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# From Teacher to Student: The 3R Model of Reading Strategies

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With the multitude of cultures that speak a single language, it is often overwhelming for foreign language teachers — novice and experienced alike — to attempt to teach the diversity of cultures and literatures within a target language. French instructors, for example, may have expertise in Caribbean Francophone literature or nineteenth-century French literature, but when presented with the task of teaching literature from Quebec and Africa, the cultural and linguistic differences may be daunting and require hours of preparation prior to the class or unit. How can one be an expert in all cultures, literatures, and linguistic varieties that encompass the teaching of languages, especially Spanish or French, whose speakers span the globe?

This paper provides one answer to the problem by offering a “best practice model” for the classroom — a practice that combines linguistic, literary, and cultural learning in a three-step model based on the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century* (SFL) (1999). Derived from current research in foreign language reading strategies and cultural acquisition, this model provides basic strategies for teaching literature and culture that remove the burden of expertise from the instructor. Student-centered rather than teacher-centered, the 3R model<sup>1</sup> allows the students themselves to direct their learning through standards-based reading and cultural analysis strategies. In this way, the instructor can stand aside, so to speak, and explore with the students the cultures and realities represented in the linguistic and literary practices of foreign language texts. The explanations that follow include a detailed description of the 3R model, along with specific examples of applications to Francophone literature and suggestions for further use in other languages and levels of instruction.

## Development of the 3R Model

The idea for this literary and cultural analysis model stemmed from current research in cultural learning and reading strategies for foreign language literature. For years, culture remained a distinct subject, taught in the form of “culture capsules” or mini “lecturettes,” outside of language or instruction. Prior to the 1960s, foreign language methodology espoused a high or big-C emphasis on cultural instruction, language serving as the tool to learn art, literature, music, history, and so forth. It was believed that learning a foreign language provided access to the great “civilization” and literature of the target language (Allen, 1985). However, researchers such as

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Brooks (1968), Seelye (1970, 1993), and Kramsch (1993) have shown that culture and language should be learned simultaneously from the start, culture serving as the context for language learning. Indeed, rather than being learned separately, language and culture reinforce one another as knowledge about the culture assists in understanding the perspectives or assumptions underlying words and expressions in the target language.

In the same way, literature and culture can therefore be taught and analyzed simultaneously. No longer is literature regarded as an element of big-C culture and thereby studied only after “adequate” foreign language acquisition; rather, literature has become an integral element of foreign language curricula from the beginning levels of language acquisition. One need only open an updated or newly released first- or second-year language textbook to note the incorporation of short literary texts within the first two years of language study. Reading strategies often accompany these texts, focusing on methods that lead to global understanding and cultural meaning rather than word-for-word translations as students prefer when first reading texts in a foreign language. Current instructional methods focus on the development of skills for lifelong learning, rather than memorization of discrete cultural facts or short literary texts for later recitation as has been done in the past. The fundamental link between literature and culture has been shown to be an interactive process, the readers providing individual meanings to each text based on their own “experience and knowledge of the world, of language, and of general and specialized topic areas” (Galloway, 1992, p. 98). Therefore, the topics that interest them as well as the areas in which they have the most expertise or cultural familiarity will guide their readings of the text (Carrell & Wise, 1998; Hammadou, 1991).

Indeed, proficiency-based instruction has led to the current movement in foreign language education, that of SFL (1999). The creation of these national standards formed a framework of “five C” goal areas providing objectives in foreign language programs for K-16 foreign language programs. Moreover, the national standards promote an intertwining of language, literature, and culture within the foreign language classroom that redefines the traditional and outdated capsulated method in which each piece was taught and learned separately. The development of the five Cs — Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities — has been followed by initiatives aimed specifically at standards for foreign language teachers and student-teacher preparation programs, including teaching standards for languages other than English designed by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS), standards for new language teachers developed by the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC), and new standards for foreign language teacher education programs established by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) (Coltrane, 2002).

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Although the national standards have provided a profession-wide agreement regarding the goals of cultural and linguistic acquisition, they do not provide specific methods for how to reach those goals. The learning scenarios suggested in the 1999 edition of the national standards certainly offer a well-constituted effort in the right direction; however, these learning scenarios remain somewhat limited as one-time classroom activities rather than an overall model of curriculum design that addresses the national standards goals. Furthermore, the classroom activities that involve literature — analyses of fairy tales, short stories, poetry, newspaper articles, and short novels — do not offer step-by-step guidance for instructors in teaching their students the relationship between the cultural perspectives in the text and their representation by the author (McDonald, 2002). Indeed, with these national standards as goals in the teaching of literature, the anxiety and cultural content burden are left to the instructor.

Therefore, the 3R model offers a possible solution to this gap in the national standards curriculum design. The 3R model of reading and cultural analysis strategies incorporates linguistic, cultural, and literary analysis skills into a simplified, three-step framework. Although the 3R model meets all five goals of the national standards, the Cultures standards are at the core of this model; that is, “Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the practices and perspectives of the culture studied” (p. 9) and “Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the products and perspectives of the culture studied” (p. 9). In this three-way equation between practice, products and perspectives, these terms have been redefined in accordance with the literary analysis goals at hand: product being the literary text, practices being the literary techniques and linguistic choices made by each author (structures, text organization, literary techniques, metaphors, images, specific words, and so forth), and perspectives being the underlying cultural reality that led to these particular linguistic and literary decisions. In order to analyze this cultural-linguistic-literary relationship, the student must have adequate background knowledge of the culture to understand the cultural perspectives that affected the literary and linguistic practices in the authors’ texts. Hence, a main objective of the 3R model is to teach students how to acquire and retrieve the background knowledge necessary for making these types of connections.

Ultimately, through this process of developing background knowledge, the reader interacts with the text to create meaning, providing a unique interaction between the cultural perspective of the author as represented in the text and the experiences and knowledge of the reader. As stated by Brantmeier (2001, p. 326), “Reading is a complex process that involves many variables, including the interaction between the reader (where the old information is

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stored) and the text (the new information). The reader not only deciphers new words but also thinks about how the text relates to what the reader already knows.” More specifically, the readers (or students) interpret their own meaning based on their particular background knowledge of the target culture; the new knowledge and experience that the text brings to each reader is thereby stored for retrieval with later texts of a similar nature or culture. For example, a student with expertise in West African dance and music might have a different interpretation of a text such as David Diop’s *À une danseuse noire* (“To a black dancer”) than would a student who has studied the history of European colonization in West Africa. Each student would view the poem from a particular perspective and set of experiences, arriving at analyses that focus on one area of the target culture over another. Indeed, the richness of a diverse class of students provides a multi-faceted view of a literary text that the 3R model helps expose through its individualized framework of analysis. The instructor no longer serves as

the expert in this process; instead, the students’ own knowledge and interests guide the interpretation of a text, often varying from class to class with the same text.

## **The 3R Model of Literary and Cultural Analysis**

The 3R model is divided into three principle stages, each acting upon and influencing the other stages in a simultaneous process of analysis and interpretation. The stages are defined as *Recognize*, *Research*, and *Relate*. Figure 1 presents these stages in a triangular fashion, emphasizing the manner in which each stage interacts with the others in an interactive and cyclical method. In the *Recognize* phase, students look for literary and linguistic elements in the text that might be specific to the cultural reality of the author. Based on these findings, the students then choose a cultural topic to explore in the *Research* stage, adding to or developing further a particular interest or expertise that the students may have. Finally, the students *relate* these findings — this increased background knowledge — back to the text, demonstrating their understanding of the relationship between the practices and perspectives of the target culture. In the discussion that follows, each of these stages will be demonstrated in detail with specific examples drawn from a Francophone African text, *Ils sont venus* (“They came”)

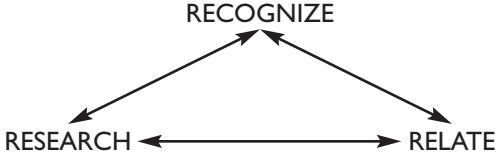
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by François Sengat-Kuo. This poem is quite effective for both beginning and intermediate students, given the simplicity of the language combined with the complexity of ideas expressed. This example serves primarily as an illustration of the steps of the 3R model, easily extrapolated for use in other languages and cultures due to its emphasis on an overall understanding of the practices and perspectives of a target culture product.

**Figure 1.** The 3R model



**Recognize.** The *Recognize* phase directs students to find linguistic and literary elements in a text that seem to reflect the particular cultural context of the author. Instructors may have the students read the text aloud, particularly if the text is short such as a poem or folk tale, listening for unfamiliar vocabulary and rhythmic elements in this first stage. As the students come across an unfamiliar vocabulary word, they may raise their hand and the instructor might list the words on the board for later discussion and interpretation. This list might also generate a discussion of the global meaning of the text, allowing students to begin hypothesizing about the ways in which its words might indicate the cultural reality of the author. Following this discussion of linguistic cues, the instructor can then ask the students to begin looking for other literary elements such as metaphors, rhythmic repetitions, and structural clues. Given that this first reading would occur prior to developing any background knowledge in the target culture, the gaps in the students’ knowledge would become evident as they try to justify their choices for each linguistic or literary clue in the text. These limitations would then serve as the foundation to guide their research for further cultural analysis and comprehension of the text.

Throughout this *Recognize* phase, the instructor need only rely on knowledge of general literary analysis strategies by asking leading questions to help the students in their exploration, such as “What do you notice about the rhythm of this poem?” “Are there any words or phrases repeated?” “What do you notice about the structure of this text?” “Are there certain images or metaphors that seem particularly relevant to you?” “What words do you notice in this text that might reflect the culture of the author?” “Are there references to geographical areas or people in this text?”. Once again, instructors serve only as guides in this process, employing their general expertise in literary analysis, while the students are responsible for investigating the target culture on their own in the following *Recognize* stage (Ketchum, in press).

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For example, in a poem such as François Sengat-Kuo's *Ils sont venus* ("They came") students with both a limited competency in the language and those with a year or more of French studies might find numerous linguistic and literary clues in the *Recognize* phase (see Appendix A for a full version of this poem). Although the words and syntax seem somewhat simple and within a first-year student's capacity, the complexity of ideas expressed — the cultural perspectives underlying these practices — provides a

rich interpretation for various domains of cultural expertise. To begin, the instructor might have students brainstorm together any ideas they may have about Africa, prior impressions perhaps formed through film, television or magazines. During the first reading of the poem, this pre-reading activity would help with the identification of vocabulary cognates such as *rythme* ("rhythm") and *dansait* ("was dancing"). Furthermore, the word *tam-tam* (an African drum) would certainly be new and unusual to students, a possible clue that they might point out as representative of the cultural reality of the author. The image of the tam-tam is in fact repeated two times in this poem, once as a rhythmic accompaniment to dancing, and the second time for its silence, *profond comme la mort* ("profound as death"), at the end of the poem. Of particular interest in this poem is the direct relationship between religion and violence expressed in successive lines, *bibles sous les bras* ("bibles under the arms") followed by *fusils en main / les morts se sont entassés* ("guns in hand / the dead bodies piled up"). In fact, introducing this poem while studying body parts and movements might be quite effective in a beginning French class, given the emphasis on corporal images.

More advanced students might question this close juxtaposition of bibles, guns and dead bodies, as they may be more likely to associate positive imagery — angels, spirituality, resurrection, religion — with *bibles* rather than death and destruction. Furthermore, in an intermediate class in which students have begun studying the past tense, they might remark the use of the imperfect tense in the first half of the poem replaced by the use of the compound past (*passé composé*) in the second half, divided

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***...this poem provides wonderful discussions for the differences between the imperfect and compound past in French within a cultural framework...***

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by the arrival of *civilisation* ("civilization"). These students might notice as well that positive images are associated with the events in the imperfect tense (*l'on dansait / l'on riait / brillant avenir*) ("one was dancing / one was laughing / brilliant future") while negative and destructive images accompany the compound past (*les morts se sont entassés / l'on a pleuré / et le tam-tam s'est tu*) ("the dead bodies piled up / one cried / and the tam-tam was silenced"). Indeed, this poem provides wonderful discussions for the differences between the imperfect and compound past in French within a cultural framework, emphasizing the essential link between language and

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culture. Students might be led to question what or whom these *Ils* (“They”) might represent, this *civilisation* (“civilization”) that directly impacted the author’s culture in such a negative and definitive manner as implied by the use of *passé composé* in the end of the poem. In essence, the listing of vocabulary, images, and structural clues leads to the next phase of the 3R model, in which the students choose a topic of research to investigate based on preliminary hypotheses of the link between the perspectives and practices of this poem.

**Research.** In this stage of the 3R model, students explore the cultural perspectives underlying the elements that they recognized in the first stage. Relying on their first (L1) or second language (L2), depending upon the students’ linguistic competency, the students use various resources to conduct their research: the Internet, articles and books, newspapers, magazines, native informants, and movies. This variety of resources provides an experience of the target culture from a multi-sensory point of view while making learning more real and long lasting. The students themselves may choose the topic of research that they would like to investigate, maintaining the student-centered nature of this model and allowing the instructor to explore the target culture along with the students. In small groups of four or five, the students together decide on their subject and individually conduct research over a period of several days or weeks, depending on the amount of time devoted to these analyses. Topics may include cultural areas such as dance, music, art, historical figures, and so forth, chosen from the text at hand. After conducting individual research, each group presents its findings on a periodic basis to the other students, allowing the entire class to acquire similar background knowledge about the target culture. The primary goal for the instructor at this stage is to serve as an observer and resource in the research process, possibly showing the students the databases and resources available to them in their community or assisting them in choosing their research topic. In this way, the students explore those areas of the target culture that most interest them and are thereby motivated to continue this research on their own (Ketchum, in press).

Given the multitude of talents and resources in a secondary and college/university education setting, instructors from other courses might provide interdisciplinary approaches to this exploration phase of analysis. History teachers, for example, might be a useful resource for researching European colonization of Africa for the question of “civilization” in *Ils sont venus* (“They came”). A music teacher might have access to African musical instruments and could offer an interactive demonstration of the tam-tam, for example, during which students could experience the feel and sound of the tam-tam’s rhythm. A theatre or dance instructor might assist the students in acting out the events of a poem such as *Ils sont venus* in order to help them visualize and experience the devastating effects of the arrival of the colonizer with his bibles and guns, and the subsequent destruction of music and dance in African cultures. These teachers might have the students create an entire story or play around the events portrayed in the poem, drawing on their creative abilities and once again making the experience

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***“The primary goal for the instructor at this stage is to serve as an observer and resource...”***

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more concrete and enduring in the students' minds. As a foreign language instructor, one would know the expertise of local colleagues and could ask willing faculty to provide such interactive workshops or lectures that best correspond to the cultural context of the text and that effectively supplement the students' own research. Indeed, such interdisciplinary collaboration among faculty could serve to spark colleagues' interest in this standards-based teaching methodology and encourage discussion of new teaching methods. Another possibility might be to collaborate with faculty at schools in the target culture, establishing intercultural e-mail exchanges in which the e-pals can provide an insider's view of their own culture and possibly create lifelong intercultural friendships. Clearly, these options require preparation and guidance from the instructor, yet they serve to illustrate to students the connections among various disciplines and cultures. In essence, the overriding goal of the *Research* stage is to teach students the skills for cross-cultural research and demonstrate to them the most effective resources that help them become lifelong independent learners.

**Relate.** Finally, the *Relate* stage allows the students to demonstrate their understanding of the relationship between the literary practices and cultural perspectives of the author. In this stage, the students apply their newly-acquired background knowledge to the text, creating a meaning based on their own specific research. This stage begins with a review of the practices that the students previously recognized, that is, the literary and linguistic elements of the text that seemed representative of the target culture. This review of their original list from the *Recognize* stage allows the students to reconsider what may have been false impressions or stereotypes about the target culture and provides an opportunity to add new literary and linguistic elements to this list, thereby demonstrating the cyclical and interactive nature of this 3R model. Following this discussion, the students then justify how their list of literary and linguistic elements uniquely represents the cultural reality of the author. Later discussions during the *Relate* stage may concentrate on placing each text within a larger framework of literature from the target culture, comparing the present text with previous texts that the students may have read. Comparisons within a single culture can thereby position each author's literary and linguistic choices in relation to others within that culture, while arriving at common practices that may permeate that body of literature. For example, some writers from Martinique may choose to produce their texts in Creole rather than in metropolitan French, revealing a particular value they may place on Creole traditions over the voice of the European colonizer. On the other hand, French-speaking writers from Quebec may decide to include English in their texts, presenting the language in either a positive or negative light and thereby emphasizing a particular perspective on the conflict between English and French in Canada. Through the students' continual research of the target culture, perhaps focusing on one or several topics of research, each text would provide new experi-

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ences to add to their knowledge base and modify their previous impressions of the culture (Ketchum, in press).

Indeed, the subject of research that the students choose will essentially determine their comprehension of particular aspects of the poem in the *Relate* stage. For example, the poem *Ils sont venus* (“They came”) might instigate several areas of research, such as African dance, music, religion, and the question of *ils* — who “they” might be, the *civilisation* (“civilization”) with *bibles sous les bras* (“bibles under their arms”) that had such a devastating effect on the African culture represented here. Research into European colonization of Africa would reveal the *mission civilisatrice* (“civilizing mission”) that promulgated the conversion of African peoples and their cultural values into more European-based practices. The daily routine of this African culture, represented by the use of the imperfect tense in the first half of the poem, was ultimately destroyed by the arrival of *Ils sont venus / civilisation* (“They came / civilization”) in the poem. The definitive and terminating quality of the *passé composé* further amplifies this message or implications that students might want to explore in their discussions of the author’s choice of *passé composé* and the imperfect. The importance of music and dancing comes forth in this poem, as the dancing is replaced by piles of immobile corpses and the tam-tam no longer plays, a silence compared to death. Therefore, a group that chooses to research African music might elaborate these discussions further by underlining the role of the tam-tam in traditional African cultures. This instrument provides rhythm for ceremonial dances and accompaniment for daily rituals; it also serves to communicate messages throughout the village. Its silencing at the end of the poem therefore might refer to the silencing of the rhythms of African

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cultures, the daily routines implied through the use of the imperfect in the first half of the poem. It would be beneficial to have groups of students research different areas — for example, colonization, music, and dance — in order to arrive at multiple perspectives on the cultural reality of this poem. The variety of background knowledge that the students gain will ultimately determine the multitude of interpretations available in the creation of meaning. Indeed, it is the reader’s individual interaction with the text, the perspective, and knowledge that each student brings to the text, which leads to the unique and varied analyses resulting from this interactive model.

Although the example presented here derives from Francophone literature, the general guidelines and overriding goals of the 3R model allow its application to literature from any language or culture.

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***“...the overriding goal of the Research stage is to teach students the skills for cross-cultural research...”***

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The emphasis on the national standards in this model assures its general applicability to all cultures, that is, the goal of helping students understand the relationship between the practices and perspectives of a target culture. Furthermore, having the students independently explore the target culture transfers responsibility from teacher to student and allows instructors the liberty of focusing more on their expertise in language and literary analysis. They can then guide the students in their final analyses of the cultural perspectives represented in the literary practices of each text. By following the students'

direction in research, the instructor can decide how to lead them best in their analyses, while perhaps doing some independent research on similar topics in order to elaborate upon any questions the students may have in class. In effect, the students take control of class, and the interpretations of each text may differ from class to class according to the background knowledge acquired by each group of students.

In considering the practical concerns of this reading strategies model, several methods may be used in organizing lesson plans around the three-step process. When creating a program of study based on the 3R model, one needs to decide the goals of that particular unit: (1) expose the students to texts from one culture or several cultures in the same target language; (2) analyze texts of different genres or one particular genre; (3) research several subjects in the target culture or concentrate on one subject throughout the length of the unit. Once these decisions are made, the length of time one would like to devote to each task can be decided.

For instance, a possible curricular unit in French may cover the marking period, semester, or year with the goals of introducing texts from France, the Caribbean, Quebec, and Africa. Perhaps the instructor may want to choose texts from each of these cultural regions that focus on a similar theme (such as the image of the woman in that culture), but this is not entirely necessary as a multitude of subjects may provide a wide range of literary experiences for the students. Groups of students might then choose a particular topic to research throughout the entire semester, such as music, festivals, or the role of women in each culture. Throughout the time period chosen, each group would periodically present its on-going research on a specific subject during the *Research* phase of the model with each text. In-class time would be spent on discussions of the *Recognize* phase — elements that seem representative of the culture in question — and on the *Relate* phase after a period of about two weeks researching each text. At the end, each group presents the research accumulated throughout the semester, including an analysis of how this cultural perspective can be seen in a representative text from each culture. In this way, cultural and literary analyses would provide a context for discussions in the target language, while the students continue to analyze language by exploring the linguistic choices of the authors in their individual texts. In lower-level classes where students may not have the linguistic competencies to present their research and analyses in the target language, the in-class dis-

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cussions of culture and literary techniques may be conducted in English, allowing the students the freedom to explore their interpretations based on their own research.

## Conclusion

The discussion and examples of the 3R model have shown the goals of the Cultures standard (SFLL, 1999) at the core of this model, the guiding principles that direct each of the three phases. By the end of each text, the students should have shown that they understand the relationship between the practices (literary and linguistic) and perspectives of the product at hand, that is, the literature produced within that culture. In considering the other four standards, Communication, Connections, Comparisons and Communities, one might notice that these have been addressed as well throughout the process. In a lower-level class, communication in the target language might occur at the *Recognize* phase as the students share what they find possibly representative of the target culture. In middle- to upper-level classes, students can engage in conversations and presentations in the target language, discussing their interpretations of each text and presenting their research findings to the class. The Connections standard encourages multidisciplinary knowledge through the target language, a goal met in the *Research* phase when students make connections to other realms of interest such as music, dance, art, and history. Students also make comparisons of language and culture in this model, comparing differences among versions of the target language as well as cultural comparisons provided by texts from different target cultures. The instructor might want to add comparisons between each culture studied and the students' own, allowing the students new insights into their own cultural perspective and how it affects their behaviors, attitudes, and practices in their own lives. Finally, the Communities standard remains an important objective of this model, as the students acquire the tools and experience of learning and researching on their own. Indeed, this student-centered aspect of the model replaces the burden from instructor to student, returning to one of the original goals of relieving anxiety in teachers who feel they lack sufficient knowledge and expertise in diverse target cultures and literatures. This new method of teaching literature, culture, and language provides a multidisciplinary approach that may ultimately gain more support and interest in foreign language education as it meets the National Standards goals and allows for connections across the curriculum.

## Note

1. The 3R model was developed as the basis of my dissertation (McDonald, 2002). Further explanations and data examples can be found in Ketchum (2004) and Ketchum (in press).

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## Appendix A

*Ils sont venus* by François Sengat-Kuo (*Fleurs de latérite*, 1971)

Ils sont venus  
 au clair de lune  
 au rythme du tam-tam  
 ce soir-là  
 comme toujours  
 l'on dansait  
 l'on riait  
 brillant avenir  
 ils sont venus  
 civilisation  
 bibles sous le bras  
 fusils en mains  
 les morts se sont entassés  
 l'on a pleuré  
 et le tam-tam s'est tu  
 silence profond comme la mort

## Appendix B

Translation of *Ils sont venus* (“They came”) by François Sengat-Kuo

They came  
by the light of the moon  
to the rhythm of the tam-tam  
that night  
as always  
we were dancing  
we were singing  
brilliant future  
they came  
civilization  
bibles under the arm  
guns in hand  
the dead bodies piled up  
we cried  
and the tam-tam was silenced  
profound silence like death