

Emotion is a Weather in a Basket of Clouds

by John Olson

When I'm not wearing an emotion I fold it up and put it in a drawer. I have a dresser full of emotions. The ones in the bottom drawer bubble and hiss. The soft, diaphanous ones smell of excerpts from Baudelaire. Let me describe this smell to you: it is the black smoke that appears shortly after a kerosene wick has gone out. The smoke that smudges the sides of the glass. You know that smell. The emotions generated by poetry pulse with the infrared scintillations of a universe crawling out of the egg of literature. This is a large, speckled egg, somewhat similar to the sweetness of ghosts when they shiver in the bathroom after a shower. If you can imagine a ghost taking a shower then you can imagine the kind of emotion I have in mind. Usually, you'd have to go to a pharmacy with a prescription to feel this kind of emotion. Or buy it from someone in a suede jacket in the alley behind a blues club. Art always incites this kind of feeling. It's a combination of savagery and faith and a description of the void swollen with supposition. There are emotions so explicit, so intense, so nebulous and ineffable I can't fold or iron them. They simply exist. I never know what to do with them, other than feel them. I mean, isn't that what feelings are for? Feelings are meant to be felt. Though I will be the first to admit that some feelings don't feel good. You really don't want to feel them at all. You want to feel something else. Something like surrealism. Or the first time you feel someone's warm skin next to yours and the excitement of giving them pleasure. You can't fold that kind of feeling. It abandons itself to the convulsions of wind on a rainy day. It goes over the shoulders like a sweater, and murmurs communion to the marrow of your bones.

