

## 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 inf-  
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

*her side*

“Listen man, Charlie Chan was  
secretly white as Spock or  
Chewbacca 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

sitting alone in that alley  
by my door  
an exile or  
a clown in army surplus  
dregs in the rain  
smelling drunk  
and who else left  
smudges on my name  
by the bell  
and night deepening  
her footsteps  
retreating—  
did she walk out  
of the drizzle  
into her grave  
pregnant with replies?  
the bus full of  
fluorescent passengers slides by  
striding pedestrians—  
and if “life is boring”  
and if “we must not say so,”  
*I* will say so—  
say so I heard  
her reciting from  
her cartoon books,  
her crayon diaries,  
her mumbles—

give peas a chance,  
‘n all that  
we are SANE  
is a big Ho Hum.  
There’s no way  
to peas,  
curds are the whey.  
Lay your sleeping head  
my love  
humming on my  
faceful of arm,  
but soft  
o my sorrow,  
and go far  
from the job—  
slave (I mean— *save*)  
yourself before the  
bosses finger you out.  
Find a place  
where it rains  
warm and clear suddenly  
sun shooting through  
the smell of mango  
everywhere....  
Renumber me,  
remire me,  
doNUT forget..”

## Notes on Subvertisements

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," 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 [*vis*] 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, "Remember 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).