

Trope City

by John Olson

Name one thing that isn't a metaphor. Blue sparks? Metaphor. Eggnog? Metaphor. Dry cleaning? Metaphor.

God is a metaphor for thunder. Eczema is a metaphor for plumage. The umbrella is a metaphor for agriculture.

Try having it both ways. An umbrella that is simply an umbrella, and an umbrella that opens into a field of oats.

If the pen travels over a sheet of paper, it is not long before a metaphor appears. A fast, beautiful metaphor like friendship, or deformity. Think of the pen as a penis and the ink as semen. I just sit and laugh. Time impregnates an opportunity and a long sentence elucidates the shine of my shoes.

Which is strange because I am not wearing shoes. I never do. I have a pair of wings that unfurl into enormous umbrellas and carry me to heaven. I look down at the splitting of rocks and the ocean's death. And come to realize that I am, after all is said and done, boiling over with metaphors. Heart and energy and the quiet grass beside the lake.

I have not forgotten you, dear reader. What happens when we sleep? We journey to other realms. We collapse into white dwarfs. We have conversations with slime mold. And when we awake our eyes are golden with the residue of dreams.

Apple trees require constant maintenance or they die. The white skulls in the long grass remember the great battles of the American civil war. That's you and that's me, one day, singing along with the Beach Boys in a time now so distant it may as well be a spaceship made of apple blossoms.

But for the time being let's just live forever. Easily said, easily done. Never die. Never age. We are here together. A couple of clicks on YouTube and there they are, the Beach Boys singing "Don't Worry Baby."

How did I ever get here? Here, in Seattle, where it always rains, and if you want to go surfing, you have to drive over a hundred miles to get to a beach where the breakers are so-so, and you have to squeeze into a wet suit, and freeze your ass off, while the killer whales go by laughing their asses off.

Is life an enchantment, a dream? You betcha. A dream where anything is possible. Provided you don't wake up and smell the proverbial coffee. You may proceed at your own risk.

Each of us creates our own story. That's the beauty of it. The beauty of being alive and alert to the quick possibility of metaphors. These devices full of sunrise. These machines made of words. These voices that come out of us laden with so much meaning and prophesy.

Make no mistake. There is such a thing called reality. But no one has yet figured out its true dimensions. All any of us have are these five measly senses. That's the beauty of metaphors. If you can compare a curlew to an inseam you can open whatever door you want.

