

*Ronald Wallace*

TROPES

After several weeks in the Caribbean,  
when they arrive on the bus at the student union,  
2 A.M., the icy wind off the lake hits them like . . .  
an icy wind. It won't sustain a metaphor—  
nothing in this cold North country is any more  
than what it is. The street, the sky, the lake,  
the stars reflecting off the lake like . . . stars.  
The season comes up short, is in arrears.

But wait! A trope he hadn't banked on comes  
shuffling out of the shadows for a hand-out—  
*Can he spare some change?*—and then it bums  
a cigarette, and that small glow of bright  
heat fires up a train of thought that takes  
him back into his life's *as ifs* and *likes*.