shown variously to be greedy, vain, and vacuous. Nevertheless, public fascination about star singers, and the world of opera, also led to the publication of a number of Tin Pan Alley songs based on individual operatic heroines. Hamberlin's compelling exploration of songs based on Richard Strauss's *Salome* takes an unexpected turn, demonstrating how such musical visions not only engaged with orientalist fantasies, but also occasionally revealed the artifice of exoticism itself. This section of *Tin Pan Opera*, which carefully explains how the American form of "Salomania" differed from its European counterpart, is especially notable for its fruitful integration of both music and dance history. Hamberlin next turns to the many topical novelty songs produced in response to Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*. By understanding songs such as "Poor Butterfly" within the context of American imperialistic overtures in the Pacific, Hamberlin shows how Tin Pan Alley publishers attempted to appeal to broader audiences in the United States by retaining the opera's display of exotic femininity while frequently downplaying Puccini's critique of U.S. overseas aggression.

Tin Pan Opera makes evident throughout that Hamberlin is comfortable with contradiction and eager to discover multiple layers of meaning. This approach is most evident in his treatment of "That Opera Rag," the centerpiece of the third section of the book, "Ephraham and His Equals." Written by Ted Snyder and Irving Berlin, this "Negro dialect" song (or "coon song") served many purposes: as what Hamberlin describes as a "racist commentary on heightened cultural aspirations of the first post–Civil War generation of Americans" (208), as a song interpolated into a show that sought to warn Americans about idolizing European culture, and as a stage vehicle for May Irwin through which it became an opportunity to showcase American popular culture alongside European high culture. Rather than highlighting a single interpretation, Hamberlin productively draws on the tensions felt by audiences in the United States who were becoming less committed to upholding European high culture and becoming increasingly interested in American popular culture in general and to ragtime, jazz, and other African American musical innovations in particular. In this way, *Tin Pan Opera* marks how ragtime and opera stood as emblems of the African and European influences on American musical life, even as these musical symbols of national identity were in the midst of significant flux and transition.

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Música Norteña: Mexican Immigrants Creating a Nation between Nations. By Cathy Ragland. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2009.

Before the 1846–48 war between Mexico and the United States, the southern tip of Texas and the states of Nuevo León, Coahuila, and Tamaulipas were all part of Mexico, forming a region with a cultural affinity that became transformed after the

U.S. border separated the Texas Valley from these Mexican states. It is in this vast zone that Cathy Ragland focuses her study of *música norteña*, a musical style that features an ensemble of accordion, guitar, bass, *bajo sexto* (twelve-string bass guitar), and drum set. She follows folklorist Américo Paredes (1915–99) and ethnomusicologist Manuel Peña, who published the first studies of this music in what is now the U.S. Southwest.[1] Unlike Peña and Paredes, however, Ragland aims to document how music produced in the Mexican northeast migrated into the United States. In this respect, the author is filling a void in scholarship on this music from south of the border.

Mexican culture on both sides of the border has long been susceptible to political and economic developments in both nations. Accordingly, issues of musical performance, songwriting, recording, and reception have reflected the contrasting environments of Mexican communities in Texas and northern Mexico. Ragland recognizes a divide in the emergence of two distinct but related genres: *conjunto tejano* (in Texas) and *música norteña* (in northeastern Mexico). From this standpoint, Ragland's contribution is significant, as she continues where Paredes and Peña stopped: beyond the U.S. Southwest. Ragland looks south of the border, examining how música norteña articulates the political and economic anxieties of both Mexicans and Mexican immigrants in the United States. According to the author, the genre not only addresses themes relevant to the political and economic marginality of these individuals, but also the immigrant experience itself, which helps fuel the development and popularity of this music. Using methodological approaches taken from some of the most authoritative scholarship in trans-border, Mexican, and Mexican American studies, Ragland analyzes themes such as *mexicanidad* (what it means to be Mexican), the subversions of authority by mythic heroes, drug trafficking, and the immigrant laborer experience; she also investigates the historical development of the *corrido* genre of narrative balladry.

Ragland's study relies heavily on her interviews with some of música norteña's best-known artists and groups, such as Los Alegres de Terán, Los Montañeses del Álamo, Ramón Ayala, Eulalio González ("El Piporro"), and Los Tigres del Norte. Her commentaries based on these interviews provide a historical contextualization of norteña music in relationship to socio-economic and political issues.

Although the division between Texas-Mexican conjunto music and Mexican música norteña might seem artificial, Ragland's analysis of their differences is

[1] Américo Paredes, *A Texas-Mexican Cancionero: Folksongs of the Lower Border* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1976); Paredes, *With His Pistol in His Hand: A Border Ballad and Its Hero* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1958); Manuel Peña, *The Texas-Mexican Conjunto: History of a Working-Class Music* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985); Peña, *The Mexican-American Orquesta: Music, Culture, and the Dialectic of Conflict* (Austin: University of Texas Press. 1999); and Peña, *Música Tejana: The Cultural Economy of Artistic Transformation* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1999). Also see Yolanda Broyles-González, *Lydia Mendoza's Life in Music—La Historia de Lydia Mendoza: Norteño Tejano Legacies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); John Dyer, *Conjunto: Voz del pueblo, canciones del corazón* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005); Ramiro Burr, *The Billboard Guide to Tejano and Regional Mexican Music* (New York: Billboard Books, 1999); Guadalupe San Miguel, Jr., *Tejano Proud: Tex-Mex Music in the Twentieth Century* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2002).

compelling. For the author, norteña derives from a norteño culture localized in the north of Mexico in contrast to a Mexican American sensibility centered in Texas. The author argues that immigration and the political and economic marginality of immigrants are central components of a norteño mentality; that the corrido is one of this musical style's central vehicles for expression; and that the currency of social themes in the corrido has kept this form alive in música norteña.

Ragland further shows how these issues permeate the lives of norteña musicians and how they inform their music. It is for this reason that the author considers música norteña as "immigrant music" (24, 59). As she points out, it was due to marketing strategies targeting immigrants in the United States that the recording industry created separate conjunto tejano and música norteña record labels in the late 1940s. The latter aimed to identify communities that guaranteed a market via a touring network in the U.S. called the "Taco Circuit," which extended from Texas as far north as Illinois, Ohio and Michigan (115–16). This strategy created a multi-million dollar industry on both sides of the border. However, due to the lack of available market data from the northern Mexican city of Monterrey, a city at the center of the development and marketing of norteña, it is not possible to assess the extent to which immigrant communities in Texas have been responsible for this development.

Ragland's analysis suggests that she views música norteña more from a Texas-Mexican, U.S. perspective than from a northern Mexican vantage point, especially with her emphasis on the importance of immigration to the United States in this musical repertory and style. Her reading of Eulalio Gónzalez, "El Piporro" (ca. 1921–2003), a singer and actor who was the quintessential representation of the norteño persona, is a case in point—the norteño dressed in folk attire typical of the state of Tamaulipas, often exclaiming, "*¡Ajúa!*" (Ah-who-ah!) in his performances as an expression of excitement. Referring to songs associated with him—such as "Chulas fronteras" (Beautiful Borders)—and to the films in which he starred—such as *El terror de la frontera* (The Terror of the Border, 1963), *El bracero del año* (The Farm Worker of the Year, 1964), and *El pocho* (The Border Guy, 1970)—Ragland argues that El Piporro's personality functions as an advocate of the Mexican norteño, whose identity is shaped by the experience of immigration and by ambivalent feelings about a Mexican national identity. Although the author's observation is valid, the reader may be led to believe that immigration is the defining aspect of norteño culture and identity. Immigration to the United States has long been an important issue in northern Mexico, but life there is far more nuanced and complex than this interpretation might suggest. For example, Ragland does not really consider the reception of El Piporro in Mexico. Specifically, she does not mention that the popularity of this performer and his character relied on his use and promotion of norteño symbols, such as the *cuera tamaulipeca* (the folk dress of the state of Tamaulipas) and his embrace of musical genres particularly important in norteño musical life beyond the corrido: the *polka norteña*, waltz, and *chotis* (schottische). Although Ragland's reading of El Piporro concentrates on his immigrant life in the United States, the character's reception in Mexico suggests a different interpretation of this persona and of norteño identity.

Indeed, Ragland places too much emphasis on immigration as a point of interpretation, something that puzzles the reader again when the author addresses the topic of consumption from the standpoint of musical sales. Specifically, her focus on the concerns and anxieties of immigrants seems to overlook the embrace of this music by other communities in Mexico that are not involved with the immigrant experience. For example, the consumption of música norteña by the Mexican middle class is also relevant to the understanding of the different notions of norteño identity, although this is not examined in this study. Ragland assumes that música norteña overtook much of the norteño musical market after artists such as Los Bukis and Bronco—performing in the *cumbia norteña* genre—lost popularity in the late 1980s (180). Here the reader may wonder why Ragland makes no mention of the current *onda grupera* phenomenon in Mexico and the United States and how immigrant communities might relate to this music vis à vis música norteña.[2]

Considering Ragland's interest in notions of identity in música norteña, I wonder why the issue of reception does not figure more prominently in her study. Moreover, she suggests that this genre is particularly relevant to immigrant communities and to how the immigrant experience has shaped their lives. And yet, the reader does not hear the voices of such individuals in her ethnographic work. More importantly, given that conjunto tejano and música norteña share similar instrumental, harmonic, and melodic characteristics, one wonders why performance studies did not figure in Ragland's analysis. For instance, the author recognizes differences in performance approaches between conjunto and norteña musicians, such as the ways of strumming the strings on the bajo sexto or the emphasis on the downbeat on the drum set (128), which to her highlight distinctions between genres. Such distinctions suggest issues of appropriation and cultural claims to a performance practice by both conjunto and norteña musicians. In this light, conjunto/norteño music appears as a liminal arena, sensitive to a plurality of discourses, of which the immigrant experience is but one example.

Given Ragland's emphasis on oral history and musical and literary analysis, however, performance issues are clearly not the center of her inquiry. Rather, she seems most interested in documenting a Mexican musical tradition in relation to the textual elements that have characterized it historically, and in theorizing about its dissemination and reception in the United States. And if there is a critique to be placed on her assessment of música norteña as a musical border (for which performance studies could prove illuminating) it is only as a reaction to a study that directly engages the reader in the complexity of this music culture.

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[2] The *onda grupera* (roughly translated as the "band wave") is a hybrid style (and not necessarily a genre) influenced by rock, cumbia, música ranchera, música norteña, bolero, and the romantic ballad. It uses the typical rock band instrumentation of electric guitar, electric bass, drum set, and keyboards.