

REVIEWS



Acoustic Colonialism: Acts of Mapuche Interference. By Luis E. Cárcamo-Huechante. Durham: Duke University Press, 2025. 288 pages. \$119.75 hardcover; \$31.95 paper.

Mapuche-Williche scholar Luis E. Cárcamo-Huechante shows that settler colonialism invades not only physical territories but also acoustic ones. Grounded in the history and acoustic ecologies of Ngulu Mapu (so-called southern Chile), he theorizes settler colonialism beyond land theft and political control as a sonic regime that organizes power, identity, and knowledge. Acoustic colonialism operates through literature, radio, music, and other media to enforce racial, patriarchal, and settler-state norms while marginalizing Mapuche sonic expression. Cárcamo-Huechante theorizes the “colonial ear” to describe how, since the nineteenth century, the Chilean settler nation-state has imposed acoustic regimes that distort and render Mapuche territories, voices, and bodies audible only within settler logics, while silencing what falls outside those limits. Against this, Mapuche writers, artists, broadcasters, and musicians enact “acts of interference” that detune hegemonic listening and reassert Indigenous autonomy. Drawing on a lifetime of personal and communal experience and more than two decades of research and fieldwork, Cárcamo-Huechante’s rigorous book reframes sound as a terrain of colonial power and Mapuche resurgence, showing how sonic practices both register and reshape struggles over territory, identity, sovereignty, and autonomy.

The introduction names *acoustic colonialism* as the long arc against which the book situates Mapuche sonic interference. Chapters 1 and 2 show how, beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, Chilean cultural production muted or distorted Mapuche speech and sound worlds. Chapter 1 traces creole literature in which the “colonial ear” operates as a mechanism of war during the state invasion of Mapuche territory. Chapter 2 analyzes the colonial media regime that racialized Mapuche people via the mass-mediated stereotype of the *Indio Pije*. These first two chapters are strongest when they move from describing settler colonial portrayals of Mapuche to discussing how literature and mass media normalized stereotypes and racist humor, contributing to the systemic oppression of Mapuche culture.

Chapters 3–5 foreground Mapuche acts of acoustic interference: Chapter 3 describes the significance of Mapuche poetry in land politics. Chapter 4 examines community radio, especially the program *Wixage Anai!* (*Wake Up!*), as a Mapuche sonic commons. Chapter 5 attends to *ül* (Mapuche song) as a site of collective endurance. This second half of the book is most compelling when it shows how acts of interference are rooted in, and actively contribute to, the resurgence of Mapuche ways of knowing. Chapter 4, for example, describes how radiophonic practice is an act of cultural and political self-determination. By imbuing the airwaves with Mapuche

language (*Mapudungun*) and song, *Wixage Anai!* was more than a communication platform: it was an “essential tool in the reconstruction of Indigenous notions of peoplehood, territoriality, and even new diasporic spaces, both on the air and on the earth” (165).

One of the book’s greatest strengths is Cárcamo-Huechante’s methodology, anchored in Mapuche autonomy (*kisugunewün*) and Mapuche ways of knowing, such as *allkütun* (attentive listening). More than hearing, *allkütun* is a practice of engagement in conversation (*nütram*), collaboration, and reciprocity (26). He employs *allkütun* to analyze radiophonic and musical texts as well as visual images and literature. This methodology yields a unique protocol for literary study, reading-as-listening, which is especially effective in his analyses of the poetry of Leonel Lienlaf and Lorenzo Aillapán Cayuleo, whose works channel the land’s acoustic ecology (Chapter 3). Through *allkütun*, the book foregrounds nonhuman sonorous agency and the polyphonic, plurivocal (i.e., multiple-voiced) worlds that have been silenced by the hegemonic drone of settler colonialism.

Cárcamo-Huechante’s reflexive, relational, and accountable approach merits emphasis. The chapters are punctuated with field notes and personal reflections that continually reaffirm his positionality and commitments to Mapuche land and life. As a Native American and Indigenous studies scholar from Ngulu Mapu now living on Turtle Island (North America), I was moved by his approach to research as reconnection and recommitment to Mapuche cultural and political life. Accountability is also demonstrated in the book’s introduction and author’s note, where alphabet choices (Unified and Raguileo), translation protocols, and collaborations with Mapuche language workers are made explicit.

Another strength is the book’s interdisciplinary and transborder reach: it brings Native American and Indigenous studies, sound studies, and critical studies of race and racialization into sustained dialogue. While I do not speak for the latter fields, the contribution to Native American and Indigenous studies is clear. It offers a South American case that shares kinship with northern scholarship on self-representation, sovereignty, resurgence, and revitalization, positioning it as a groundbreaking book in a field that often centers North America. It is among the first of its kind to introduce, explicitly from a Mapuche perspective, Mapuche epistemologies and canonical Mapuche scholarship—such as the collective volume *j . . . Escucha, winka . . . !* (2006)—to an English-speaking audience. It is therefore a significant resource for cross-hemispheric conversation. The book repeatedly enables theoretical cross-fertilization, clarifying how Mapuche autonomy differs from, and resonates with, Indigenous sovereignty on Turtle Island. Grounded in Mapuche epistemology, Cárcamo-Huechante develops concepts that have international reach while remaining accountable to place. The book connects Indigenous nations across the hemisphere without collapsing their differences.

This transhemispheric orientation could inform future research. Throughout the book, Cárcamo-Huechante hints at connections with other Indigenous media across Abya Yala (Latin America) but does not develop them fully. A sequel or edited volume could extend radiophonic practices and acts of interference across Abya Yala, particularly in Puelche Mapuche communities on the Argentine side of the Andes and in

Aymara community radio in northern Chile and Bolivia. A follow-up study could also expand the theoretical framework to address Mapuche language revitalization and digital ecologies as additional sites in which colonial power operates and where Indigenous interference can be theorized and practiced.

Pedagogically, the book is appropriate for upper-division and graduate seminars in Indigenous studies, Latin American studies, sound studies, media anthropology, and courses with a hemispheric focus. Generative pairings include Chapter 2 with Chapter 4 of Philip Deloria's *Playing Indian* (1998), and the introduction and/or Chapter 5 with Chapter 1 of Jessica Bissett Perea's *Sound Relations* (2021). Dylan Robinson's *Hungry Listening* (2020) also pairs well across the book, particularly for protocols of listening, refusal, and governance. *Acoustic Colonialism* can also inspire practice within and beyond the classroom: "acts of interference" can inform participatory projects such as coproduced broadcasts and counter-archiving. For practitioners, community radio producers, language revitalization teams, and museum sound curators, the book doubles as a design brief.

Acoustic Colonialism demonstrates that settler colonialism is audible and interruptible. While its waves have reshaped Mapuche soundscapes, counter-sonic practices disrupt, contest, and interfere with imposed acoustic regimes. By theorizing acoustic colonialism and documenting Mapuche acts of interference across literature, radio, and music, Cárcamo-Huechante offers a model for Indigenous media studies grounded in land and committed to Indigenous liberation. Methodologically, his employment of *allkütun* as reciprocal exchange models accountable listening to people and land, and stands as a principled counterpoint to the "colonial ear" that captures and distorts. The book's concepts and methodology resonate across the hemisphere precisely because they remain accountable to place.

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