



Michel Foucault (Critical Lives)

David Macey

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With *Michel Foucault*, Reaktion Books introduces an exciting new series that brings the work of major intellectual figures to general readers, illuminating their groundbreaking ideas through concise biographies and cogent readings.

There is no better thinker than Foucault with which to begin the "Critical Lives" series. Though reticent about his personal life for most of his career, Foucault, in the last years of his life, changed his stance on the relationship between the personal and the intellectual and began to speak of an "aesthetics of existence" in which "the life" and "the work" become one. David Macey, a renowned expert on Foucault, demonstrates that these contradictions make it possible to relate Foucault's work to his life in an original and exciting way. Exploring the complex intellectual and political world in which Foucault lived and worked, and how that world is reflected in his seminal works, Macey paints a portrait of Foucault in which the thinker emerges as a brilliant strategist, one who-while fiercely promoting himself as a maverick-aligned himself with particular intellectual camps at precisely the right moments.

Michel Foucault traces the philosopher's career from his comfortable provincial background to the pinnacle of the French academic system, paying careful attention to the networks of friendships and the relations of power that sustained Foucault's prominence in the academy. In an interview in 1966, Foucault said, "One ought to read everything, study everything. In other words, one must have at one's disposal the general archive of a period at a given moment." It is precisely this archive that Macey restores here, accessibly relating Foucault's works to the particular context in which they were given form.

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