

10<sup>th</sup> August, 2022

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Thus, confidence springs from hope, and despair from fear.  
[Baruch Spinoza, *Ethics*, Chapter 3, postulate XV]

*Wominjeka, yadabiling Sarah,*<sup>1</sup>

It is winter and I am writing from Ngár-go in greater Naarm.<sup>2</sup> Vibrations are strong, making distance immaterial.

Your spirit, your intuition, led you to connect with the earth's energy lines, the invisible forces that once guided our ancestors. Australia's First Peoples call them 'Song Lines', connecting over two-hundred and fifty separate nations across Australia. The wrenching pain of invasion diminished their power, along with the number of nations and languages, but our understanding of song lines is rebounding.

We first met in a café somewhere in Auckland. Was it on the North Shore? I had already moved back to Melbourne by then and had to get to know you as a distant friend. You taught me to be aware of the way intuitive systems have material effects: or, rather, how to actualise energies as images. Initially, the information you imparted was rich, and seemingly endless. There was so much. It overwhelmed me. I had to slow you down. And then one day I noticed that I could absorb more and more without needing to interrupt your flow. Over the years, I noticed that your unwavering energy, your positive energy, was transforming into a curative force. Like a favourite street song on everyone's lips,<sup>3</sup> it infiltrates the surrounding atmosphere, the pores of neighbourly beings, the stomata of loving plants and other life forms.

The shift intensified as you got further into your garden, your bees (*manerlong* to the Wurundjeri), your sculptural practice, and now your drawings. Did you notice that I used, for the sake of this piece, a patriarchal-capitalistic-Eurocentric rupturing of your wholeness, breaking you into taxonomic bits. It implied that you exist obligingly (organically) with an arrangement of 'productive' roles — mother, partner, worker, artist, gardener, lover of cows, bees, trees and the grandmotherly mantel (*maloong-goongò*) ascribed to the relation you have with your baby/toddler/now distant boy. But such separation is akin to violence, the first step in forming hierarchies, which means that it is not a physical distancing or separation, but the internalising of externally imposed categories. If I find your ways elevating, then the opposite pathway is one that falsely divides everything into parts. Controlling. Minimising. Hierarchical.

You grasp, gently, the unconscious to unconscious connections between all living things (Jung would call it the *objective psyche* or the *collective unconscious*).<sup>4</sup> In a related way, Spinoza was driven, not by an external moral power (the church, the patriarch), which Gilles Deleuze reframed as "the problem of originary guardians" whose debt can never be fully paid.<sup>5</sup> Instead, Spinoza saw ethics arising from immanent modes of existence, and thus the diminishing or increasing of our passions is the recognition/

acknowledgment of the way encounters with external forces affect our emotions or passions.

When, therefore, the mind is assailed by any emotion, the  
body is at the same time affected with a modification  
whereby its power of activity is increased or diminished.  
[*The Ethics*, Chapter 4, Prop 7]

I think we may share this belief: a non-gendered form of feminism that appeals to heterarchical formations. Rather than permitting bully-boys to enforce their stratifying ways into every system, we form systems that gather, shuffle and reform, thus recognising and respecting different abilities for different purposes.

I am now ready to dive into a series of drawings you have called *Joyfield*. They were performed by tapping into vibrational forces. I chose a monochromatic-beauty, a bright yellow one, with lines and gauges of deep gold and patches of white. It remained close to you, you said, a teaching tool that you needed to live with for many months before you could let go. I intentionally wrote 'perform' above because I can see your actions in its every mark and your process that wouldn't end while you and this bright yellow field cohabitated.

Your children are not your children.  
They are the [offspring] of life's longing for itself.  
They come through you but not from you.  
[Kahlil Gibran, *The Prophet*, 1923]

I bring certain memories to bear as I dive into this work. A painter friend said he has a strange relation to yellow. Being so intrusive at one point, gaudy, he had to learn how to tame it, lest it colonise every other colour in its midst. It was also my mother's favourite colour. I was trapped in my foreign yellow dresses. Colonised by a mother who didn't understand self-determination. But I love this yellow drawing that has taken on its own forceful lines, its moments of intensity, its powerful white spaces that are not abysses but fields of respite, places for breathing, as with shores upon which to rest before diving back into healing waters. Is this why you call it a teaching tool? Did it take you on a journey that you then had to repeat, relive, experience over and over?

Perhaps it was a providential force that brought together our different ways of relating to the world—my energy (which is often flat), my dark, violet energy, and your brightness, which was initially chaotic, even exhausting, but rich, addictive, and then calmer, healing, generative. Your beautiful, elevating negentropy. You speak of your drawings as gifts to the Kauri who provide special energies. A gift loop from them to you and back to them is how you describe your drawings. A salve for the difficult days we face as the earth tries to heal.

Lots of love to you Sarah,

Jan x

Napier Street  
Ngár-go  
Naarm

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<sup>1</sup> This letter was written on the unceded Wurundjeri lands of the Kulin nation. I pay my respects to their elders, past and present. And with respect, I have borrowed the Woiwurrung language of the Wurundjeri people as a Welcome (*Wominjeka*), to you, darling (*yadabiling*) Sarah.

<sup>2</sup> In Woiwurrung, Ngár-go, means 'high ground' and remains the Wurundjeri name for Fitzroy. And Naarm for Melbourne.

<sup>3</sup> Walter Benjamin, "What form do you suppose a life would take that was determined at a decisive moment precisely by the street song last on everyone's lips? "Surrealism: The Last Snapshot of European Intelligentsia", *One-Way Street* (trans.) Edmund Jephcott and Kingsley Shorter (London: NLB, 1979) 229.

<sup>4</sup> "The collective unconscious contains the whole spiritual heritage of [human]kind's evolution, born anew in the brain structure of every individual. [Their] conscious mind is an ephemeral phenomenon that accomplishes all provisional adaptations and orientations, for which reason one can best compare its function to orientation in space", C.G. Jung, *The Collected Works* (trans.) R.F.C. Hull, Vol. 8, *The Structures and Dynamics of the Psyche*, (London: Routledge, 1991) 342

<sup>5</sup> Gilles Deleuze, "To have done with judgment" (trans.) Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco, *Essays Critical and Clinical* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1997) 135.