

CHANGING THINGS

by A. R. AMMONS



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THERE IS A poetics of tears, of smiles, of ecstasy (sensual joy and the harsh inspirations of the religious heights); there is a poetics of quietude and deep study, a poetics of fear—and a poetics of anger.

During Christmas vacation in 1976, I got the notion, which I had had passingly but often before, to try watercolors. I'm sure I was attracted to the possibility of bringing together in one visual consideration the arbitrariness of pure coincidence with the necessity of the essential, the moving from the free, as the work of art begins, through the decisions of pattern and possibility, and

into and through the demands of the necessary, the unavoidable, the inevitable. This "change" is in another form the oldest of journeys, that from exile to community.

Having made dozens of tries at real pictures, I began to feel what events on the paper "meant"—that is, I began to learn the joining of what happened on the paper to its emotional counterpart, the feelings generated and expressed by the events. I discovered that I was stirred by the thin, loud, and bright, the utterly blatant effect like a smack in the face, the anger felt, expressed, reacted to. And then I thought that not a very nice thing to be into. But I *was* angry, sizzingly angry for whatever reasons,

and I found myself, when I could endure the emotions at all, released by letting the anger go and become the splatters and the sheer control of the paint. And then I thought that since we must after all at times be angry, how fortunate we are that art allows us to transform blistering feelings into the brilliance, the sweep and curve, the dash and astonishment (along with the cool definition, judgment, and knowledge) of still completed things.

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