

some readers as romantic and unlikely, it is modeled on the successful life of Edward Carpenter, who ran a farm together with his proletarian lover, George Merrill. With minimal changes, the film version released by the Ivory-Merchant-Jhabvala team in 1987 emerged as fully credible.

In his novels Forster was a conservative **modernist**, with roots in the social comedy of Victorian times, but also showing affinities with the work of his friends D. H. Lawrence and Virginia Woolf. Although the revelation of Forster's homosexuality diminished him in the eyes of some critics, his familiarity with the ideas of the early homosexual rights movement was actually a source of strength. He succeeded in translating the insights of Carpenter, John Addington Symonds, and others into universal terms, and for this all his readers should be grateful.

BIBLIOGRAPY. P. N. Furbank, E. M. Forster: *A Life*, New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978; Claude J. Summers, E. M. Forster, New York: Frederick Ungar, 1983.

Wayne R. Dynes

## FOUCAULT, MICHEL (1926-1984)

French historian and social philosopher. After completing his university work, Foucault was active in the French cultural services in a number of European cities. His first major book was *Folie et déraison: histoire de la folie à l'âge classique* (Paris, 1964; translated only in an abbreviated version: *Madness and Civilization*, New York, 1967). This monograph shows Foucault's characteristic ability to frame bold historical hypotheses and to give them literary form in gripping set pieces. As the audience for his work grew, however, more conventional historians began to flag gaps between evidence and inference.

Developing his ideas further, Foucault advanced the guiding concept of "archeology," the notion that western

civilization had seen a succession of distinct eras, each characterized by its particular "episteme," or style of thinking. He then extended the scope of his investigation into clinics and prisons; as "total institutions" these sites display in concentrated form the strategies of social surveillance and subjugation that regulated the whole society. Foucault's work in the 1960s was often viewed as structuralist, but he denied this affiliation. Although he was out of France at the time, he was deeply marked by the Paris uprising of May 1968, which created a general climate of activism; in Foucault's case this commitment found expression in concern for prisoners, mental patients, the Afghan rebels, and human rights generally.

The 1970s saw him increasingly involved with the problem of power, which he perceived as universally diffused though not in very different measures. The modern state in particular has learned to harness to its purposes such bodies of knowledge as medicine and the social sciences, which serve to colonize and subjugate the individual. The individual can confront this phalanx of domination with only a stubborn recalcitrance. At this time the concept of archaeology yielded to the more corrosive and dynamic "genealogy," derived from Friedrich Nietzsche, probably the most important influence on Foucault's later thought. His increasing iconoclasm and skepticism led him to deny that historical record yields any evidence of a stable human subject, of a human "condition," or of human "nature."

In the mid-70s he turned to the matter of sexuality, issuing a programmatic statement in 1976 (*La Volonté de savoir*, Paris, 1976; translated as *The History of Sexuality*, vol. I, New York, 1978). The five volumes that were to succeed this little book, treating the early modern period and the recent past, never appeared. Yet at the end of his life he surprised the world with two successor volumes with a different subject matter: the management of sexuality in ancient Greece and Rome.

While completing these books he was already gravely ill, a fact that may account for their turgid, sometimes repetitive presentation. In June 1984 Michel Foucault died in Paris of complications resulting from AIDS.

In some ways a quintessential Parisian intellectual, Foucault obtained remarkable success also in the English-speaking world. On several occasions he taught at the University of California at Berkeley. Although he was wary of being identified as a homosexual thinker *tout court*, he made no bones about his orientation, and could sometimes be found in the leather bars south of Market Street in San Francisco.

It is not surprising that scholars of homosexuality should be attracted to Foucault's work, since apart from its (nonexclusive) focus on sexuality it accorded with several aspects of the spirit of the times. Discontent with the systems of Marx and Freud and their contentious followers had nonetheless left an appetite for new "megatheories," which the Anglo-Saxon pragmatic tradition was unable to satisfy. Foucault's thought was both ambitious and critical. Moreover, he attacked the oppression model, which saw the shaping of sexual minorities as merely a function of negative social pressures, while at the same time he denied that there was such a thing as a transhistorical homosexual, an invariant building block of social typology. In particular Foucault was influential among a group of gay and lesbian historians who rallied to a program called *Social Construction*. This approach sees human beings and their sexuality as artefacts of the spirit of the age in which they live. *Social Construction* also detects sharp breaks, "ruptures," from one era to another. This concept of discontinuity was all the more welcome as the ground had been prepared by an influential American philosopher of science, Thomas Kuhn, whose concept of radical shifts in paradigm had been widely adopted. In vain did Foucault protest toward the end of his life

that he was not the philosopher of discontinuity; he is now generally taken to be such.

As has been noted, the influence of Foucault has been complex and ramifying. Not since Jean-Paul Sartre had France given the world a thinker of such resonance. Yet Foucault's work shows a number of key weaknesses. Not gifted with the patience for accumulating detail that since Aristotle has been taken to be a hallmark of the historian's craft, he often spun elaborate theories from scanty empirical evidence. He also showed a predilection for scatter-gun concepts such as episteme, discourse, difference, and power; in seeking to explain much, these talismans make for fuzziness. Foucauldian language has had a seductive appeal for his followers, but repetition dulls the magic and banalization looms. More generally, Foucault found it hard to resist an anarchistic, "anything goes" vision of historical change, which leaves unanswered the question of why we are embedded in a temporal-cultural process from which it is useless to try to escape. Methodologically, his relativism permits no secure place from which to evaluate conflicting truth claims. Despite these criticisms, there can be no doubt of Foucault's personal sincerity, and his generosity toward those who sought to consult him. Refusing to be bound by the somewhat rigid and old-fashioned training he had received in France, he boldly sought to open new vistas of enquiry. The lesson of Foucault then is his quest, rather than the particular points at which he arrived in his relatively short creative life.

BIBLIOGRAPHY. Michael Clark, *Michel Foucault: An Annotated Bibliography*, New York: Garland, 1983, J. G. Merquior, *Foucault*, London: Fontana, 1985.

Wayne R. Dynes

#### FOURIER, CHARLES (1772–1837)

French utopian philosopher and sexual radical. Fourier spent much of his