

Angry

To be angry is to entertain strong negative feelings toward another person. Must it be toward a person? Can I be angry at God? Angry at destiny for the way it has treated me? Angry at 'the government of Poland'? The answer seems to be yes, but only if that target of anger is personalized. I cannot properly be said to be angry at a thing. But given a personal object I can adopt any of thousands of forms of negative feeling, from the resentment of insensitive behavior in love to the wish for a hit man to remove my rival.

1

I rarely get angry, for I am not good at controlling anger. It is like a runaway horse, trotting at first, and eventually galloping. Once I was angry with a friend who pushed the wrong button on me. We were working together on an Anthology of Latin American poetry translated into English. We were to share the royalties, as we shared the work. As it happened he moved to another city, before we received the royalty check, which was sent to him and which it was his responsibility to share with me. He kept procrastinating about sending my half. I needed the money, or at least convinced myself I did. I called him. He procrastinated. I grew angrier. Eventually he sent me the money, after I had made a furious call to him. By that time the emotions were more important than the money. Our friendship was broken.

2

I was angry when I went to Greece for the first time. I was a young graduate student, and received a Fulbright Grant to study in Athens. My interest was in living by myself, and exploring the literary life of the country. For 'bureaucratic reasons,' however, I was (like all the other Fulbright students that year) assigned to residence in the American School of Classical Studies, a training ground for up and coming archeologists. I was obliged to conform to the schedules of the School, to go on all the outings that were planned, and to explore issues of archeology rather than of literature. I was angry with this arrangement, which seemed to me unwarranted by the terms of my grant, and then presented to me as though there was no room for discussion. I complied, as I had to at the time. But I am still angry.