

Along Party Lines

ghostly voices whisper in
-William Stafford

Even though we'd paid for a private line,
we couldn't be sure Mrs Tattletale
wasn't listening in, or the Operator.

Sometimes we could even hear them breathing
and every so often out of nowhere whispers,
hums, clicks, and spirit voices talking

to each other the way they do in some dreams
as though they couldn't hear a word you said.
Not all that different from now, except

the characters, scale, consequences
and instrumentation have changed to the tune of
world trade wars, population,

pollution, and a global pop culture
dominated for the foreseeable future
by Uncle Sam and Miss Liberty

who seem to be able no matter what the law
or public opinion says, and despite
the scandal of their economic morals,

to eavesdrop anytime on anyone
in their never-ending War waged
in the name of the One True Religion.