

# Back Tomorrow

# FEDERICO GARCÍA LORCA

## POET IN NEW YORK



The New York Public Library April 5–July 20, 2013

STEPHEN A. SCHWARZMAN BUILDING, FIFTH AVENUE AND 42ND STREET  
THE SUE AND EDGAR WACHENHEIM III GALLERY



## Back Tomorrow **FEDERICO GARCÍA LORCA** POET IN NEW YORK

In June 1929, at a time when young writers and painters dreamed of living in Paris, Federico García Lorca (1898–1936), Spain’s greatest modern poet and playwright, broke boldly with tradition and sailed for New York. His nine months here, followed by three months in Havana, changed his vision of poetry, the theater, and the social role of the artist.

Lorca came to New York to study English but devoted himself instead to writing *Poet in New York*, a howl of protest against racial bigotry, mindless consumption, and the adoration of technology. “What we call civilization, he called slime and wire,” the critic V. S. Pritchett once wrote. But Lorca’s book reaches beyond New York—“this maddening, boisterous Babel”—into the depths of the psyche, in a search for wholeness and redemption.

In 1936, the poet left the manuscript of *Poet in New York* on the desk of his Madrid publisher with a note saying he would be “back tomorrow,” probably to discuss final details. He never returned. Weeks later, at the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, he was brutally murdered by fascist elements in Granada, his body thrown into an unmarked mass grave. The book was published posthumously in 1940, but the manuscript mysteriously disappeared, lost to scholars for decades. The Fundación Federico García Lorca in Madrid and The New York Public Library exhibit it now for the first time, together with drawings, photographs, letters, and mementos—traces of a *Poet in New York* . . . and of New York in a poet.

Federico García Lorca at Columbia University. Gelatin silver print, 1929.  
Fundación Federico García Lorca, Madrid.





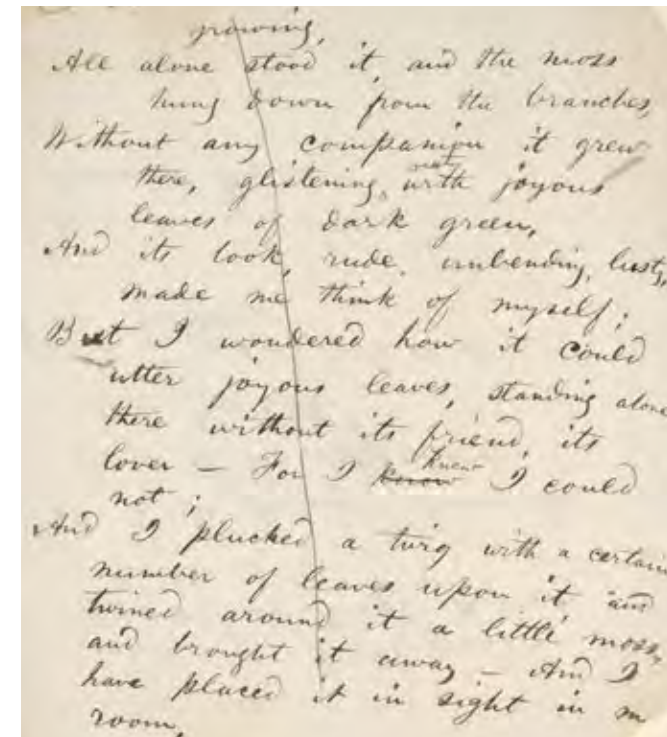
Federico García Lorca's passport. Spain, June 1929. Fundación Federico García Lorca, Madrid.

### ***“New York seems horrible, that’s why I’m going”***

In spring 1929, Lorca was caught in what he described as an emotional crisis. His love affair with the sculptor Emilio Aladrén had come to an unhappy end, and he agonized over the popular success of his *Gypsy Ballads* (1928), which had been fiercely criticized by his friends the avant-garde artists Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dalí for being too traditional—“tied hands and feet to the art of the old poetry.” Yearning to leave Spain, shed his image as “Gypsy balladeer,” and write an entirely different sort of “vein-opening” poetry, Lorca sailed for New York in the company of his professor and mentor Fernando de los Ríos, who had promised Lorca’s parents to enroll him in English classes at Columbia University. Never before had the poet traveled abroad. Soon after his arrival, in late June, he wrote home with his first impressions. One of the most vivid was of a boat trip to Coney Island for the Fourth of July holiday. It was his first encounter with a huge urban crowd—more than a million people went to the beach that weekend—and he would transform the experience into a nightmarish poetic vision: “Landscape of a Vomiting Multitude.”

### ***“I too walk’d the streets of Manhattan Island”***

Rubbing shoulders with the crowd, Lorca thought of the poets who had encountered it before him: “No one can imagine just what a New York crowd is like, except perhaps Walt Whitman, who searched it for solitudes, and T. S. Eliot, who squeezes the crowd like a lemon in his poem [*The Waste Land*], extracting wounds, poets, wet hats, and river shades.” One of Lorca’s masters, Juan Ramón Jiménez, had wrung poetry from New York in *Diary of a Newlywed Poet* (1916), and both men had thought fondly and often of Edgar Allan Poe (a friend remembered Lorca’s hopeless attempts to recite Poe’s “Annabel Lee”). One day Lorca walked across the Brooklyn Bridge to meet fellow poet Hart Crane, then working on his long poem *The Bridge* (1930). Both men were inspired by Whitman, to whom Lorca wrote an ambitious ode celebrating his vision of male love and his unfulfilled dreams for America.



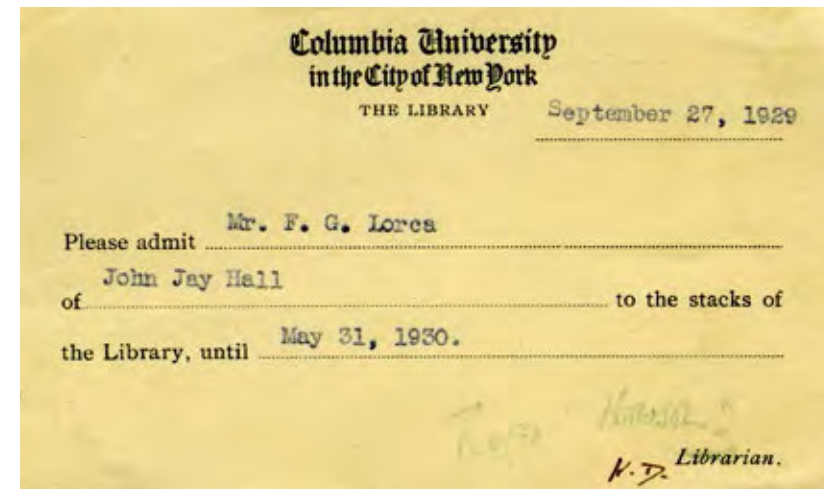
Walt Whitman. “I Saw in Louisiana a Live Oak Growing.” Manuscript, late 1850s. NYPL, Henry W. and Albert A. Berg Collection of English and American Literature.

## At Columbia University: *Spaghettil* and *Shishpil*

In June 1929, Lorca enrolled in “English for Beginners” at Columbia University summer session. A magazine article captures the moment: “The students at Columbia University, the Negro elevator attendants of Furnald Hall, the telephone operator downstairs, are all familiar with the deep bows, the peculiar walk, the pirouettes, the exaggerations, and the charm of Federico Lorca.” The poet soon gave up on English. He clung to simple words like *spaghettil* and *shishpil* (sex appeal) and got through to his “Yankee friends” in limping French. A generous allowance from his parents enabled him to spend the fall term in a Columbia dorm, John Jay Hall. But instead of attending classes, he worked on *Poet in New York* and registered his impressions of American students: they “stretch and yawn with the innocence of animals, sneeze without taking out their handkerchiefs and are always shouting, everywhere. And yet they are open and friendly, and truly enjoy doing a favor for you.”

## In Search of *Duende*

The poems written in New York mark a departure from Lorca’s previous verse, much of which was inspired by traditional Spanish poetry—the ballad, the folk song, the lyrics of flamenco—and by the metaphorical splendor of the Spanish Baroque. In *Poet in New York*, in the film script *Trip to the Moon*, and in the homoerotic drama *The Audience*—all written in America—Lorca puts aside the “riddle of metaphor” and searches instead for images resistant to rational analysis. His lecture “Imagination, Inspiration, Evasion,” given in Spanish at Columbia, argued in favor of “pure instinct” and of poetry that can gulp down reality like a carnivorous flower. It was while reciting his New York poems that Lorca first developed his theory of *duende*—the mysterious creative force, dear to performing artists, that can “lash open the eyes of a poem” and help the audience understand it “at the speed of the voice.”



Federico García Lorca’s Columbia University library card. New York, 1929. Fundación Federico García Lorca, Madrid.

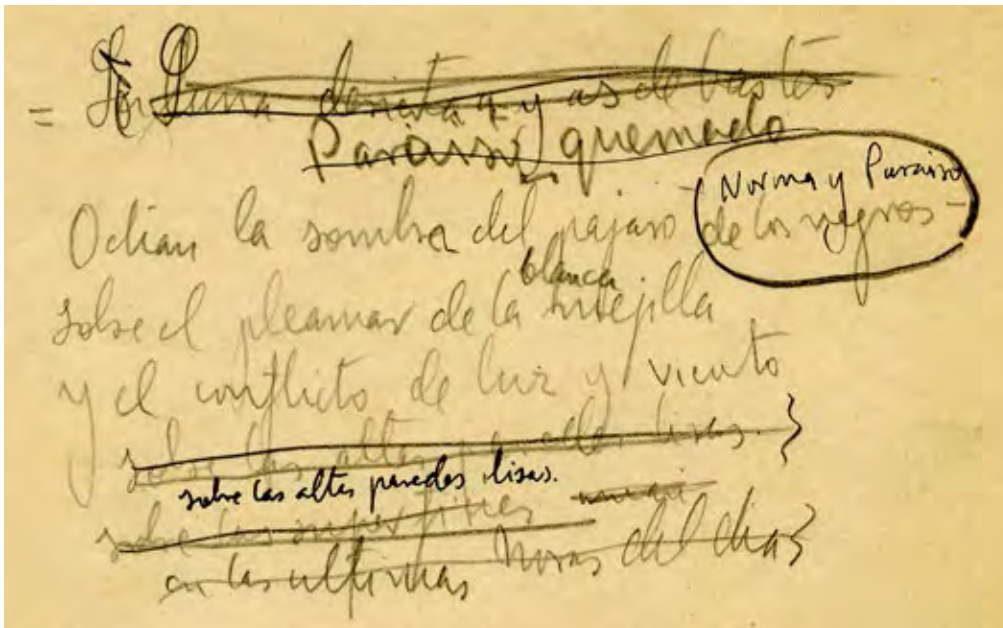


Federico García Lorca. *Bailarina española / Spanish Dancer*. India ink and colored pencil on paper, 1929. Colección Conchita Fernández-Montesinos García, Madrid.





Federico García Lorca with Stanton and Helen Hogan in Bushnellville, New York. Gelatin silver print, 1929. Fundación Federico García Lorca, Madrid.



Federico García Lorca. "Norma y paraíso de los negros" / Norm and Paradise of the Blacks. Manuscript, 1929. Fundación Federico García Lorca.

### **"Where dream collided with its reality"**

Lorca left three sorts of testimony about his trip to New York: a series of cheerful letters to his family in Granada; the poems, which he began writing a short time after his arrival; and a lecture about how he wrote them. To compare those documents and the historical record is to marvel over his powers of fantasy—the collision of dream and reality. In September 1929, he spent a few weeks with friends at an old farmhouse in Bushnellville, New York. The farmer who had rented them the house had two children, Stanton and Helen, whom the poet quickly befriended. In poems and in his lecture on *Poet in New York*, Lorca invented a sinister end for both of them: Helen drowns in a well, and Stanton—"idiotic and beautiful among little animals"—is haunted by a cancer that roams his house, pulsing through the hallways, "full of clouds and thermometers." In his lecture, Lorca offered a preposterous poetic fade-out: "The girl withdraws into the well, in a host of green angels, and on the boy's chest the cruel star of the North American police begins to grow, like saltpeter on a damp wall."

### **In Harlem "there is human warmth and the shouts of children"**

It took Lorca only days to discover both the cultural effervescence of the Harlem Renaissance and American prejudice toward African Americans. He loved Harlem, all "human warmth and the shouts of children." His friendship with the African American novelist Nella Larsen, his enthusiasm for spirituals and for the "black musical revue," and his visits to nightclubs like Smalls Paradise, where African Americans danced for white audiences, led him to compose two stirring poems, "Norm and Paradise of the Blacks," which tries to define African American aesthetics, and "The King of Harlem," a cry of encouragement and solidarity. "I wanted to make *the* poem of the black race in North America," Lorca remarked. Being from Granada, he said, "helps me understand those who are persecuted: the Gypsy, the black, the Jew . . . the Moor we all carry inside us."



Federico García Lorca. *Joven y pirámides / Young Man and Pyramids*. India ink and colored pencil on paper, 1929–30. Colección Amat.

### “¡Ay, Wall Street!”

The crash of the stock market and the beginning of the Great Depression clouded Lorca’s initial admiration for “the boldest, most modern city in the world.” At the height of the panic, on Black Thursday (October 24, 1929), he hurried to Wall Street: “I was lucky enough to see it with my own eyes,” he wrote. “Several billion dollars were lost: a rabble of dead money that went sliding off into the sea.” Everywhere, “there were men shouting and arguing like animals and women crying.” Several texts in *Poet in New York*—among them a “Dance of Death” that makes its way through the city to Wall Street—condemn the cruelty of unbridled capitalism: “Between the sphinx and the bank vault, there’s a tense thread / that pierces the heart of all poor children.”

### “Search for me . . . in Cuba”

On March 2, 1930, Lorca was scheduled to give a talk on contemporary Spanish poetry at the 115th Street branch of The New York Public Library, but those who went to hear him were in for a disappointment. At the last minute, he had asked a friend—the literary critic Dámaso Alonso, a visiting professor at Hunter College—to speak in his place. The poet was on a train to Key West, where he would board a ferry for Havana. The three months he spent touring Cuba (March–June) were among the happiest of his life. “If I ever go missing,” he wrote his parents, “search for me in Andalusia or in Cuba.” Work on his book of poems came to a temporary halt, and he plunged into a round of lectures, conversations with Cuban writers and painters, re-encounters with old friends, and deeply lived musical experiences. In Havana and throughout Cuba, he

lectured with passion and flair on Góngora and Baroque poetry, flamenco, the “mechanisms of the new poetry,” and Spanish lullabies. The rhythm of the Afro-Cuban *son*—which was just then being discovered by Cuban poets like Nicolás Guillén—found its way into Lorca’s poem “Son de negros en Cuba” (An Afro-Cuban *Son*), which, as the last poem in the book, provided a joyful colophon to *Poet in New York*.



Federico García Lorca in Havana. Gelatin silver print, 1930. Fundación Federico García Lorca, Madrid.



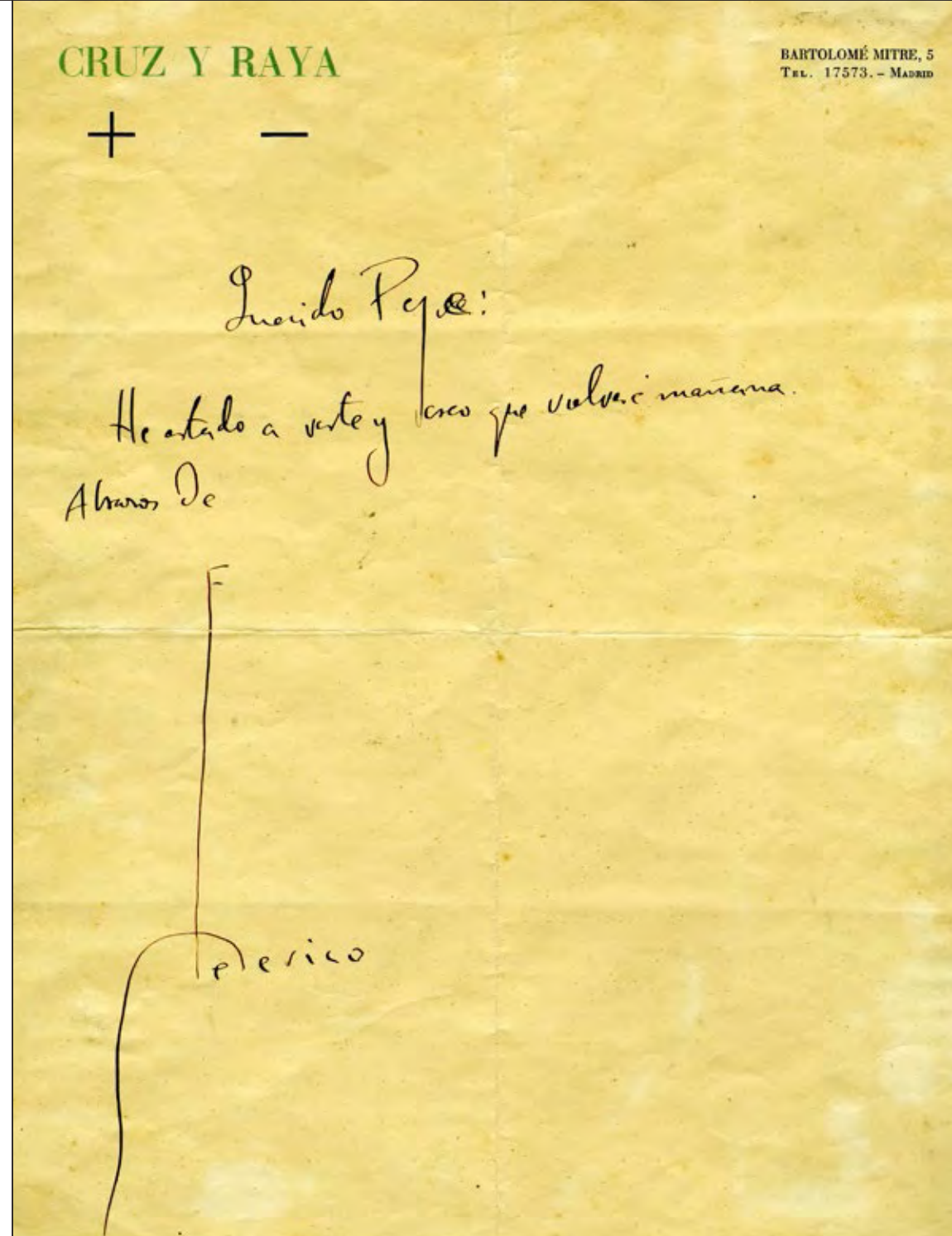
## Back Tomorrow: The Making of *Poet in New York*

By summer 1936, Lorca had prepared a typewritten manuscript of *Poet in New York* and divided it into chapters. Not all were complete. The poet often gifted friends with his handwritten drafts, and he now found himself without copies of some poems. In July, he left the unfinished manuscript on the desk of his friend and publisher José Bergamín, together with a note: “Pepe, I was here to see you and I believe I will be back tomorrow.” Before he could return, he was murdered in Granada. Bergamín took the manuscript with him into exile—a relic of the Spain defeated by Franco—and published it in Mexico. An American edition, with translations by Rolfe Humphries, appeared almost simultaneously. Mysteriously lost for decades and since recovered by the Fundación Federico García Lorca in Madrid, the manuscript is exhibited here for the first time.

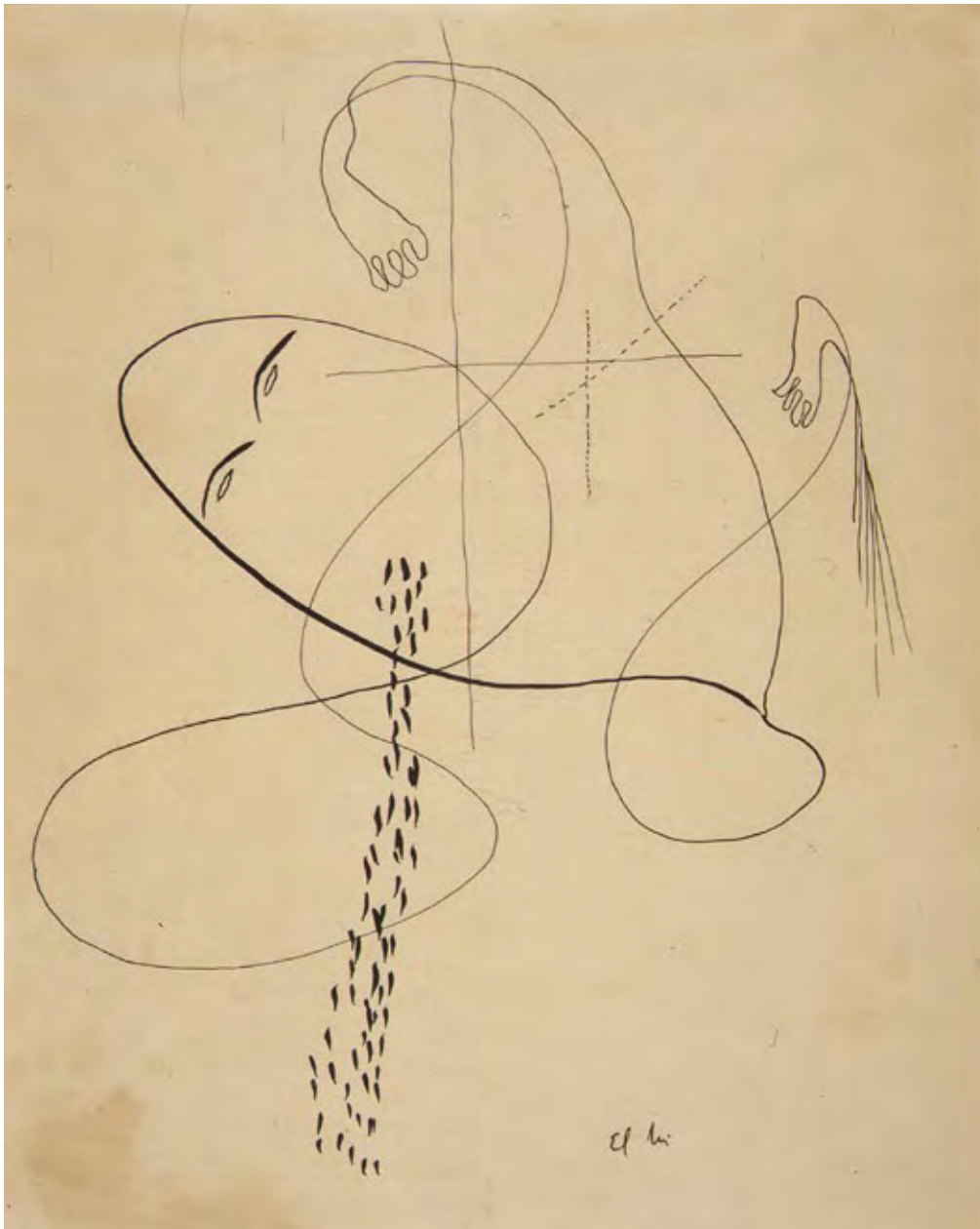
### Excerpt from “Landscape of a Vomiting Multitude (Nightfall at Coney Island),” *Poet in New York*

Who could imagine my sadness?  
The look on my face was mine, but now isn't me.  
The naked look on my face, trembling in alcohol  
and launching incredible ships  
through the anemones of the piers.  
I protect myself with this look  
that flows from waves where the dawn would never go,  
I, poet without arms, lost  
in the vomiting multitude,  
with no effusive horse to shear  
the thick moss from my temples.  
But the fat lady went first  
and the crowds kept looking for the pharmacies  
where the bitter tropics could be found.  
Only when a flag went up and the first dogs arrived  
did the entire city rush to the railings of the boardwalk.

(Tr. Greg Simon and Steven F. White)



Note from Federico García Lorca to José Bergamín. Madrid, 1936.  
Fundación Federico García Lorca, Madrid.



Federico García Lorca. *El hijo de puta* / *The So[n] of a Bitch?*. India ink on rag paper, 1929–31. Fundación Federico García Lorca, Madrid.

## Drawings of a Poet

“To me Lorca’s drawings seem the work of a poet,” the artist Joan Miró once wrote. “And that is the highest praise I can give to any plastic expression.” Two years before the trip to New York, encouraged by his friend the painter Salvador Dalí, Lorca exhibited several dozen of these “poems,” executed in colored pencil and India ink, at a prestigious gallery in Barcelona. The drawings done in New York, four of which appeared in the first edition of *Poet in New York*, are somber, sometimes deathly in tone. In a series of self-portraits, a stylized figure is surrounded by horses or beasts suggestive of medieval illuminated commentaries on the Book of Revelation (indeed, *Poet in New York* conjures up an urban apocalypse). Other New York drawings share some of the themes of the poems: the cruelty of Wall Street; death and disintegration; bloodshed and martyrdom (as in the depiction of Saint Rodegunda); and the rootlessness of the city.



Federico García Lorca. *Animal fabuloso dirigiéndose a una casa* / *Fabulous Beast Approaching a House*. India ink and colored pencil on paper, 1929–30. Colección Gloria García Lorca, Madrid.



## New York Public Library Programs

Visit [nypl.org](http://nypl.org) for further details.

### **Vivir la poesía / Live Poetry** **Bloomingdale Branch**

**March 9 at 2 p.m.;**

**March 11 at 3:30 p.m.**

Readings from *The Gypsy Ballads*, one of Lorca's most important works, performed in Spanish by a contemporary poet, with an opportunity for guests to read a selection of poems.

### **LIVE from the NYPL:** **Celebrating Federico** **García Lorca**

**Stephen A. Schwarzman Building**  
**June 4 at 7:00 p.m.**

Paul Holdengräber, director of LIVE from the NYPL, presents a special installment of the Library's series in celebration of Federico García Lorca's life and legacy.

*LIVE from the NYPL is made possible with generous support from Celeste Bartos, Mahnaz Ispahani Bartos and Adam Bartos, and the Margaret and Herman Sokol Public Education Endowment Fund.*

### **Lectures from the Allen Room** **and the Wertheim Study**

**Stephen A. Schwarzman Building,**  
**South Court Auditorium**  
**July 9, 10, and 11 at 1:15 p.m.**

**JULY 9**

Sharonah Fredrick  
*Lorca, Jews, and African Americans:*  
*From Romance to Racism or*  
*Simple Misunderstanding?*

**JULY 10**

Melcion Mateu  
*Federico García Lorca Occupies*  
*Wall Street: "Poet in New York"*  
*and Global Crisis*

**JULY 11**

J. K. Fowler  
*Dream Traces in Streets Revisited*

## Programs Throughout New York City

Visit [lorcanyc.com](http://lorcanyc.com) for further details.

### **Los títeres de Cachiporra /** **The Billy-club Puppets**

**Clemente Soto Vélez Cultural**  
**and Education Center**

**April 6 at 8 p.m.;**

**April 13, 20, and 27 at 3 p.m.**

Teatro SEA presents Spanish and English performances of Lorca's play for puppets, *Los títeres de Cachiporra / The Billy-club Puppets*.

### **Federico García Lorca** **Extravaganza: El Poeta** **en Nueva York**

**Bowery Poetry Club**  
**April 7 at 7 p.m.**

An evening of poetry, music, theater, and spoken-word performances in celebration of Lorca's legacy. Performers include La Bruja, Emanuel Xavier, and Simply Rob.

### **Lorca and New York:** **Some Memories over the Years** **Butler Library, Room 523,**

**Columbia University**

**April 8 at 6 p.m.**

Gonzalo Sobejano, professor emeritus in the Department of Latin American and Iberian Cultures at Columbia University, shares his thoughts on the poet, his family, and his milieu. Cocktails will follow.

### **American Lorca**

**King Juan Carlos I of Spain**  
**Center, New York University**

**April 9 at 7 p.m.**

Jo Labanyi, director of the King Juan Carlos I of Spain Center at NYU, moderates a series of talks by leading Lorca specialists:

Antonio Monegal,  
Universitat Pompeu Fabra,  
Barcelona

*Sex in the City: Lorca's Images*  
*of Desire*

Paul Julian Smith,  
The Graduate Center,  
The City University of New York  
*Poet on the Moon: Intermediality*  
*in Lorca's American Period*

Andrés Soria Olmedo,  
Universidad de Granada  
*Letters and Poems: On Lorca's 1932*  
*Presentation and Reading of "Poet*  
*in New York" at the Residencia de*  
*Señoritas, Madrid*

Jonathan Mayhew,  
University of Kansas  
*Postmodern Lorcas: O'Hara,*  
*Motherwell, Strayhorn*

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### **Lorca in Vermont**

**The Graduate Center,  
The City University of New York  
April 16–May 30**

This exhibition, curated by Patricia Billingsley and Christopher Maurer, explores the poet's August 1929 trip to see his friend Philip Cummings in Vermont—inspiration for a series of haunting poems. The show brings together reproductions of photographs, letters, poems, and translations; Vermont maps and memorabilia; and other biographical materials that capture an intense moment in Lorca's life and a vision of a Vermont that has ceased to exist.

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### **Interpreting Lorca**

**The Graduate Center,  
The City University of New York  
April 16 at 6 p.m.**

This in-depth examination of Lorca's work includes a panel discussion with Caridad Svich, Mónica de la Torre, and Eliot Weinberger on issues of translation; a performance by Joan Jonas, interpreting different translations of a Lorca verse; and a concert by Ben Sidran.

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### **An Evening with Carlos Rojas and Edith Grossman**

**Instituto Cervantes  
April 17 at 7 p.m.**

Acclaimed Spanish author Carlos Rojas speaks and answers questions about his forthcoming book *The Ingenious Gentleman and Poet Federico García Lorca Ascends to Hell*, translated by Edith Grossman.

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### **Writing in New York / New York in Writing**

**King Juan Carlos I of Spain  
Center, New York University  
April 18 at 7 p.m.**

Hear M.F.A. students in the Creative Writing in Spanish program at NYU rewrite Federico García Lorca's experience of New York.

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### **Lorca, Dalí, Buñuel & Eternal Youth: Life in the Residencia de Estudiantes**

**Instituto Cervantes  
April 19 at 7 p.m.**

Jose García Velasco, former director of the Residencia de Estudiantes in Madrid, reflects on Lorca's student days and his friendship with Surrealist artists Salvador Dalí and Luis Buñuel.

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### **Luis García Montero and Nathalie Handal**

**Instituto Cervantes  
April 25 at 7 p.m.**

Join Luis García Montero, author of a recently published anthology on Lorca, and Nathalie Handal, who wrote *Poet in Andalucía* in response to *Poet in New York*, for a roundtable discussion and Q&A session.

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### **After Lorca: A Day of Poetry and Performance**

**The Graduate Center,  
The City University of New York  
May 1 at 2 p.m.**

Poets and performers LaTasha Diggs, Rob Fitterman, Eileen Myles, Judah Rubin, Sara Jane Stoner, Aynsley Vandenbroucke and the Aynsley Vandenbroucke Movement Group, and others explore the tensions between urban and pastoral, foreign and American, mapped and experimental, as well as the often-unexamined queerness of Lorca's work.

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### **Film Screenings**

**Instituto Cervantes**

**MAY 8 AT 7 P.M.**

*Trip to the Moon* (1998)

Directed by Frederic Amat

*Mudanza* (2008)

Directed by Pere Portabella

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**MAY 15 AT 7 P.M.**

*The House of Bernarda Alba* (1987)

Directed by Mario Camus

**MAY 22 AT 7 P.M.**

*To an Unknown God* (1977)

Directed by Jaime Chávarri

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### **Words and Music:**

#### **Patti Smith and Friends**

**Bowery Ballroom**

**June 5**

Legendary singer Patti Smith, a great admirer of Lorca's poetry, performs a concert in honor of the poet's birthday.

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### **Poet in New York: Reading Lorca**

**The Poetry Project**

**Saint Mark's Church**

**June 10 at 8 p.m.**

Paul Auster, Aracelis Girmay, John Giorno, Wayne Koestenbaum, Rowan Ricardo Phillips, Mónica de la Torre, Frederic Tuten, and others read from *Poet in New York*.

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### **Alexis Cuadrado:**

#### **"A Lorca Soundscape"**

**92Y Tribeca**

**June 21 at 8 p.m.**

*A Lorca Soundscape*, composed by the Spanish-born, Brooklyn-based musician Alexis Cuadrado, sets Lorca's *Poet in New York* to music, drawing inspiration from Spanish and African modes and melodies and the rhythms of flamenco.



## Acknowledgments

The curators thank The New York Public Library, the Fundación Federico García Lorca and Acción Cultural Española for making possible this exhibition and a splendid series of events to commemorate *Poet in New York*. Thanks to Laura García-Lorca, President, Fundación Federico García Lorca; Tony Marx, President, The New York Public Library; Ann Thornton, Andrew W. Mellon Director, The New York Public Library; and Teresa Lizaranzu, President, Acción Cultural Española. Our thanks to Susan Rabbiner and Kailen Rogers, who coordinated the exhibition for The New York Public Library, and Amelie Aranguren, who did so for the Fundación Federico García Lorca. Thanks to staff members of the three institutions: Myriam De Arteni, Andrew Pastore, Isabel Stauffer, Caryn Gedell, James Murdock, Nicholas Teti, Jenny Santos, Diane Tenerelli-June, and Andrew Gaylard from the NYPL; Sonia González García, Rosa María Illán de Haro, and Marga Rodera from the FFGL; and Elvira Marco, Miguel Albero, Pilar Gómez, and Montse Perero from AC/E. The curators gratefully recognize the scholarship of Andrew A. Anderson, Nigel Dennis, Daniel Eisenberg, and Mario Hernández, among many others.

Thanks to designers Stephen Saitas, Miko McGinty, and Rita Jules; editors Marcie Muscat and Trilce Arroyo; translators Noemi Martín Santos, Greg Simon, and Steven F. White; and videographer Luis Mengs. Special thanks to the staff of the Residencia de Estudiantes, Madrid; the Instituto Cervantes, Madrid and New York; and the staff of Acción Cultural Española.

Special thanks to lenders of works: Frederic Amat, Conchita Fernández-Montesinos García, Vicenta Fernández-Montesinos García, Gloria García Lorca, Isabel García-Lorca, Carmen de Piniés Hassel, Carmen del Río de Piniés, the Biblioteca Nacional de España, the Fundación Camilo José Cela, the Hispanic Society of America, La Huerta de San Vicente, and the Residencia de Estudiantes. Thanks to Boston University for research support.

—Christopher Maurer and Andrés Soria Olmedo

The Fundación Federico García Lorca is grateful for the expert and generous dedication of the curators, Christopher Maurer and Andrés Soria Olmedo. Our thanks to Juan Abelló, Luciano Alonso, Plácido Arango, Mario Armero, Juan Manuel Artero, Toni Bechara, Susan Bernofsky, Patricia Billingsley, Juan Manuel Bonet, Jaime Botín, Gonzalo Casals, Guillermo Corral, Matías Cortés, Nicholas Courage, Sarah Crichton, Charles Day, Isabelle Deconink, Augusto Delkader, Johnny Depp, Barbara Epler, Julio Feroso, Manuel Fernández-Montesinos, *in memoriam*, Pepa Gamboa, José García-Velasco, Pilar Gómez, Alicia Gómez-Navarro, Francisco González Lodeiro, José Guirao, Inmaculada de Habsburgo, Paul Holdengräber, Bob Holman, Montserrat Iglesias, Ellen Iseman, Elianna Kan, Jo Labanyi, Jaime Lanasa, Jennifer Lerner, Juan Tomás Martín, Noemi Martín Santos, Graciela Montaldo, Antonio Muñoz Molina, Juan María Nin, Philip Noonan, John O'Neill, Alice Quinn, Íñigo Ramírez de Haro, Claudio Iván Remeseira, John Richardson, Javier Rioyo, Charles Ruas, Michael Ryan, Jeff Seroy, Águeda Sanfiz, Ben Sidran, Rafael Spottorno, Michael Stipe, Aioibheann Sweeney, Stacy Szymaszek, Mónica de la Torre, José Torres Hurtado, Laura Turégano, Darío Villanueva, Gregory Wazowicz, David Weinstein, and Lila Zemoráin. Thanks to the Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte, the Junta de Andalucía, the Ayuntamiento de Granada, the Diputación de Granada, and the Spanish Embassy. Very special thanks to John Giorno and Patti Smith.

Our deepest gratitude to Mahnaz Ispahani Bartos and Adam Bartos.

—Laura García-Lorca

## For Further Reading

### WORKS BY FEDERICO GARCÍA LORCA

- Collected Poems*. Bilingual edition. Ed. Christopher Maurer. 2nd edition. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2001.
- Manuscritos neoyorquinos. Poeta en Nueva York y otras hojas y poemas*. Ed., transcription, and notes by Mario Hernández. Madrid: Tabapress/Fundación Federico García Lorca, 1990.
- Obras completas*. Ed. Miguel García-Posada. 4 vols. Barcelona: Círculo de Lectores/Galaxia Gutenberg, 1996–97.
- Poet in New York*. Ed. Christopher Maurer. 3rd edition, revised. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2013.
- Poet in New York*. Trans. Pablo Medina and Mark Statman, with a foreword by Edward Hirsch. New York: Grove Press, 2008.
- Poeta en Nueva York*. Ed. Andrew A. Anderson. Barcelona: Galaxia Gutenberg, 2013.
- Selected Poems*. Ed. Donald M. Allen, intro. W.S. Merwin. New York: New Directions, 2005.
- Sólo un caballo azul y una madrugada. Antología poética (1917–1935)*. Ed. and intro. Andrés Soria Olmedo. Barcelona: Galaxia Gutenberg/Círculo de Lectores, 2004.

### BIOGRAPHY AND CRITICISM

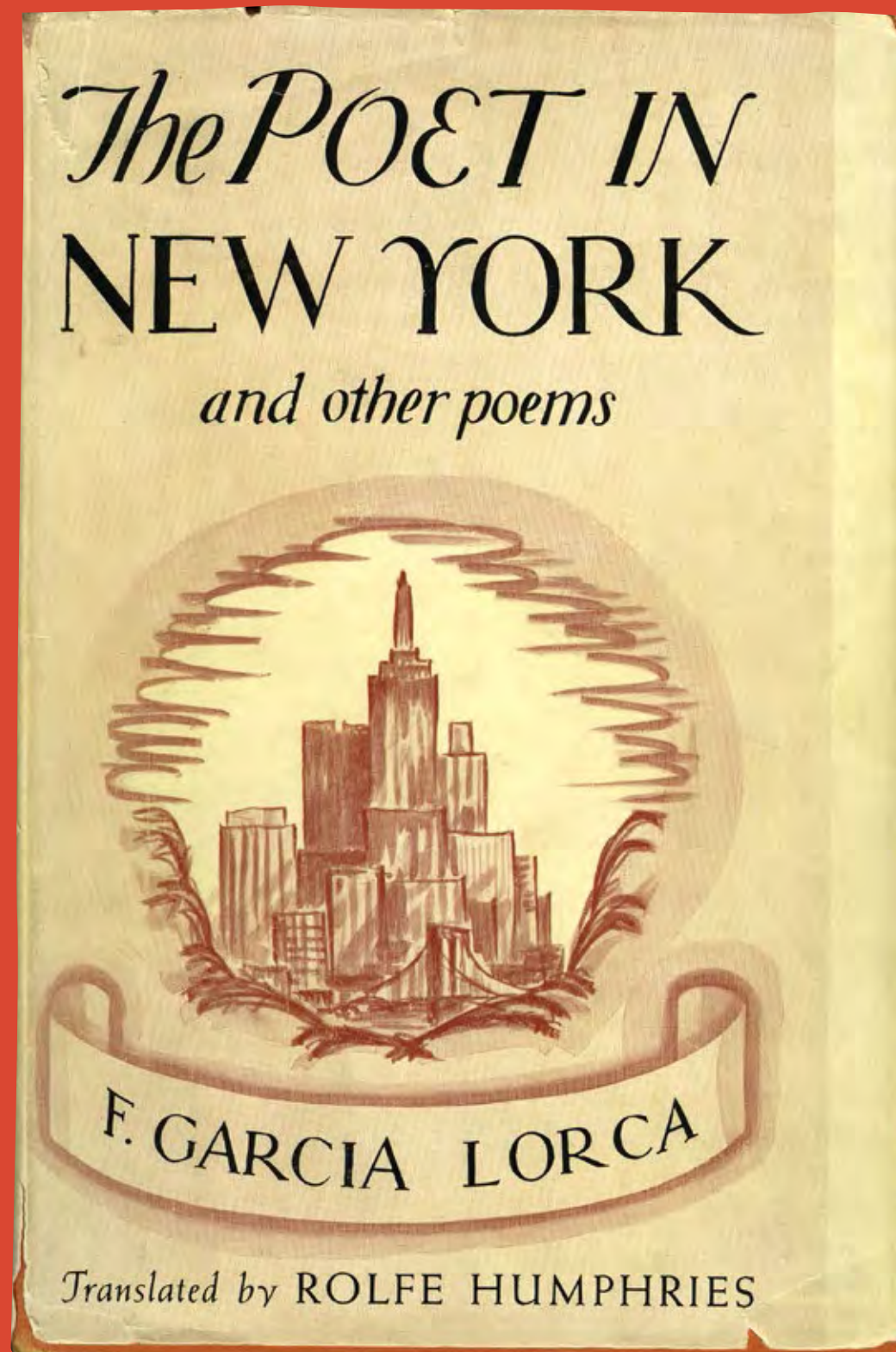
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- Hernández, Mario. *Line of Light and Shadow. The Drawings of Federico García Lorca*. Durham: Duke University Press/Duke University Museum of Art, 1991.
- Stainton, Leslie. *Lorca: A Dream of Life*. London: Bloomsbury, 1999.

## Hours and General Information

The exhibition is open Monday, Thursday–Saturday, 10 a.m.–6 p.m.; Tuesday–Wednesday, 10 a.m.–7:30 p.m.; and Sunday, 1–5 p.m. The exhibition will be closed May 25–27 and July 4, 7, and 14. For more information on hours, current and upcoming exhibitions, programs, and services at The New York Public Library, call 917.ASK.NYPL (917.275.6975) or visit the Library's website at [www.nypl.org](http://www.nypl.org).

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This exhibition is organized jointly by the Fundación Federico García Lorca, The New York Public Library, and Acción Cultural Española with the support of "la Caixa" Foundation.

Support for The New York Public Library's Exhibitions Program has been provided by Celeste Bartos, Sue and Edgar Wachenheim III, Mahnaz Ispahani Bartos and Adam Bartos Exhibitions Fund, and Jonathan Altman.



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Inside Back Cover: Federico García Lorca. *The Poet in New York and Other Poems*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1940. Fundación Federico García Lorca, Madrid.