

I'll begin with a set of poems set in America. When I first came here there were all these Bell telephone ads, then it was Bell telephone, not AT&T. And there were all these adds on the television, and there was this one "has anyone heard from you lately?" and it went on and on, and there was a point at which I said I have to answer them. So I have these 5 poems, and each one is an answer to a Bell telephone ad, and there are funny parts so please don't hold back your laughter, alright?

Bell Telephone Hours

1

"Has anyone heard from you lately?"

The living . . . only the living
their area codes once
visible in their eyes.
I flipped through their visions,
left my number in their sleep.
but no one called back.
I called all night,
called for years,
called till their lids began to ring,
ten, twenty, two hundred times,
and then they went blind
on my dreams.
Now their eyes don't open.
No one picks up the phone.
I only hear
the busy signals
of their nightmares.

2

"Call long distance: the next
best thing to being there."

The rich . . . forever
on my list
of frequently called numbers
took long expensive vacations.
My long distance Annoyance Calls
were heavily fined,
my breath was disconnected.
When I breathed again,
my fingers walked through the yellow pages.

Then I mailed my bones
Wrapped in bare dreams.
Courteous, I enclosed
a stamped envelope.
But no one answered.

Directory Assistance,
Give me the magic number
For Necropolis, U.S.A.

3

"It's getting late. Do your
Friends know where you are?"

They know my debts are unpaid,
they won't look for me. But
if they call, say I'm at the phone booth,
talking long distance to the dead.
This is the longest distance
I've called. And the bill is running up.

Before I run out of change,
I must report:
The cremations aren't working,
Someone's left the bones off their hooks.

Operator,
I'm still getting busy signals.

4

"Use your phone, for all it's worth"

Once I plugged into the sleep of friends
and interrupted their dreams,
I spent years apologizing.

Once I let the phone ring
until the dead woke up,
they told me they were sick of the Earth,
they told me to dial the sea.

Underground line locating service
get me the sea when there is no ice,
when the water is pure,
absolutely free.

I've lost faith in half-rates.

5

"Reach out and touch someone
Far away."

I called Information Desk, Heaven,
and asked, "When is Doomsday?"
I was put on hold.

Through the hallelujahs of seraphs,
I heard the idle gossip of angels,
their wings beating rumors
of revolts in Heaven.
Then I heard flames, wings burning,
then only hallelujahs.

I prayed, "Angel of Love,
Please pick up the phone."
But it was the angel of Death.
I said, "Tell me, Tell me
When is Doomsday?"

He answered, "God is busy.
He never answers the living.
He has no answers for the dead.
Don't ever call again collect."