

D. M. Gordon

Free Radical

It isn't the traffic, the hot river stopped
on I-91, it's the loose dog.
It isn't that he's lovable—
he has a trashcan head.
Look, I say to the fairy,
smudged lipstick, mascara and a wand.
On the seat between us,
a pumpkin with magic marker eyes.
The dog scoots among stopped cars.
There's a party atmosphere, children waving
through rear windows, the sky crayon blue,
everybody stopped, watching the police
trying to catch the dog, directing cars to slow.
When we come to have a front row seat,
the dog is calm.
It isn't the officer unholstering
his gun; it's that we cannot leave.
It isn't the dog's heart blossoming
on a stalk of blood, or the spread legs of the man,
shot after shot, or the smile playing on his lips
as he houses his gun and waves us on.
It's the stillness of the wand.