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Applaud the Machine

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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.