

PART II

Masculinities

The second part concerns a more recent interest of mine—namely, masculinities. I had been rather suspicious of this particular form of scholarship, suspecting it merely perpetuated the age-old concern of men with themselves. But as will soon become obvious, I have found a way to approach what is really a vibrant area of scholarship. The four chapters gathered in Part II each contain their own discrete arguments, but they share a common agenda: they increasingly problematize masculinity from a variety of perspectives. It begins as a suggestion in Chapter 4, where the patriarch's nuts turn out to be squashably vulnerable. By Chapter 5, "Too Many Dicks at the Writing Desk," that questioning becomes a focus on the ludicrous image of the supposedly all-powerful scribal prophets sucking on their own spermatic spluttering pen(ise)s. The forbiddingly masculine book of Chronicles, my concern in Chapter 6 ("Of Fine Wine, Incense, and Spices"), leaves itself wide open for a queer reading. All of which folds back to the penis in Chapter 7 ("Skin Gods"), where bodybuilding becomes a lateral way of dealing with the castrating iconoclasm of the Hebrew Bible itself.

A brief word on the generic variation between the chapters: the first three are more conventional scholarly studies, digging deeply into terminology and texts. "Skin Gods" is as much a cultural studies piece as it is one of biblical criticism. But since my work often disregards disciplinary boundaries, this chapter has its rightful place here as well.