

These “conversations” may be an attack against the flaws of some humanists, yet they are not at all a war-machine against the humanities. What Aldama and Hogan are looking for is a new way to start doing new forms of research that brings the best of both worlds together, while also fostering new insights within each of the respective disciplines. Despite their common passion for general, if not universal laws, Aldama and Hogan are not making a plea for the integration of the humanities in the newer cognitive studies (and therefore the vanishing of the former and the sole promotion of the latter), but for the humanist enhancing of cognitive research on the one hand and the cognitive deepening of humanist studies, currently in great need of a new and more solid basis, on the other hand.

It should be stressed that this book is not to be seen as the encounter between a cognitivist voice and a humanist voice, for both authors are committed cognitivist humanists. In this sense, the unity of the book is very strong. There are, however, also divergences between Aldama and Hogan, who frequently take different stances and positions on key matters in the field. For example: Aldama tends to put a stronger emphasis on narratology than Hogan; he also feels more sympathetic to the quest for a “unified” general science, whereas Hogan is more eager to open his theoretical work to history and context. Finally Aldama sees the (artistic) work as a “blueprint” that establishes a relationship between author, work and reader (listener, spectator) while Hogan’s approach underlines more the idea of simulation and the use of the work as a “building.”

However, these (important) differences do not involve fundamental tension or opposition between the two researchers. Hence, the perfectly well-chosen term of “conversations.” This book, indeed, is not a “dialogue” in the Socratic sense of the word: Such a project would suppose a cer-

tain dissymmetry between a person who A) knows (although claiming that he doesn’t know anything at all; we know the trick) and a person who B) doesn’t know yet (but who will learn how to learn and know thanks to the maieutic power of the dialogue). Nor is this book an “interview,” which would suppose a more or less lively and natural circulation of the word. What the book proposes, instead, is a thoroughly constructed and neatly organized overview of all major issues raised in today’s cognitive research, completed with a presentation of its most important and often most controversial topics. Both authors give their opinion on all of these debates, often in very long interventions, while reacting also to each other’s perspectives, nuances and queries. Thus this book becomes a kind of “personal and twice-told encyclopedia” that can be read from A to Z and also in any order whatsoever, starting from the key words listed in the detailed index. Actually, the best way to read this book is to read it in different ways and to continue to reuse it as a compendium. I can strongly recommend for instance the item “habituation,” which will lead the literary scholar to extremely fruitful insights on the practice of rereading.

Aldama and Hogan have not written a book of scientific vulgarization. Their conversations are often very technical approaches of cutting edge research, yet always presented with exceptional didactic talent and flair and an open eye to cultural complexity and diversity in the broadest sense of the word. One of the great qualities of the book in this regard is the authors’ familiarity with non-Western cultures (Indian culture for Hogan, Latin-American culture for Aldama). This openness is not a way of demonstrating a sense of political correctness (on which the authors have many thought-provoking things to say), but a way of putting into practice the values and questions of cultural studies for cognitive studies (and vice versa).

## ON LISTENING

Angus Carlyle and Cathy Lane, editors. Uniformbooks, Axminster, U.K., 2013. 200 pp., ills. Trade. ISBN: 978-1-9100-1001-3.

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As Marshall McLuhan noted, we have no earlids, no way to close our ears against the surrounding, ever-present and constant soundscape. We have, however, trained ourselves not to foreground the ever-present stream of aural broadband information. When we do listen, the dynamic shimmer of sounds can problematize discrete sources, and thus understanding. Additionally, there are places where we cannot listen.

Within this context, listening has become a popular subject of study by a broad swath of academics. On the other hand, reflexive listening takes place in a number of everyday settings. This new book, *On Listening*, edited by Angus Carlyle and Cathy Lane, seeks to bridge this gap, connect the scholarly with the experiential and extend our discourse about the act of listening.

Carlyle and Lane, co-directors of the Creative Research in Sound Arts Practice program at the University of the Arts in London, have collaborated previously on *In the Field: The Art of Field Recording* (reviewed July 2013). This time they have commissioned works from artists, activists, scholars and scientists (40 total) and curated their writings about listening into multidisciplinary perspectives ranging from anthropology to bioacoustics, to geography, to literature, to community activism, to sociology, to religion, to philosophy, to art history, to conflict mediation and to sonic arts including music, field recording and ethnomusicology. Each contribution explores how skilled listening can mediate new relationships with our physical environment and the people

and other species with which it is shared.

*On Listening* is divided into four sections. Carlyle and Lane admit this division is arbitrary but capable of revealing commonalities, of making connections across disciplines, geographies and methodologies and, as a result, of increasing apprehension. Listening Perspectives, the first section, assembles a number of perspectives and meanings linked by the common idea that listening becomes active, creative, dedicated and passionate. The second section, Listening Spaces, discusses eventscapes where “either one species or one specialized area of activity dominates, often making it difficult for us to access the acoustic space” (p. 55). Such spaces include personal point of view while riding a bicycle, a Protestant cemetery in Rome, the airspace above a secret testing facility in the Mojave Desert, and underwater. A common theme is what constitutes ideal listening environments and the knowledge to which listening can give rise.

The essays collected in Listening Spaces, the third section, speaks to a range of technical and conceptual devices, acting like McLuhan’s extended ganglia, as probes sent into the world, designed to stream information back to the listener.

The final section, Listening to Self and Others, explores the nature of a listener and effective listening in a variety of contexts. In each essay, the author struggles to express the essential nature of listening even while reminding us that careful listening is essential for the moral, spiritual and intellectual welfare of both individuals and societies. The common theme: Listening requires full concentration and engagement. Listening is “an attitude, a state of mind, a way of being, something that happens inside as well as coming from the outside” (pp. 153–154).

In the end, this collection of curated essays leads the reader (listener?) to realize that listening can reveal a parallel reality. This reality of

listening can lead to immersion, and over time to meditative introspection. The listener is located at the center of this process, “offering an immediate connection to place and its inhabitants, sacred, and profane.”

**TRIPLE ENTENDRE:  
FURNITURE MUSIC,  
MUZAK, MUZAK-PLUS**

by Hervé Vanel, University of Illinois Press, Champaign, IL, U.S.A., 2013. 216 pp. Trade. ISBN: 978-0-2520-3799-3.

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We love to place things along continua, forcing multi-dimensional phenomena onto a straight line that is probably compartmentalized into a mere handful of categories we can get a grip on. Nowhere is this more so than with the arts. In the case of music, whose categories seem designed for mystification, it’s not easy, but we strain to do it. From John Cage’s silence to the self-parody of heavy metal, from the wondrous Portsmouth Sinfonia to the UNESCO designated, intangible world heritage of Sardinian throat singing, we have ways of explaining why it is music, where it is along the line and hence, of course, of commodifying it.

Then along comes a transgression. Worse, one that has been with us since the 1940s. No, not crooning, but Muzak from the Muzak Corporation. Shock! Horror! Degradation! Muzak was to music what Tracey Emin’s bed is to the Daily Mail’s art. What a relief, then, that John Cage added edgy, near-tangible heritage value to the very concept of it, by inventing Muzak-Plus. Phew! Muzak is thus able to be pinned to its reserved place—Now we see it!—along a line starting—Perhaps! Who knows!—with Erik Satie’s “furniture music” and passing via Cage towards ambient music, iPad drone and just, like, 8-bit post-video-game wave-table looping madness!

The above is not only, I assert, true, but also useful, rich and extremely

interesting. One cannot repeat too often that the sideways mapping of discourse from one domain to another is deeply satisfying and illuminating, irredundant holism. And of course the ideas treated in this study could be couched in terms of, say, found text, Situationist strolling, seaside postcards or computer art. *Triple Entendre*, by Hervé Vanel, is partly about a music designed not to be listened to but to enhance productivity, change or reinforce moods—a trademarked instrument of social engineering. Not to be listened to, but always heard. You can blink, but you don’t have earlids [1]. The title is deserving of unraveling.

In full, the title of the book reads *Triple Entendre: Furniture Music, Muzak, Muzak-Plus*; it offers three ways of hearing. Then, of course, there is the pun on “double entendre,” where one utterance can conceal another, and one can have it mean or be understood both ways, if you know what I mean. As Vanel must know, the phrase “double entendre” is not to be found in the French section of any *dictionnaire bilingue*, but only in the English sections, where it is explained to the somewhat mystified French that it means *double entente*, one more cordial false friend. So a close reading of the title reveals it

