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Author(s): Asma Naeem

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## Splitting Sight and Sound: Thomas Dewing's *A Reading*, Gilded Age Women, and the Phonograph

Asma Naeem

Amid the excitement surrounding his retrospective in New York in 1900, the artist Thomas Dewing wrote his close friend Stanford White, “Did you notice the one with two girls at a big table, I think it the best thing that I ever did.”<sup>1</sup> The object of Dewing’s praise, the painting he called *A Reading* (1897), was a modest-sized canvas (approximately 20 by 30 inches) depicting two elegant women in a sparse, well-appointed interior—a pictorial subject with which the artist experimented for the next twenty years (fig. 1). According to the painting’s title, *A Reading*, the woman on the right has been reading aloud to her listening companion. Yet even though the picture largely visualizes an oral reading—the open book here, the contemplative listener there—it is difficult to understand the experiential loop between the two women as speaker and listener. While Dewing’s decision to picture silence, instead of speech, emphasizes the contemplativeness that an activity such as an oral reading surely induces, it also leaves us with somewhat of a paradox when viewing the picture, an incongruity between the painting’s title of “a reading” and its visual effect.<sup>2</sup> Making this incongruity a central line of inquiry, I claim in the pages that follow that the disjunction between the painting and its title is sensorially based, a tension between seeing one thing and “hearing” another, and further, that the tension between these sensory functions pervades *A Reading* in several important ways, with the women around the table and the viewers in front of the painting, with period constructs of power and the imagination.

Specifically, I consider how *A Reading* engages, indeed thrives on, the oscillating forms and meanings of listening and sound in the Gilded Age. A crucial issue for my examination is the signification of gender, for women anchored—served as the leitmotif in—both the artistic production of Dewing and period depictions of listening. As scholars such as Susan Hobbs have shown, Dewing’s participation in aestheticism, an Anglo-American style that proffered women as vessels of culture and models of self-cultivation, led him to explore an ideal



**Figure 1.**  
Thomas Dewing, *A Reading*  
(1897), Smithsonian American Art  
Museum.

and essentialized cast of femininity.<sup>3</sup> This investment in women in the late nineteenth century, as I demonstrate, was also occurring with, if not precipitated by, the cultural forces circumscribing women as modern society's ideal listeners, and *A Reading* wholly participates in this realm of constructions and meanings. In mapping these kinds of interrelationships between the painting and historical tropes of listening, my aim is to suggest a perceptual, multisensory significance for Dewing's silent women and to reveal how the painting sustains preexisting systems of social and sensorial authority particular to the Gilded Age.

To this end, I focus not on what the women might be listening to but on *how* they are listening. In the second half of the nineteenth century, a significant set of forces transformed the meaning of sound and the act of listening. Culminating with such technologies as the phonograph in the late 1870s, voices became disembodied and listening became detached from its visual referent. This fragmented effect occurred not only with the musical functions of the phonograph (such as not being able to see an opera as one listened on phonographic disk) but also with its textual uses: as Lisa Gitelman puts it, "for the first time reading aloud was explicitly severed from the human subject."<sup>4</sup> Disconnecting sound and sight, the phonograph offered, in the words of its inventor Thomas Edison, "amusement [to] the lady or gentleman whose eyes

and hands may be otherwise employed.”<sup>5</sup> As these statements suggest, the phonograph, with its ability to record sound, was part of a discursive framework that normalized the fragmentation of the senses in the late nineteenth century. Like the phonograph, Dewing’s *A Reading*—and the ears, eyes, and hands of the women he depicted in it—registers the period splitting of sight and sound. The painting, of course, does not depict a phonograph, but in its explicit bifurcation of the two senses, as well as its exploration of problems of aurality, orality, and replication, the work explores a range of issues that intersect with the technological form. Equally important, in its emphatic promotion of a feminized, cultivated kind of audition, the painting tracks, both visually and substantively, period consumption of the phonograph. During this time, businessmen like Edison quickly realized that the biggest consumer of the phonograph would be middle-class women, a strategy filled with significant assumptions and implications. As Carolyn Marvin explains in her landmark study of technologies, “The early history of electric media is less the evolution of technical efficiencies in communication than a series of arenas for negotiating issues crucial to the conduct of social life; among them, who is inside and outside, who may speak, who may not, and who has authority and who may be believed.”<sup>6</sup> These problematic issues of aurality and power are precisely what links the cultural construction of the phonograph and the inert, quiet women of *A Reading*.

### Sound and Listening in Dewing’s Time

During the second half of the nineteenth century, scientific and technological developments helped enact significant and decidedly varied models of sound and listening. Researchers in medicine, at the forefront of this epistemological breakthrough, began to utilize the faculty of hearing to obtain information from the patient and make diagnoses—most notably with the monaural stethoscope in 1816.<sup>7</sup> And in psychoanalysis, the therapist’s assessment of the patient shifted from visual observations to linguistic/aural fields in the work of the French neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot (1825–1893) to include the catharsis model (or “talking cure”) of his student Sigmund Freud (1856–1939).<sup>8</sup> With sound emerging as a highly focused mode of knowledge, new technologies such as the phonograph began to emerge in response to a wide array of cultural needs and conditions. Edison arrived at a prototype for the phonograph in 1877 while working on the telegraph and telephone. He was not alone, however: individuals on both sides of the Atlantic were making discursive advances in creating a sound reproduction device around this time. Utilizing a transducer

and inscription techniques, the French scientist Léon Scott invented a machine to visualize or “write” sound called the phonautograph in 1857, producing a phonautogram on April 9, 1860, which is arguably the earliest recording of sound.<sup>9</sup> Another Frenchman, Charles Cros, described his idea for a machine that could store and reproduce sound months before Edison’s announcement.<sup>10</sup> Both of these efforts were essentially variants of Edison’s machine. In Edison’s first model, a speaker talked into a mouthpiece, and the sound vibrations were indented onto a rotating tinfoil cylinder with a diaphragm-and-needle unit; a second such unit played back the recording. Though successful at recording sound to a certain degree, the cylinder was problematic in terms of mass production and durability; it was eventually replaced by the disk with which we are more familiar.

Predicting its future uses, Edison imagined the machine primarily for letter writing via dictation. This, along with phonographic books, the “preservation of languages,” and the “last words of dying persons” were some of the original ways the phonograph was marketed.<sup>11</sup> A promotional brochure from 1878 titled “All about the Telephone and Phonograph” explains:

Lovers, we have heard, delight to read tender epistles over and over again; but now they can *treasure up old voices!*— preserve the little metal slip, and hear again and again the words so dear, and the tones still dearer. The last utterances of a dearly-loved parent, child, or friend may be treasured and listened to, though continents and oceans intervene.<sup>12</sup>

The desire to record the sound of loved ones continued for several decades, as demonstrated by an 1894 poem titled “Visible Sound”: “If human voice may on the plastic disk / Breathe into being forms of beauty rare, / And we may see the voices that we love / Take shape and color, infinitely fair.”<sup>13</sup> As these period statements suggest, the phonograph emerged from a variety of transformations and concerns occurring within American society, responding to such imminent needs as modes of communication for an expanding country and more efficient use of time for the growing class of businessmen. The phonograph then was neither invented nor initially used to record music, but for textual or linguistic practices like reading, speaking, and writing.<sup>14</sup>

Along with these shifts in sonic experience, listening as a set of social behaviors and practices underwent dramatic changes as well. Prior to the nineteenth century, concerts were primarily considered venues of sociability: audiences chattered and hawkers shouted, leaving little time to listen to the music.<sup>15</sup> Yet alongside scientific discoveries in sound and hearing, concertgoers began to focus their attention on the aural events at hand. Incrementally, periodicals,

too, began to signal the individual modality of listening. In 1872 *Harper's New Monthly* featured a poem titled "The Listeners"; in 1873 *Scribner's Monthly* published a short story called "The Automaton-Ear."<sup>16</sup> This burgeoning interest by musicians, writers, and critics amounted, according to Peter Gay, to a "small army of single-minded preceptors struggl[ing] to train listeners in requisite introspective postures," ushering in an "ascent of inwardness in the Victorian Age."<sup>17</sup>

Dewing was well acquainted with the newfound emphases on both the artistic and the technological powers of listening. Trained in the violin, the artist was an avid concertgoer. He also kept a telephone in his studio and communicated with patrons and colleagues with the sound-based technology of the telegraph. Those in Dewing's close social circle were also technophiles: between 1892 and 1900, White's architectural firm built one of the most acoustically advanced music halls in Boston, and the patron Charles Lang Freer relied on the new inventions of the typewriter (a machine based on the piano) and telephone for the day-to-day business operations of his railroad-car company.<sup>18</sup> While it is unknown whether Dewing used the phonograph, his use of the telegraph and telephone—the latter a device that also encouraged a unique splitting of sight and sound—in addition to the technological activities of his close associates, suggests that he had some familiarity with the unprecedented developments in sound and listening that were occurring everywhere around him.

To some degree, Dewing's artistic evolution, a shift from portraiture and classical subjects early in his career to sustained explorations of aurality, music, and silence during his mature period, supports this notion. As a young boy growing up in Massachusetts, Dewing displayed a remarkable talent for drawing. Although he experimented with such varied interests as taxidermy and lithography, Dewing settled on painting as a vocation, spurred particularly by the rousing success of his portraits. The artist moved to Paris for further instruction at the Académie Julian, where he painted academic subjects similar to those of his mentors, Gustave-Rudolphe Boulanger and Jules LeFèbvre. These classical themes were quickly abandoned once Dewing returned to America and settled in New York, where for the majority of his prolific career, he pursued the sonic subject. Indeed, Dewing is perhaps best known for his depictions of music, such as *The Song* (1891) and *Girl with a Lute* (1905).<sup>19</sup> But he was not alone in doing this; many painters—American and European, impressionists and symbolists—were depicting individuals listening to or making music at home or at concerts during this time.<sup>20</sup> Dewing's particularly unique purchase in this regard, however, was his insistence on depicting solely female auditors—an

insistence that seems related to the sonic hierarchy that the artist adhered to in his personal life. Dewing and his male colleagues (White and the sculptor Augustus Saint Gaudens, among others) dominated both the New York and Cornish, New Hampshire, artistic communities to which they belonged. Fellow Cornish colony resident Frances Grimes singled out Dewing for his verbal lashings and treatment of women, noting that Cornish “was a place where the men were acknowledged to be more important than the women, where the men talked and the women listened.”<sup>21</sup>

### Listening

One key aspect of the reshaping of listening behaviors during Dewing’s lifetime was a valorization of the ability to be silent. This was nothing new for the act of picture making, of course, for a model was required to sit quietly for hours on end as the artist created her likeness on canvas. The painter-narrator in Henry James’s 1893 short story “The Real Thing” intimates this process when, after the elegant Mr. and Mrs. Monarch offer themselves to him as models by strutting about his studio, he remarks; “I thanked [them], observing that what a draughtsman most valued in his model was the faculty of keeping quiet.”<sup>22</sup> Beyond the allusion to studio operations, however, silence functioned as a powerful signifier of different psychic and sensorial states. According to Susan Canning, silence carried several interpretative possibilities: contemplation or meditation, admonition against speech, and religious devotion.<sup>23</sup> In the late nineteenth century, American artists usually represented silence in terms of contemplation, as exemplified by Saint Gaudens’s 1874 sculpture of a woman holding a finger to her lips, titled *Silence*.<sup>24</sup> While Dewing’s women in *A Reading* do not adopt this pose or function as allegories of silence, their lack of sound equivocates—problematically so—between a silencilike interiority and the aural receptivity of listening, an ambiguity that Dewing creates using formal and compositional strategies of omission and immobility and principles of aestheticism.<sup>25</sup>

One of Dewing’s main preoccupations throughout his career-long engagement with aestheticism was visualizing the meditative state inherent in aesthetic experience.<sup>26</sup> Commonly associated with the mantra “art for art’s sake,” the aesthetic movement privileged formal issues of harmony and beauty over narrative. Though many painters, thinkers, and collectors advocated the principles of aestheticism, it was the American expatriate James McNeill Whistler who became its most famous spokesman. In an 1878 letter, for example, Whistler wrote, “As music is the poetry of sound, so is painting the poetry of sight, and



subject matter has nothing to do with harmony of sound or of color. . . . [Art] should stand alone, and . . . that is why I insist on calling my works ‘arrangements’ or ‘harmonies.’”<sup>27</sup> Patrons and collectors of aesthetic paintings who supported Whistler’s program similarly prized the powers of the imagination and railed against literalness. For example, Freer exclaimed, “So many people . . . seem to want buckets full of pigment where its intelligent absence stands for higher imagination and greater subjective pleasure. Is the world never to learn the great value of omission?”<sup>28</sup>

Dewing, too, apparently believed in the value of omission with respect to the imagination, for he reduced *A Reading*’s legibility by altering the figures in significant ways.<sup>29</sup> As Hobbs has noted, according to x- and auto-radiographs of the work, the reader was originally making eye contact with and lifting her face toward the listener, and the listener had an outstretched arm to the reader.<sup>30</sup> Instead of showing these sensorial empathies and narrative gestures—all of which would suggest that the women were participating in an oral reading—Dewing changed each figure to appear noncommunicative and diffident. Eliminating precisely those gestural symbols that connote speaking, Dewing creates a speaker who, with closed lips, face tilted down, and eyes averted from the listener, turns inward, lost within her own absorptive orbit. With this effect, the speaker resembles the countless depictions of women reading to themselves created during this period. The cultural historian Martha Banta argues that such portrayals touted the female mind at work, disagreeing with the premise that they showed “a life exposed as indolence, passivity, emptiness, and negation.”<sup>31</sup> Banta’s logic, applicable to silent readers or thinkers, cannot rescue the speaker in *A Reading*, however, for Dewing creates a woman who projects a sense of passiveness not commensurate with the task at hand.

The listener, too, presents difficulties in terms of aural meanings. While Dewing created many depictions of listening, few works feature a listener in such dense, ambiguous ways. For example, in *Lady with a Lute* (1886), Dewing shows the listener in profile, a convention many artists relied on time and time again to depict listening because it permits a comprehensive view of the ear. Another audiovisual aid is the fact that the figure touches an object that transmits sound. In other words, the sonic narrative in this painting is manifest. Yet in *A Reading*, even though the listener is shown in profile, the ear is covered, and the ear’s sonic powers are thereby obscured. Along with this occlusion of the ear, the listener seems enervated, with her left arm particularly limp, hinting at the idea of hypnosis or trance that so gripped the fin de siècle.<sup>32</sup> The most infamous example of this trend is the series of lectures given by Charcot. At the hospital at Salpêtrière, Charcot conducted studies of women afflicted by



hysteria by hypnotizing them for classes of male students, pictorialized by André Brouillet in *A Clinical Lecture at the Salpêtrière* (1887) (fig. 2). Emphasizing the sexual pleasure implicit in this spectacle, Brouillet bathes the patient and her décolleté in warm light as the suit-clad Charcot discourses next to her. Within this inequity of power there are sonic implications, for it is Charcot who speaks and the female patient who is rendered mute by his efforts.<sup>33</sup> To put it differently, silence in this case is not an admonition of speech but the draining of sound. If we can connect Dewing's women in *A Reading* to Charcot and hysteria (through Brouillet's painting), it is because of their overlapping strategies of suppressing the female voice in spite of her physical presence, through techniques of restraint or immobilization.<sup>34</sup> Each woman in *A Reading* appears trapped by her surroundings, an effect amplified by the suppressing compositional structure. With its wedge-like position and stark orthogonals, the table pins the women in place, restricting any possibility of movement within the painting's geometric system. Like the vase and the mirror nearby, the women also become fixed, inert coordinates; their motionless state minimizes the potential for the durational, mutable operations of speaking and listening. Further, as both paintings illustrate, while silence and listening are two very different—albeit sometimes related—perceptual experiences, these differences can disappear in visual representation, creating a paradox of sorts that the artist must overcome with visual markers or pictorial strategies. Dewing, on the contrary, not only avoids this kind of auditory illumination (as suggested by the fact that critics dubbed him a “quietist”), but he also makes changes to *A Reading* that diffuse the aural experiential loop between the women and evacuate any possibility of sound within the painting.<sup>35</sup>

To the Victorian audience, the women's passiveness would be nothing new, of course, for in so many arenas, women were meant to be seen and not heard—beliefs that some women were rebelling against with the burgeoning suffragist movement. As Gay notes, “A majority of the protagonists in [depictions of listening] are women . . . [because the] dominant ideology of the nineteenth century took women to be more sensitive, more passive, more receptive than the male.”<sup>36</sup> With the popular invention of the phonograph, the stereotype of the passive listening female proliferated in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. At the same time, the trope of the listening female also was used to tantalize women to buy phonographs. According to Gitelman, “During the years 1895–1910, recorded sound was reconceived as a commodity for home consumption.”<sup>37</sup> In other words, women became the phonograph's target consumers.



**Figure 2.** André Brouillet, *A Clinical Lecture at the Salpêtrière* (1887), Musée d'Histoire de la Médecine, Université Paris V, René Descartes.

This marketing strategy is readily seen in this image, appealing to mothers and wives desirous of an elegant lifestyle and high position in society (fig. 3). Indeed, many advertisements displayed the “talking machine” as a fine piece of furniture and promoted it exclusively for house-proud women, often using a pictorial language that resembled Dewing’s. Like Dewing’s paintings, manufacturers of the phonograph manipulated what Bailey Van Hook calls the “Aristocratic aesthetic” to target both the men who desired the models in these images and the women who wanted to emulate them.<sup>38</sup> With their hair pinned up to reveal their fine-boned frames and ruffled low-cut dresses, the women in these advertisements belong in the same cultured circles as Dewing’s women, projecting a middle-class desire for refinement. The bearded patriarch and requisite child are nearby, framing the woman in the traditional role of mother and wife to stabilize the family economy. And like *A Reading*, these advertisements participate in the late nineteenth-century network of ideas that promoted Spencerian repose, aesthetic contemplation, and, in the words of Alan Trachtenberg, the “cultured home [as] domestic island of virtue and stability.”<sup>39</sup> Maria Oakey Dewing, Thomas’s wife, wrote as much in the 1882 work that she collaborated on with her husband, *Beauty in the Household*,



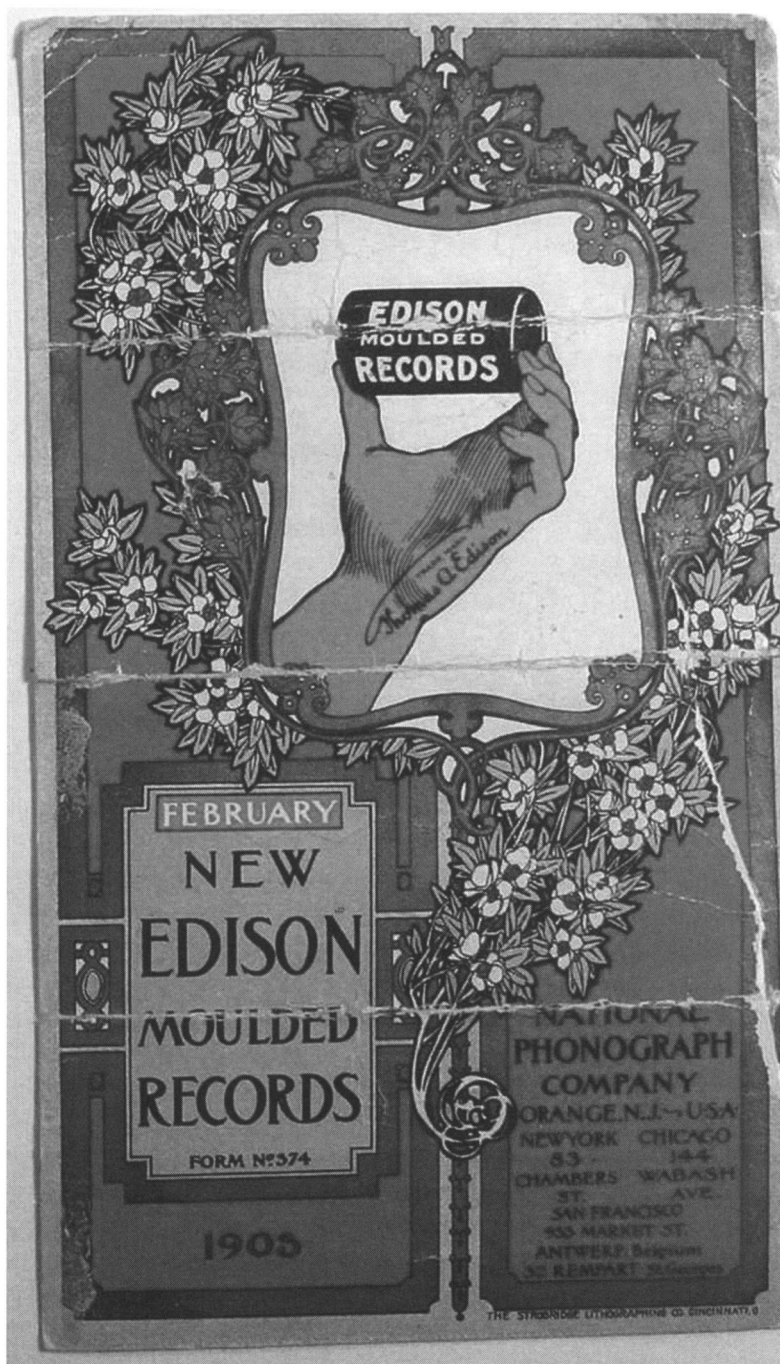
**Figure 3.** Advertisement for the Gram-o-phone (1897), Warshaw Collection of Business Americana—Phonograph, Archives Center, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution.

insisting that women should have servants to help around the house so that the wives would have time to create an “atmosphere of peace and beauty” for their families.<sup>40</sup>

In addition to the refined female protagonists, *A Reading* harbors other significant formal resonances with the material culture of the phonograph, particularly with its tropes of reflection, repetition, and floral imagery. To begin with, the listener in *A Reading* functions much like the phonographic listener in that she cannot see the action of the text being read to her, only her sense of audition is being stimulated. Even further, Dewing’s speaker and listener are almost interchangeable, a similarity that suggests the motif of replication and corresponding concerns of authenticity or “which is which?” as Edison famously asked in his advertising campaigns in the early decades of the twentieth century.<sup>41</sup> Also suggesting replication, the mirror functions metaphorically in phonographic discourse for the ability to repeat or reproduce sound realistically (fig. 4). As seen in this 1903 catalog for Edison Records, the phonographic cylinder is held up to the gilt, ornamented mirror (not unlike the mirror in *A Reading*) showing the reflection of a hand bearing

**Figure 4.** Catalogue Cover for Edison Records (1903), Warshaw Collection of Business Americana—Phonograph, Archives Center, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution.





A True Mirror of Sound

# BETTINI

MICRO-  
PHONOGRAPH

MICRO-DIAPHRAGMS  
FOR PHONOGRAPH AND  
GRAPHOPHONE

BETTINI  
CELEBRATED  
"OPERATIC MUSICAL RECORDS"  
AND  
AUTOGRAPH-RECORDS  
OF  
WORLD FAMOUS ARTISTS

CATALOGUE N° 10 - APRIL 1900.

**BETTINI PHONOGRAPH  
LABORATORY**

110 Fifth Avenue, New York.

Cable address, Micrograph, New York.

*Bettini*

Edison's signature and confirming the brand's authenticity. Another example of the use of the mirror metaphor is a popular phonograph manufacturer's logo, "the true mirror of sound," as seen in the 1900 catalog cover (fig. 5).<sup>42</sup>

From the doubled women to the reflective surfaces, the theme of proliferation continues with the flowers shown throughout the painting. Not surprisingly, flowers, too, functioned as powerful sonic emblems. In their organic cycle of bud, bloom, and decay, flowers offered Victorians an appropriate metaphor for the way sound reached human ears—and ultimately faded away. Suggesting the fleeting (and reproductive) character of sound, flowers began to appear in the marketing, design, and production of the phonograph as well, most notably in the way the horn of the phonograph was shaped (see fig. 6). Sound in effect emanated from flowers—even though Victorians were

**Figure 5.**

Catalogue Cover for Bettini Micro-Diaphragms (1900), Smithsonian Institution Libraries, Washington, D.C.

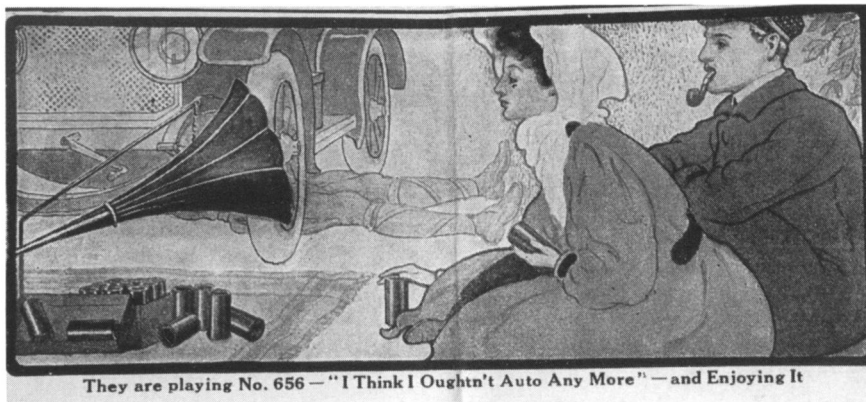
looking at a flower-shaped horn, words and music emerged from it. In *A Reading*, Dewing's careful placement of flowers in and around the vase in the center of the painting may have reminded viewers of their sonic connotations. At the same time,

just as Dewing drains the women of their aural potentialities, the sonic powers of the flowers and reflective surfaces in the painting are obscured: the flowers in the vase are scant and lifeless, and the reflections in the mirror and on the table are somewhat hazy and inconsistent.

### The Artist's Voice

If Dewing goes to great lengths to empty the picture of sound, he goes to equal lengths to fill the painting with self-reflexive devices. The most important example of this is the Empire mahogany table featured in the work, as it was one of the artist's most prized acquisitions. Dewing wrote that he bought the table from William Merritt Chase's Tenth Street studio because he had to "have something [of Chase's]," and his desire to acquire part of Chase's studio legacy is telling.<sup>43</sup> According to Sarah Burns, Chase was the consummate self-propagandist, and his opulent studio contributed to his own mythmaking.<sup>44</sup> From Chase's studio to Dewing's then, the table signifies self-promotion, and Dewing's inclusion of this table, rendered more vividly than the women around it, materializes Dewing's wish for an artistic legacy and turns the work into a powerful self-construction. Implicit in this point is the fact that the table suggests the act of artistic representation—its vast span of mimetic surface a lateral substitute for the canvas itself. When we consider, too, that the mas-





**Figure 6.** Advertisement for Phonograph Cylinder Records (n.d.), Warsaw Collection of Business Americana—Phonograph, Archives Center, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution.

sive table would direct any sound made by the women, the gleaming structure annexes an aural, in addition to a visual, significance.

Because a surface's acoustic properties (whether it can absorb or reflect soundwaves) directly correspond to the material composition of the surface and how it appears to the human eye, it is one instance when sound has a visual correspondent.<sup>45</sup> In *A Reading*, the table's thick, slick surface would seem to deflect any sound made near it, its massive plane commandeering any verbal, sonic production. As this suggests, the table undeniably controls the scene both formally and in autobiographical terms, bearing the metaphorical fingerprints of the artist in many ways.

This sense of autobiography becomes clearer if we consider that the setting of *A Reading* was an actual room in Dewing's Cornish home designed for him by White. Furthermore, provocatively placed within this scene of art imitating life is another motif of self-reference—the mirror, which also carries associations of the artist and the act of artistic representation in the way it offers mimetic capabilities. Most artists relied on mirrors to paint their own portraits, and this convention would not have been lost on the academically trained Dewing. In *A Reading*, the mirror not only references self-portraiture but also presents the possibility of a self-portrait, particularly when we consider that the mirror's placement in the room would reflect the artist's position in front of the canvas. Regardless of whether the reflection in the mirror constitutes a literal self-portrait, it acts as a reminder of the artist's disembodied presence in the painting and thus serves a potent role within the painting's overall schematic. Notice that the mirror is not near the listener (where it might suggest

the mind's capacity to imagine) but closer to and in fact above the would-be speaker, relegating the model and any possibility of voice to the mirror above her and the allusion of the artist reflected in it. In fact, the speaker seems to be making room for the mirror, as if she is in its way. She is displaced by it, her head and body askew in the Windsor chair. Thus, even though Dewing is not depicted within the painting, the entire *mise-en-scène* he has constructed is self-referential, imbuing the work with his metaphorical—and, significantly, disembodied—presence.

While none of this amounts to a sense of sound *per se*, these reflective, autobiographical markers provide a crucial bridge—a fulcrum—between the women in the work and the artist who created them and, more generally, between what is occurring within the picture and outside it. Dewing's title for the painting, and perhaps the table, in this sense, too, connects the women in the work to the metaphorical sound that comes from the title displayed outside the frame. That is, for all his efforts to evacuate sound within the painting, Dewing selected a title that inflects the otherwise silent picture with a sense of sound. Instead of a Whistlerian title that evades narrative, Dewing does the very opposite with his choice of words, "a reading." In other words, with the aid of the title, the viewer can construct sonic narratives for the women in *A Reading*. No longer isolated, silent, or static, perhaps the reader has just paused in her reading, or as Kathleen Pyne suggests, the reader is in fact "intoning" a poem as the woman nearby listens.<sup>46</sup> The title unites the women in a joint enterprise, mobilizing the painting with a narrative cohesiveness and legibility that is implicitly unfolding. In this significant sense, Dewing's title serves a crucial, *ekphrastic* function.

Exemplified by Homer's description of the shield of Achilles in the eighteenth book of the *Iliad*, ekphrasis traditionally has been considered a poetic form that describes a visual work of art, but can be more broadly defined as the "verbal representation of visual representation."<sup>47</sup> As Jaś Elsner explains, it was only in the twentieth century that writers confined ekphrasis to descriptions of works of art, for in antiquity, ekphrasis described events or any kind of visual experience.<sup>48</sup> For the eighteenth-century theorist Gotthold E. Lessing, ekphrasis was a way to consider the contrastive qualities between poetry and the visual arts of painting and sculpture.<sup>49</sup> Favoring poetry's diachronic capacity, Lessing argued that painting should represent the moment when action is about to occur, to overcome the medium's inability to represent more than one moment in time. According to Lessing, "Painting uses completely different means or signs than does poetry, namely figures and colors in space rather than articulated sounds in time."<sup>50</sup> More than just an interest in the problem of duration, however,

Lessing's statement also adumbrates the sensorial divisions between the visual medium of painting and the aural one of poetry, divisions that have been articulated more fully in the recent work of James Heffernan and others.<sup>51</sup> Heffernan, for example, argues that ekphrasis "entails prosopopeia . . . [it] speaks not only about works of art but also *to* and *for* them."<sup>52</sup> Equally important for my purposes are the gender implications patent within this model of word and image, for as W. J. T. Mitchell explains, ekphrasis can be seen as the "suturing of . . . the image identified as feminine [and] the speaking/seeing subject of the text identified as masculine."<sup>53</sup> Of course, these oppositions staged by ekphrasis between image and text, seeing and speaking, female and male, can be fixed only to a certain degree—as Mitchell points out, when discussing a female author, for example, these categories readily collapse. But in the particular case of *A Reading*, with its display of silent, beautiful women and offer of narration by the male painter's title, these oppositions seem intractable—and bear out in other ways as well.<sup>54</sup>

Ekphrasis, then, in its capacity to offer narrativity to a visual object, parallels the relationship between the title of Dewing's work *A Reading* and the painting itself. Dewing, in turn, takes on the role of the ekphrastic poet, a mediator between the object and, as Mitchell describes it, "the listening subject who . . . will be made to 'see' the object through the medium of the poet's voice."<sup>55</sup> Dewing was familiar with ekphrastic operations in reverse, as he created several works in response to specific poems. His 1886 painting *The Days* was inspired by Ralph Waldo Emerson's poem of the same name. In fact, Dewing was so insistent on the relationship between word and image that he inscribed the poem's text on the frame (several years before Thomas Eakins's similar maneuver on *The Concert Singer* [1892]).<sup>56</sup> With *A Reading*, he takes these efforts farther, as the title literally lends a voice to a mute object and creates, in effect, a gendered binary that bifurcates sight from sound—with the silent, highly visible models and the ekphrastic voice of the invisible, decidedly disembodied, artist.

### Disembodied Voices

Thus far I have been positing that various structural relationships within Dewing's painting—the "sonic" dominance of the title and table (and to a certain extent, the mirror) over the frail women and flowers, the disembodied presence of the artist, the bifurcation of sight and sound—lead to an aural experience of the painting's title incongruent with its visual effect. In broader terms, this sensorial fragmentation in *A Reading* tracks several issues related to the phonographic experience of listening with no corresponding visual referent, what

was considered a sensorial shock to most Victorians.<sup>57</sup> As the media historian Jonathan Sterne notes, “Manufacturers and marketers . . . felt that they had to convince audiences that the new sound media belonged to the same class of communication as face-to-face speech.”<sup>58</sup> One of the most effective ways to “convince audiences,” to normalize the new media’s elimination of the visual source of sound, was through advertisements. For instance, promotional literature in 1878 taunted, “I cannot see you smile, but if you laugh, / Shall hear the merry tones by Phonograph.”<sup>59</sup> Even more remarkable, those in the phonograph industry went to great lengths to show how visual perception was no longer relevant. As can be seen in this 1900 trade catalog for Bettini phonograph diaphragms, for example, the base of the pedestal holding the phonograph features a classical Greek figure with his hands covering his eyes, while the singers advertised are not shown as normative vision would dictate but as bodiless heads within the phonograph cylinders on which their voices were recorded (fig. 5). In effect, advertisers and manufacturers had to skew standard models of seeing because of the phonographic separation of sight and sound.

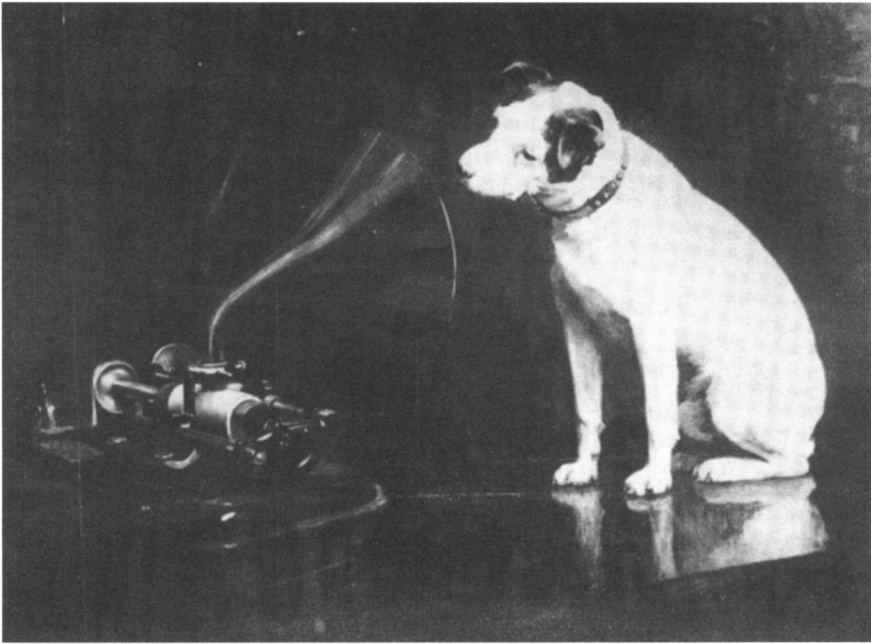
As the catalog cover demonstrates, within years of being introduced on the market, the strange visual disjunctions implicit in phonographic listening were quickly appropriated, even fetishized, for its cultural construction. Strikingly, advertisements for the phonograph began to feature two different kinds of seeing, one with the eye and the second with the phantasmic aural imagination—as if the disembodied voices had to be embodied in some way. In this period advertisement, for example, the listeners are shown looking at the phonograph while the scene they hear described in the recording floats nearby (fig. 6). Even though this specterlike image is as detailed as the rest of the advertisement, it is rendered in a lighter manner to suggest its intangible auditory origins. In *A Reading*, the dematerialized women similarly suggest the interiority of aural experience. For both Dewing and phonographic imagery, vision was no longer solely perceptual but subsisted also within the aural imagination. Equally important, as shown in this and many other advertisements, women played a central role in these campaigns of phonographic listening. The female listener (note that she appears in profile) touches or holds the cylinder records and leans in toward the phonograph, transported, with her capacity to literally see occluded by what her mind sees. With tropes of a spectral presence and latent desire, this advertisement serves as a visual testament to the ways the aural imagination gained a legitimacy and dominance in phonographic discourse. Unlike the phonograph advertisements, however, the women in *A Reading* seem to be both listeners and projections of the phantasmic imagination. In other words, the ethereality of Dewing’s women (in stark contrast to

the table's solidity) suggests that our mind is imagining their presence and the oral reading.

These phantasms of the ear occurred in other modes of cultural production as well. Edward Bellamy's 1889 short story "With the Eyes Shut" features a narrator musing on the uncanniness of the phonograph in the numerous everyday objects he encounters. Listening to a female voice in a phonographic clock, for example, the narrator confides: "I lay awake [in bed] . . . enjoying the society of my bodiless companion and the delicious shock of her quarter-hourly remarks."<sup>60</sup> But perhaps the most famous example of the phonographic bodiless companion is *His Master's Voice* (1897–98), a trademark for Victor/RCA records and originally a painting by the Englishman Francis Barraud made within months of Dewing's picture (fig. 7).<sup>61</sup> With cocked head and pricked ears, Nipper the dog looks with curiosity at the machine that blares his master's disembodied voice. According to Michael Taussig, Nipper the dog "is what assures the fidelity of technical reproduction."<sup>62</sup> In conjunction with this important etymological (think of "Fido the dog") and visual sign of acoustic fidelity, the table's polished surface that reflects the dog and the phonograph suggests the mimetic, reproductive technology of the machine. In other words, the terms of vision are stressed to emphasize the wondrous, immaterial effects of sound reproduction. At the same time, the reflection also portends how vision is multiplied, but not necessarily repeated: we see the dog and phonograph but perhaps imagine the dog with the master whose voice seems to intrigue him so.<sup>63</sup> Just as *His Master's Voice* centers on Nipper's master with the exteriorization of his voice, *A Reading* hinges on Dewing's simultaneous presence and absence with the ekphrastic operation of the artist's voice. Though not as ambiguous as *A Reading*, *His Master's Voice* also operates ekphrastically, that is, it is only with the aid of the title that the viewer grasps the full sonic import of the image, the voice of the master. Similarly in *A Reading*, it is Dewing's disembodied voice that imbues the silent painting with a sense of sound, that of the two women absorbed in an oral reading. Just as important, in both paintings, the bodily absence intensifies the hierarchy of power between subject and master, model and artist.

### Listening as Work

These formal resonances between *A Reading* and *His Master's Voice* are harbingers of the broader concerns of gender and class shared by Dewing's work and phonographic discourse. In addition to marketing the phonograph for the domestic sphere, Edison and other manufacturers promoted the device



**Figure 7.** Francis Barraud, *His Master's Voice* (1898–99), Warsaw Collection of Business Americana—Phonograph, Archives Center, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution.

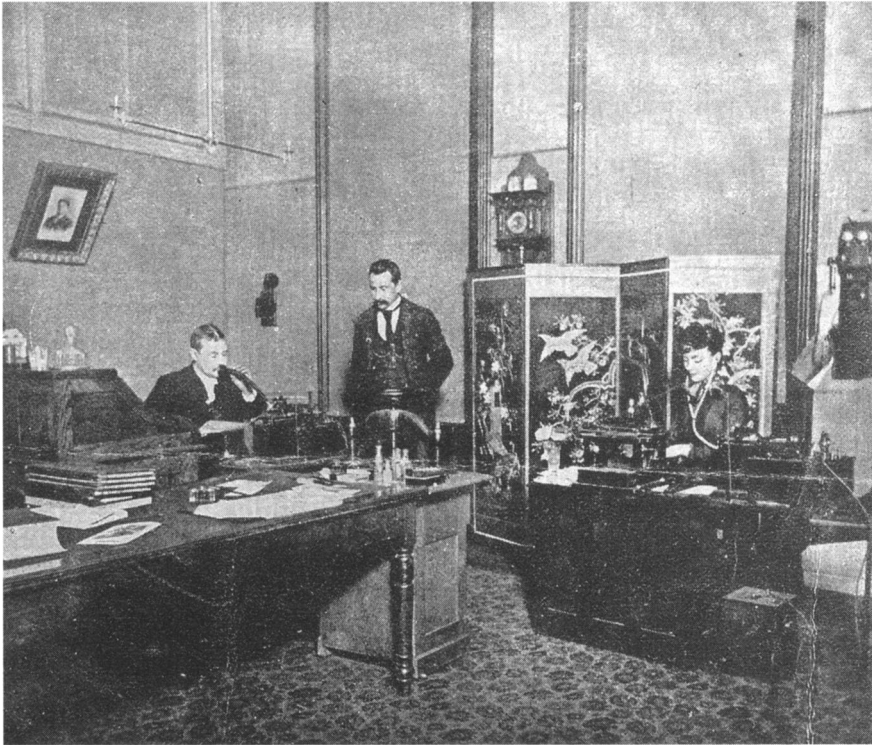
for its efficiency and reliability in the office, a burgeoning sector of employment.<sup>64</sup> Using the phonograph in conjunction with the typewriter, secretaries played back their bosses' phonographic recordings to create typewritten letters.

In 1875 an advertisement boasted that women could make \$10 to \$20 an hour because “no invention has opened for women so broad and easy an avenue to profitable and suitable employment as the typewriter.”<sup>65</sup> Friedrich Kittler calls the surge of female typists the “convergence of a profession, a machine, and a sex,” making women phonographic listeners in the workplace as well.<sup>66</sup> Thus, as more and more women left the home to learn typing and stenography, the binary of women listening and men talking, however problematic and overdetermined, became more and more entrenched.<sup>67</sup> Put another way, in a few more years, the placid, patrician women in *A Reading* very well could transmute into the plucky, pretty secretaries who populated so many facets of American culture in the twentieth century. This gendered division of labor can be seen in an undated photograph (fig. 8) of a secretary listening to and typing out a phonographic recording, while nearby, a man at his desk, presumably her boss, speaks into a second phonograph to create another recording.



Not surprisingly, while women and their listening practices migrated from the home to the office, men's voices remained hegemonic. Though there were some men in clerical and typing positions at the end of the century, the vast majority of secretaries were female, all of whom answered to male supervisors. In her study of gender and class in the American office in the early decades of the twentieth century, the historian Sharon Hartman Strom notes, "Men who dominated elite business professions were happy to recruit women as assistants as long as they respected the central rule: men were in charge and would remain in charge."<sup>68</sup> As Strom explains, male business executives co-opted an array of strategies to keep women in clerical positions, arguing, for example, that women could not grasp the late nineteenth-century systematic management system of Frederick W. Taylor because of its inherent "scientific" nature.<sup>69</sup> Employing a different tactic, Herbert Spencer argued that women should be kept out of the workforce, as societies were more civilized in not treating women as slaves.<sup>70</sup> In a significant sense, Dewing's agenda of elegant, listless women at home contributes to this ideology of exclusion.

As all of this suggests, the paradox of depicting women as vessels for intellectual and cultural refinement while essentializing them in aestheticism also existed within phonographic discourse.<sup>71</sup> In the domestic sphere, the phonograph functioned for women as a means of conspicuous consumption and leisure—what Thorstein Veblen in his 1899 work, *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, dubbed, somewhat problematically, modern upper-class women's "sole economic function."<sup>72</sup> In the public realm, the phonograph was a woman's ticket out of the home and into the workforce—but in accomplishing this transition, she entered another form of sonic and scopophilic domination. At the same time, manufacturers and advertisers traded on images of beautiful female listeners *to sell* phonographs. Within this multivalent economy of phonographic listening, then, Dewing's listeners circulate as the workers, consumers, and currency. Dewing's aesthetic production was a visualization of these attitudes, consumed over and over again by the male patrons and captains of industry who relied on female auditors to effect their business transactions and supported the artist for much of his life. Though *A Reading* represents all of these countervailing forces and tensions—male and female desire, a soon-to-be moribund leisure class and emergent working class—the painting is remarkably still; Dewing's innate sense of compositional balance and cool atmosphere a veneer for all that lies underneath.



**Figure 8.** Photograph of office (n.d.), Warshaw Collection of Business Americana—Phonograph, Archives Center, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution.

#### Notes

1. Dewing to White, February 3, 1900, SW 42:8, Stanford White Papers, Avery Library, Columbia University.
2. According to Susan Hobbs, the work was initially shown as *Reading* in the 1900 exhibition at Montross Gallery. Similarly, for the 1901 Pan American Exhibition in Buffalo, John Gellatly lent the painting as *Reading*. With the 1924 Macbeth Gallery exhibition, “The Thirty Paintings by Thirty Artists,” the painting began to be shown as *A Reading*. The Smithsonian Institution acquired the painting as part of the Henry Ward Ranger bequest in 1914, and the work was first exhibited as part of the bequest in a 1929–30 exhibition at the National Gallery of Art as *A Reading*. Susan Hobbs, e-mail to author, March 10, 2009.
3. Susan A. Hobbs, with a contribution by Barbara Dayer Gallati, *The Art of Thomas Wilmer Dewing: Beauty Reconfigured* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1996); Bailey Van Hook, *Angels of Art: Women and Art in American Society, 1876–1914* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996).
4. Lisa Gitelman, *Scripts, Grooves, Writing Machines: Representing Technology in the Edison Era* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1999), 145.

5. Thomas Edison, "The Phonograph and Its Future," *North American Review*, no. 126 (May–June 1878): 533.
6. Carolyn Marvin, *When Old Technologies Were New: Thinking about Electric Communication in the Late Nineteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 4.
7. For discussion of the stethoscope in this context, see Jonathan Sterne, "Medicine's Acoustic Culture: Mediate Auscultation, the Stethoscope, and the 'Autopsy of the Living,'" in *The Auditory Culture Reader*, ed. Michael Bull and Les Back, 191–217 (New York: Berg, 2003).
8. Peter Gay, *Freud: A Life for Our Time* (New York: Doubleday, 1988), 50–53.
9. Jody Rosen, "Researchers Play Tune Recorded before Edison," *New York Times*, March 27, 2008.
10. Jonathan Sterne, *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2003), 77–78.
11. Thomas Edison, "The Phonograph and Its Future," *North American Review* 126 (May–June 1878): 527. For further discussion of Edison, see Theresa M. Collins and Lisa Gitelman, *Thomas Edison and Modern America: A Brief History with Documents* (New York: Bedford St. Martin's, 2002).
12. *All about the Telephone and Phonograph* (London: Ward, Lock and Co., 1878), 99.
13. Ellen Knight Bradford, "Visible Sound," *Century* 48.2 (June 1894): 217.
14. Gitelman, *Scripts, Grooves, and Writing Machines*, 1. In fact, Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, published the same year that Dewing started to work on *A Reading*, features the phonograph as an inscription technology, recording the thoughts and observations of Dr. Seward, for example, in his hunt for the vampire. Bram Stoker, *Dracula* (New York: Modern Library, Random House, 1897).
15. Peter Gay, *The Naked Heart: The Bourgeois Experience, Victoria to Freud*, vol. 4 (New York: Norton, 1995).
16. Marguerita Willets, "The Listeners," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, November 1872, 816–17; Florence McLandburgh, "The Automaton-Ear," *Scribner's Monthly*, April 1873, 711–20.
17. Gay, *Naked Heart*, 11, 18.
18. The architectural firm McKim, Mead, and White consulted with the pioneering physicist Wallace Sabine in structuring the acoustics for Boston's Symphony Hall and, from that point on, continued to seek his advice on other projects. For further discussion of the relationship between Sabine and McKim, Mead, and White, see Emily Thompson, *The Soundscape of Modernity: Architectural Acoustics and the Culture of Listening in America, 1900–1933* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2002), 13–81.
19. See Susan Hobbs, "Thomas Wilmer Dewing, The Early Years," *American Art Journal* 13 (Spring 1981): 4–35. To this day, many art historians annex Dewing's aural depictions to his musical avocation: "Dewing's love of music is well known, so it is not surprising to find this connection between his ethereal compositions and the insubstantial art of sound." John Davis and Jaroslaw Leshko, *The Smith College Museum of Art: European and American Painting and Sculpture, 1760–1960* (New York: Hudson Hills Press, 2000), 144.
20. For a discussion of some of the European paintings on this subject (such as Fernand Khnopff's *Listening to Schumann* [1883] and Edgar Degas's *Manet and His Wife* [1868–69]) in terms of Wagnerism, symbolism, and the painters' desires to overpower music's status at the time, see Anne Leonard, "Picturing Listening in the Late Nineteenth Century," *Art Bulletin* 89.2 (2007): 266–86.
21. Frances Grimes, "Reminiscences," in *A Circle of Friends: Art Colonies of Cornish and Dublin* (Durham, U.K.: University of New Hampshire, 1985), 64.
22. *Henry James: Complete Stories, 1892–1898* (New York: Library of America, 1996), 36.
23. Susan Canning, "Fernand Khnopff and the Iconography of Silence," *Arts Magazine* 54 (December 1979): 170–76. See also Leigh Schmidt, *Hearing Things: Religion, Illusion, and the American Enlightenment* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000).
24. Paradoxically, the personification of silence originated with the Egyptian child-god of fertility Horus's gesture of a finger to his lips to signify speech, with the meaning inverted when the ancient Greeks later adopted Horus's gesture for their god of silence, Harpocrates. Canning, "Fernand Khnopff," 171–72.
25. Dewing's fine brushstroke, haziness of forms, and soft palette also contribute to the women's silence. The soft brushstroke, particularly in the art of Whistler and George Inness, recently has been explored in an exhibition at the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute. Marc Simpson et al., *Like Breath on Glass: Whistler, Inness, and the Art of Painting Softly* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2008).
26. Kathleen Pyne argues that this is the main thrust of *A Reading*: "[The painting] adumbrates the higher condition that can be reached when the frippery of life is cast away . . . [in the] worship of art." Kathleen Pyne, "Evolutionary Typology and the American Woman in the Work of Thomas Dewing," *American Art* 7.4 (Autumn 1993): 17, 19.

27. James A. McNeill Whistler, letter to *The World*, May 22, 1878, reprinted in *The Gentle Art of Making Enemies* (New York: Dover, 1967), 127–28.
28. Letter to Alfred Chapman, October 1, 1904, Freer Letterpress Books, Freer Gallery of Art Archives (FGAA), Washington, D.C.
29. Hobbs, *Art of Thomas Wilmer Dewing*, 161.
30. Ibid.
31. Martha Banta, *Imaging American Women: Ideas and Ideals in Cultural History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 345–47.
32. Another painting by Dewing that more explicitly deals with these ideas, particularly the séance, is *The Fortune Teller* (1904–5). For further discussion of this work, see Kathleen Pyne, *Art and the Higher Life: Painting and Evolutionary Thought in Late Nineteenth-Century America* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996), 180.
33. For a discussion of Brouillet's painting in terms of a sexualized male audience, see Susan Stanford Friedman, "Hysteria, Dreams, and Modernity: A Reading of the Origins of Psychoanalysis in Freud's Early Corpus," in *Rereading the New: A Backward Glance at Modernism*, ed. Kevin J. H. Dettmar (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993), 46–47.
34. With its wallpapered interior, female protagonists, and general timbre of malaise, *A Reading* dabbles in another late nineteenth-century neurosis, neurasthenia, a condition made notorious by Charlotte Perkins Gilman's 1891 short story "The Yellow Wallpaper" and popularized by the physician George M. Beard. In terms of Dewing's artistic production, Zachary Ross argues that his leisurely women have overcome such neuroses, having attained "physical and mental relaxation." Zachary Ross, "Rest for the Weary: American Nervousness and the Aesthetics of Repose," in *Women on the Verge: The Culture of Neurasthenia in Nineteenth-Century America* (Stanford, Calif.: The Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Center for Visual Arts at Stanford University, 2004), 23.
35. For a brief historiography of quietism, see Wanda Corn, "Reflections on the 'Color of Mood,'" in Simpson et al., *Like Breath on Glass*, 219.
36. Gay, "The Art of Listening," in *Naked Heart*, 33.
37. Lisa Gitelman, *Always Already New: Media, History, and the Data of Culture* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2006), 59. For further discussion of the phonograph, women, and the domestic setting, see Nathan David Bowers, "Creating a Home Culture for the Phonograph: Women and the Rise of Sound Recordings in the United States, 1877–1913" (PhD diss., University of Pittsburgh, 2007).
38. Bailey Van Hook, "Decorative Images of American Women: The Aristocratic Aesthetic of the Late Nineteenth Century," *Smithsonian Studies in American Art* 4.1 (Winter 1990): 45–70.
39. Alan Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982), 149.
40. Pyne, *Art and the Higher Life*, 167, citing Maria Oakey Dewing, *Beauty in the Household* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1882), 173, 182–83.
41. Lee Glazer also notes the repetition of the same model, "'A Modern Instance': Thomas Dewing and Aesthetic Vision at the Turn of the Century" (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1996), 63. This concern for repetition and the original in phonographic culture was exploited in Edison's "tone tests," advertising campaigns in the first decade of the 1900s requiring audiences to distinguish between a singer's live performance and phonographic recording, typified by the slogan, "Which is which?" For further discussion of these "tone tests," see Emily Thompson, "Machines, Music, and the Quest for Fidelity: Marketing the Edison Phonograph in America, 1877–1925," *Musical Quarterly* 79.1 (Spring 1995): 131–71.
42. *True Mirror of Sound: Bettini Micro Phonograph and Graphophone Diaphragms* (n.p.: Bettini Phonograph Laboratory, 1900).
43. Dewing Correspondence, folder 19, letter 72, January 10, 1896, FGAA.
44. Burns, *Inventing the Modern Artist* (New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 1999), 63. Burns characterizes Chase's studio as a performative space that emphasized the "aesthetic commodity." Ibid.
45. Even though the field of acoustics dates back to the time of the Roman architect Vitruvius, it was not until 1853 that the sound-absorbing properties of materials were discovered by the American physicist (and secretary of the Smithsonian Institution) Joseph Henry. Thompson, *Soundscape of Modernity*, 1–27.
46. The dynamic between Dewing's title and painting is not unlike the period relationship between subtitle and silent film. As William K. Everson explains, "The title, in the pre-1906 period, [was] a necessary

- informational device . . . [as it] told the audience what was happening.” William K. Everson, *American Silent Film* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1998), 129.
47. W. J. T. Mitchell, “Ekphrasis and the Other,” in *Picture Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 152; and James Heffernan, *Museum of Words: The Poetics of Ekphrasis from Homer to Ashbery* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 3.
  48. Jaś Elsner, *Roman Eyes: Visuality and Subjectivity in Art and Text* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2007), 67–68. In his keen exploration of ekphrasis, Elsner also considers the myth of Narcissus and Echo, a text bearing obvious thematic and iconographic resonances with *A Reading*. *Ibid.*, 131–76.
  49. Lessing, *Laocöon: An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry*, trans. Edward Allen McCormick (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984). See also Murray Krieger, *Ekphrasis: The Illusion of the Natural Sign* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992).
  50. Lessing, *Laocöon*, 78.
  51. For consideration of ekphrasis in terms of other sensory modalities beyond vision, see Andrew Laird, “Sounding out Ekphrasis: Art and Text in Catullus 64,” *Journal of Roman Studies* 83 (1993): 18–30.
  52. Heffernan, *Museum of Words*, 6–7.
  53. Mitchell, “Ekphrasis and the Other,” 181.
  54. *Ibid.*, 161–64, 181.
  55. *Ibid.*, 164.
  56. Dewing’s wife, Maria Oakey Dewing, also was an ardent admirer of Emerson’s work. In fact, she was related to Cyrus Bartol, the youngest of the circle of the transcendentalists around Emerson and the minister of the Old South Church in Boston. Pyne, *Art and the Higher Life*, 163. A few years later, Dewing returned to this method in his attempt to pictorialize a poem by Pre-Raphaelite Dante Gabriel Rossetti titled “The One Hope” in his 1892 work *After Sunset (Summer Evening)*. In a letter to Freer, Dewing wrote that he had “hit” on something that would capture the “Rossetti address to Hope.” Dewing’s attempts to “hit” on a visual embodiment of the poem, a venture into the shared domain of sound, language, and the imagination, attest to the artist’s willingness to explore ekphrastic principles. Dewing Correspondence, letter 145, October 19, c. 1892, FGAA. See also Pyne, *Art and the Higher Life*, 153–54.
  57. For discussion of the issues regarding an “original” sound and its recording, see James Lastra, “Reading, Writing, and Representing Sound,” in *Sound Theory, Sound Practice*, ed. Rick Altman (New York: Routledge, 1992), 65–86. To some degree, the telephone also enacted a splitting of sight and sound, and in ways that go beyond the scope of this essay could be applied to *A Reading*.
  58. Sterne, *Audible Past*, 25. For a more detailed exploration of this topic, see chapter 5 in *Audible Past*.
  59. *All about the Telephone and Phonograph* (London: Ward, Lock and Co., 1878), 99.
  60. Edward Bellamy, “With the Eyes Shut,” *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine*, October 1889, 738.
  61. Shortly after completing the painting, Barraud sent a photograph of it to the Gramophone Company, later known as the Victor Talking Machine Company. While company executives expressed interest in the work, they asked Barraud to update the phonograph shown in the painting with the latest model. Barraud complied by replacing the cylinder phonograph with the flat disk phonograph. By October 18, 1899, the Gramophone Company had acquired sole reproduction rights to the revised image. Ruth Edge and Leonard Petts, *The Collectors Guide to “His Master’s Voice” Nipper Souvenirs* (Great Britain: Manson Group Limited, 1997), 987–88. For more information on Nipper and *His Master’s Voice*, see Leonard Petts, *The Story of “Nipper” and the “His Master’s Voice” picture painted by Francis Barraud* (Bournemouth, U.K.: Ernie Bayly for The Talking Machine Review International, 1973).
  62. Michael Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 224.
  63. Other scholars trace this homology between reflection and bodily absence to ideas of mortality and ontological anxiety. For example, Sterne argues that the fact that many contemporary viewers considered Nipper to be sitting on the coffin of his master evinces a “Victorian culture of death and dying.” Sterne, *Audible Past*, 301–2, 304. On the phonograph, spirituality, and the exteriorization of the voice, see also Steven Connor, “A Gramophone in Every Grave,” in *Dumbstruck: A Cultural History of Ventriloquism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 362–93.
  64. See Edison, “Phonograph and Its Future,” 527–36.
  65. Margery W. Davies, *Woman’s Place Is at the Typewriter: Office Work and Office Workers, 1870–1930* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1982), 54.



66. Friedrich Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, trans. Geoffrey Winthrop-Young and Michael Wutz (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1999), 183.
67. See Thomas Edison's short film, *The Stenographer's Friend, or What Was Accomplished by an Edison Business Phonograph* (1910). Van Hook states that, "as embodiments of leisure, women were portrayed in late-nineteenth-century paintings as having pastimes, not occupations. . . . The languor of the women was compatible with their powerless status but not with the reality of their increased visibility in such arenas as recreational sports, the workplace, and the university." Van Hook, "Decorative Images of American Women," 59.
68. Sharon Hartman Strom, *Beyond the Typewriter: Gender, Class, and the Origins of Modern American Office Work, 1900–1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 95.
69. *Ibid.*, 73.
70. Pyne, *Art and the Higher Life*, 189n138, citing Herbert Spencer, *The Principles of Sociology*, vol. 1, pt. 3, chap. 1, 734ff.
71. As Pyne argues, this incongruity "left women in their separate sphere of domesticity . . . [while endowing] them with a mark of advancement that was nonthreatening to male hegemony in the public sphere." Pyne, *Art and the Higher Life*, 196.
72. Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study of Institutions* (New York: Modern Library, 1934), 43, 179.