**The Sociable Telephone: A Game for the Smart Set**

 *J. Ottoman Lithography Company 1902*

James Engelhardt

Ask me anything, a friend said one evening,

years ago when were young and the network

was strung together on copper wire.

My new student says

he thinks it must be hard to make friends

in middle age.

He’s right of course, and I’m jealous

of youth, nights filled with new wonders

and Instagram posts.

My long ago evening pulsed with cicadas

buzzed with heat, honeysuckle, and jessamine

that even tonight keeps me on the porch.

When you have moved as much as I have

keeping friends feels like spider’s work—

tending connections, repairing breaks.

Some webs hold. Others don’t.

A call. A text. Ghost perfume in a hall.

I have a string and two blocks.

Ask me anything.