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A-1

The Silence of Bernhardt

A-1

Thomas Edison has invented the phonograph.

There it ^{bides} stands, tinfoil cylinders aglitter
in the late-afternoon ~~in the late afternoon~~ sun,
on the workbench of his Menlo Park laboratory.

A-2

{ Edison } He has, moreover, ^{made trial of} ^{vetted} ^{tested} ^{captured} upon it ^{the device} ^{his invention} ^{the machine} ^{he} succeeded in capturing upon it

the voices of his wife ^{his} and Chief Technician
and his own voice, which ^{the inventor} he found, as have
many ^{since,} { after him, } unrecognizable

A-3

↓

{ All trials } These trial runs having { gone well, }
{ [all] succeeded, },
it was now time to ^(contemplate) ^(attempt) ^(venture) the first recording ever
of a major living { voice - but whose ? }
{ figure - but who ? }

↓

A-3 God (or) Jesus are presumably unavailable,
So then perhaps
(Perhaps, then,)
(Possibly, then,)
Possibly ... } the President of the Republic?

The Governor of New Jersey? The Archbishop

of {Camden?
Mattawan?
Trenton?
Newark?} [None seems quite right]

A-4 (Now) (Then) (he learns) (word reaches him) that Sarah Bernhardt

[the great French actress]

is even now {appearing (as) Phèdre
on tour as Phèdre} in New York City,

just across the river from (Edison's) Menlo Park

{office
factory
laboratory
facilities,} (He) and he invites {the great French actress} her to visit his lab,

{where he plays
(where, having played)} her [the] recordings of his

wife's and technician's voices {and offers
(he) offers},

A-5 by this some (device means, to) {immortalize
preserve} her own [voice]
immortalize her performance

↓ (as was never actor's yet
as has never been actor's yet)

A-5

Bernhardt ^{assents, accepts, agrees} ^{upon} but (sets) one condition; she must [she stipulates,] be left alone in the studio with ^(only the) the ^(operant) machinery and ^(operator) its operator ^(technician) — no audience! Edison assents

A-6

After an hour or so [in the lab], Bernhardt ^{departs} decamps. Edison ^(rushes) comes rushing in, ^(to play) plays [back] the ^(finest) wax cylinders and hears — nothing! ^(it would appear) His invention, ^(it appears) he ^(can only) conclude ^(has failed) ^(NHA p. A-6) His invention, to all appearances, has failed. His invention, he presumes, has failed.

A-7

But now, ^(playing) ^(running) over the cylinders and more, the cylinders ^(over,) ^(again,) he ^{finds he can, can, he finds,} ^{clearly} ^(distinctly) make out those tern cries from the marshland outside ^{the window, window} his ^{studio window} so ^(clearly) ^(fairly) audible in the background of his earlier, trial recordings.

A-8

(^{He} Edison) summons the Chief Technician and demands to know what ^(went down) ^(happened) in there, Bernhardt, the ^(technician) ^(Technician) replies, sat silent the whole ^(while) ^(time) before the ^(turning) ^(revolving) ^(wax) ^(tin foil) cylinders, ^(and then) then at ^(last) ^(length) [, without a word of explanation,] rose and departed.

A-9

For this behavior ^(the inventor) ^(Edison) ^(can) ^(could) ^(imagine) ^(supply) ^(conceive) ^(several) ^(various) ^(many) ^(more) ^(than) ^(one) explanation[s]. Perhaps the actress had felt foolish speaking into a void.

Perhaps she "froze." Perhaps she was waiting for those ^(bothersome) ^(background) ^(intrusive) ^(ferny) cries to abate. ^(cease) ^(give) ^(over) ^(leave) ^(off) their chirping.

A-10



Whatever the ^(explanation) ^(answer), Edison was determined to ^(learn) ^(hear) it. And so, on the night

↓
 [A-10] { ① (before) (Bernhardt's) her departure (for Paris from New York),
 ② before Bernhardt (departed from New York, sailed to Paris, } }

the inventor (writes) the actress (demanding to know) (asking) (inquiring)
 why she had not (spoken) a single word (addressed) (so much as a single word) (to) (delivered) (into)

~~his~~ his (invention, machine) Bernhardt replied as follows:

A-11 "For my (recitation to) (performance (to) (into)) your (machine) (device),

I had selected Phèdre's Act IV [scene vi]
 tirade to her (confidante) (nurse-confidante), Oenone.

A-12 To 'get into it,' as (actors) (we actors) say, I began by

(mentally) (silently) running through (running through in my (thoughts) (head) (mind)) the speech of Oenone's

that cues (it) (Phèdre) and had just reached its

(final) (closing) words when I heard (your machine) (snap) (click) off,

(at) (with) whereupon I departed."

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A-6

③ "Your invention" the Chief Technician observes, "is to all appearances a failure." "Say rather," quoth Edison, "a triumph."

A-13

① ^{UPON} (On) reading which, the Chief Technician laments: } "Your invention { looks to be } a failure." "And Edison: { Edison replied: } to have failed." To which { Edison: } the inventor ()

"Say rather: } triumphed, Have I not recorded } ~~the~~ I have recorded }

② To which next day Edison: } replied: { Behold! I have } "I have recorded

③ (UPON) reading, which Edison (remarks) { observes: } "I have, it would { seem } recorded

the silence of Bernhardt } ? "