

SONGS OF HURT, SONGS OF HOME: LULLABIES AS CARRIERS OF DIASPORIC MEMORY

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ABSTRACT

Lullabies are not simply soothing music to put a child to sleep. They are the foundations of learning and connecting to one's cultural identities. The functions of orality, literacy, and memory have been vastly explored by Brandt, Goody, Havelock, and Ong (Brandt, 2001; Goody, 1987; Havelock, 1986; Ong, 1982). However, this paper will employ a non-Western theoretical lens to understand orality and the transmission of cultural knowledge. Rhetorical traditions of learning include hearing and chanting (Śruti), and then weaving together, (re)creating new narratives and new interpretations of old narratives from the memory (Smriti) of the learned movements. Kelly Armor, folklorist and educator based in Erie, PA, championed a project where she recorded several lullabies and children's songs sung by members of Erie's immigrant community. In this project, Old Songs New Opportunity, several refugee men and women from Sudan, Bhutan, Iraq, Ukraine, and Congo recorded children's songs from their cultures. By employing the Śruti and Smriti theory of cultural pedagogy, the chapter will analyze translations of the old lullabies recorded by the Erie Museum project to argue that the culture of a caregiver's chanting of lullabies is vital in the preservation of cultural memories, especially in diasporic families. This paper will explore the role of lullabies in cultural socialization, discussing how these songs serve as a means of communication between mother and child in immigrant families and as an indication of emotional bonding, while also transmitting cultural knowledge that is loaded with memories of hurt and loss.

Keywords: *Cultural Transmission, Orality, Diasporic Communities, Śruti-Smriti Pedagogy, Cultural Memory, Immigrant Families.*

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