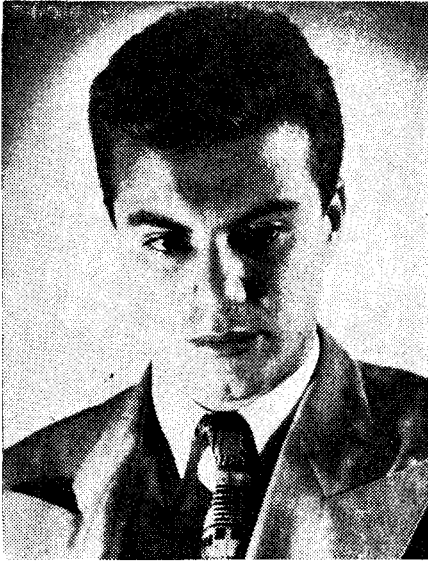


Apprentice Saint Joan



—John H. Popper.

Edwin Fadiman, Jr. — "solid earth beneath his saint's feet."

THE VOICE AND THE LIGHT. By Edwin Fadiman, Jr. New York: Crown Publishers. 249 pp. \$2.75.

By EVELYN EATON

EDWIN FADIMAN, JR., has chosen an interesting, difficult, and absorbing theme for his first novel, for it deals with the apprenticeship of a saint, and saints are the most attractive men and women who have ever lived, the most challenging. They excite and embarrass us with their courtesy, their freedom, their light-heartedness, their frankness, their disconcerting habit of including all the world in a fellowship of prayer. They are never dull. In their infinite variety they are alike in one thing only, they have exchanged self-centeredness for love of God, and this, they say, is the spiritual vocation of the race. A Voice crying to every man for coöperation and surrender offers in return growth and joy.

A novel about the first intimations of sainthood to any saint would have its appeal, both timeless and timely, to the reader in Year Five of the Atomic Age. Saint Joan of Arc has also the advantage of being one of the more easily understood saints, one of the most loved. She did not have to achieve simplicity after a lifetime of discarding worldly complications. She began with it. She was a practical saint who achieved a concrete goal. She "got results." She liberated France, and France has never been permanently conquered since. She was loyal to her country, to her Voices, to her God, even to martyrdom. Mr. Fadiman shows the begin-

nings of the growth of that loyalty.

He portrays Jeanne in the village of Domrémy, obeying her Orders, although they brought her into conflict with everyone she loved, first with her peasant father, the strong, prejudiced Jacques d'Arc, who told his sons: "If I believed that the thing I have dreamed of her should come to pass, I should want you to drown her, and if you did not do so, I would drown her myself." Jacques punishes his daughter, tries to marry her off, suffers shame and rage before Jeanne finally leaves home. Her brothers, her friends, her suitors, even her mother, are equally frustrated in their attempts to understand her or to make her conform to the pattern of the life they know and endorse. Jeanne contrives through her own sharp wit, and the working together of many small convenient miracles, to reach the Governor, the Duke of Lorraine. After convincing him, she returns with his support to Robert de Baudri-

court, whom Saint Michael, Saint Catherine, and Saint Margaret have designated as the man who will take her to the "gentle little Dauphin," whom she is to save. "Que Dé m'apporte victoire," she says as the bugles of the morning sound and she begins the quest.

In his first novel, Mr. Fadiman has succeeded in evoking a well-known France. He has put the solid earth of Domrémy beneath his saint's feet. He has surrounded her with credible characters. It is a picture of the Meuse valley and of the young Jeanne d'Arc for which we should be grateful, but the saint's "lovely life of service which is Christ's" has never been caught—entirely—by any pen, even in the hand of a saint. In this respect the book may disappoint. In all others it is interesting.

Evelyn Eaton is author of "North Star is Nearer," and co-author of "The Heart in Pilgrimage."

Nostalgia & Nausea

THE WORLD IN THE ATTIC. By Wright Morris. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 189 pp. \$2.75.

By KENNETH S. DAVIS

AT the heart of this novel, flawing its integrity either as a work of art or as a perceptive report of small-town Americana, is an irritating tentatiousness. It is evident that Mr. Morris believes he has done what his publishers say he has done, namely "made a novel that expresses much more than is apparent on the surface." In the opinion of one reader, at least, he has done precisely the opposite; he has made a novel expressing much less than seems apparent on the surface.

At first glance, one is convinced that so slight a tale simply must have hidden meanings. Clyde Muncy, a writer, is driving through Nebraska on his way to New York with his wife and two children. He passes through the tiny village of Junction, where he was raised, and decides to stop for a visit with his boyhood friend, Bud Hibbard. Inevitably, the Muncys are trapped into spending the night with the Hibbards, and before they manage to get away twenty-four hours later Clyde has become involved in funeral arrangements for Mrs. Clinton Hibbard, Bud's aunt, who has always been an alien in that community because of her alleged cultural superiority. He also encounters as corny a group of stock small-town "characters" as has been assembled

in one book in years. Great effort is made by the writer to create a mood of mingled nostalgia and nausea; he labels the mood "nostalgia" and "nausea." It is an effort which many readers may agree is only 50 per cent successful.

The chief trouble seems to be that Clyde Muncy, who tells the story in first person, is conceited as all-get-out, and none too bright, either. He's so blinded by his sense of personal superiority that he doesn't really see anything, save the stereotypes in his own mind. Midwestern small towns are simply not as Clyde sees them to be. For instance, two pages of unfunny dialogue are devoted to the outraged surprise of a restaurant waitress when Clyde, city slicker that he is, orders iced coffee. The waitress is supposed never to have heard of such a thing. Someone ought to tell Clyde Muncy, or his creator, that the people in towns like Junction now read the same magazines, subscribe to the same book clubs, see the same movies, listen to the same radio shows, read the same AP news, and buy the same standard brands of merchandise as do the no more pampered people in Eastern cities.

There are differences between Midwest and East, and between country and city people, but those differences are much too subtle to be accurately perceived by guys like Clyde Muncy. A certain humility, a willingness to submit mind to fact, is essential to clear vision.

Butterfly Aunt

THE QUEEN BEE. By Edna Lee. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts. 295 pp. \$3.

By PAMELA TAYLOR

JENNIFER, when her parents are suddenly run over and killed near their shabby home in New York, turns for help to her mother's much younger sister, Aunt Eva, far away in Atlanta. Traveling south on the train, Jen meets Ty McKinnon, an agreeable young man who seems incredulous when she tells him she is Eva Avery's niece, that she is on her way to live with the Averys, whom she has not seen since she was a baby. "Do you know anything about bees?" he asks irrelevantly.

Weeks later Jen begins to understand Ty's question, guesses why, on one of his many calls at the Avery's great house, he makes her a present of two books on bees. For Eva Avery is a Queen Bee, beautiful, spoilt, totally selfish, and luxury loving. "Make up your mind," she tells her niece, "that you want the best things in life and get them. . . . A woman can get what she wants." What Eva Avery has wanted has been jewels and magnificent clothes; a fine house; complete domination of her incredibly handsome husband, the wealthy "Beauty" Avery, with his scarred, sardonic face; endless parties and a succession of enslaved men, preferably men whom other women wanted but could not hold against Eva Avery's wiles. And what she has not wanted enough to bother about has been the happiness of her children or her husband. The children, lost in a world of nightmare, are dependent entirely upon their father, in his sober moments, and his sister Phyl, for affection. "Beauty"



—Berkley Ball.

Leo Brady—"fear, guilt, exultation."

Avery himself blots out the bitterness of his life with increasingly long bouts of morose drinking.

At first Jen, like so many others, falls under Eva's spell, is taken in by the clinging affection, the apparent interest in Jen's having a good time, the lavish shopping so that Jen may be well dressed, as befits anyone in Eva's orbit. She is willing to offer with both hands the adulation, devotion, and constant small services which Eva demands, shutting her eyes to the avid selfishness which lies behind the exquisite façade. But disillusionment sets in. Phyl marries to free herself from the uneasy household, but for Jen there seems to be no means of escape from the impossible, anguished emotional entanglements which bind her to "Beauty" and his children. Not until "Beauty" Avery pulls himself out of his alcoholic haze long enough to take melodramatic action is Jen free to find "the best things in life"—and not those which Eva Avery had meant.

The self-centered woman, insatiable in her search for admiration, is not new in fiction. Around her can be written terrifying stories of destruction. But "The Queen Bee" is a melodrama without the dimensions of reality and since the ill-starred Averys never come to life sufficiently to move us either to pity or horror, their final tragedy seems futile and irresponsible, no more.

Sin of Impulse

THE EDGE OF DOOM. By Leo Brady. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co. 247 pp. \$3.

By EDMUND FULLER

MR. BRADY'S first novel is a difficult book to review. It calls, at once, for recognition of the attempt to mine a deep-running vein. It is no ordinary tale of murder and pursuit, of guilt and repentance. Writing specifically as a Catholic, he tries to interpret to us a sin of impulse, and the complex variations of the sin of pride that follow upon it to block the path to the confession and contrition upon which the redemption of this soul depends.

Martin Lynn lives in the tenement section of a great American city. His mother has just died. The accumulated frustrations of his life take the form of a desire that she should have a lavish funeral. Balked in his appeal for this, he murders an elderly priest in an unpremeditated outburst of rage.

Now in Mr. Brady's scheme the thought follows the deed, and the rest



—Mario Rosel.

Edna Lee—neither pity nor horror.

of the book interweaves the external man-hunt with the internal anguish of Martin, compounded of fear, guilt, and exultation. There are others involved in Father Kirkman's death. His niece, Rita Conroy, whom he has prevented from a marriage contrary to the laws of the Church, resented the old man's dictatorial control over her life. Realizing that his death fulfilled a deep wish of her own, she takes a share of the guilt unto herself, identifying herself with the murderer who had been, in effect, the agent of her desire.

Father Roth, the young priest who had served the dead man in a bond of affection, is harassed by Rita's spiritual crisis and by the mystery of the killer, whose identity he slowly divines and for whose immortal soul he feels a priestly compassion.

Detective Mandel is a philosopher, a sad man. He seeks the solution of two crimes, the murder of the priest, and also a robbery, committed at the same time and linked, curiously, to the case of Martin Lynn. It is no callous, personal triumph or satisfaction to him to close this account.

Now whether Mr. Brady would avow it consciously or not, the Dostoevskian parallel is inescapable. And in this parallel is found the limitation of "The Edge of Doom" which keeps it from achieving the stature possible to its theme.

Martin Lynn is a brainless Raskolnikov. His crime is not the logical consequence and test of a certain view of life. So random, so fortuitous are its circumstances that it is almost meaningless to him and hence to us. I find it impossible to believe the act, as it is presented, so I accept it. But this does not help, for I find no sufficiently substantial depths of mind or emotion from which truly meaningful interpretations can be drawn.