edge of the history of this field, and my own reading does not bear out his insistence that Freud, "simultaneously attractive and repugnant," was the man who "most deeply influenced American anthropology in its formative years." Surely Freud had a great negative influence, influencing the choice of research on the part of young scholars eager to refute him, but if Americans were under anyone's influence it was that of Franz Boas, whom Lasch unfortunately confuses with George Boas, and who receives but scant mention in this book. On the other hand, Lasch seems oddly eager to rehabilitate Freud as a student of women and their problems and to rescue Freudian analysis from the therapeutic manipulations of neo-Freudians like Karen Horney. This seems to me a misguided enterprise. It may well be true that women have distorted Freud's prejudices, and that neo-Freudians ruined a plausible theoretical beginning, but the enterprise has a desperate air about it. I personally do not believe Freud understood women very well, and think it unwise to argue any reformist case on this ground. It would be far better to Lasch to survey current theory and stress the best that is now being thought, and to leave this kind of intellectual resurrection to detached intellectual historians.

Finally, Lasch's lack of expertise in the field shows in a rather muddled treatment of neo-Freudianism and the Frankfurt school. He does cite Martin Jay's recent study, but otherwise seems innocent of the established classifications for dealing with these two quite distinct groups. He thus associates Erich Fromm too closely with T. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, merely because the three men belonged at one time or another to the Frankfurt Institute. It cannot be stressed too often that this sort of superficial similarity in intellectual history can be extremely misleading. In fact, Fromm did not share the dogmatic biological rigidities that prevailed in the School. Instead, he should be grouped with Karen Horney and the other neo-Freudians who broke from Freud and insisted on a more cultural kind of determinism of human character. In this same context, Lasch is grotesquely unfair to Karen Horney, whose early work in Europe was far better than he seems to realize, and who said things in the 1930's in America that were often sensible, intelligent, and similar to some of Lasch's current views. Her later career as anxiety-therapist to the masses may well be as deplorable as Lasch and I both believe, but the demands of historical accuracy require a fairer statement of the quality of her earlier work.

The book thus has many problems that should trouble perhaps a few dozen specialists in intellectual history. Other readers should ignore these problems and read the book for its many solid virtues. Lasch has zeroed in on some of the enemies of civilized life in our time.

Reviewed by ROBERT M. CRUNDEN

Beyond the Fringe


HERMAN MELVILLE informs us in Moby Dick that no mighty book has ever been written on the theme of a fly. To produce a memorable book one needs a mighty theme.

Chaim Grade's The Yeshiva: Masters and Disciples has as its underpinnings many such mighty themes: the Job-like confrontation with the enigma of suffering; the problem of maintaining one's faith in a world seemingly bereft of meaning and justice; the dichotomy in one's being between the demands of the flesh and the inhibitions on our libido induced by a religious asceti-
cism; the struggle of the soul to escape the meshes of involvement with the secular world; the hostilities fomented by the religious and the nonreligious; the rivalries between competing religious factions. One could continue with the enumeration of these massive themes. Let it suffice for the moment to say that Grade is concerned in this two-volume work not with the mutabilities of the moment but rather with the metaphysical stirrings of the eternal.

Properly to appreciate Volume I of *The Yeshiva* (a Hebrew word meaning a place in which to learn not only the elements of Judaism but the advanced areas of the Torah, the Talmud, etc. Grade also includes the Musar, which he defines in the Glossary as “a nineteenth-century movement in Judaism to educate the individual to strict ethical conduct”), one must be at least familiar with the major events in the first volume. In this first volume, Tsemakh Atlas, a Polish Jew very much influenced by the ascetic rigors of Musar, in which he has been raised and to which he is dedicated, seeks to lead a life in consonance with its teachings, but he finds that his attempts end in frustration and failure. He becomes engaged to a sickly girl, but he breaks the engagement when he discovers her father is reneging on the dowry. He marries instead an attractive and wealthy woman but realizes that her lack of religious convictions and the life of the business world into which he is thrown corrode his soul. He leaves his wife and the world of business and establishes a Yeshiva in another town in Poland (the setting is eastern Poland after World War I), but here, too, he finds that the soul’s yearning for purity is thwarted by promptings of the flesh.

Volume II continues Tsemakh Atlas’s search for salvation. Although he does not dominate the book by his physical presence, his spirit broods restlessly over the lives of the other characters. Thus, several of his former students, notably Moshe Chayit Lohoysker, accuse him of ruining their lives. Lohoysker tells his former teacher:

You taught us a Torah for which you did indeed sacrifice yourself, but which you yourself weren’t happy with. That’s why your students grew up full of contradictions too, and became broken people. I don’t hate you any more. I see what’s become of you. But I have no respect for you.

Similarly, his deserted wife, Slava, from whom he has been separated for two years and from whom he vainly seeks a divorce, comes back to him filled with both rage (at his desertion of her and at his untouchable aloofness to her physical charms and her emotional importunities) and yearning for a reunion. There is also his haunting search for penance because he has learned, to his horror, that his first fiancée, Dvorele Namiot, died shortly after he jilted her, and he seeks forgiveness from her insane-stricken father—even to the extent of rolling himself in the mud before her father’s house and letting him step over him and spit in his face.

What sustains Tsemakh Atlas in spite of all the failures and anguish of the soul is his belief (instilled in him by his Musar training) that somehow, by self-discipline and effort, a person can improve himself ethically and spiritually despite all the evidence to the contrary.

But mighty as the presence of Tsemakh Atlas is in the book, there are others who thrust themselves on the reader’s awareness. There is Chaikl (also called the Vilner, named after Vilna, the city from which he comes; Chaikl is presumed to be based on the early life of Grade himself), whose faith in the traditional teaching of the Torah is weakened by his growing awareness that divinity does not see the world in Manichean dichotomies. Chaikl feels that poets and philosophers can also enlarge our vision of the world’s dimensions. He does not share the Musar belief that gratification of one’s sexual urges and appreciating the beauty of the sensory world are inherently evil. There is Meyerke Podval, a politically radical atheist, whose
Marxist sympathies are born more from a bitterness of recalling his childhood poverty and what he regarded as humiliating charity, than from firm political and philosophical convictions. There is the sickly and saintly Henekh Malariter, whose altruism provides a welcome contrast to the nibbling selfishness of most of the other Yeshiva students.

Above all, there is Reb Avraham-Shaye Kosover (probably based on one of Grade’s former mentors), a rabbi, sage, author of *The Vision of Avraham*, whose moral magnificence benefits many troubled people (and they all seem to be troubled). Despite his personal wish to be always preoccupied with fulfilling the many commandments enjoined upon an observant Jew and to flee from the nets of communal involvement, he is always there, guiding, inspiring, even laughing—and never expecting either gratitude or material emoluments. What marks him as an extraordinary influence is that he himself is not free from the thorns of personal affliction: his wife is molded in the Xantippe tradition and can bear him no children. He is impoverished materially and is beset with everyone else’s problems. Yet, his basic belief is that “the way of the Torah is to be strict with oneself and lenient with others.” When, at the end of the novel, he is invited to Jerusalem, two of his young followers (Tsemakh Atlas and Chaikl Vilner) “had the feeling that all their struggles would be illuminated by the radiance of the man of God—Reb Avraham-Shaye Kosover, the author of *The Vision of Avraham.*”

There is much more in the book. There are the women, either maneuvering to attract the Yeshiva boys into marriage or, if married, working to help their husbands and sons continue their learning. There is the bitterness of the secularists in the towns (all in eastern Poland) towards the Yeshiva students, whom they contemptuously regard as “bench warmers.” There are the acrimony and pettiness among the various Yeshiva factions, the fear that the traditional Jews had of the emerging Communism in Russia (from where some of the Musariks illegally took young boys to the Yeshivas in Poland), and the entire web of human misery woven from the strands of personal inadequacies and environmental pressures.

It is a tribute to Grade’s mastery that, even though he is dealing with sensitive subjects, conflicts, and divergent types, he is both comprehensive and compassionate. He avoids the temptation of being tendentious, even though his own upbringing in eastern Poland (he now lives in New York) and subsequent tribulations in Nazi-controlled Europe would make tendentiousness understandable. He is aware of the smokescreens people often put up to hide their egocentric behavior. He understands the poisons of collective degeneration which could take a movement such as Musar (originally founded by Reb Israel Salanter, whose basic philosophy was, “Think about your fellow man’s body and your own soul, and not the reverse”) and turn it into a soul-destroying malignancy.

Early in the novel, one of the more zealous citizens asks an individual who questions the wisdom of the Torah, “You’re quoting the sages? First show me your fringes.” (The fringes are the four corners of the garment that traditional Jews have been wearing and still wear to remind them to adhere to God’s commandments.) What marks Grade’s work is that his novel, while superficially particularistic and regional, goes beyond the fringes to encompass not only certain kinds of Jews in a certain part of Poland at a certain time in history. It is not at all difficult to go beyond the “fringes” to the continent of mankind.

With a little imagination, it should be possible to equate Grade’s immersion in the Talmud and the Musar with Hawthorne’s Puritanism or with Joyce’s Roman Catholicism. One can identify Tsemakh Atlas’s grappling for a spiritual unity with Faust’s attempts to reconcile the “two souls” struggling with him (those two souls being comparable with the Hebrew yetzer hara—the
evil impulse and the yetzer tov—the good impulse). Similarly, it is possible to see in the saintly Reb Avraham-Shaye Kosover the lineaments of Dostoevsky's Father Zosima; in Slava (the vibrant feminist wife of Tsemakh Atlas) the counterpart of Hester Prynne. More important, however, than the finding of literary counterparts to the characters in Grade's novel are the sensitivity, skill, compassion, and depth with which he has mirrored the struggles of all of us to find a purpose in our lives. Grade has once again redirected the novel from the shallows of frivolity and inanity to the profundities of a metaphysical quest.

Reviewed by Milton Birnbaum

Some Talk of Alexander


Julius Caesar was "the greatest man that ever lived," Alexander Hamilton once allegedly declared to Thomas Jefferson at a dinner party. Such stories (in this case related by Jefferson himself) have helped to reinforce for two hundred years the popular conception that Hamilton was a "monarchist" and a nationalist, the natural enemy of the democrats and states' rightists of his time. Although there is considerable evidence to support these contentions, Mr. Holmes Alexander has nevertheless presented us with a sympathetic biography of Hamilton which attempts to rescue him from some of the more serious of these charges. To Covet Honor has a number of good points. The description of the young Hamilton in the Revolutionary War is an interesting account of the relationship between the youthful Hamilton and his sober commander, Washington. The references to Hamilton's later political thought are also accurate enough as far as they go, although they are not penetrating enough to warrant being described as an analysis. (On those occasions when passages from The Federalist are cited as relevant to some of Hamilton's political decisions, however, the references are reasonably apt.) And the later chapters contain some vivid descriptions, particularly concerning Hamilton's last encounter with Aaron Burr.

But in the final analysis, the book cannot be classified a success. Mr. Alexander's biography fails to make Hamilton "live again," that is, he does not give Hamilton's character the complexity and depth which distinguishes great men from lesser ones. Mr. Alexander fails to present Hamilton's thought with any profundity: we are told of Hamilton's powers as a speaker and as a writer, but the reader learns of them only as if receiving a report about events from afar. We are not made to relive those times and passions which brought those talents into use. We are similarly told of Hamilton's famous ability in the realm of public finance, but the national economic problems that Hamilton faced (and in great part solved) remain as mysterious to the reader as they must have seemed to the congressmen who received his reports.

Some of the book's shortcomings are caused by its lack of proportion: too much space is devoted to describing episodes which should have been mentioned briefly, while insufficient attention is paid to some of the more important events in Hamilton's life. For example, Hamilton's private affairs (particularly his "affairs") receive far too much discussion, while not enough notice is paid to his rift with Jefferson in the 1790's, and to the consequent part that Hamilton played in organizing the Federalist party in opposition to the Jefferson-led Democratic-Republicans. From this account one would scarcely be aware of the magnitude of that great conflict in the 1790's which the history books like to call "capitalism versus agrarianism."