

## Translating Pete Seeger: The challenge of recreating an American legend in all its popular glory and complexity

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### Abstract:

The oral historian Studs Terkel has called Pete Seeger “America’s tuning fork” and many US historians have referred to Seeger as America’s conscience. In this paper we consider the challenges of translating from English to Spanish Seeger’s unique musical autobiography *Where Have All the Flowers Gone?* (SingOut! Publications 1994) which has involved collaborating with Seeger (our suggested title of the as yet unpublished book, *¿Qué habrá sido de las flores?*). The book is written in a folksy, easy to read style as Seeger discusses complex issues which concern US culture and politics, though not necessarily in that order. Seeger’s unflagging faith in the popular *hoi polloi* betrays a highly literate thinker whose background reflects more affinity to Boston Brahmin than to the working class socialist tradition that Seeger celebrates in his songs, discourse and public persona. Translating this work involves combining literary and technical-scientific theories, providing a unique challenge to the translator.