson's blurring of time is articulated clearly when she describes this reading of Lucretius as "a discontinuous laboratory." This phrase also brings to mind the scientific core of Lucretius' verse, which in many ways predicts what our molecular physicians have only just verified in the last two-hundred years. Certainly, early materialist texts such as *De Rerum Natura* offer their own unique kind of defamiliarization through the combined effect of their prescient science communicated in classical metre. She continues to trace this scientific and poetic transmission: "You bring his prosody into your mouth / When you hear the sound of paper" ("The Present" 17-18). Robertson asserts here that, even hearing paper, perhaps being crumpled or flipped, invokes the rhythms of his prosody in her own body. Importantly, however, Lucretius' prosody is not perceived directly, since it is not the ears through which it is apprehended, but rather through the mouth. Bringing his prosody into her mouth, she invokes the rearticulation of his poetry at the same time as its consumption: it involves the enlivenment, translation, and absorption of his work. Reading these lines through the atomist theory of indivisibility, we find that, in consuming Lucretius, his ideas remain embedded within Robertson, within her corporeal body and her literary work. The latter is precisely what we observe in the archive.

The endnotes upon which Robertson drafted "The Present" contain brief, fragmented pieces of Lucretius. On the verso of the first page of her poem is one endnote:

> (28) Lucretius, *On the Nature of Things*, 11, 221, 223-224. If it were not for this swerve, everything would fall downwards like rain-drops through the abyss of space. No collision would take place and no impact of atom on atom would he created anything. created. Thus nature would never have. ("The Present Drafts")

The language of this passage, both visceral and abstract, evokes an aesthetic I associate with Robertson. The strategic use of repetition and a non-grammatical fragment additionally resonate within her work. These lines, although certainly poetic, are not in fact written by Lucretius. They are written by Karl Marx. In this way, to return to Robertson's invocation of the appropriation of voice as a kind of consumption: Lucretius appears pre-digested, as do Plutarch, Plato, and Democritus, as each of these writers are interpreted and paraphrased by Marx. Robertson models this metaphorical consumption within her poetic lines, as she also makes reference to the above writers; in this way, she archives their ideas within her own, and, more substantially, through the inclusion of their papers in her archival fonds.

As another example, allusions to Lucretius are found throughout Robertson's writings. She engages with him throughout her body of work, and he appears prominently in *Magenta Soul Whip* (2005), *3 Summers* (2016), and the prose collection *Nilling: Prose Essays on Noise, Pornography, The Codex, Melancholy, Lucretius, Folds, Cities and Related Aporias* (2012). In the paper titled "Lastingness: Réage, Lucrèce, Arendt," one essay collected in *Nilling*, Robertson writes that reading produces a "transformational agency that runs counter to the teleology of readerly intention, as it negates the limits of identity" (39). As she works through how reading blots out and affects conscious thought, she uses Lucretius as a primary example. I mention this now, not only because this essay was written during the same period as "The Present,"[1] but also

because this approach to reading informs how Robertson engages with Lucretius in this poem. In "The Present," Robertson uses this method as a specific strategy of reading. Robertson writes, "Here is the absurdist tragical farcical twist / In order to enter I needed an identity" (48-49). Rather than rewriting her work from the same perspective, Robertson makes use of the philosophical ideals of Marx and the atomist poets such as Lucretius in order to reconceive of her own experiences. This philosophical mediation is what distinguishes the project of *R's Boat* from *Rousseau's Boat*. What Robertson is proposing with this statement, however, is the difficulty of remediating the self directly. Memories may be interjected, melded, and reinterpreted within memory; memories may be fictionalized.

What I believe that Robertson is acknowledging here is the extent to which our reading, whether to understand ourselves better or not, comes to shape the person that we become. A representation of a writer, then, devoid of the people with whom she so frequently "converses"—such as Lucretius, for example—would be an incomplete one. She broaches this idea again when she writes, "In these persons we glimpse belief / Establishing the fact of perception / Its inherence in history" ("The Present" 79-81). These lines sketch out an ontological progression of self within the archive. When we read, we bear witness to the construction of beliefs, which fix our understanding of the other's perception, whether it is in fact fixed or not. This amounts to an inherence: "the state or quality of being inherent; permanent existence (as of an attribute) in a subject; indwelling" ("inherence, n."). This term is also closely associated with the Platonic dialogue *Timaeus*, which reads inherence as matter's primary constitution of four elements (Plato). Robertson leans into this atomist theory directly in the poem following "The Present," in which she writes, "Philosophers taught me a conversion narrative / How the 4 elements change into each other by flattering / I think of them or meet with them in reading" ("A Cuff" 6-7). This conversion narrative, which in itself imports the history of ontological shift qua religious conversion, is made material both through the elemental conditions of Plato's inherence, and again through the materialization of his presence within her record. This reading of history through philosophy is not the history of anyone but Robertson herself, and one shaped by the pages she reads as much as those about whom she writes.

Marx himself is signified only remotely within this collection. He is not mentioned at any point by name in the manner Lucretius is. For the most part, Marx's position within the archive is unwritten; it is rather his mediation of other Classical writers with whom Robertson converses. Nevertheless, there are still some lines that respond directly to his work. She writes,

> Now that philosophy is collapsing before our eyes
>
> Our former movements are integrated into a fresh entity, into a freshened
>
> sensing
>
> And once more I go screaming into sheer manifesto. ("The Present" 84-86)

Here Robertson's project of remediation is laid bare. Philosophy, as an ideal, breaks down, but it becomes part of the material from which she reconstructs herself—this "freshened sensing," the new matter of perception guided by the methods that she absorbs. She uses it to analyze her own notebooks and, in turn, herself. This act of remediation, because of its concretization in writing, eventually succumbs to the same archivization that her philosophers do: reduction to a text.

Reading *R's Boat* in conversation with these notes, we cannot see the original text of Marx's thesis, but rather only the endnotes. At no point in these notes is Marx named, nor the text from which they are excerpted. It was only through keyword searching for direct quotations that I was able to determine the origin of these endnotes. This separation between the body and paratext obliges us to consider why the endnotes are in the archive without the text to which they refer. The first way of reading their presence would be that the scraps with endnotes were printed upon because they were less valuable than the text itself; the text could be read, while the excess could be reused. The endnotes, in this case, are subordinated to the text itself and its appearance in the archive is a by-product of this decision. The second way of reading follows a more deliberate line of reasoning: the endnotes were printed upon because they, and not the thesis itself, contain the references from which Robertson was working—so, in fact, they are more valuable than the text itself. The question is, then, whether the text was printed on the flipside of these endnotes in order to bring them deliberately into the archive, or whether they were simply treated as scrap paper. In one brief conversation I had with Robertson on the subject, how she responded strongly gestured toward the latter.

Before I began this project, I reached out to Robertson to receive permission to conduct research in her archive. During our conversation, she mentioned that, when she ran her Vancouver bookstore, Proprioception Books, she would often print her drafts on exhibition notices from artist-run centres and other local events, taking pleasure in this kind of archivization of local culture. She also mentioned that some of the versos would possibly belong to her roommates, since she often did not live alone; however, she clarified that Marx's thesis on atomism was indeed hers ("Personal Interview"). This admission, although perhaps underscoring what the archive already materializes, helpfully reminds the reader of the complicated sociality of papers. Nearly always they reveal an exchange between persons, even if that exchange is facilitated by an online forum or digital repository.

The social embeddedness of these papers expresses itself in subtle ways. There are manifold traces of these relationships to be found within these versos. On the backside of an essay drafted by Robertson, for example, was an excerpt from *Impersonal Passion: Language as Affect* by Denise Riley. It was emailed to Robertson under the subject line, "Beach Reading Supplement" ("The Present Drafts"). Given the theoretical rigour of *Impersonal Passion*, it would likely be the first (and only) time it was to be classified as a beach read. Regardless, this page helpfully demarcates a social relation, both between papers and between people. This text and that of Marx each highlight a shift in the sociality of archival papers in the digital age. Whereas marginalia frequently indexes social interaction in the archive (Sherman 18), seldom are texts or emails brought to the fore of genetic criticism (see Deppman et al.). Such a shift is permitted, first, by the ability to print on the back of a text and, second, by bringing the text into the archive. Sourcing a text online and then reprinting it atop of one's own work is undoubtedly a product of digital media, even if it expresses itself in the material record. Indeed, Robertson's printing of these texts makes this digital exploration legible without the requirement of computers or software. It also signifies a lingering importance to Robertson, at least in 2006, of the desire to read and write upon paper, despite alternatives being available. Examining Marx's dissertation, it is clear that this text is sourced from *archive.org* (Marx), both because of its spacing upon the page, as well as its tell-tale font, Consolas. Others, as in the case of the more contemporary versos found in Robertson's fonds, such as *Words upon Words*, were scans, either

found online or produced by herself. In each case, the connection between these two texts may be found in the very materiality of the paper.

Contrary to once being seen as something upon which we merely write, the page is now recognized as an active constituent in meaning. The scholar Bonnie Mak writes about the primacy of the page, arguing that “the matter and mattering of the page are entangled in complicated ways as they reconfigure each other iteratively through time” (3). She here gestures toward the formal shifts between media: how the nature of the page changed after the mass adoption of printing and again after the shift to digital forms of writing and reading. This shift may be similarly witnessed within the archive. Her wordplay points toward a metaphysical interconnectedness not dissimilar from the atomist theory detailed in Marx’s thesis. More importantly, however, this connection between matter and mattering helps to explain how Marx ended up in Robertson’s archives. Bound by matter, it is the mattering of Robertson’s manuscript that assured his transmission into her record—that is to say, Marx could not have gained access to or a place in the sanctioned space of Robertson’s fonds independently. Were “The Present” and Marx’s endnotes printed on separate papers, it is likely that Marx’s text would not have been deemed important enough to warrant preservation or relevant enough to be included in her record. Because of his connection to this manuscript and to the context of its creation—both materially and temporally—his dissertation signifies more of Robertson than it does of himself.

The page also presents one way of establishing a link between space and time within the archive. Upon brief examination of Robertson’s papers, it could be argued that she opted to use old drafts of her writing to print something that she wanted to read—in this case, Marx’s dissertation. Examining the versos of each of these pages, it is clear that this cannot be the case. “The Present” is printed in part on Marx’s dissertation, but it is also printed on the additional literature noted above. This continuity on one side but not the other illustrates a simple chronology and tells us that Marx indeed preceded the draft that Robertson produced. It was loaded into the printer along with the other texts referenced. This invalidates the assumption that Robertson may have read Marx after producing this poem. Their connection, therefore, is more causal than correlative.

When Robertson printed her draft of “The Present” atop Marx’s dissertation, she may have done so more out of necessity than choice. Yes, it is possible that she ran out of paper and needed to print upon scraps; however, the similarities between the endnotes and her own writing are compelling enough to indicate a more substantial connection, one which may employ a similar function to her inclusion of their ideas in her published poetry. That is to say, I do not believe in the argument for such coincidence, least of all within Robertson’s fonds, which is so meticulously divided, organized, and mediated. It speaks to a conscious effort on Robertson’s part. Her inclusion of Marx in her fonds, therefore, denotes a significant shift in her engagement with his thought. His voice, whether his own or that of Lucretius is starkly different when contained within Robertson’s folders. Within the sphere of her archive, he only becomes legible insofar as he signifies something about her body of work, so long as he “converses” with her as the primary speaker. Although his thought is retained throughout this accrual, his writings are demarcated by the limit to which they illuminate Robertson’s practices. Printing the works of another author, legally or not, and then publishing them within one’s own archive reads as both an act of veneration as well as defiance, both against the canonical, male writers through whom she writes, as well as the institution proper.

This practice was not atypical for Robertson: in many of Robertson's works, the voices and personas of male canonical authors are reinscribed. In "The Value Village Lyric," the speaker is thrifting for Baudelaire's jacket and in "Lucy Hogg by Baudelaire," the speaker describes Hogg's paintings in Baudelaire's vernacular. The most popular example of these may be her recent novel, *The Baudelaire Fractal*, wherein a young Hazel Brown awakens one day to discover that she has authored the prolific poet's works herself. Ted Byrne notes the picture of a young Lisa Robertson in the book's inner flap, whose own eyes are hazel, her hair brown. He claims that this project represents a keen "act of property theft or repossession" (Byrne). If there is an act of repossession in *The Baudelaire Fractal,* the one within *R's Boat* is not quite so tidy. True, each of these books represents a project of reauthoring: for the *Baudelaire Fractal*, Charles Baudelaire, and for *R's Boat*, predominantly Marx and Lucretius. For each of these projects, it is not merely about rewriting old narratives, but rather appropriating theoretical methods in the service of a deeper understanding of self. The material of *R's Boat* derives from Robertson's own journals and notebooks, but much of it remains opaque. Tracing this one thread of connection between Marx's endnotes and *R's Boat* allows for Robertson's difficult and subtle references to be made legible. This is not a matter of using a theory to uncover an essential aspect of Robertson's lyrics, but rather, of uncovering through the archive the theories at the heart of her poetry.

Endnotes

[1] As noted in the Acknowledgements section of *Nilling*, "'Lastingness' was first a lecture at the University of Chicago […] in 2006" (np).

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