In *Transforming Borders: Chicana/o Popular Culture and Pedagogy*, Dr. C. Alejandra Elenes's powerful voice decries the injustices facing Chicana/os. She systematically deconstructs traditional interpretations and commonly-held truths about three popular Mexican legends. She argues that these legends promote hegemonic, misogynistic, and conservative values. *La Llorona*, *La Virgen de Guadalupe*, and *La Malintzin* serve as examples of popular figures that have been presented as binary constructions emphasizing overly simplistic views of right and wrong. Elenes offers a historical background for each figure and then carefully unravels each legend using epistemologies (*conocimientos*), subjectivities, and third space feminism as theoretical and philosophical lenses, with the purpose of developing a border/transformative pedagogy.

*Transforming Borders: Chicana/o Popular Culture and Pedagogy* is divided into six chapters, with the first serving as a foundation of the historical background on border studies and theorization, and the second as a literature review. Chapters Three, Four, and Five are devoted to the legends of *La Llorona*, *La Virgen de Guadalupe*, and *La Malinche*, respectively, while the final chapter synthesizes the conceptual groundwork laid in the previous chapters with a focus on transformative pedagogies. Each chapter demonstrates deep and thorough analysis and could easily stand alone as a substantive work.

For readers who are not familiar with the three legends that are the focus of the book, I offer a brief
summary of each legend and then a glimpse into the approach Elenes takes to re—tell the stories in a way that leads toward “border(transformative pedagogies.” In the legend of La Llorona, a young woman married and bore two children by a man from a higher caste. Her husband was faithful for a short time but soon turned to a life of debauchery. He was away from home for months at a time, and only returned to visit his children, ignoring his wife. Eventually, the man remarried a woman from his class who was barren, and decided to take his children away from their mother. Instead of losing her children, La Llorona chose to drown them in the river. As the legend goes, one can still hear the cries of La Llorona near the river mourning her dead children.

La Llorona has traditionally been a cautionary tale; however, Elenes believes that “In order to get in the feminist decolonial meanings of the legend, it is necessary to unravel its contradictory meanings in favor of a complex analysis” (p.79). A characteristic of colonization is to devalue the knowledge of those being colonized, and oral narratives such as La Llorona offer a way to understand women’s contradictory positions. An example of Elenes' use of complex analysis of the traditional legend begins with an examination of the legend’s use of infanticide. Elenes suggests that the loss of children might symbolize the loss of the past, and therefore the future, which relates to the imposition of ideas that accompanies colonialism, rather than to the literal death of children.

La Virgen de Guadalupe is the most popular and widely recognized figure and legend of the three legends discussed, as her image can be seen on everything from t-shirts, mugs, and hats to bumper stickers and air fresheners. The historical account of La Virgen de Guadalupe originated in 1531 after the fall of what is known as today’s México City. As legend has it, a dark-skinned woman appeared to an Indian named Juan Diego, who was from a group of people of humble origins. The woman was believed to be a vision of the Mother of God, the Virgin Mary. This vision appearing to Juan Diego is significant because of the “othering” of the indigenous and mestizo/a population in México. Elenes devotes the last portion of this chapter to artwork that focus on La Virgen and is created by Chicanas who confront social inequalities, patriarchal views of sexuality, and the dehumanization of brown bodies.

The final legend featured is that of La Malintzin/Marina/Malinche, a tale that reinforces “misogynistic fears about women: traitor, vendida (sell out), corruptible, sexually active, intelligent” (p. 139). In her role as lover of Hernán Cortés, La Malintzin had an active role in the Spanish conquest of Mexico, and she is condemned as a traitor because she bore a child through this affair. However, many Chicana feminists fervently challenge her status as an outcast as Elenes elaborates upon in the chapter devoted to La Malintzin.

Throughout her work, Elenes demonstrates her skill of utilizing borderland epistemologies, subjectivities, and Third World feminist thought to offer a clear and understandable alternative view to the accepted meanings of these legends. The process she uses to deconstruct and re-envision these stories can be of great value to educators who attempt to learn more about the students who sit before them, who wish to reconsider “established” pedagogical practices, or who desire to transform their classrooms. My main concern for educators is:

1. Those who have not yet acknowledged their white privilege,
2. Those who have not considered voices that have been traditionally omitted from classrooms, and
3. Those who might dismiss Elenes’s work as irrelevant before even beginning to analyze the nuances of her arguments and the relevance of her work to their classroom practice.

In her summative chapter, Elenes utilizes Patricia Hill Collins’ work as a basis for discussing the matrix of domination and the notion of intersectionality. Elenes writes, “different groups of people and individuals have different gradations of privilege and oppression, and we all move back and forth from privilege to oppression” (p. 172). She uses as an example the idea that white males have more power than other groups, but not as much power as conservative white males. With this same thinking, Elenes discusses the work of critical pedagogue Peter McLaren (Canadian, male, white, and heterosexual) whose work is commonly accepted as applicable to all people, while the work of Chicanas or any women of color are seen as only applicable to that group. Elenes explains further in a footnote that in reviewing articles
for journals and conferences, she has seen submitters who write about Chicana pedagogy focus on the work of white authors while neglecting scholars who may be more fully able to inform their work. Elenes attributes this to the fact that these writers view white scholars as universal.

As this journal is focused on gender and music education, the final portion of this review will consider why Elenes’s scholarship is valuable and informative for music educators. Understanding or even simply grappling with Elenes’s ideas may make music educators stand outside of themselves—at least temporarily, in disagreement, revolt, and disdain for the philosophies and theoretical landscapes that Elenes uses. But as Elenes concludes:

Clearly, the pedagogies enacted by Chicanas are situated within a specific cultural and social space. It is imperative to give voice to these cultural expressions for both Chicanas/os and non-Chicanas/os alike. To speak against colonization and imperialism, against the forces of globalization, Chicana and Mexicana voices are necessary. Not to create another hierarchy, or to speak as victims, but because in order to create a just society, all voices must be heard (p. 177-178).

My belief is that one essential step needed for music educators to clearly hear the voices Elenes discusses, and in regard to more than their voice designation as a soprano, alto, tenor, or bass, is to come to an understanding that teaching is a highly political and philosophical act, and that our beliefs are always in flux and unstable. In addition, music educators may need to realize the background and origins of their pedagogical beliefs in order to begin the search for alternative meanings. Only by doing so do I believe music educators will reap the rewards of Elenes’s *Transforming Borders: Chicana/o Popular Culture and Pedagogy* and begin to have rich and complex dialogues regarding injustice, race, and power while relentlessly searching for the sacred space where the ideas and cultural expressions of their students reside.