

Sensemaya

Nicolás Guillén. *Obra poética 1920-1972*, La Habana, Instituto Cubano del Libro, 1972.
Canto para matar a una culebra. *Chant for killing a snake*

iMayombe—bombe—mayombé!
iMayombe—bombe—mayombé!
iMayombe—bombe—mayombé!

Mayombe—bombe—mayombé!
Mayombe—bombe—mayombé!
Mayombe—bombe—mayombé!

La culebra tiene los ojos de vidrio;
la culebra viene y se enreda en un palo;
con sus ojos de vidrio, en un palo,
con sus ojos de vidrio.

The snake has glass eyes;
the snake comes and coils around a stick;
with its glass eyes, on a stick,
with its glass eyes.

La culebra camina sin patas;
la culebra se esconde en la yerba;
caminando se esconde en la yerba,
caminando sin patas.

The snake walks without feet;
the snake hides in the grass;
it hides slinking in the grass,
walking without feet.

iMayombe—bombe—mayombé!
iMayombe—bombe—mayombé!
iMayombe—bombe—mayombé!

Mayombe—bombe—mayombé!
Mayombe—bombe—mayombé!
Mayombe—bombe—mayombé!

Tú le das con el hacha y se muere:
¡dale ya!
¡No le des con el pie, que te muerde,
no le des con el pie, que se va!

You hit it with a hatchet and it dies:
Hit him already!
Don't kick him with your foot, he'll bite you,
don't kick him with your foot, or he'll escape!

Sensemaya, la culebra,
sensemaya.
Sensemaya, con sus ojos,
sensemaya.
Sensemaya, con su lengua,
sensemaya.
Sensemaya, con su boca,
sensemaya.

Sensemaya, the snake
sensemaya.
Sensemaya, hit its eyes,
sensemaya.
Sensemaya, hit its tongue,
sensemaya.
Sensemaya, hit its mouth,
sensemaya.

La culebra muerta no puede comer,
la culebra muerta no puede silbar,
no puede caminar,
no puede correr.
La culebra muerta no puede mirar,
la culebra muerta no puede beber,
no puede respirar
no puede morder.

A dead snake can't run,
a dead snake can't hiss,
it can't walk,
it can't run.
A dead snake can't look around,
a dead snake can't drink,
it can't breathe,
it can't bite.

iMayombe—bombe—mayombé!
Sensemaya, la culebra...
iMayombe—bombe—mayombé!
Sensemaya, no se mueve...
iMayombe—bombe—mayombé!
Sensemaya, la culebra...
iMayombe—bombe—mayombé!
Sensemaya, se murió.

Mayombe—bombe—mayombé!
Sensemaya, the snake...
Mayombe—bombe—mayombé!
Sensemaya, it's not moving...
Mayombe—bombe—mayombé!
Sensemaya, the snake...
Mayombe—bombe—mayombé!
Sensemaya, it's dead.