

Creative Writing Tactics for Testing and Teaching English Literacy *

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When we begin teaching the unit in Creative Writing at the school of Australian Linguistics, we usually tell the anecdote about a famous American poet who was invited to speak (at the cost of 25,000 dollars) at one of America's Ivy League universities. He was asked to speak on 'How to Write a Poem' - a subject, we assume, not of his own choosing. He mounted the podium, asked the audience who would like to write poetry, and received an almost total show of hands. He suggested that each of them write a poem, and having achieved a satisfactory version, to send it to him. He then left the podium, and probably felt he had well-earned his honorarium.

This anecdote has its merits with regard to teaching in any creative sphere. Being creative, it comes from within the individual, and there is very little that a teacher can truly 'teach'. He or she can offer examples for emulation, and discuss the do's and don't's of good story writing, but the pupil either will write creatively or will not, although everyone seems to have some spark that can be ignited, and hence the unit is taught (in at least the loose sense of exposure to a given topic).

We have heard arguments that one needs the spark of creative genius in order to ignite such fires in one's students or pupils. We are not sure that this is the case - even though we have had to offer a shoulder to one or another colleague in despair over having to teach in this area. The spark need not lie in the teacher so much as in the subject matter: it is difficult to be bored when one is genuinely excited. Hence, we would like to devote some time to motivational topics and techniques that have proved useful. We have found these equally successful in developing Aboriginal vernacular literacy, although we will apply them below to the teaching of English. But, before doing so, it is crucial to stress the importance of creative writing within the English curriculum.

1. Importance of Teaching Creative Writing.

What we have to say is not, as some might assume, about Australian Aboriginal English (with which we are currently in contact) or Philippine English (with which we were formerly in contact). Experiences in several communities here and overseas have convinced us that the phenomena of 'speech atrophy' (the inability to use English outside of the classroom) and 'speech apathy' (the unwillingness to use English outside of the classroom) are with us wherever a native vernacular is strong and used as the tool for everyday communication. English lessons, whether readings, exercises, or drills imprint basic vocabulary and grammar, and prepare the pupil for a passive receptivity for the language

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(i.e., understanding English), but not for the desire or need to express oneself (i.e., speaking English). English movies and media reinforce and expand one's passive abilities, but only the occasional tourist, government official, or new-found friend offer both the opportunity and the motivation to venture into actual speech - and this only if one's initial embarrassment or shame can be overcome.

Creative writing is one of the few avenues where one can and does express oneself in coherent and extended (if not extensive) texts. Although actual speech would be preferable, creative writing has the added advantage in Australia and Asia of avoiding the shame problem - one quietly works within the limits of one's competence, unconcerned over the ridicule or approval of peers. Later, when rapport has been established within the classroom, and a certain ease is felt, one can read and/or discuss one's stories, and hence venture into oral expression as well. Furthermore, when a student has achieved a piece that surpasses shame and induces pride, he or she is motivated to improve the story, correcting errors in spelling, grammar, punctuation, and stylistics, thereby entering a level of English expression rarely achieved inside or outside the formal classroom situation.

From the student's point of view, creative writing, then, has three advantages: (1) it allows extended self-expression, (2) it encourages self-development (that is, having expressed oneself, one can re-write the story re-arranging the ideas in such a way that it will have impact on the reader), and (3) it reduces (although it may not totally eliminate) the embarrassment felt in having to express oneself orally. In this regard, we must emphasise how often we have observed some of the shiest students producing some of the longest and loveliest pieces of literature in the local variety of English.

From the teacher's point of view, creative writing allows the analysis of two important pedagogical points: the student's command of English and also the local variety of English. The latter assists the teacher in setting the limits for what is accepted and tolerable, and what is not acceptable and must be taught in subsequent lessons. For example, in Aboriginal English a four-member paradigm of English verbs is reduced to a two-member set (as in Table 1). This leads to local English expressions such as 'We done it'.

Table 1 Reduction of English Verb Paradigms in Australian Aboriginal English

Present base	do	see	see	sing
3rd sing. present	does	do(es)	see(s)	sing(s)
Past	did	saw	seen	sang
Perfective	done	done	seen	sung

'They sings it in church every Sunday', 'I seen the bones lying in the bush'; grammar, incidentally, found in the speech of both rural white and black Australians. The teacher has two choices, to accept this as a local variety of English, or to reject it and intensively drill the standard grammar involved in such phrases. We would maintain, however, that even if rejected, such usage adds local colour to stories, and need not always be corrected and edited out. In brief, for the teacher creative writing is both a tool for teaching and for learning (or analysing) vernacular English, and further for assessing individual student's competence at English expression.

2. Ways and Means of Teaching Creative Writing.

Again, let us allay the fears that one must be a creative writer in order to teach the subject area. Obviously, emulation is an asset to any teacher, but the motivation can be achieved by the selection of stimulating topics and by the presentation of good material from other authors, particularly the pupils' peers.

A typical lesson runs the gamut of topics outlined in Table 2. Furthermore, certain points have to be made within a creative writing unit, and these are best taught in lectures (or their equivalents) at random intervals throughout the course as relevant topics arise. These include:

- (1) choosing the right word (use of synonyms or antonyms, turns of phrase, language devices, metaphors, idioms, etc.);
- (2) putting emotion into what is said (gaining the desired mood or reaction from the reader);
- (3) filling in details (leaving no questions unanswered about who, what, why, where, when, how - unless this is part of the author's design and style);
- (4) writing for a specific audience (keeping the language level, choice of vocabulary, and story-length within the grasp of the expected readers);
- (5) distinguishing between plot (what the story is about) and style (how the story is told), including features of re-ordering chronology, facts, and/or details;
- (6) emphasizing the importance of length vs brevity for effect in various story contexts.

Table 2

Standard Lesson Plan for Creative Writing

1. **Introduction of the topic:** lecture/discussion, helpful hints, related areas encountered in English lessons or other subjects.
2. **Motivation:** experience chart, picture, sample story, discussion.
3. **Production:** students write the story.

Table 2 cont'd.

4. Assessment: teacher corrects the stories (paying attention to details of plot and style, vernacular usage, basic impact; note that grading should not overly rely on correction of spelling, punctuation, or grammar).
5. Feed-back teacher may read some of the better pieces in order to encourage those showing genuine sparks of creativity, but never to embarrass either the author or his/her peers.
6. Self-development: students should be encouraged to re-write pieces they feel or can be led to feel deserve further attention.

One of the best devices for motivating creative writing is the 'experience chart' (this was the term used in the Philippines in the late sixties). The teacher, having introduced a topic, writes down words and phrases suggested by the students as relating to that topic. An example can be found in Table 3.

Table 3

Sample of Experience Chart on Topic 'The Sun'

star	sunburn (Europeans)	WITHOUT THE SUN:
ball of fire	dark-skin (Orientals)	cold
gives light	beautiful sunrise/sunset	no life(plants/animals)
is hot	warms the world	everything would die
dries clothes	makes rain	dark(ness)

Note in particular the contrast obtained by dealing with the 'negative' aspect, which yields even more horizons in creativity; that is, if we didn't have the sun, what a dark, lifeless world this would be. In exceptionally elementary classes, where the command of English is only marginal, such experience charts allow the pupils to put together stories with the basic ideas given and the grammar supplied by a growing competence in that area. Contrast some of the stories given in Appendix I based exclusively on the experience chart in Table 3. Note how some authors summarize the main points, and others do a complete take-off on one topic or another.

Going through a typical lesson sequence is reasonably straightforward (as listed in Table 2), but one point needs particular attention. If creative writing is part of a broader English curriculum, there may be a strong temptation to pay undue attention to errors in spelling, punctuation, and grammar, and to grade a paper accordingly. This is a serious mistake! Its overall effect could be to stifle any further attempts to venture into free expression of one's ideas and feelings. The rules and minus points applied in phonetics, grammar, and spelling tests should be suspended for the time-being within this mode of the program. This is not to say that the teacher shouldn't correct mistakes in spelling

and grammar; we only wish to emphasize that the grade for creative writing assignments should be based on the overall impact and style of the story. Since the purpose is to get the pupils to express themselves, they may feel intimidated or shy to write words they may have heard but of which they have not yet mastered the spelling or grammar. For teachers who feel that this suggestion is unduly lax, they can have the pupils rewrite their stories, and then grade according to all the traditional scoring procedures. In this way, one can introduce a system of checks and balances and see that the learning process has been total, and that all the rules have been obeyed.

Table 4 (see page 10) outlines some of the topics that have proven most successful in our creative writing program. One or another of them has led to absolutely beautiful pieces of creative expression.

One of the best signs of a creative story is that the reader gets 'lost', momentarily suspended in time and place, unaware of the world about him, completely absorbed in the action or mood of the narrative. Conversely, the reader can get 'lost' in following details or characters, overly flowery descriptions, or inadequate cross references: this is the antithesis of creative writing, and the trap for non-English speakers who are bound to the cultural and narrative styles of their native languages. Aboriginal campfire stories are very, very repetitive, renaming the key characters over and over again, with little or no pronoun substitution or synonyms. Such repetition is lost on and often irritating to English readers, but not so judged by Aboriginal readers. In our Philippine experience, we found students sticking too closely to chronological events, showing little or no imagination in re-ordering events for impact, and this often makes for a boring story to English readers.

It would seem best to guide students through the cultural barriers into good English narrative styles, especially where this does no harm to the author's purpose and plan. Pronoun substitution, while novel, does not detract from a good Aboriginal story - in fact, the clarity of gender differences between 'he' and 'she' enhances the flow, once the original confusion is mastered.

Such guidance can lead to 'overkill', like the many instances we have observed when students learn the thrill of describing a good scene and do so on almost every occasion thereafter (lovely sunsets in horror stories and the details of a flower garden in one's autobiography). Hence, we consistently strive to reach a happy medium - a blend and meld of the two languages and the two cultures, hopefully achieving an enrichment of both. Note here the need from time to time to include language words that enrich a tale which have no (known) English equivalents: these include discourse particles (indicating approval, surprise, agreement) and words that defy translation (like moiety names and specific cultural artifacts).

Table 4

Suggested topics within a creative writing program

1. **INK BLOTS:** Similar to Rorschach tests in psychology, although it is best to get students to make their own by folding a piece of paper in half, then in half again, and dropping ink on the inside fold along the line, smearing, and then opening up the paper completely and writing one's "interpretation" on the bottom (or empty) half page.
2. **CHOOSING THE RIGHT WORD:** Contrast: 'boulder : stone : rock : pebble' writing a sentence with each. Also contrast: 'stole : took : got : pinched : flogged' and write a sentence with each.
3. **PUTTING EMOTION INTO WHAT YOU SAY:** Write a sentence starting out 'The...boy...' Make the reader laugh, or feel angry, or feel sad. (Note examples in Appendix II.)
4. **ALL MEN ARE BROTHERS:** Have you had an experience that makes you believe this? Tell us about it. (See examples in Appendix III.)
5. **THE BOY AND THE DOG:** Some people once discovered the bones of a boy and a dog buried together. This is most unusual in any culture. Make up a story about how this happened. (See examples in Appendix IV.)
6. **GROG/LIQUOR:** This is a very emotive topic for most of us since we see its damaging effects. What do you think about drinking?
7. **TRIP TO THE MOON:** Would you like to go up to the moon? Take an imaginary trip. What would it be like? How would you get there and back? What would you need to bring with you?
8. **THEFT:** Tell a story about how someone steals something and what happens. Don't forget to fill in all details.
9. **MY FAVOURITE STORY:** Either re-tell or invent a story that you think would make good reading for your friends.
10. **FRIGHTENING STORY:** Write a scary story.
11. **BIOGRAPHY or AUTOBIOGRAPHY:** Write about yourself or your favourite person, it could be a friend, your father, your mother, or a relative.
12. **DESCRIPTION:** Describe in great detail your favourite scene: sunset, hill, beach, river, lake, home, or whatever fills you with emotion.
13. **POEM:** Try to write a poem, either using rhythm or rhyme, on a topic close to your heart - love, friendship, fog, rain, the sun, etc.

Note Many other topics can be used, such as current events, news, a recent trip or experience. The above represent a small core of possibilities.

2. Background of 'Creative Writing' within S.A.L. Curriculum

The School of Australian Linguistics trains Australian Aboriginals and Islanders in English and vernacular literacy work and in linguistics. Students speak English as a second, third, or fourth language - which, until the advent of bilingual education in 1973, was the only formal medium of instruction in the schools. Entrants vary in facility with English, ranging from fourth grade (primary) competence up to first-year high-school abilities. Graduates of our certificate courses are employed as literacy workers or language assistants, and produce materials in their own languages for use within the bilingual program in their schools. Students attend four eight-week long sessions over a one-year period, and can then obtain a Certificate in Literacy Work. Each eight-week session has three hours of English as a Second Language and two hours of Linguistic Readings (exposure to articles that touch on linguistic or language-related topics); the remainder of the hours are filled with lectures in linguistics (phonology, grammar, semantics, language and culture) and vernacular literacy (reading and writing one's own language, producing materials for a bilingual program, including areas such as translation, artwork, grading of materials, lettering, layout, design, and the operation of printing machinery).

Two units in Creative Writing are offered, at the third and fourth level (or eight-week session) respectively, and occupy only two hours per week - that is, a total of 16 contact hours per session. Although put relatively late in our English program, the units have been requested by communities and by the Northern Territory Department of Education in isolation for brief on-site courses. Needless to say, they have been popular, and have resulted in a lot of literature in both Aboriginal English and in vernacular languages.

Hence, these units while only a small part of an on-going English and vernacular literacy program, have generated a good deal of interest and enthusiasm outside of the School, and have led to several productive ends. The stories written over the past five years have taught us a good deal about Australian Aboriginal English, which has in turn given much input to our own English program (ESL units) - we are clearer on what areas of English grammar and vocabulary need particular attention, and which appear to have been sufficiently mastered. Furthermore, even when a unit is taught with attention to an Aboriginal or Island language, translations into English (which invariably are published with the stories) teach us about the problems of style, genre, and readability confronted between the two cultures and languages (for example, the repetitive and conjunction-filled style of oral traditions vs the concise and flowing style of written language). Several of these problems come to light if we examine the example stories presented in the Appendices to this paper. As just one case in point perpetually re-occurring in stories is the over-reliance on the conjunctions 'and', 'but', 'then', and an almost total unawareness of 'however', 'although', and 'therefore'.

4. Implications for Language Teaching

We trust that by now some of the enthusiasm which we feel for creative writing has caught on to at least some degree. We sincerely and respectfully recommend to you the incorporation of creative writing into your English program if it is already not ensconced there - even at the elementary level (where experience charts can be of great assistance in supplying the main lines of a story and childlike imagination can be let free once again).

Native Australians feel freer to express themselves quietly and privately, yet enjoy the praise earned for having done so in a creative manner. We shall then be in a much better position to assess and evaluate the local variety of English by an examination of the end results. And should we be so fortunate as to find avenues of publication for our students' work, we may eventually be able to illustrate yet another variety of English which can stand on its own as a vehicle for literature and creativity, expressing the spark, vitality, and wit of our various Australian peoples, cultures, and ways.

APPENDIX I

Sample stories on 'The Sun' (cf: Experience Chart in Table 3).

(a) The sun is round like a ball with very strong heat. It gives life to many things on the earth. It dries our clothes, gives us sunburn and blisters. If we don't have the sun, everything will look sad and dark, with no lovely things around us.

Rita Oates

(b) The sun give us bright sunshine light on the world. The sun also very hot and give very strong heat on the world. The sun give us about $\frac{1}{2}$ world a light and sometimes give another $\frac{1}{2}$ a world a light too.

S. Brett

(c) Every morning around 6:30 a.m. when the grey misty morning is nearing its death, it unveils to reveal a new born day. An outer ring of colours floods the skies in the mountains to present the sun. It has a warming effect to everything it reaches. Birds, animals, people and plants all reach out for the sun, it paints the whole world in a matter of minutes. All day long it gives warmth and light to the whole universe we are in. Around 6:00 p.m. the sun is now bowing out, leaving a massive colourful picture to linger on forever in your mind because it is the end of another day.

Janice Carter

(d) The sun was setting - just sitting there still waiting for someone, something to snatch it away. Like an eagle snatches chickens from their mother's.

Not bright colours -
But black and grey, dull orange and red

Like a funeral on a hot summer day.

The sea was hazy, smoky

Meeting the beautiful sunset on the far away horizon
On the far, far horizon.

Harry Mati Yunupingu

(e) The sun makes flowers, tree and grass grow, and other things that are on the earth. The sun gives light and life to everything because if there's no light the things that are on earth wouldn't grow but will eventually die. Everything would be dark. All things cannot live forever. The sun is beautiful to look at during sunset and sunrise. People wake up from sleep and go to work; at night we go to sleep and rest for the next day. The sun is many, many trillion miles away but we still feel how hot it is.

Christopher Japangardi Poulson

(f) One rainy day, a lady was washing her clothes inside her laundry. As she was washing her clothes, she was wondering where she would hang them. There was a line inside her laundry so she hung some clothes on the inside line. But there was still

Appendix I (continued)

more washing to do. She was wondering where to hang these. She couldn't use the outside line because it was raining. She wished very much for the sun to come out and brighten up the day so that she could hang her clothes on the outside line. So she wished and wished. Then suddenly she crossed her fingers and wished a third time. Then she looked up and saw that the rain had stopped. She saw the rays of the sun. She jumped for joy. Then she took out her washing and hung them on the outside line for the sun to dry them off. She was cold and shivering. She got herself a rocking chair and put it out in the sun. She sat on the rocking chair and rocked herself to sleep with the sun warming her.

Gwen Warmbirrirt

APPENDIX IIWriting for Emotion ('The boy...')

- (a) The starving boy was cold and hungry.
- (b) The boy was running after his dog, when suddenly a car came by and knocked him down.
- (c) The little boy looked up and saw the plane disappear into the clouds, and with tear-filled eyes he cried aloud, 'Daddy, please come back.'
- (d) The little boy walked in with a smile on his face, followed by a mangy old cat with nits and lice crawling over its hairless body.
- (e) The little boy stole some chocolates from the store, but they melted in his pocket.
- (f) The little boy went swimming, but his pants fell off, so he hid behind a tree until his friends came to help him.
- (g) The little boy's parents were both very sick with the flu, so he took care of them until they were both well again, and they both gave him a big cuddle for being such a helpful son.
- (h) The hungry little boy found a piece of dry bread and ate it.
- (i) A little boy in ragged clothes stood on the corner of the street. Suddenly he bent down, picked up a stone, and threw it at a passing car. The driver of the car stopped, but before he could say anything, the boy had taken off, straight into the arms of a big burly policeman, who had been looking for a stolen car, whose driver was an escaped prisoner. When the policeman saw the man and the car, he recognised them immediately and quickly arrested the man, forgetting about the boy, who went merrily on his way.
- (j) The little boy went into the bank and sold some money.
- (k) The fat, cheeky boy wet his pants when the teacher spanked him.

Appendix II (continued)

- (l) The boy went home with a smile on his face after seeing a clown who was wearing nothing on.
- (m) The little boy raced home to be the first, only to find he could not reach the door handle.
- (n) The spoiled boy set fire to his baby brother's bedroom when his mother let him play with matches.
- (o) The crippled boy went home in his wheel chair, but when a bull charged at him, he jumped up and ran as fast as he could down the street.
- (p) The boy had gone home through the woods, but he never returned.

APPENDIX IIIStory topic: 'All men are brothers!'

- (a) When I lost my husband, I had only one son. He's called Maurice. We had only one blanket, and it was getting very cold. One day, the missionary lady gave us blankets and a mosquito-net. I was very grateful to the lady for her kindness.
Dinah Garadji
- (b) When I was a little girl at the age of seven years old, I was playing out in the bush with a little axe. I was chopping down a tree, when I cut myself. Blood was pouring down from my leg. Then two men came running and picked me up, and they took me to their shelter. They bandaged my leg with a piece of rag, and took me in their truck straight to the hospital, where I was treated by a nurse.
Magdalen Kerinaiaua
- (c) I remember quite some years back in Adelaide. This particular day, I went shopping with some friends in a great big store called John Martins. The big store was situated on the main street. Everything seemed so awkward and cramped up. Not like the beautiful, open space of the Top End. Anyway, my friends all seemed so happy about shopping in John Martins. They were very lucky, they knew Adelaide very well. As for me, I was only new to the city. I tell you, it was very frightening. As we walked through the big glass doors, I saw many people going up and down on something they called electric stairs. My friends had already gone onto one of those escalators. Truly, I froze with fright. Along came an elderly man with a very fatherly-like face, smiling broadly. He got me by the arm and walked me over to the escalator still frozen with fright. I looked at his friendly face and felt I just couldn't let him down. So I put one of my feet on the moving steps. I just about had a heart attack! Through the thoughtfulness of that elderly man, I can now ride up and down those electric stairs.
Rita Oates

- (d) The first time I ever had been away from home was the time I went for a Home Management Course in 1969 for three months.

Appendix III (continued)

I left by Connair, across to Groote Eylandt, and then I waited at the airstrip with my cousin and her husband. When the Friendship plane was ready to take off, I wasn't really sure how to put on the seat belt, so the hostess did it up for me. I was very upset and crying on the way to Darwin. The hostess was so nice to me, she gave me biscuits and drinks, and asked me if there was someone to meet me in Darwin. I told her that I wasn't really sure. So when we landed in Darwin, she asked me to go along with her. I stayed with her until a lady who was sent to meet me asked me if I was the girl she was expecting; and I said 'yes', so she took me in her car and we went to the Training Centre. To this day, I still remember the kindness of the hostess in my moment of sadness and loneliness.

Didamain Ufbo

APPENDIX IV

Story topic: 'The boy and the dog'

(a) Long ago when the land was still young, there was this particular tribe called Djano. Everybody used to own a dog, as is the custom today. Every child was given a pup which he grew to love. One day a boy named Djigga and his dog went hunting. While on the way, Djigga's dog was bit by a deadly snake. Djigga rushed to his aid, only to be bitten too. They both died. When the boy and his dog were found, Djigga had his arms around his dog. The old men of the tribe knew how much he loved Manyilla, his dog, so they buried them both together. You see, Djigga was an orphan boy.

Jacob Wiyendji Nunggula Roberts

(b) Once upon a time there lived a small boy who had a big, black dog. They both lived in a house with the boy's mother and his two sisters. Whenever the boy went out to play with his friends, the dog used to follow him. One day, he said to his mother, 'I am going to go and get us something to eat.' So the boy started out onto the beach. All he had with him was his fishing spear and his fishing lines. When he got to the place where he usually did his fishing, there were these fresh crocodile tracks. They were so big that the boy felt like going straight home. Nonetheless, he had to do his fishing to get some food for his mother. So he sat down and baited his line. The next instant there was a big splash and the boy was dragged into the water. The dog, seeing his master being eaten by this enormous creature, just dived in the water, and so was eaten by the crocodile too. As the sun was setting, the mother was getting worried. She sent the two girls to the creek, but he wasn't anywhere to be seen. They called and called. By the time the girls got back, it was already dark. The two little girls ran into their mother's arms and wept bitterly. The mother cried too, for she knew that something had happened to her one and only boy. Two months later, the bones of the boy and the dog were found on the bank of the river. The people of the village killed the crocodile and burned it in a big fire. The bones of the boy and his dog were buried together in their own back yard, where they once used to play.

Leon Melpi

Appendix IV (continued)

Note. The original idea for this most successful story topic came from a booklet by Isabel Taylor Escoda, Once upon a Hilltop 1968, Pamana Inc., Philippines.

APPENDIX V

Dreamtime story: 'The moon and his two sons'

Once there lived a man and his two sons. The man's name was 'Moon', and he had two wives. The boys decided to go down to the river to fish with new spears that they had made. Then they returned with the first lot of fish; and they collected firewood. Then they rubbed the two sticks together until they could get the sparks going. Then they cooked the fish on the hot flaming wood. They went for a second time and caught more fish. Then they cooked them again. Then their father said to them, 'Aren't you going to give me some?' So he decided to put them into a fishnet and throw them into the river. Then he said to them, 'My sons, I want you to get in this net so I can try it out.' They got inside, and he tied them into the net and carried them to the river, and threw them in. They tried to get out, but they couldn't; they were drowning. Their mothers returned from hunting, and asked Moon, 'Where are the boys?' Then they started looking in the direction of the river, and they suddenly saw the two children floating. They recognised them, but it was too late. Then they returned to Moon and started to belt him. But Moon ran and ran and ran, until he started to float in the air. Everytime he went up and up, he said to them, 'You will die and never rise, but I will die, yet rise again.' That is why the moon dies and rises, but we die and never rise.

Gurrugupunbuy

Note. The author is narrating a commonly known tale, and leaves out an important cultural point. The father is angry because the children did not offer him any fish from the first lot, nor from the second; and they did not give him any, even upon asking. Such undutiful children must be punished, as they are in the next scene. This is a translation of a story originally written in Marrangu; note the extensive use of the conjunction 'then', which translates the form bala used as a sentence or clause introducer in narratives.