

Subvertisements for Utopia

(when he is haunted by hearing Katrina's crazed voice)

I think	I saw
continually	the best
of those	minds of
who were	my generation
truly great	destroyed...
— Stephen	— Allen
Spender	Ginsberg

his side

I'm tired of ventriloquy,
my own voice misses me –
I'm down to my last
ditch ef-fing
at the inef-
fable voice
weakening until
I cannot hear it –
haunting me
even now,
she's many years later
a surprise long after
she was young and
recognizable –
it's a pain
to know I could see
and not know her now –
was she the one
sitting alone in that alley
by my door
an exile or
a clown in army surplus

her side

“Listen man, Charlie Chan was
secretly white as Spock or
Captain Kirk or any
Kennedy-era
Tonto-man...
Deserve what you get,
turned on the set.
Alas, that they
should bear
no colors there
in the putriful future,
the ever cruddy now.
There must be sum weight
ounces hear,
said the beggar
to Big Cheese.
Let me word-soup you
wi' this – lettuce
give peas a chance,
'n all that
we are SANE
is a big Ho Hum.

dregs in the rain	There's no way
smelling drunk	to peas,
and who else left	curds are the whey.
smudges on my name	Lay your sleeping head
by the bell	my love
and night deepening	humming on my
her footsteps	faceful of arm,
retreating –	but soft
did she walk out	o my sorrow,
of the drizzle	and go far
into her grave	from the job –
pregnant with replies?	slave (I mean – <i>save</i>)
the bus full of	yourself before the
fluorescent passengers slides by	bosses finger you out.
striding pedestrians –	Find a place
and if “life is boring”	where it rains
and if “we must not say so,”	warm and clear suddenly
<i>I</i> will say so –	sun shooting through
say so I heard	the smell of mango
her reciting from	everywhere....
her cartoon books,	Renumber me,
her crayon diaries,	remire me,
her mumbles –	donut forget...”

Notes on “Subvertisements for Utopia”

Katrina represents a type of artistic persona from the 1960s. Living in the streets, she has lost (parts of) her mind but not her intuition or creativity.

The dual epigraphs come from the first lines of Spender's famous poem, "I Think Continually of Those Who Were Truly Great," and Ginsberg's *Howl*. Read together as though they were each saying half of a line of a combined poem, their voices could say: "I think / I saw / continually / the best / of those / minds of / who were / my generation / truly great / destroyed... / — Stephen / — Allen / Spender / Ginsberg." Steve Allen, incidentally, was a famous TV comedian from the early black and white era.

On *his side*, "weakening until/ I cannot hear it," is an allusion to the last line of Galway Kinnell's "Neverland," which is an elegy to the poet's sister.

The lines, "night deepening / her footsteps retreating" is an allusion to the crucial scene in Samuel Beckett's luminous, melancomomic [*sic*] short story, "First Love."

Immediately after, "did she walk out / of the drizzle / into her grave / pregnant with replies?" alludes to Hamlet's razor-sharp repartee with Polonius ("POLONIUS: Will you walk out of the air, my lord? / HAMLET: Into my grave./ POLONIUS: Indeed, that's out of the air. [*Aside*] How pregnant sometimes his replies are!" (II.ii.201-204)

The lines "and if 'life is boring' / and if 'we must not say so,'" quote from the famous first line of the fourteenth of John Berryman's *Dream Songs*, "Life, friends, is boring. We must not say so."

On *her side*, she alludes to the fact that the original Hollywood Charlie Chan was played by a Caucasian. Spock and Kirk are from the original *Star Trek* TV series from the 1960s.

The lines, "Alas, that they / should bear / no colors there" alludes to Wallace Stevens' line from "Sunday Morning," "Alas that they should wear our colors there" (85). In Stevens' poem, at this moment, the speaker laments the idea that in paradise the trees, sky, rivers etc. should take their colors from the mortal world, for he has already conceived the idea that "Death is the mother of beauty," and without death the beauty of the world (and even beauty itself) becomes insubstantial.

The lines, "There must be sum weight / ounces hear / said the beggar / to Big Cheese" echoes the opening line of Bob Dylan's "All Along the Watchtower," which goes "There must be some way out of here / Said the beggar to the thief."

The lines, "give peas a chance, / 'n all that / we are SANE is a big Ho Hum" alludes to the choral refrain of John Lennon's "Give Peace a Chance," "All we are saying is give peace a chance."

Immediately after, "There's no way to peas, curds are the whey" alludes to the bumper sticker/slogan, "There's no way to peace, peace is the way."

The lines, "Lay your sleeping head / my love / humming on my / faceful of arm," echoes Auden's opening lines to "Lullaby" (1937), "Lay your sleeping head, my love, / Human on my faithless arm."

The lines, "but soft / o my sorrow, / and go far / from the..." echo the opening line of Baudelaire's frequently translated sonnet, "*Recueillement*," "*Sois sage, ô ma douleur...*"

The lines, "Renumber me, / remire me, / donut forget..." echo the Ghost of King Hamlet when he

admonishes the Prince to remember him (I.v.91 and III.iv.110).