

The Geopoetics of Affect: Bill Neidjie's *Story About Feeling*

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In this article I argue for the importance of Bill Neidjie's *Story About Feeling* in constituting a theory of affect in Australian poetry: specifically a theory which participates most evidently in a paradigm of land writing. I am, therefore, making a reading of the 'feeling' that the work's title refers to. By geopoetics, I refer to the localised context of the story: where it comes from. Though the book is titled as a story, I read it as a long poem. Veronica Brady compares Neidjie's story-emphasising poetics to that of William Carlos Williams and Wallace Stevens (42-43). The text, edited by Keith Taylor, owes something I think to Stephen Muecke's editing of Paddy Roe in *Gularabulu* and *Reading the Country* (Benterrak et al). It is not one story only, but a number of stories and observations transcribed in free verse form. It is also a 'talk poem', comparable not just to Roe, but to those of American poet David Antin, and the New York-based Australian poet Chris Mann. It is not the written form that makes it unconventional, but rather, it is special in its attention to feeling; and it is Neidjie's assertion that this poem-story comes literally from the body and through the body: literally from the heart.

Story About Feeling is largely told through the pronoun of 'e', which at times is the pronoun of the story itself. Though presumably a truncation of 'he' it does not necessarily refer to a male figure; as Muecke remarks in his notes to Roe's *Gularabulu*, 'Aboriginal English often does not distinguish gender in pronouns' (xi). As 'e' in *Story About Feeling* variously refers to spirit, tree etc., I prefer to read it as being gender neutral. ('E' is also the most emphasised sound in the word 'feeling': therefore it also represents feeling on the level of sound.) The *Story About Feeling* begins:

This story e can listen careful
and how you want to feel on your feeling
This story e coming right through your body
e go right down foot and head
fingernail and blood... through the heart
and e can feel it because e'll come right through (1)

This is story as agent, the ambiguity of the 'e' suggests that 'e' can listen to the story, yet 'e' can be read as referring to the story listening to itself; and feeling as differentiation, feeling as different from itself: feeling as identity (Nancy 10). Neidjie writes that we feel this story 'laying down' (2), we dream, while up above stars 'work' for us: 'Have a look star because that's the feeling' (3). The stars are identified with the trees, the grass, the ground, the dirt, and this identity is love: 'I love it tree because e love me too' (4). Neidjie reads the stars, positing a telling that is aligned with the earth, as are the listeners, lying on their backs. This seems different to vertical storytelling where authority comes from the speaker. It is storytelling as reading, not as originating. It involves memory, and commentary, but is also collaborative: "Because that story up there; have a look!" (7).

Through identifying the place of feeling as being under particular stars, Neidjie locates *Story About Feeling* in one place, yet opens up the possibility of other texts being read under other stars elsewhere on earth. The pluralised or democratic reader is lying on their back, reading in their own language. To adapt postcolonial critic Walter D. Mignolo, 'I Am Where I Read' or 'I

Feel Where I Am’; but to adapt Mignolo to Neidjie, and to generalise this reading identity we can characterise the context as: ‘E Am Where E Reads’/‘E Feel Where E Am’, where ‘e’ can be others in a collective self, or it can be a star, or the earth etc. This, then, is Neidjie’s ‘geopoetics’ of knowledge. My use of the term ‘geopoetics’ is adapted from the use by Mignolo and Leo Ching of the term ‘geopolitics of knowledge’, and is informed particularly by Mignolo’s essay ‘I Am Where I Think.’ My article attempts to practice a geocritical or geopoetical reading of Gagudju man Neidjie’s long poem in a way that broadens readings of place in relation to Indigenous poetics.

Though ‘geopoetics’ has some European precedence as a term, my use of it departs from these examples. Federico Italiano provides one definition: ‘The Geopoetics of an author is to be understood as his territorial intelligence, poetic and imagining ability for producing and constructing a world, his characteristic determination and presentation of the relation Man—Earth.’ He follows this definition with a comprehensive extension of the term from the concept of landscape, which he describes as ‘a sight of a sight.’ Though he credits the term’s coinage to Scots writer Kenneth White (circa 1978), he adds that ‘his [White’s] private Poetics’ character precludes a proper application to literary analysis’ (n.pag.). Italiano proceeds, then, to his own definition of geopoetics via an etymology of the two terms ‘geo’ and ‘poetics’, referring also to the more familiar terms ‘geopolitics’, ‘geohistoire’ and ‘geophilosophy’. Italiano’s definition doesn’t displace readings of landscape (which, I would argue, Neidjie’s geopoetics does, its feeling aspect being not separate from that of looking); it clearly emphasises a (masculine) human-directed version of the term.

Though no explicit, official definition of geopoetics can be found on the website for the ‘Scottish Centre for Geopoetics,’ founded by White, under the heading ‘What is Geopoetics?’ a subheading reads, that ‘Some of the key elements of geopoetics are:

It is deeply critical of Western thinking and practice over the last 2500 years and its separation of human beings from the rest of the natural world, and proposes instead that the universe is a potentially integral whole, and that the various domains into which knowledge has been separated can be unified by a poetics which places the planet Earth at the centre of experience.

It also seeks to express that sensitive and intelligent contact with the world by means of a poetics i.e. a language drawn from a way of being which attempts to express reality in different ways e.g. oral expression, writing, visual arts, music, and in combinations of different art forms. White also adds that ‘geopoetics is a place ... where poetry, thought and science can come together’ (np). I found these formulations however, after beginning to think about what the geopoetic might mean in the context of a creolised version of geopolitics: after reading contemporary postcolonial critics Walter Mignolo, and Leo Ching. Neidjie’s text is not a critique of the West, nor an attempt to recoup ‘a potentially integral whole.’ It is, arguably, an expression of that wholeness; Italiano’s ‘geopoetics’, which is about producing and presenting ‘the relation Man-Earth’ also suggests a separation from the earth, with the relation reimagined: that is, through the use of the mind. Neidjie speaks that relation, but it is not just imagination that Neidjie deploys, but care (of man by the earth: the trees, the stars) and ‘feeling’. White’s ‘plac[ing of] the planet Earth at the centre of experience,’ is, like Italiano’s formulation human-directed, but also assumes a separation. ‘Story About Feeling’ assumes that humans belong to the earth.

I am trying to think about Neidjie's work in terms of affect, the broad, embodied range suggested by Neidjie's use of the word 'feeling' (rather than emotion or mood). Here I take my cue from the broadness of feeling as a concept as presented by Neidjie, that is, in its own terms: *as* knowledge. This is at something of a variance to commentators from other critical contexts. Anthropologist Michelle Rosaldo, for example, argues that emotions are 'thoughts embodied.' In addition, Rosaldo (though she is trying to get away from the notion of 'private feeling') treats feeling and emotion as synonyms (138). For Neidjie, feeling is clearly not just a private thing, though it does require listening, attention. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari make a distinction between feeling and affect. They write: 'Affect is the active discharge of emotion ... whereas feeling is an always displaced, retarded, resisting emotion' (441). They are writing in the context of desire and war. Perhaps an analogy might be made with speaking and listening, where affects speak and feelings listen: but again, listening is an active and crucial act in Neidjie's *Story About Feeling*.

I am particularly interested in the tone produced by Neidjie's 'feeling' discourse, and also how affect is produced geopoetically. What is this 'where' of place that is produced in texts such as Neidjie's, and what is the place that such texts are consigned to? Mignolo calls for the 'epistemic democratization' of knowledge: such democratisation, I argue, must include creative and feeling knowledges; knowledges reproduced in creative works, as well as the poetics of such works (poetics not just in the sense of aspects of the work's construction, but accompanying critical materials of various kinds).

This knowledge in *Story About Feeling* is not purely visual (legible), but also involves listening and physical feeling. In speaking about the wind, Neidjie frames feeling as something shared, and as something that shares a property with listening. He says:

Wind for us
That way e come blow wind
and you feel it lovely, nice,
feel it cold now...lovely
And I love it that wind.

That wind is wind for anybody...no-matter who
...
I like im.
I like im camp outside
because of course you got to sleep outside,
ou got to feel im that wind and look star! (16)

Neidjie's democratic sentiment is nicely captured in 'That wind is wind for anybody': it also suggests a democratic readability. Words like 'lovely', 'nice' are associated with the sentimental, an affect which has, as Dylan Evans notes 'negative connotations' (xi), and is described by the *Concise Oxford* as being 'false or unworthy tenderness or the display of it' (958). Neidjie's tenderness towards the wind is perhaps unusually direct, but not 'false or unworthy.' In his article from a 'Symposium on Sentiment' published in *Pleiades*, 'Sentimentality, the Enemy?', Kevin Prufer elaborates an objection to this standard definition. He compares the feeling of 'recoil' from the sentimental to that of someone who has 'tasted too much cotton candy or sweet sherry' (78). In this case, the feeling is in the consumer-reader not the consumed-text. Further, he argues, the sentimental is that which reduces 'emotional complexity' and 'accuracy': it is reductive rather than excessive (79).

Prufer suggests that writers ‘retreat from strong emotional affect [as a] retreat from the risk of sentimentality’ but argues that this ‘is not an adequate pressure against the emotional manipulation of the larger world’ (80). C.J. Dennis’s character ‘The Sentimental Bloke’ refers to the wind in ‘Spring Song’ in self-consciously sentimental fashion:

The little winds is stirrin’ in the trees,
 Where little birds is chantin’ lovers’ lays;
 The music of the soft and barmy breeze. . . .
 Aw, spare me days! (13)

At this point the character of the Bloke has become disgusted with his own sentiment or ‘dilly feeling.’ This feeling appears commensurable to Joy Katz’s ‘darlingness’, which she characterises in her introduction to the ‘Symposium on Sentiment’ mentioned above, as the penchant for using the word ‘little’ (68). Yet the Bloke neutralises the sentimental paradigm (Barthes 6) with the following: ‘If this ’ere dilly feeling doesn’t stop/ I’ll lose me block an’ stoush some flamin’ cop!’ (13). Yet despite his violent reaction against ‘dilly feeling,’ he remains, in Prufer’s terms, ‘The Sentimental Bloke’ because he refuses ‘emotional complexity,’ and is unable to bear this contradiction to his usual state, nor any thinking about it. In Neidjie though there is no darlingness or dilly feeling, no simplistic sweetness, but rather the practical and physical sense of the lovely and nice properties of a cooling wind on a hot day. Whether the general application of Neidjie’s terms obviates complexity or accuracy, and opens his discourse to the charge of sentimentality—or whether such criticism is an inappropriately Western one (it is, Prufer suggests, born from a disgust with WWI propaganda, 79-80)—will I think be dispensed with by quoting him more extensively. Prufer’s own position on sentimentality seems ultimately ambivalent, arguing against its avoidance but also repositioning and redefining the sentimental as a simplistic concept that *is* to be avoided.

Neidjie’s description of the wind is an example of geopoetics: pointing to the place where Neidjie speaks (of and from). Dennis’s Bloke could be (almost) anywhere, yet when we recall it is a ‘Spring Song’ then this also says something of his placing in the world: as spring is only spring in one hemisphere at a time. As James Ley concludes in a review of a recent anthology of writing on Australian literature and the transnational, *Republics of Letters*: ‘there is no such thing as a view from nowhere’ (n.pag.)

Words like ‘lovely’ and ‘nice’ become stronger when we think of them in terms of their affect, how Neidjie’s repetition of these words creates the effect of a warm, likeable and caring tone. Thinking, feeling and listening are framed as collective. There is an inclusivity that recalls Paddy Roe: ‘This is all public./You know (it) is for everybody:/Children, women, anybody./See, this is the thing they used to tell us: Story, and we know’ (i).

The wind speaks, and speaks through the tree. What follows is a substantial quote, that I think is necessary not just to support my claims, but to provide readers with access to the kind of feeling that is in the work:

That tree now, feeling...
 e blow
 sit quiet, you speaking...
 that tree now e speak...
 that wind e blow...

e can listen.

...

We think.
 Story we think about, yes.
 Tree...yes.
 That story e listen.
 Story...you'n'me same.
 Grass im listen.
 You'n'me same...anykind.
 Bird e listen...anykind, eagle.
 E sit down. E want to speak eagle eh?
 Im listen. You listen...eagle.
 Because e put im through your feeling.
 But for us eagle...
 all same.
 Listen carefully, careful
 and this spirit e come in your feeling
 and you will feel it...anyone that.
 I feel it...my body same as you.
 I telling you this because the land for us,
 never change round, never change.
 Places for us, earth for us,
 star, moon, tree, animal,
 no-matter what sort of a animal, bird or snake...
 all that animal same like us. Our friend that.

This story e can listen careful
 and how you want to feel on your feeling.
 This story e coming through your body,
 e go right down foot and head, fingernail and blood...
 through the heart.
 And e can feel it because e'll come right through.
 And when you sleep you might dream something.

...

Now I telling story I can listen this.
 You listen that wind e come more.
 Tree e start moving round and feeling. (18-19)

The complexity, the thoroughness expressed here, clearly contradicts the sentimental in the pejorative sense as elaborated by Prufer. Neidjie's text supports Rosaldo's claim that 'thought is always culturally patterned and infused with feelings ... [and that] affect is culturally ordered and does not exist apart from thought' (137). The key aspect is, I think, that we 'Listen carefully.' In sentimental writing there is not a careful listening, nor is such a thing possible in reader recoil. As Prufer observes, many contemporary poets avoid the possibility of sentimentality by avoiding emotional writing altogether (79). Neidjie, however, takes his cue from the tree: 'Tree e start moving around and feeling.' Agency and affect are synthesised in this one line. Feeling becomes story becomes thought, spirit and listening, and also, possibly, dream. Physical feeling is not differentiated from other kinds of feeling. Not

only are trees attributed with the same qualities as animals, but blood, story and feeling are presented as moving similarly through the body:

When you feeling tree e work with you tree.
 You cut im little bit, you got water coming out.
 That's his blood, same as your blood. So e alive.

...

If you feel sore...
 "Oh, I'm my body sore!"

Well that mean somebody killing tree
 because your body on that tree or earth. (23)

Rosaldo's characterisation of affect is very close to Neidjie here. She writes: 'Feelings are not substances to be discovered in our blood but social practices organized by stories that we both enact and tell. They are structured by our forms of understanding (143).' Note that she doesn't say 'by stories that we hear.' Rosaldo is presumably referring to the human world in using the term 'social', though arguably, in Neidjie, the social is expanded to include place: earth, star, tree, animal etc.

Such an expansion suggests the possibility of a new affect paradigm, one that does not emphasise the social or psychological, but rather the earth, or even, as in Neidjie, the cosmos. Yet in *Story About Feeling* the stars are seen from being on—lying on—the earth. We might say, then, adapting Prufer, that rather than 'emotional complexity' necessarily, sentimentality is resisted through a complex context: or an emotional complex that includes the earth, the location of the speaker. Neidjie's poem is a key text for such a theory: one that could be used to produce new readings that cross established aesthetic and cultural boundaries. Such new readings are timely. As Bonny Cassidy writes in a recent article published in *Teaching Australian Literature* 'I see [critic David Carter's] call for original views of Australian literature as directly connected to an affect- and response-based approach to the teaching of poetry' (304).

Story About Feeling is not just Indigenous philosophy or mythology or religion, but is expressly related in terms of feeling and how we speak about feeling. Here we also see the poetics of Neidjie's form with its repetition, and imagery: the explicit aesthetics perform a metapoetics. Neidjie speaks of the 'lovely', the love-related feeling, explicitly comparing the tree with a man:

"Lovely tree", we say,
 Well we say, "lovely man".
 Young-fella, young man... "e lovely man".
 Well we look lovely tree... all same.
 "Oh beautiful bird"... colour, yes.
 This ground or any river, flower... same thing.
 Pretty colour snake...
 "I seen it good colour snake".
 Well same you'n' me.
 "Good man that"... young-fella or young-girl...
 all same. (32)

In this remarkable eleven-line passage, Neidjie conflates aesthetics, identity, poetics, gender and sexuality. He obviates the practice of metaphor, placing emphasis on the adjective. The adjective is the linking, feeling word, rather than the comparing, descriptive word. The subject feels connected to the lovely, beautiful, pretty and good, rather than naming these qualities to exalt the loved one or the subject's descriptive ingenuity. Note that colour isn't denoted but described as 'pretty' and 'good' and just 'colour', as if this was a positive attribute in itself. 'All same,' says Neidjie, all grounded in feeling. Virtue and appearance are one.

Neidjie has produced a unique space for his work. Before looking at the Australian poetic context, there are comparisons that can be made in terms of its relation to the Western canon, which I think brings the possibilities of a new affective paradigm into relief. Brady compares Neidjie's poetics to that of William Carlos Williams and Wallace Stevens (42-43). We can also see that Neidjie elaborates on John Keats's 'Beauty is truth, truth beauty - that is all/Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know' (295) as well as Oscar Wilde's 'Beauty is the wonder of wonders. It is only shallow people who do not judge by appearances. The true mystery of the world is the visible, not the invisible...' (25). Yet Keats's conclusion seems to intellectualise and close down feeling. There is a distancing involved in 'Ode on a Grecian Urn' (as Clare Louis Gerlach notes (v)), whereas Neidjie involves our feeling ('you'n'me') with the appreciated beauty. The 'dual pronoun' (Muecke xi) of 'you'n'me' from Aboriginal English, itself says something about a different culture being expressed, one less concerned with individuality, unlike Anglo English culture (Evans 3). Like Neidjie's *Story*, Keats's poem also refers to trees: as 'happy, happy boughs,' and uses the adjective 'happy' to link the tree, the 'happy melodist' (or poet) and 'happy, happy love!' Yet the happiness in Keats's poem is a morbid one, where trees and the melodist are happy because they are not alive, and therefore won't die. Referring to Dorian Gray's face, Wilde's Lord Henry says that beauty is 'one of the great facts ... like sunlight, or spring-time, or the reflection [of] ... the moon' (99). Does beauty have agency? Lord Henry seems to obviate Dorian's need to think or speak for himself. As close as Wilde's Lord Henry is to Neidjie's equivalencies, both Keats and Wilde use aesthetics to distance affect. Keats literally uses the urn's message to displace feeling (in this case 'woe'):

Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe
Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st,
'Beauty is truth, truth beauty,—that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.' (295)

Both writers promote the hegemonies of the image and the message. Now, after language writing and neoformalism, and with the turn to affect, it is timely for a new attention to be paid to emotional aspects of poetry, as well as to critique what formerly passed for aesthetics: perhaps creating a new kind of synthesis.

Further on in the poem Neidjie also insists on the tree's agency; like a person it isn't just there to be admired: 'Well some people they say.../“Lovely tree, look!”/But me...I think that story.' We might think of Gig Ryan here: 'I'm not a fucking painting/ that needs to be told what it looks like' (22). Yet also pertinently, I think of the story of 'The Orange Tree' by John Shaw Neilson. The narrator of Neilson's poem suggests that the tree—presumably a non-Indigenous orange tree—has memories 'of the olden time,' perhaps in Britain. The poem ends with the tree as model: the girl of the poem silencing the narrator, saying that she is 'listening like the Orange Tree' (355).

Neidjie says that a tree's noise might not be the tree breaking but a signal: "E's no break...e spoke in sleep. E won't hurt us. Might be somebody coming" (35). Neidjie's poem continues with the story of the different countries of people that make up the Arnhem Land area, including Gagudju, Neidjie's people (41), and what food the people eat: yam, turtle, goose, lily and honey (42-50). When we read that we see how much food can say about place. In Neidjie, there is detail about the food, dialogue about eating it and how to catch a goose, for example: with yesterday's wet stick kept heavy in the water (51). *Story About Feeling* is a macro or über-poem: it tells the story of a culture. Of the beginning of the people, of eating, medicine, burial rites, of contact with white people.

The feeling of loving and of feeling story is not the only feeling in the poem. Neidjie also refers to the feeling of 'fright' in relation to secret places, risking flood or cyclone. Risk is associated with mining also: you might be killed for touching the wrong rock. Here Neidjie points to the consequences of 'breaking Law': 'E worry slow and e get very weak' (81-83). Feeling is, then, on a continuum of health. Feeling can also be a snake-bite, and the corresponding 'heart-crack' when you miss someone because they've been bitten by a King Brown snake (92, 95). As Neidjie indicates, some people don't listen because 'they only worry about money': they're 'feeling something else' (101-02). He continues:

Man like you, like me, you feeling with this story.
 What I'm saying, you listen.
 You'll feel your string, you feel your body,
 you'll feel yourself.
 Might be morning, you feeling...
 "Ahh, I want to understand that. I want to listen."

In yourself, feeling. (102)

Story About Feeling isn't, then, just a story 'about' feeling. The story is itself felt, is (told with) feeling. Feeling is the telling and the listening, feeling is the state of reception. This is a particular story, coming from Neidjie's country and culture; it is also an urtext of affect, a model for reading / receiving other Australian texts in terms of affect. I think that there is potential in connecting Neidjie's poem, with the poetry of Neilson, for example, to create a basis for thinking about affect in Australian poetry, particularly poetry participating in what I have described as a land affect paradigm such as Charles Harpur, Banjo Paterson and Henry Lawson, as well as more contemporary poets such as the Nglarla songwriters, John Anderson and Les Murray.

Not all the feeling is related to love. Neidjie speaks of a secret place, a 'Ring-place' made by King Brown law: 'if you go ... there ... When you finished from bush, you'll be start crying. You don't want to come back in "outside"' (103). This suggests a feeling of sadness produced from a feeling of emptiness. In *Story* the coincidence of self, feeling and dream is emphasised. In a section that refers to Jabiru, the stork, Neidjie writes: 'You'll dream of that nest or Jabiru/ because you can feeling./ You, yourself, feeling (108). 'You, yourself, feeling': it's a remarkable line and sentence that both explains what is happening, that you, yourself *are* feeling, but also names the elements of this feeling structure: 'you, yourself, feeling,' as if 'yourself' is the relational or mediational element between 'you' and 'feeling'. It suggests a person as an affective assemblage to adapt Deleuze and Guattari, but not in Deleuze and Guattari's terms: not, that is, in terms of desire (440). This hypothetical affective

assemblage or complex is not conservative in the sense of needing to hold onto (a) feeling, but it is in the sense that it does not desire change. This is an Indigenous critique of change, of desire. *Story About Feeling* is not about becoming, but about being more attentive to what is always being felt. Feeling changes, however, and therefore, the ‘you’ (or e), and the ‘yourself’ change. Story is also part of this assemblage of course: ‘You must keep in story/because e’ll come through your feeling./Even anybody’ (110). Yet story is personified, and has its own agency. Story is a critique of human agency, in that it is a spirit telling you something.

If I read Neidjie right, the spirit of Jabiru might bring you something in dream: ‘Might be piece of rock you find im/because spirit is there’ (108). Neidjie adds:

I love it too.

...

How you feel...wind, feeling cold, “oh lovely night.”

Yes...because e longside with you.

E listen to you this. (109)

Neidjie reassures us that there is no need to feel ‘fright’, because ‘e’ is telling us a story, is telling us to go somewhere, to a tree, to a painting (111-12). He describes a painting, the significance of the colours. He says:

Well all that piece, piece they paint im, all that story

secret, grandpa, granny, back, chest, head...

e coming through your feeling.

That painting you say...

“That lovely painting.” (114)

This is not, then, the ‘cold pastoral’ of Keats’s Grecian urn. It is not a composite, representative artwork, but a specific work read by a member of that culture, not, like Keats, a belated commentator. Neidjie has expressly connected the painting not just to the story of the people, but has synthesised, via aesthetic feeling, the painting with the living. The painting is personified. Yet Neidjie writes that the painting is ‘dead...on the rock,’ which implies it was formerly alive. He expressly opens the culture of his people to those who listen, or feel: No matter who is./ E can feel it way I feel it in my feeling./ You’ll be same too.

Neidjie is a particular Indigenous man; as he says, other Aboriginals might not listen to the story (120). ‘When you read.../exactly right and you can feel yourself, anyone./That way I feel myself putting this story./You’ve got to feel... [my ellipse] I feel in my feeling with this story’ (121). It may be coincidental, but it sounds like there is a Christian inflection when Neidjie says, ‘Listen.../ “What for?”/ Because he might feel his body with the blood, water/ feeling’ (121). It might also be coincidental, but at this point the telling of the story becomes (not for the first time) metafictional: it becomes about a father telling the story, and some of his children not listening, and one of the boys walking off and being eaten by a crocodile (136-37). This is also part of the feeling of *Story About Feeling*; yet the father appears not to feel anything other than impatience and disgust. He says to his daughters: ‘My feeling...you never listen to me’ (139).

Story About Feeling is both a traditional story and a contemporary one. It warns about mining, of the sickness caused by uranium and the fatal aspect of money, and of the big roads that destroy the country:

Because you love it this world.
 Yes, this country, your country, my country...I love im.
 I don't want to lose this country, somebody take im.
 Make you worry.
 If somebody take im your country, you'n'me both get sick.
 Because feeling...this country where you brought up
 and just like you'n'me mother.
 Somebody else doing it wrong...you'n'me feel im.
 Anybody, anyone...you'n'me feel. (153)

The dominant pronoun is not, here, 'e', but 'you'n'me.' The feeling of 'you'n'me' is a shared one, implying a shared self. Killing the country: this is a real reason to be 'fright or scared' (157), because 'e kill our blood and body' (158). Here we might speak of a 'geo-affect' or land feeling.

Story About Feeling concludes with Neidjie expressing his need to tell this story. A story that can't be felt in the city:

We like white-man alright. We like im city
 but city make you sick of it. Better this...
 no matter little house, little road
 and others where no road,
 e can see something there, green, tree...
 Now e's lovely over there.
 E's feeling now...wind...e coming.
 Now we telling story e start blow.
 E pumping now that leaf, that blood there,
 E not wood but you'n'me that.
 E man but e listen for you'n'me. E listen.
 ...
 Today e feeling now.
 That wind e love, love, love.
 I love wind.
 E blowing...nice country in the plain.

Percy Shelley, who famously hymned a wind, did not write a line as simple as 'I love wind.' Shelley's narrator doesn't listen but tries to get the wind (or the world) to listen to him. Though there is in Shelley's poem an identification with the wind, and a desire to be wind, the strongest expression is that of the self, of conceptual control ('O, hear ... O, Uncontrollable!' 579). The narrating 'I' appeals to the fantasy of 'thou'. In Neidjie, 'e' and 'you'n'me' come together: the 'e' of the wind / country and the 'you'n'me' of people. They are not combined in a complex of desire (the same desire that leads to mining and cities) but in a relation of feeling and listening. The plural or joint pronoun of 'you'n'me' suggests the prefix 'co'. Perhaps we could then think of the 'eco' of 'ecopoetics' not in the Greek etymological sense of 'oikos', or house (Concise 306), but as a new compound, one that combines the sense of the creolised pronoun of 'e' that occurs in *Story About Feeling*: where

‘e’ stands for feeling, person, tree, animal, story, star and earth; and ‘co’ is ‘you’n’me’, listening.

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