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Spanish traditional and literary lullabies: what makes them controversial?

A lullaby is usually defined as a gentle, quiet and rhythmical song used to lull a child to sleep. To fulfill its calming function, a variety of pleasant themes is frequently implied. However, in both traditional and literary lullabies, we encounter some topics, f. ex. death, fear or suffering, that may be perceived as controversial (debatable, questionable, open to discussion). Moss (1972, p. 530) notices the importance of implying death in children's literature: *literature, apart from entertaining and instructing, can aid people with life situations. Many children will have to face the death of a close relative.* Nevertheless, the same author describes her almost fruitless attempt to find children's books where young people are *facing the loss of a dearly loved relative.* Gabriel García Lorca, a famous Spanish poet, was fascinated about traditional Spanish lull songs, especially those with the presence of "el Coco" – the character implied to spook children (1928). Death and fear in traditional Spanish lullabies were also investigated by Cerrillo Torremocha (2007) and Cillan Cillan (2008). Some literary Spanish lull songs also deal with difficult topics that some modern mothers would rather avoid. Gloria Fuertes, one of the most well-known authors of children's poetry in Spain, frequently copes with death and suffering in her lullabies. Spanish literary lullabies also play with the traditional genre's definition, for example there are some poems that are destined to wake up a child instead of calming it. Also, lullabies addressed to an adult instead of a child can be perceived as controversial.

Keywords: lullaby, traditional Spanish lullaby, literary Spanish lullaby, death in children's literature, Gloria Fuertes

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