

## Readers' Guide

# *Dark God of Eros*

William Everson

### Timeline

The following timeline will help you put events from *Dark God of Eros* in context.

1912	William Oliver Everson is born on September 10 in Sacramento, California.
1914-1918	World War I.
1935	Everson's first book, <i>These Are the Ravens</i> , is published.
1938	Everson marries Edwa Poulson.
1941-1945	The United States participates in World War II and Everson is sent to conscientious objector service camps, where he learns the art of printing.
1947	Everson divorces Edwa Poulson.
1948	Everson marries Mary Fabilli.
1951	Everson enters the Dominican Order as a lay brother, or one who enters the monastic life with no intention of becoming a priest and does not take the vows of poverty, obedience, and chastity. He takes the name Brother Antoninus.
1963	Everson divorces Mary Fabilli.
1964	Everson takes his vows and joins the Dominican Order.
1969	Everson leaves the Dominican Order to marry Susanna Rickson.
1993	Everson divorces Susanna Rickson.
1994	Everson dies in his sleep in Santa Cruz.
1996	Everson's spiritual biography, <i>Prodigious Thrust</i> , is published.

### Questions to Discuss

1. In "Muscat Pruning," Everson writes: "There is a flicker swooping from the grove on scalloped wings, / His harsh cry widening through the fog" (3). Here the young Everson describes a natural process, the reverberation of a bird's call, in poetic yet accessible terms. Are there any other lines that evoke the same response?

2. Some of Everson's early poems suggest a striving to regain the "lost [...] knowledge of what one ought to believe" (182). Can you think of other examples that express a similar sentiment?
3. In his poem "In the Fictive Wish," Everson graphically describes lovemaking as "Of such cunt-ed closure, / Butt broad in the love-grip" (27). Do you think this is poetry? How do such lines show the tension in his work between the spirit and the body?
4. *The Veritable Years* sees Everson becoming increasingly a Catholic poet. How does his work reflect this transition?
5. How does erotic mysticism play a role in Everson's poetic efforts to reconcile the body and spirit?
6. In addition to being a meticulous poet, Everson, like the Romantic poet William Blake, was also a masterful printer. How do these two art forms interact and collide in Everson's life's work?
7. How would you characterize the poems of *The Residual Years*? Do you see them as a step away from his religious poems of *The Veritable Years* or as a step further on in search of an alternate vision?
9. How has Everson's entire life and creative output been an attempt to reconcile "what I believe / With the fact of what I am" (128)?
10. In his essay "Not Without Wisdom," Everson speaks of Jeffers's unique ability amongst American poets to "project and sustain a truly cosmic vision of man, induct a whole cosmology, as Homer and Dante and Milton did before him" (234). Some readers think that Everson also created a cosmology. If so, how would you characterize Everson's cosmology?

### Suggested Reading

Bartlett, Lee. *William Everson*. Boise: Boise State University, 1985.

Everson, William. *The Crooked Lines of God*. Detroit: University of Detroit Press, 1959.

Everson, William. *Archetype West: The Pacific Coast As a Literary Region*. Berkeley: Oyez, 1976.

Jeffers, Robinson. *The Selected Poetry of Robinson Jeffers*. Ed. Tim Hunt. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001.