At the end of this book the authors seem sure that they have launched a sturdy research craft. I feel sure that newcomers in particular will, on reading this book, be encouraged to try out this craft and make use of it in their own area of primary care. We may feel unsure and uncertain. The editors assure the reader that qualitative research is best suited for those who are comfortable with uncertainty. **Renee O'Sullivan.**

* **The Lives of Michael Foucault by David Macey, Hutchinson (1993) 599 pp, £20.00.**

* **The Passion of Michel Foucault by James Miller, Harper Collins (1993) 491 pp, £18.00**

* **Genet by Edmund White, Chatto and Windus (1993) 820 pp, £25.00.**

Speaking in 1975 to a journalist about his lectures at the prestigious Collège de France Foucault said:

Sometimes, when the lecture was not good, something, a question, was needed to bring it all together. But the question never comes... And as there is no feedback, the lecturing becomes a piece of theatre. My relationship with the people who are there is that of an actor or an acrobat. And when I have finished speaking, a feeling of total solitude. There is a sense in which reading Macey's scholarly biography we observe Foucault performing his intellectual acrobatics but are unable to join him in his creative flights of fantasy. The text is grounded in and by a mass of frequently superfluous detail and when a fact strikes the reader as curious, for example, as Macey portentously informs us, that Foucault was one of the few French philosophers during the late 1940s to own a car and that during his spell in Uppsala he surprised colleagues by driving an expensive British limousine, we wait in vain for him to do something with this material, whether a Freudian interpretation or even a recognition of this as concomitant with the philosopher's relative wealth.

There is something gloriously funny about the earnestness with which the most promising material is rendered banal while, as an example of understatement, Macey's analysis of the cause of Foucault's depressions when a student, that they "probably resulted from a combination of factors: a competitive atmosphere, a culture of the neurotic, possible worries about sexuality, a conviction of being ugly, and fear of failure could all have played a part" would be difficult to

improve upon. It might be thought that Macey does not enter fully into the life - let alone lives - which Foucault lived. Though it would be easy to miss or to dismiss as a quibble his translation of what Foucault termed the 'state of passion' between him and Daniel Defert into 'love', this translation does violence to Foucault's lived philosophy. Similarly, the notion of the 'lives' of Foucault as employed here is strange: Macey commits the error of those (among them Proust) who state that a man has no single essence, but then talks about his different facets, who claim that there is no such thing as a homosexual persona, only to enumerate the different ways of being homosexual. Instead of categorization we find subcategorization and the subject becomes not greater but diminished as the process of division proceeds. What we get here is Foucault as Jekyll and Hyde with all that such a division entails. What we do not get is the Foucault of the limit experience, of the passion, nor a sense of what Proust would have called the intermittences of the self. This self is, of course, more than the sum of its parts; at the close of the book we leave Foucault, rather as his audiences at the Collège de France left him, without real contact. Technically, the biography is successful and the extensive bibliography of the philosopher's writing should prove invaluable to future researchers, but Foucault himself remains dead to us.

Macey closes his work by recounting Foucault's statement that his *Words and Things* was "a 'fiction', pure and simple; it's a novel, but I didn't make it up...", and concluding that the philosopher would no doubt have preferred a novel to a biography. Miller, with his extraordinary text attempts to offer a fiction, or at least, in true Foucaultian fashion, (as evidenced most notably by the seminal *Madness and Civilisation)*, attempts to make a fictional construction with authentic elements: attempts, in fact, to approach the whole business of biography in the spirit of a limit experience.

Miller's book reflects its subject's concern with subverting boundaries between pleasure and pain and life and death, and his attempt to live fully - indeed, to his death - the Nietzschean imperative 'to become what one is'. Every line is carefully thought through, (though not necessarily factually accurate), and even the spare design of the cover - a monochrome photograph of Foucault in an open doorway dressed in a kimono he purchased in Japan - serves to draw the reader further into the world of the philosopher. Reflected on all sides in the dark lacquer-like surfaces, the lone figure seems to preside over a clinic, an asylum, or stand all-seeing at the centre of the panopticon which so fascinated him, as it did his contemporary

Genet. Suddenly it is not hard to imagine Foucault in the clubs of San Francisco.

Like the seeker of truth in the labyrinth, the text - and the reader with it - seems to re-enter Foucault's own *Discipline and Punish:* while negotiating its labyrinthine twists and turns, trying to avoid dead ends and patiently exploring detours in pursuit of answers to the many riddles it poses - about chronology, about method, about genealogy - the reader is never permitted to avoid the troubling substantive issues to which the text nevertheless keeps circling back: the centrality of torture and death and the alchemic function of S/M in Foucault's philosophy...in short, life lived as passion.

It is, perhaps, this honest embrace with the shifting self of Foucault which enables Miller to hold, if only momentarily, his essence. A fellow-traveller, Miller is able to heed Foucault's injunction "Do not ask who I am, and do not ask me to remain the same" as the archivist is not, and in doing so engages with the 'lyrical core' of the philosopher's life -the key to his 'personal poetic attitude'. The sensibility which Miller brings to Foucault is quite moving. Both he and Macey translate Foucault's account of observing, from his desk, a young man in a nearby apartment who at nine every morning would appear at his window, apparently lost in reverie. Macey's is the more polished translation as we might expect from a professional translator, and his version reads as a factual account of what he describes as 'the gentle art of voyeurism'. Miller's, in contrast, appears the more literal translation and he speaks not of voyeurism but of the degree to which the philosopher and correspondent inhabited 'the same imaginative universe'. The sensitivity of Miller's translation indicates the extent to which he too is able to enter this space.

This innovative approach to a life and its chronology will, and justifiably, frustrate the expectations of the reader who 'knows' the proper format of biography, but those who are willing to 'bracket' such expectations will find the experience this book affords well worth the effort.

Genet, unlike the wealthy Grande Ecole-educated Foucault, never needed to worry about the quality of his lecturing at the elite Collège de France since he was never elected to this illustrious body. It is unthinkable that this quintessential outsider would have aspired to membership in any case. Foucault emphasised the vital distinction between working against the system from within and attacking it from without; Genet's, as Edmund White's *travail de longue haleine* demonstrates, was a life lived out for the most part in loathing of France, of all institutions of power, and finally, when revolt became

debased and the sixteenth arrondissement asked him to dine in order to experience the frisson of eating with a thief and a pederast, perhaps even self-loathing. White notes that Genet was appalled at his effect on those closest to him, by the extent to which he seemed to personify towards the end of his life Wilde's maxim 'each man kills the thing he loves'.

If Genet and Foucault did not have the Collège de France in common they did share the same love of Greek, the same fascination with prison and Bentham's panopticon, (though from different sides of the wall), the same project to write themselves out of Sartre's shadow, all of which White portrays. Though he embarks with an invaluable chronology, White is quick to observe that while "the art of biography is often supposed to trace the small steps an individual takes in a clear direction...no one could logically account for the extraordinary leaps Genet made from the beginning to the end of his life". His response to this is to offer the best qualities of both Macey and Miller: he is scholarly but also impassioned about the life he recounts.

Miller's reading of Foucault allows us to appreciate the degree to which in his death he realized his Passion. Foucault is increasingly incandescent, increasingly Pater's 'hard, gemlike flame' with each passing year; Genet becomes more gnomic. Even physically Genet seems to become a smaller, blunter version of Foucault as the photographs included by White illustrate. The haunted and hauntingly beautiful face of the man at twenty-six (the age - thirty-six - attributed to him in the caption is incorrect) increasingly resembles a clown without greasepaint. White's treatment of Genet's death, what Genet called, with Mallarmé, 'this shallow brook', in perfect sympathy with the writer's wish to de-dramatize the subject, calls to mind Woolf's *Time Passes,* and makes a fitting end to this masterly biography. **Simon Du Plock**

* **Heuristic Research by Clark Moustakas, Sage Publications, London (1990), £32.50 HB, £15.50 PB.**

* **Husserl by David Bell, Routledge, London (1990), £12.99 PB.**

Moustakas is claiming to provide psychological researchers with a humanistic, experiential and phenomenological method in what he calls heuristic research: a form that has much in common with the