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REVIEW

David Macey, *The Lives of Michel Foucault. A Biography*. London: Verso, [1993] 2019. Pp. 613. ISBN: 9781788731041 (hardback).

This edition of the standard biography of Foucault comes with an essay by Stuart Elden, an 'Afterward: Afterlives,' pp 481-491, which itemizes the materials that have come to light since the biography was published in 1993. Certainly, it was in the 1990s that a certain Michel Foucault and debate around his work was established with competing bio length studies by Didier Eribon (1989) and James Miller (1993), and by 2000 the two massive volumes of *Dits et écrits* (in French) and the three volumes of *The Essential Foucault* with magisterial introductions by Faubian, Rabinow, and Gordon. One could say that at that point Foucault's own wishes that there be no more posthumous book publications had been fulfilled. That was the sort of legacy that he had hoped for. The scene today is different. Not only have many further minor pieces and interviews been collected but also the Collège de France lectures, while the History of Sexuality series has been completed and other lecture courses from each stage of his career have been published, some very recently. If Macey (1949-2011) was writing today, the biography would be different.

The biography works through the 'lives of Michel Foucault' chronologically in eighteen chapters. Macey read virtually everything that was available and interviewed key informants on Foucault's life and on his work. It is written in an objective style which presents brief summaries of articles, books, and lectures; often, given Macey's erudition, brilliantly placing arguments in the context of intellectual and political debates. He then discusses the reception of these ideas and how Foucault dealt with criticisms. As the biography moves through the years, Macey follows Foucault's personal relations, his career, and his political activities. There is a clear thematic in the biography that respects Foucault's own view that this was not a single life with a single unchanging character. I was present at the Foucault conference in London in 1994 when James Miller presented his account (*The Passion of Michel Foucault*), which takes the line that there was a constant thread: the limit experience that Foucault constantly sought and which explains why his work has an exceptional dynamism.¹ Indeed, I introduced Macey to Miller during an interval at the conference expecting some fiery exchanges, but the encoun-

¹ Stuart Elden wrongly gives the title as *The Passions of Michel Foucault*, p.555, n.12.

ter was glacial. Macey was highly political but with one or two exceptions not given to polemics. Miller's study is an engagement with a Foucault who lived his life in a certain challenging way, and who could be respected but also critiqued at a personal and ethical level. Macey tried to produce an objective account and withheld his political and theoretical reservations.

The biography, if written today, would certainly be different, as Elden says. As Elden himself has written three long studies which amount to an intellectual biography of Foucault, it might be thought that Macey's study is now redundant. But this is not the case, since Elden essentially adds to Macey's chronological account (see Gane, 2018). The major additional material includes lectures on sexuality given in the 1960s at Clermont-Ferrand and at Vincennes and continues in the 1970s with the yearly Collège de France lectures, which were not available to Macey. So as the biography charts Foucault's activities in these years, it is now possible to see how the enormous work invested in the lectures reveals a level of intellectual involvement and development unknown to Macey. Stuart Elden reveals that the store of Foucault's archive contains a further 117 boxes containing as yet un-catalogued materials from some 37,000 pages. Further documents and correspondence remain in private hands.

There is a problem for readers, evidently: the volume of material on and by Foucault. There is no shortage of guides, but Macey's book remains a key reference point not just for information but also for judgement. For example, on the question of Foucault's visit to California in May 1975, Macey simply says 'Reports from those who claim that he told them that it changed his life should probably be treated with some scepticism; the insights granted by LSD tend to be short-lived and illusory...' (p. 339). Miller, on the other hand, had access to Simeon Wade's manuscript detailing Foucault's visit to Death Valley and taking LSD, and he interviewed Wade. His chapter 8 starts with an account of this 'limit experience' and emphasises its life-changing effects for Foucault. The chapter is chaotic, meanders through various interviews and short pieces, and presents a picture of Foucault as searching, experimenting, unsettled, and refusing to be closed down. Had Macey read the Wade manuscript, no doubt his judgement would have been more nuanced. As Wade's text has now been published (2019), the reader has access to a first-hand account of how Foucault experienced not only LSD but the university scene and its onerous demands. Recently, Wade's book has been cynically exploited by Mitchell Dean and Daniel Zamorra to promote an all-out attack on Foucault.²

The new edition of the biography should come with a warning note, however. The addition of the 'Afterward: Afterlives' by Elden has simply been added as a chapter before the endnotes. As the excellent index, which includes indexing the notes, follows on, a problem has been produced: the index has not been adjusted to account for the insertion of the Elden chapter, so all the index pagination for the endnotes is wrong by about

² Dean and Zamorra's first version (2019) was aimed at the debate in France around the 50th anniversary of May '68, the second version (2021) has a different sub-title for the Anglophone audience. Their attitude of cynicism is explicit: 'Status-seeking is neither a positive nor negative feature of the habitus of the intellectual. Rather, it defines it.' (2021: 33). Foucault's view, expressed many times, was different, but it certainly defines the opinion and casuistic practice of these two authors.

12 pages. Thus, for example, the Althusser indexed reference for page 537 is actually on 549, and so on.

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