Applaud the Machine

Kit Frick
APPLAUD THE MACHINE

_The phonograph knows more about us than we know ourselves._

THOMAS ALVA EDISON, 1888

i. Tone Test, Carnegie Hall, 1920

Behold the Diamond Disc

and our lovely vocalist, Miss Anna Case.

A layer of sound breathes

beneath an exact layer of sound. It is unblemished,

pure: applaud the machine. Listen:

you can’t parse it, can’t distinguish one from one.

Her voice, a perfect copy of her voice.

This is not representation, not documentation,

not a recording. I have ignited sound, conceived

an authentic music, rid of the clutter.

ii. Paranormal

Once, I was content with exactitude.

But isn’t there more? What we need

is a Phonograph with a Soul. Imagine

the possibility: to call out to ghosts—

of ideas, ancestors, spent desires.

Maybe Marconi was right: no sound

has ever died. There is a secret knowledge

in the cylinder: the hills and dales,

the diamond stylus, the locked

language of the dead.
iii. Mood Change Party

We’ll throw a Mood Change Party: listen to my re-creations, my sonic communications,

and chart your changes: now sad, now joyful, once troubled,

now carefree. Can you feel the ghost moving through?

Are you transformed? Applaud the machine.