

ORLANDO

I don't want to imagine
the terror you must have felt,
gun fire crackling in the early hours,
rat-a-tat forcing dance beats
to silence. It was last call.
I imagine Donna Summer fading
into the pre-summer dawn.
Glances, furtive, meaningful.
Love rises in the sweat and
ecstatic safety of your
private church. Men couple, women
embrace. Oh so bad. Last dance,
last chance -- I don't want
to imagine what's next.
AR-15 pops, slices, bodies
fall, blood, then silence. In the air,
spent gunpowder lingers. In your eyes,
something more than sorrow.

A CONVERSATION WITH HENRY WALLACE

We say we'll fight, face off against tyranny. We say this, always say this. It is, you say, you said, seventy-five years ago, *a fight between a slave world and a free world*. Today, we have failed to define our terms. Who is the freeman? Who the slave? *The idea of freedom and the dignity of the individual*, that's the American ideal. I agree. *Everywhere, the common people are on the march* and today they are angry. Do you blame them? We've made it *easy for demagogues to arise and prostitute the mind*. Greed is rampant, but no one pays. The pickpocket wins praise, leads through his not-so-elaborate misdirection. *The successful demagogue is a powerful genie* you said, but that is wrong. He is more like Milton's Satan, awash in desire even as he proclaims a return to an abandoned age. A lie, of course. You knew that *only he can retain full sovereignty over his own soul*. The rest. Ha. We, his followers and his critics, are stooges. We have been *mentally and politically degraded*. Left to lash out, *we get square with the world only by degrading the other*. With walls. With cops. With words. *We stooges are really psychopathic cases*. And some are good people. *Satan has turned loose upon us the insane*. I'm tired. *No compromise with Satan is possible*. And that is what the demagogue says. Satan is on the march. A lot of things were sacred in this country, women and soldiers, the flag and god. He said that. Always says it. You proclaimed a people's revolution, said the devil *and all his angels can not prevail against it*. I want to believe you, Henry, but I fear the rot at the core.

IN REVOLT

Call it a coup, not
unexpected, but still.

Not not speak
to me.

Not unexpected.
Coughing up blood. She
sleeps a lot now. She's in pain,
a lot of pain.

The body's
insurgency,
insurrection, the cells
in revolt. Announcements.
Pronouncements.
A new order. Her cries
rattle out, damn
it all, everything and then
she repents. Old grievances,
a bill of particulars.
Order will be
restored. Order. Chaos.
The agony of
descent. Agony.
First you control
the television, the radio.
She can't watch
anyway.

Her mind
is sharp. The pain is sharp.
She turns away.

Do you care
to comment? Have
you called the family?
Has the doctor.
Doctor. Expect
a crackdown. Jail
the plotters. It's only
a matter of days.

THREAT ASSESSMENTS

His hands were empty, will stay
empty as his body, lowered
into the dirt, is left
to rot. He had a gun.
A carry permit. It was legal.
He was black. He was
empty handed, compliant. Dead.
Alton Sterling's dead. Philando
Castile's dead. Tamir Rice.
Laquand McDonald. Sandra
Bland. Dead. Dead. Dead.
Bodies robbed of breath, made small,
inert. Less than human. Less
and more, magical
hulking figures, perhaps,
how we see them, as
comic-book villains, able
to alter space with
the mere fact of their bodies.
Minnesota. Carolina.
Baton Rouge. Chicago.
In Ferguson, a dead teen,
riots. Threat analysis,
reasonable fear. It's as if
Michael Brown's black body
swelled, a golem bulked up
in rage, looking through me,
past me, my white
form nothing more
than a discarded can
to be stepped on
and kicked down the road.
Nothing more than,
nothing at all, not worth
the effort, leave it
uncovered for hours
like roadkill. I guess
that's what he was, what
any black kid at the cusp
of manhood can expect,
to be treated as parasite,
vermin nibbling the teat
of polite society, as

predators -- isn't that what
Clinton called them. Not boys,
not men. But animals
devouring their prey.