

Title: Lorca cannot be Englished? – the changing fortunes of Lorca’s *Blood Wedding* in English translation

The proposed paper will examine the divergent translational fortunes of the English language versions of Federico García Lorca’s *Blood Wedding* since the first translation entitled *Bitter Oleander* was literally laughed off stage in New York in 1935, due to its perceived incomprehensibility and remoteness from an American audience, to its contemporary consolidation as a classic tragedy which is widely regarded as part of the universal theatrical canon and is regularly performed in English-speaking theatres around the world. We will examine how Lorca’s play has overcome the initial perception of resistance to translation and impenetrable exoticism and has gradually acquired a universal theatrical appeal, albeit one too frequently based on an excessive degree of cultural stereotyping. The play has been performed in English in a wide variety of cultural and geographical equivalences ranging from the African-American vernacular of Harlem, to late 20th century Jerusalem, from the Belfast of the Troubles to the Eastern Europe of the Iron Curtain period. We will also attempt to identify the socio-historic changes behind these English retranslations and representations of the play, and how what was once considered an utterly strange and even risible text has now become a modern classic. Essentially, the objective of this paper is to elucidate to what extent the successive English versions of the play have refuted the claim of one of its most celebrated English translators, the poet Ted Hughes, who once declared that Lorca “cannot be Englished”.