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.