

*Derrida and Wittgenstein* is by no means the final word on Derrida, Wittgenstein, or the two together. But it is an excellent first word, a starting-point for thinking about Derrida, Wittgenstein, and the nature of language.

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*Foucault's Virginité: Ancient Erotic Fiction  
and the History of Sexuality.*

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1995.

Pp. xiii + 194.

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If a book is to be judged by its title, Goldhill's *Foucault's Virginité* would fare poorly. The book may position itself as a response to Foucault, and share some of Foucault's vocabulary, but it is only marginally about Foucault's work. Only two of Foucault's works are referenced, and, from those, a total of 12 pages are directly footnoted. Foucault's work serves as a foil that pops up sporadically throughout, but Goldhill offers neither an extended commentary nor criticism. In the end, the reader is left to wonder why Foucault is featured in the title.

Placing that criticism to one side, however, Goldhill's discussion of the male desiring subject in Hellenistic erotic novels is a well-written commentary. It is designed for non-specialists, with most of the Greek sources given in the footnotes. The collection of three lectures given at Trinity College in Dublin, weaves together different novels, important concepts and arguments from the period. The first chapter, which focuses on *Daphnis and Chloe*, contains discussions of *sophrosune* and the nature and value of virginity (both male and female). The second chapter, which focuses on *Leucippe and Cleitophon*, considers the way that nature is used to justify male homosexuality. The third chapter, which covers many texts and focuses on Plutarch's *Amatorius*, takes up the debates over female virginity and the problem of female desire.

The highlights of *Foucault's Virginité* include Goldhill's frequent close readings of the erotic novels. The narratives and his commentaries are often insightful. In addition, his nuanced reading of the Greek originals often point to the complex word-plays in the novels. For instance, at one point Chloe remarks after seeing Daphnis: 'Would that I had been born his pipe that he

might blow me!' (Goldhill's translation). Goldhill asks 'how smutty a remark do you think Chloe is making?' (14). Goldhill also considers how the reader relates to the novel. In this case, the double entendre plays on the contrast between the reader's experience and Chloe's innocence. Passages such as this make the book worth reading.

The greatest disappointment in the discussion is the sporadic attempts to criticize Foucault's work. At the conclusion of the second chapter, for instance, Goldhill claims, that due to Foucault's teleological history (a characterization that Goldhill never justifies), the novels are forced into the historical shift from Plato to Jerome. Foucault's account leaves 'a fundamentally distorting gap in his writing of the history of sexuality' (45). Goldhill challenges Foucault's 'panoptic vision of ancient sexuality' and criticizes his blindness to the 'fun that is had with the knowledge and teaching of sexuality' (44). Goldhill does not justify these criticisms, and periodically overstates or misrepresents Foucault's position. For instance, when Foucault claims that the Hellenistic novels contain 'some of the themes that will subsequently characterize erotics' (*Care of the Self*, 228), he is suggesting an historical connection between the narratives and later erotics, but he comes nowhere near to adopting the repressive teleology that Goldhill attacks.

Thus, while *Foucault's Virginité* offers many examples of the complexities, humour and play of Hellenistic discourses on desire, Goldhill does not establish that his criticisms of Foucault are sound, and his work would have read better without the critique.

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**François Guery, ed.**

*Philosophie Politique: Revue Internationale de  
Philosophie Politique.* 6 *La nature.*

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Pp. 192. Np.

This volume of *Philosophie Politique* deals with the political implications of humankind's presumed relationships with nature. Though little discussed in political contexts in the first part of this century, the concept of nature — of environment — has now become a central concern. Rather than attempt to arrive at a premature consensus concerning man, environment, and politics, the editor asserts, the contributions to this study represent the 'conflictual texture' of the current debate.