

Conversations With William Everson

~ poet and printer ~

at Kingfisher Flats near Swanton, California

Trickster

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EVERSON: I get my charismatics from my father, the expressive manifestation ... the gift of gab.

FRANCES: But to be charismatic it seems like you have to be spiritual too. Isn't that what charisma is all about?

EVERSON: Hitler had charisma but we don't think of his charisma as being particularly spiritual. The devil has charisma like nobody's business!

FRANCES: Oh god, I didn't tell you what happened to me! I draw little pictures inside a circle, I got the idea from Jung. And I don't know what I'm gonna draw, it just comes out. I don't remember what I drew but I didn't like it so I drew a picture of a lake on top and hung it on our back door. Several months later I looked up at that door. The picture was faded but underneath there was a large cross lying in a pool of blood and a woman holding out a cross toward the devil. The real devil!! It came out when that picture faded, the black devil with horns. Tim came running in because he smelled smoke. I burned it up in the kitchen sink because it scared me. [Pause.] How can you believe in things you don't really believe in?

EVERSON: It's called superstition. Superstition is really the ... Achilles heel of religion. A person of religion ... our greatest liability is superstition. We keep it suppressed, we loftily try to think that we're above it all. But if you're a deeply religious person, there are gonna be areas in which you're superstitious. It takes the form of superstition rather than of coherence. (Pause) Sometimes superstitions are true, we just haven't caught up with it. In some way ... if you can find the archetype, from the Jungian point of view, you know, where there's diabolic ... or divine. [Long pause.]

That devil scared you because it came out of you. The subconscious is manifested as the shadow figure, the opposite side of the positive. Everyone has a shadow. It manifests itself in what we do. I wouldn't worry about that, the fact that my shadow revealed to me that I got a devil in there operating.

FRANCES: Yeah. But I don't want it to be a bad devil. It was definitely a mean devil, there was nothing nice about that devil.

EVERSON: Is there anything nice about any devil?

FRANCES: Well I guess not ... but the devil that just plays tricks, maybe that's the trickster?

EVERSON: Yeah. That's part of the shadow, though. And one of the greatest parts was that trickster.