

PART III

Paraphilias

A paraphilia is simply an abnormal sexual practice, a love that is to the side if we think of the Greek root for a moment. Immediately that raises the question as to what constitutes normal and abnormal and, more important, who decides what is such. The answer: overlapping legal, cultural, and religious codes, which seem to spend an inordinate amount of time policing and censoring—desperately and futilely—what counts as acceptable and “normal” and what does not. For the sake of argument, I am willing to accept such codes, if only for the purpose of gathering the remaining chapters under a single heading.

Each of the topics in this section either occupy a space far over the boundary, no matter how vague and shifting it might be, or are in the midst of the contested zones of that boundary. Found among the latter are prostitution and pornography, the topics of Chapters 9 and 10, “Hooker Hermeneutics” and “King Solomon Meets Annie Sprinkle,” respectively. Yet even these terms include a host of items that slip one way or the other: anointing, decriminalization, whore stigma, footing, pissing, and anal sex with a dildo, to name but a few. The last two chapters move further afield, linking up with and thereby pursuing some of the hints in earlier chapters, especially those on the Song of Songs where I became enamored of the sexuality of nature. In Chapter 10 I pick up Allen Edwardes’s provocative suggestions regarding the names of God, the way the Israelites might have worshipped the Golden Calf, and a range of other ribald proposals. By Chapter 11 we are well beyond that boundary (or perhaps not if we happen to be Hittites . . .), for now we broach the vast realm of bestiality and necrophilia, particularly as a point of contact between Hittites and Hebrews. These are topics of biblical interpretation where few critics dare to tread—precisely the reason to explore them patiently and thoroughly.