

Title of proposal: **Lorca, New York and the perils of cultural appropriation through translation.**

Abstract:

Federico García Lorca's relationship with New York occupies a unique place in Spanish literature since it has unequivocally transcended the frontiers of the Spanish language and exerted a considerable influence on creation in English, as evinced by the work of artists such as Leonard Cohen, Philip Levine, Allen Ginsberg and Lou Reed, to name but a few. Indeed, the numerous complete and partial English versions of *Poet in New York* have played such a notable part in the construction of the poetic vision of the city itself that some critics have spoken of a genuinely 'American' poet called Lorca due to the extraordinarily fertile reception of this poetry in the English-speaking world. Nonetheless, in very recent times the Andalusian poet's intense literary association with New York is starting to be read as problematic (in translation at least) as his New York poems are replete with troubling and potentially offensive reference to the city's African-American, Jewish, and Chinese communities. Although these references were meant to be laudatory and part of his denunciation of racism and social marginalization, akin to his sympathetic depiction of Andalusian gypsies which in Spain has thus far never been read as cultural appropriation, they are increasingly being read and rejected as the inappropriate interference of a privileged white European interloper who singularly failed to understand New York and its sociocultural heritage.

In recent years, the reading of these poems has even begun to run the risk of being considered an egregious example of cultural appropriation, and it is noteworthy that the most recent English versions have opted to avoid these texts. This would seem to speak of an enormous cultural shift between Spanish readers, who still see his New York poems as an impassioned denunciation of racism by a sympathetic outsider, and students and readers of Spanish literature in the English-speaking world who increasingly find these poems troubling and redolent of a certain romantic racism such as the reference to the city as "Senegal with machines". As new renderings of Lorca's work continue to appear and his literary reputation continues to be rewritten through these successive retranslations, this paper seeks to explore the reasons for this troubling evolution in his reception in the English-speaking world, one which scholars have tended to shy away from lest it tarnish Lorca's reputation as the quintessentially progressive literary martyr.