

Federico Garcia Lorca,

CASIDA OF SOBBING

I have shut my balcony door
because I don't want to hear the sobbing,
but from behind the grayish walls
nothing else comes out but sobbing.

Very few angels are singing,
very few dogs are barking,
a thousand violins fit into the palm of my hand.

But the sobbing is a gigantic dog,
the sobbing is a gigantic angel,
the sobbing is a gigantic violin,
tears close the wind's jaws,
all there is to hear is sobbing.

— Federico García Lorca
(Trans. by Robert Bly)

Casida del llanto

*He cerrado mi balcón
porque no quiero oír el llanto
pero por detrás de los grises muros
no se oye otra cosa que el llanto.*

*Hay muy pocos ángeles que canten,
hay muy pocos perros que ladren,
mil violines caben en la palma de mi mano.*

*Pero el llanto es un perro inmenso,
el llanto es un ángel inmenso,
el llanto es un violín inmenso,
las lágrimas amordazan al viento
y no se oye otra cosa que el llanto.*

Spanish poet and playwright Federico García Lorca (1898-1936) was captured and executed by right-wing National forces during the Spanish Civil War. Casida of Sobbing was one of his last poems, published posthumously.

1. Who is doing the sobbing?
2. This “casida” (short poem) is about the sounds of wartime. What are the wartime sounds you generally think of?
3. For students who can understand Spanish: which changes has the translator made in the sound of the poem? (Look for rhyme and assonance.)