

**'She is the beginning of all the ways of perversity:'
Femininity and Metaphor in 4Q184**

**Melissa Aubin
Florida State University, Tallahassee**

Abstract

Commentators of Qumran text 4Q184 have variously identified the poem's subject, the Seductress as a prostitute or a symbol of enemies to the Essenes. Rather than a "real" woman, or even a code for a particular, specified anti-Essene group, she is a vehicle for promoting the ideals of the orthodox poet, an alarming example of the fate of the wayward. An emblem legitimated by the feminine models in the Hebrew Bible upon which the poet draws, the evil woman as heretical symbol rages anew. Her amplified presence in 4Q184 affirms an ideological "siege mentality" that manifestly distinguishes "in group" from "other" in several Qumran documents.

One of the most provocative documents in the Qumran corpus, a sapiential poem describing a temptress and the consequences of her seduction, is found (at least, for the most part) in fragment one of 4Q184.¹ Culled from a host of misogynistic images and cast in biblical proportions, her description is one of tantalizing horror. Her body is inviting and decadent, her house is in the depths of the netherworld, and her persuasion to corruption is compelling for even the most righteous man. Thus it may come as no surprise that controversy follows her into the present day: differing characterizations of the central feminine figure have given rise to a debate concerning the historical significance of the text, which is, in some ways, as provocative as the material of the text itself.

Historically, the text's central character has been construed either as a type of historical woman, or, in much the same way the Kittim (1QpHab I, II, IV) or Wicked Priest (1QpHab I, VIII, XII) have been read, as a personification of an anti-Essene group. Pre-occupied with questions about the text's bearing on debates over the nature and chronology of the Qumran community, commentators of 4Q184 have overlooked the signature premise of the text, its emphatic link between femininity and apostasy. This association is deeply ingrained in 4Q184 (and the traditions upon which the text draws) and, indeed, its neglect in secondary literature tacitly re-naturalizes the stereotype of the heretical feminine for a modern audience. Failing to problematize this construction permits the narrator to set the agenda for the reception of his text even today and thus propagates the ancient cultural fiction. Commentators thus implicitly allow apostasy, as personified in the text, to be construed as an independent or self-evident category of thought, naturally and artlessly linked with femininity.

But "orthodoxy" and, by extension, "apostasy" are particular, culturally stipulated formulations, forwarded by those who define themselves as uniquely orthodox, in large part as an exercise of

¹ For suggestions concerning the probability and reading of certain other fragments that may belong to 4Q184, see John Strugnell, 'Notes sur le no. 184 des "Discoveries...,"' *Revue de Qumran* tome 7, fasc 2, 27 (April, 1971): 263-68.

rhetorically differentiating their so-called heretical opposition. Thus "orthodoxy" is not an inherently substantive category, but a label that shifts depending on the speaker and circumstance. We can certainly acknowledge that the orthodox voice of self-validation is at work throughout the Qumran corpus, where, to name only one example, the "Sons of Light" are valorized, and eventually triumphant over the patently unorthodox "Sons of Darkness." But in addition to noting the fluidity and historical contingency of "orthodoxy" and "heresy," commentators on religious difference in antiquity have now introduced the theme of gender into the critical examination of the historical construction of the categories of "orthodox" and "other."²

Utilizing gender as a category of historical analysis for 4Q184 requires first that we note that this text is written from the point of view of a masculine, self-identified orthodoxy. The fact that the figure of the heretical female, the Seductress of 4Q184, is a vehicle for the negative expression of the author's (or authors') self-described position directs attention to the poet's *gendering* of his own self-defining rhetoric. By *gendering*, I mean the assignation of masculine or feminine qualities to culturally stipulated constructions, here, the categories of "orthodoxy" and "heresy." Attention to the rhetorical operation of gendering need not stand at odds with the task of earlier commentators who sought to provide an historical setting for the text. Indeed, as I shall indicate, shifting the terms of the inquiry in this way might further the attempt to place the document in an historical context.

But *how* can explicating the description of heresy embodied, a sexually voracious, street-walking, brainwashing seductress help us to historicize the author(s)? Attention to the poem's component motifs, the images and terms used to describe the seductress, provides a starting point. The very building blocks of this poem are familiar Proverbs images and *Leitwoerter* that starkly polarize Lady Wisdom and the ideal wife of Proverbs, depicted as domestic, familiar, nubile, and docile, away from the anti-typical, alien woman or Dame Folly, who is aggressive, foreign, deceitful, and irreverent. The orchestration of these motifs in 4Q184 permits us to see how the product, a harrowing feminine extreme, is used as an "othering" device in the poet's own self-defining rhetoric.

Through its pervasive referentiality, the text continues a long tradition in Hebrew Scriptures that links polarized images of esteemed femininity to social propriety and despised femininity to deviance. In our current cyber-age, we might compare the poem to a "hypertext," whose component motifs serve as "embedded links," visible, emblematic iceberg tips always pointing the reader to pages of traditions and narratives whose full versions are buried beneath the surface. Viewing 4Q184 as "always already read," authored and understood by the audience with a thoroughgoing sense of ideals developed in Proverbs, allows the reader to observe plainly how the author relies on hallowed traditions that use gender to inscribe cultural demarcations.

For any patriarchal discourse in which the self is defined as male, woman qua woman is the quintessential other. For the Qumran community, mightily consumed by self-imposed social

² See, for example, Virginia Burrus, "Woman as Heretical Symbol in Alexander, Athanasius and Jerome," *Harvard Theological Review* 84 (July 1991): 229-248; Elizabeth Clark, "Ideology, History, and the Construction of "Woman" in Late Ancient Christianity," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 2 (Summer 1994): 155-184.

boundaries, the concerns are easily transcribed on the body of a seductress and enshrined in loaded descriptions borrowed from hallowed scriptures. The product is the permeable and aggressive central figure of 4Q184, a threatening image of a community with uncontrolled boundaries. Just as she allows herself to be penetrated sexually by strange men, she speaks effusively without self-control. She ignores any expectation that she remain in the private sphere and she also disregards subordination in the public sphere.

Thus the impropriety of Seductress as Proverbs-laden symbol functions to mark distinctions between the text's "orthodox" audience and the enemies of orthodoxy against whom the text warns. Hence the feminine figure is viewed as a gendered expression of the 4Q184 author's notion of heresy, and her portrayal is enforced by the rhetorical structure of the text. If the text was produced by the Qumran community-- creators and readers of several other texts that pronounce an overwhelming concern with distinguishing their own group from outsiders hostile to their version of orthodoxy -- one might easily understand how the pastiche of distinguishing rhetoric found in 4Q184, dependent on notions of femininity's "othering" value, would have effectively expressed community concerns. Even if the text was not produced at Qumran, it is plausible to see how the text might have been at home there.

As I shall demonstrate, the Seductress is distinguished from orthodoxy by her positioning as an anti-type to Wisdom. She constantly stands in contradistinction to Wisdom, who indirectly expresses the self-identity of the orthodox male. Wisdom speaks with authority in the places that are physically symbolic of collective authority, and she is an extension of the cultural voice that speaks through the father. The turpitude of the 4Q184 Seductress is amplified with features from Folly and heightened by tacit contrasts to her esteemed Proverbs *Doppelganger*.³ Thus, the 4Q184 author used women "to think with,"⁴ encoding on polarized extremes of femininity the boundaries between self and other, creating a figure that was "doubly alien-- both woman and strange."⁵

This article first introduces the text and supports the notion that the guiding characterization of the seductress occurs at the thematic and structural crux of the text, "she is the beginning of all the ways of perversity," a phrase that at once recalls Wisdom and distinguishes the Seductress from her. A review of previous attempts to determine and historicize the significance of this character follows. The final section observes how the metaphorical figure of 4Q184 amplifies and develops culturally meaningful notions of the feminine in Proverbs and elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible. This section also notes how the rhetorical format of the text enforces its message.

The Poetic Architecture of 4Q184

What follows is a translation of 4Q184, divided into stichoi (each assigned to a letter of the alphabet) to show something of the poetic structure of the text. Parts of this version I owe to

³ The term is used in discussions of Proverbs in Alice Bach, *Seduction and Betrayal in Biblical Narrative* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), a book that has deeply influenced my commentary on this text. Ibid., 28.

⁴ A phrase coined by Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988).

⁵ Alice Bach, 28.

previous editors of the text,⁶ and in some cases I depart from readings offered thus far in favor of my own.⁷ A brief introduction to the structure and content of 4Q184 fragment one follows the translation. Brackets [] indicate reconstructed terms.

Part I

- A [From her mouth] she brings forth vanity and ...
errors, she seeks continually [to sharpen her] words
- B And mockingly she flatters/deals smoothly
she insults altogether with [lips] of perversity
- C her heart establishes recklessness
and her kidneys ...
- D ... in perversity they are touched and
her hands go down to the Pit
- E her feet go down to do evil
and to walk in guilt [of transgression]

Part II

- F foundations of darkness...
many are the transgressions in her skirts

⁶ For previous editions of the text, see Strugnell, 263-68 and: J.M. Allegro, "The Wiles of the Wicked Woman, a Sapiential Work from Qumran's Fourth Cave," *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* (January-June, 1964): 53-55 + plate XXVIII XIII; more fully published in his *Qumran Cave 4 Discoveries in the Judean Desert*, vol. 5 (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1968), 82-85 + plate XXVIII; J. Carmignac, "Poeme allegorique sur la secte rivale," *Revue de Qumran*, tome 5, fasc. 3, 19 (November, 1965): 361-74; Rick Moore, "Personification of the Seduction of Evil: 'The Wiles of the Wicked Woman,'" *Revue de Qumran*, tome 10, fasc. 3, 35 (April, 1980): 505-519. See also the translation of this text by Florentino Garcia Martinez in *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated: The Qumran Texts in English* (Leiden/NY: Brill, 1994), 379.

⁷ Especially stichoi G, J, Q, R-T. I owe the most debt to Rick Moore, who has presented the most sensible approach to partitioning the phrases of the text, see Moore, 509-512.

G ... eminence of night
and her coverings ...

H her covers are deep darkness of twilight
and her ornaments are touched with ruin

Part III

I her couches are beds of the Pit
from the low places of the Pit

J from her night huts are beds of darkness
and in the midst of [night are her tents]

K from the foundations of deep darkness she pitches dwelling and she abides in tents
of Silence

L in the midst of everlasting fires, not in the midst
of all luminaries is her inheritance

Medial Statement

M she is the beginning of all the ways of perversity

Part IV

N Alas, ruin belongs to all who possess her
and destruction to [all] that takes hold of her

O for her ways are ways of death
and her paths are paths of sin

P her tracks are strayings of perversity
and her [byways] are wrongdoings of transgression

Q her gates are gates of death
at the entrance of her house she steps into [Sheol]

Part V

R [all] who enter, [they will not return]
[and behold] all her inheritors go down to the Pit

S and she lies in wait in the secret places
[near] every [corner...]

T in the broad places of the city she covers herself
and in the gates of the city she stations herself

U and she has [no repose from walking continually]

V her eyes glance here and there
and her eyelids she lifts wantonly

Part VI

W [to look at] a righteous [man] and trip him up
and a [mighty] man she causes him to stumble

X upright men to pervert their way and
[prevents] the righteous elect from keeping the
commandment

Y the sustained ones to cause to be foolish with
wantonness and those who walk straight to alter
their [custom]

- Z to cause the meek ones to rebel from God
 and to turn their steps from the ways of
 righteousness
- AA to bring [insolence to their hearts]
 so that they are not [ordered] on the paths of righteousness
- BB to lead humanity astray into the ways of the Pit
 and to seduce with smooth talk the sons of man

The poem thematically divides into two halves, with one summary hemistich (M), applicable in meaning to either half but independently standing between the two sections.⁸ The thematic division and medial independent hemistich set up expectations of symmetry between the first half of the fragment and the second. Indeed, certain parallelisms bear this expectation out. I caution, however, that there is debate concerning whether or not the poem actually began where the text commences in the manuscript. That is, some editors suspect that fragment one of 4Q184 might begin in *medies res*. Thus, one would have to assume that the text begins where you see it begin in the transcription and translation for the poem to be indeed thematically and structurally symmetrical.⁹ Provided this is the case, it is the medial statement, "She is the beginning of all the ways of perversity," which occupies the crux of the text and summarizes the poet's conception of the metaphorical character's identity. The diametric opposition of this statement to the characterization of Wisdom personified in Proverbs (3:17)¹⁰ further suggests that the poet

⁸ See Moore, 509 for several arguments regarding the symmetrical structure of the text. Moore relies on thematic and metrical data to establish his case and presumes that fragment one comprises the entire text of 4Q184.

⁹ Given the fact that there exist four other fragments, which scholars have attributed to 4Q184, I do not claim that fragment one, the most complete and extensive piece, contains a literary whole. The first line of fragment one may or may not introduce the entire poem. Although the manuscript photograph reveals blank space above the first line of the fragment, it is unclear whether the fragment is a continuation of another document or the first segment of an independent work. Differing interpretations of the fragment's first term (see below) add to the confusion. It is also unclear whether the final line of fragment one terminates a section of the poem or evidences an abrupt truncation. Again, there is blank space in the manuscript below line seventeen, which seems to begin at the lower right hand corner of the page, but it is not clear whether the text continues elsewhere. Despite the possible incomplete status of the text, I think it is imperative to try to evaluate each stich in terms of what precedes and follows it in the same fragment. Viewing each stich as a part and indicator of the entire fragment allows appreciation of the complex orchestration of images associated with the allegorical female figure.

¹⁰ Note also that the crux statement of 4Q184 appears to invert the description of Wisdom in Job 40:19. This observation appears in Daniel J. Harrington, *Wisdom Texts from Qumran* (London/New York: Routledge, 1996), 34.

designed the text with "stock phrases" describing so-called Wisdom and Folly in the Proverbs material and other wisdom literature.¹¹

Before noting the parallelisms that surround this medial hemistich, it is useful to present an outline of the thematic progression of the text.¹² The first half of the fragment offers a general description of the female personification and her realm. The poem begins with a description of her anatomy (A-E). Notably, her anatomical description proceeds from her head to her feet, perhaps anticipating, as Moore points out, the meta-thematic progression of our figure downward toward Sheol or the Pit throughout the fragment. The next section, the least well-preserved of the fragment, contains a description of her dark and corruptive attire (F-H), and the following few lines offer a description of her temporal and spatial abode, again associated with Sheol and night (I-L). This section leads to the medial summary statement (M).

At the crux of the fragment, we read that "she is the beginning of all the ways of perversity." Although the term *derekh* is common to this statement and the discussion that immediately follows suggests that this hemistich introduces the second half of the fragment, there are other features, which establish the hemistich as an independent phrase. For example, the phrase appears between two synonymous parallelisms, the former coupling "fires" (*betokh mokdei olam*) and "illuminators" (*betokh bekhoh ma'azarei*), and the latter coupling the consequences of those who "possess her" (*hovei havah lekhoh nohaleah*) and those who "take hold" of her (*lekh[ol] tomkhei bah ushdadah*).¹³

This central statement provides a structural crux as well as a thematic one. The two halves of the poem meet here, and on either side of the central hemistich appear parallel linguistic clues that confirm their symmetric arrangement before and after the crux. For example, a form of the root *n-h-l* ("to inherit") appears in both stichoi that border the central hemistich. The previous stich (L) uses the term to signify the metaphorical figure's possession, summarizing what the rest of the third section (I-L) itemizes ("In the midst of everlasting fires, not in the midst of all luminaries is her inheritance"). In the subsequent stich (N), however, the form of *n-h-l* connotes a victim's possession by the woman, corresponding to that section's purpose of describing the implications of accepting her ways: "Alas, ruin belongs to all who possess her and destruction to all who take hold of her."¹⁴

¹¹ See Strugnell, 266 for the earliest correlation between 4Q184 and the Proverbs material.

¹² Again, see Moore, 509-10 for a more elaborate discussion of the poem's thematic progression.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 510-11.

¹⁴ In addition, Moore (p. 511) mentions a linguistic subtlety in the poem's final phrase ("To lead humanity astray into the ways of the Pit and to seduce with smooth talk the sons of man") that may also support a symmetric framework for the fragment. Here, the noun *halakot* ("smooth things") is used and reminds the reader of the somewhat symmetrically placed verbal form in the second stich of the poem. It is interesting to note, however, that the term *halakot* has a related form, *halakah*, which is synonymous with the *nahalah* just mentioned in stichoi L and N ("possession, portion"). Perhaps the *halakot* appears as a muted echo of the poem's interior motif just described. Moreover, the final statement may suggest a double entendre, so that the sons of man are being seduced "by smooth talk" and "into the possession" of the evil exemplar.

The second half of the fragment departs from describing the metaphorical figure herself and turns to a discussion of where, how and whom she leads astray. A geographically oriented section noting all the places from and whither she leads men astray follows the crux statement (N-Q) and parallels the section just preceding the crux statement (I-L), which discussed where the woman resides. Here, a pattern begins in which the geographical language of "roadways" used in a figurative sense (that is, for "ways of life") becomes more and more specific, possibly more and more narrow and rural, as though we are receiving directions that lead finally to her specific abode in Sheol, which also ultimately specifies a way of life associated with the poem's subject. The following four lines (R-V) demonstrate how her glances and stares lead men astray. The emphasis on her appearance here seems to parallel the middle section of the poem's first half, but here she is no longer the object of someone's view. Rather, she emits a gaze lethal to the objects of her attention.

The final four lines (W-BB) emphasize whom the woman leads astray: the righteous, the strong and the poor, and finally, all humanity, the "sons of man." Her means of leading such men astray as described in this final passage recall her insincerity, discussed in the first passage of the fragment. Indeed, the use of *h-l-k* ("to flatter") to describe her actions in both the first and last section of this fragment confirms the rhetorical symmetry suggested throughout.

Reading the Conceit of 4Q184

Since John Allegro's initial publication of a text and translation for 4Q184¹⁵ (more tantalizingly dubbed "The Wiles of the Wicked Woman" by Professor Allegro), ambiguity concerning the identity of the metaphorical subject of the poem has given rise to conflicting and competitive interpretations among its editors. Upon her modern debut, the female personification central to 4Q184 was described as a "harlot" once Allegro filled the first lacuna with the term *zonah*.¹⁶ Although Allegro gave her this identity based on characteristics found within the text (for instance evil, temptation, perversity), he also proposed another identity for her quite apart from any literal clues in the poem. In much the same way other scholars have posited historical referents for other intriguing characters and groups named in the Qumran corpus, Allegro suggested the figure might be an encrypted, defamatory personification of the political entity of Rome.

Soon after, A. Dupont-Sommer¹⁷ rejected both of Allegro's suggestions, proposing instead that the purpose of the poem was to warn the historical Qumran community against the real and immediate dangers of the women of their time. According to Dupont-Sommer, the author of 4Q184 exhibited misogynistic tendencies similar to those of Ben Sira and Philo of Alexandria by warning contemporaries against distracting and ultimately fatal female "temptations." Theodore Gaster would later combat this argument with the full weight of the Essene hypothesis, stating "there would be no point in warning desert ascetic against the ploys of real live streetwalkers."¹⁸

¹⁵ Allegro, "The Wiles of the Wicked Woman."

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 53.

¹⁷ A. Dupont-Sommer, "Le Psaume CLI dans 1 I QPs(a) et le probleme de son origine essenienne," *Semitica* 14 (1964): 54-55.

¹⁸ T. H. Gaster, *The Dead Sea Scriptures* (New York: Anchor Press, 1976), 495.

Barely one year after the work of Dupont-Sommer, J. Carmignac,¹⁹ generally accepting Allegro's edition of the text, published an article proposing that the female allegorical figure metaphorically represented Jewish sect that rivaled the Essenes. According to Carmignac, the point of the poem was to disparage satirically the proposed sect, which, he argued, would have differed from the Essenes in interpretations of law. Some time after Carmignac's article and Allegro's re-publication of 4Q184 in *Discoveries in the Judean Desert of Jordan V*, John Strugnell²⁰ proposed his own emendations to Allegro's text in a trenchant review of the *Discoveries in the Judean Desert* volume. Although Strugnell accepted much of Allegro's transcription and translation, he eschewed the interpretations of both Allegro and Carmignac. It was Strugnell who first proposed that the portrait constructed in 4Q184 fit best within the Wisdom traditions and relied heavily on portraits of Wisdom and her antithesis founds in Proverbs.

Aside from Rick Moore's relatively recent edition of the text, which focused on the poetic structure of 4Q184, a few other interpretations have appeared in the last twenty years that deviate in minor ways from either Allegro's or Strugnell's readings. In the fashion of Carmignac, A. Burgmann²¹ published an attempt to correlate the metaphorical identity of the female personification with Simon the Maccabee, assuming that the text was generated at Qumran and sheds some light on the relationship between the renegade community and Jerusalem. Likewise, M. A. Gazov-Ginsberg²² believed the poem vilified a rival sect within Jewish circles. J. Baumgarten,²³ however, chose to emphasize the demonic elements of her description in light of parallels in later rabbinic material, magical texts, and an ancient pictorial representation of Lilith in the Burney Relief.

As the great variety of interpretations indicates, one's presuppositions concerning the significance of the metaphorical feminine figure in part determine the text's origin. Scholars such as Carmignac or Burgmann who claim that the text expresses a certain polemic held by the Qumran community against other contemporary Jewish groups or groups in the community's history view 4Q184 as a text generated by a sectarian Qumran poet.²⁴ Other scholars, such as Vermes²⁵ claim that the text may antedate the Qumran community. The general message of the text might suggest that the Qumran sect did not necessarily produce it, although such terms as *h-l-k* and *l-v-z*, which are common in eponyms for rival sects in the Qumran corpus ("seekers of smooth things" and "interpreters of lies") render it difficult to close the debate. For my purposes, identifying a particular author is not critical. If evidence for Qumran authorship is not absolutely

¹⁹ See Carmignac.

²⁰ See Strugnell, "Notes sur le no. 184."

²¹ A. Burgmann, "'The Wicked Woman: Der Makkabaer Simon?'," *Revue de Qumran* tome 5, fasc. 3, 19 (November, 1965): 361-74.

²² A. M. Gasov-Ginsberg, "Double Meaning in a Qumran Work: The Wiles of the Wicked Woman," *Revue de Qumran* tome 6, fasc. 2, 22 (November, 1967): 279-285.

²³ J. Baumgarten, "On the Nature of the Seductress in 4Q184," *Revue de Qumran* tome 15, fasc. 1, 57 (April, 1992): 133-143.

²⁴ See Carmignac, 367-74 and Baumgarten, 133-43.

²⁵ Geza Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 3d ed. (London: Penguin Books, 1987), 240-242.

convincing, it could at least explain why this text might have been at home in the Qumran corpus rather than generated there.

As noted above, such attempts to historicize the document and its central figure have left unexplored her significance as a gendered instrument signaling starkly drawn cultural demarcations. When this text is read in its full potential as an heir to Jewish wisdom traditions, the question of a concrete historical referent for the Seductress is eclipsed by others concerning the complexity of the poem's structure, its relationship to Proverbs, and its re-writing of Folly as a figure uniting themes of apostasy and adultery. With attention to these features, we can ask how category of gender is engineered to enforce the boundary creating efforts of the author.

4Q184 and Proverbs Paradigms: Routine Pristine and Cliched Decay

The figure portrayed in 4Q184 fragment one stands in a bipolar tradition of positive and negative female depictions in Wisdom literature. Her portrait is a pastiche of images that characterize the antitheses of Wisdom found throughout Proverbs described as unchaste and threatening women, either harlots, seductresses, or "alien women" who may be both. Elements from Proverbs pervade descriptions of her body, her home and her *modi operandorum*. For example, the metaphorical figure in 4Q184, who exhorts apostasy and exhibits strong ties to the underworld, stands in opposition to more positive personifications of Wisdom, who appears an symbol of righteousness (Proverbs 8:1-36) and who was present and active at the creation of the world (Proverbs 9:30-31). Several specific details throughout the poem support this association. To name one example, the verb *sh-h-r* ("to look early or diligently for") describing the actions of the Seductress in the first stich is used twice elsewhere in Proverbs (1:28, 8:17) to valorize the actions of those seeking Wisdom personified. In this way, the characterization of the 4Q184 figure is marked by echoes of the metaphorical correlation between seduction and apostasy in the Hebrew Scriptures, suggesting the intentional reversal of Wisdom imagery that evokes themes of harmonic relationships between God and Israel. Thus, the poetic result is a negative female figure that simultaneously reminds the reader of Wisdom and animates the threat of jeopardized relationship between humankind and God through her depiction as an adulteress, leading humanity down a figurative path to sin and false doctrine.

Documenting the linguistic and imagistic debt of 4Q184 to other Hebrew Bible texts, primarily Proverbs, provides an opportune setting to note how the newly redacted elements (re)construct femininity. Terminological and thematic affinities between 4Q184 and the Proverbs depictions of Wisdom and Folly suggest that the poet depended primarily on the style and language of Proverbs when composing 4Q184. Nonetheless, a newly drafted figure appears. Itemizing parts of her body, her abode and her actions, and repeating motifs to develop the subject, the poet describes her with deliberation as a feminized embodiment of threats to the poet's own, self-described orthodoxy.

Assault and Flattery

Commentators of 4Q184, unsatisfied with the gaps left in the fragment, suggest reconstructions that cap a multi-leveled design: they place words in the mouth of the author/redactor to describe, in turn, the figure's speech, often in terms already pronounced in earlier sapiential literature. This

complex of text, intertext and metatext comes into relief at the outset. Differing reconstructions of the initial phrase have determined entire solutions for reading the identity of the central figure of the 4Q184 fragment 1 text. Allegro first suggested "the harlot" (*zonah*), leading some to read the text as a polemic against women in general or prostitutes specifically,²⁶ and Strugnell countered with "from her mouth" (*mipiah*) in its place, to conform to the physiological language of the rest of the first section (A-E). Strugnell's reconstruction appears appropriate, since this first colon parallels the second colon (A2), in which the subject of the text continues to use her mouth for fashioning flattery.²⁷ This reconstruction, which spotlights her misleading speech straight away, compliments the rest of the Proverbs-flavored poem in which the speaker attempts to protect his son from stylized foreign temptresses who deceive men through flattery and lies.

Nevertheless, Allegro's solution is not misguided, especially if it is based on the metaphorical figure's representation as an agent of apostasy. His reconstruction echoes a long-recognized correlation between infidelity or prostitution and apostasy in the Hebrew Bible (e.g. Isaiah 1:21; Nahum 3:4-7; Proverbs 2:16-19; 5:6), associating the breaking of the exclusive covenant with Yahweh with the rupture of the marriage vow (Jeremiah 2:20, 25; 3:1-13; Ezekiel 16:23; Hosea 1-3). The term "harlotry" itself carries a semantic range inclusive of, but not necessarily limited to prostitution. The term can be applied to an adulterous woman or a woman who had sex before marriage (Leviticus 21:7, 14), and derivations from the root refer to both premarital sex and extramarital sex.²⁸ Thus, a woman whose sexual habits figuratively resemble an apostatizer's devotional sampling would not necessarily have to have been a harlot in the "professional" sense of the term. The question of the first term aside, given the correlation between the term and strange/foreign women who lead men to apostasy in the Proverbs material on which the poet relied, it becomes clear that the metaphorical figure of 4Q184 stands in a tradition of figurative women whose deviance from proper sexual mores is used to signify deviance from correct religious doctrine or praxis.

That either reconstruction could easily fill the lacuna with little consequence for the meaning of the rest of the text affirms and repeats an important motif throughout the 4Q184 text and its antecedent traditions: the conflation of flattery and harlotry as images of religious corruption.

²⁶ Dupont-Sommer, 54-55.

²⁷ If Strugnell's reconstruction is correct, it seems as though first line of the fragment does not actually begin the text; that is, to start the line with "from her mouth" may presume that the subject of the text has already been identified, perhaps on a previous page. Alternatively, Allegro's reconstruction, which does provide the reader with a subject for the text, conjure literary traditions associating the *zonah* and apostasy, inasmuch as the two other nouns of this first hemistich, *hevel* and *toyah* find associations in biblical texts with idol worship. Ezekiel 48:11, for instance, uses the verb *t-y-h* two times in a verse, which might have resonated with the sentiments of those at Qumran concerned with preservation of the Zadokite line for the high priesthood. The verb describes the actions of the children of Israel who go astray, although the sons of Zadok do not (ta' u haleviyim...). The term frequently describes disparaged, apostate parties throughout the Dead Sea Corpus. *goyei hevel*, "nations of vanity" appears throughout the War Scroll in this sense (IV, 12; VI, 6; IX 9). Indeed, I QS V, 19 broadens the referent of the term dramatically: "all are vanity who know not his covenant."

²⁸ See Elaine Alder Goodfriend, "Prostitution (OT)," in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 5 (New York: Doubleday), 505-510.

Both reconstructions allude to the same alien woman/Folly type constructed in Proverbs; in either option, seductive speech is linked to harlotry, which defies the expectations of the valorized feminine ideal, which are linked to the narrators' presumed orthodoxy. Just as flattery occupies the metaphorical figure in fragment one, flattery is the signature characteristic of the "alien women" whom we find in Proverbs, figures long characterized as negative embodiments of the Wisdom imagery of Proverbs 1-9.²⁹

The second stich of 4Q184 reads: "and mockingly she flatters/deals smoothly, insulting altogether with [lips] of perversity." It is no small coincidence that, in all of the four extended passages on introductions to seductress figures in Proverbs include remarks about her smooth words, each including a form of the root *h-l-k* ("to flatter") as in 4Q184. Proverbs 2:16 and following (and similarly in 7:5) reads: "You will be saved from the strange woman; from the foreign woman with her smooth words." Similarly, Proverbs 5:3 states: "The lips of a strange woman drip honey and her palate is smoother than oil," and Proverbs 6:24ff: "To preserve you from the evil woman, from the smooth tongue of the strange woman" repeat the idea. Finally, Proverbs 7:21 likewise reads "with much seductive speech she persuades him; with her smooth talk she compels him," prefiguring her compulsions later in the text. In each case, women use language that is both threatening and seductive in order to deceive and seduce.

The complex of images associated with the female figure's mouth continues at the end of the first stich, where "she seeks continually to sharpen her words," a phrase that connotes damaging or well-crafted speech, two ideas repeated in colon B1.³⁰ This image of sharpness presents a marked contrast between the earlier talk of smooth speech, heightened even more by the alliterative effect of finding *tihlik* and *k-l-s* in such close proximity. Here, her open mouth is not merely a

²⁹ See chapters three and four in Claudia Camp, *Wisdom the Feminine, and the Book of Proverbs* (Decatur, GA: Almond, 1975); Strugnell, 267. See also Sidnie White Crawford, "Lady Wisdom and Dame Folly at Qumran," in *The Feminist Companion to the Bible (Second Series)*, eds. Athalya Brenner and Carole R. Fontaine (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 205-17; Christl Maier, "Conflicting Attractions: Parental Wisdom and the 'Strange Woman' in Proverbs 1-9," in *The Feminist Companion to the Bible (Second Series)*, eds. Athalya Brenner and Carole R. Fontaine, 92- 108; Carol A. Newson, "Woman and the Discourse of the Patriarchal Wisdom," in *Gender and Difference in Ancient Israel*, ed. Peggy L. Day (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 142-60; Harold C. Washington, "'The Strange' Woman of Proverbs 1-9 and Post-Exilic Judaeae Society," in *A Feminist Companion to Wisdom Literature*, ed. Athalya Brenner (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 157-84; Gale Yee, "I have Perfumed my Bed with Myrrh: The Foreign Woman in Proverbs 1-9," *JSOT* 43 (1989): 53-68; ---"The Socio-Literary Production of the 'Foreign Woman' in Proverbs," in *A Feminist Companion to Wisdom Literature*, ed. Athalya Brenner, 127-30.

³⁰ Strugnell, however, reads *leshamen* for the third term of A2, the *piel* infinitive construct of the verb *sh-m-n*, meaning "to oil" (cf. Proverbs 5:3). Although this referent is not attested for *sh-m-n* in biblical Hebrew, the *piel* form of *sh-m-n* in Jastrow offers the referent (Marcus Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature* (New York: The Judaica Press, 1992), 1598). Vermes apparently adopts Strugnell's reading in his translation, perhaps because the *sh-m-n* corresponds more easily with the *hehlik* ("she flatters/deals smoothly") of the next stich. Given Psalms examples (140:4; 64:4) concerning the sharpening of one's tongue, however, I think Allegro's reconstruction is more apt.

sign of her unregulated physiological boundaries and her persuasive means to seduction. In a characteristically feminine way, she is out of control, but at the same time she is tacitly masculinized by emitting the spiked protrusions of sharp words, an image elsewhere found in descriptions of evil men (Psalms 64:4, 104:4; 1QH 5:13) whose sword-like words are martial. Her finely tuned speech, fashioned for abusive ends, mocks the more noble goals of the legitimate wisdom students' attempts at well-crafted speech.

As the language of the poem fashions a thoroughly negative characterization of apostasy as Seductress, the rhetoric that props this language consistently repels the reader from her. Modeled on the typical father to son rhetoric in Proverbs, the poem is delivered in the rhetoric of instruction.³¹ The reader is positioned as a naïve youth, audience to an authoritative father who mediates the uncontrolled, eroticized speech of the Seductress. Under this pretense, the Seductress's alluring speech to the reader-elided-with-the-student-of-wisdom contends with the rhetorically favored, didactic speech of the narrator. Conflated with the son, the presumed reader is male, for whom feminine language detailing apostasy, borrowed from Jewish sacred history, is expected to "make sense." Any women in the audience were also addressed paternally as rhetorical sons, their gender erased because they are implicitly addressed as sons or simply presumed to be absent. Like the men to whom the poem is addressed, women are reminded to recognize the portrayed female proclivity to apostasy, which is expressed as seduction. Thus, unless the reader extricates herself from that naturalized position as student of wisdom or son, the narrator's declamations against the Seductress, bolstered by a host of legitimating sacred images, enlist the reader to declaim the seductress's speech as well. In sum, the rhetoric positions the reader to discredit the seductress, whose speech competes for the student/reader's ear, on both narrative and rhetorical levels.

That the seductress presumes to speak is as damning as *what* she speaks. A familiar connection between harlotry and flattery appears at the completion of the first colon, where we find that the metaphorical figure brings forth "vanity" and "errors." The final term of the first colon, "errors" (*to'ot*) which presumably provides a direct object for the preceding incomplete term, is found elsewhere in the Qumran corpus only two other times, both as examples of spoken apostasy (e.g. 1QH 1:22 ff.). If these qumranic instances indicate a common sense of the term, our metaphorical figure begins straight away to display an identity marked by apostasy. The term is strategically chosen to serve another purpose: its verbal root (*t-'h*) literally means "wandering about" (Exodus 23:4; Isaiah 35:8, 53:6; Job 38:41; Psalms 119:176), so that the notion of error is coupled with the sense of a misguided route, conflating faulty moral and geographical compasses. Her curiosity unchecked, her religio-social restlessness leads her down forbidden paths, and her commanding words misdirect those seeking the right way. The shared valence of error and losing one's geographical way is telling in this context, given the dual language of paths and ways of life in section 4 as well as the language of straying from correct paths in section six. Throughout the poem, repetition of the theme of apostasy heightens her destructive potential.

³¹ For a full and astute explanation of the ramifications of this rhetoric in Proverbs, see Carol Newsom, "Women and the Discourse of Patriarchal Wisdom: A Study of Proverbs 1-9," in *Gender and Difference in Ancient Israel*, ed. Peggy Day (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 142-160.

The second colon elaborates on the nature of her speech, introducing the theme of mockery: partially restored, it reads: "And insulting altogether with [lips] of perversity." The reconstructed "[lips] of perversity" is used elsewhere in the Qumran corpus to describe a sneering enemy (1QH 5, 24), but in this case, uncontrolled feminine orifices again emit offenses. Instances of the root of the first term, *l-v-z* ("to insult/deride") elsewhere in the Qumran corpus reveal an interesting correlation between the terms *h-l-k* ("to flatter") and *l-v-z* (found in the subsequent colon, B2) and in Qumran literature.³² In the three times which *h-l-k* occurs in the Hodayot, it appears in parallelism or in proximity to *l-v-z* (II, 13-15; II, 31-32; IV, 7-10), describing the ways of groups who hold false doctrine. The pairing of these two terms in stich B may have been a natural choice for the poet, if the text were in fact generated in the Qumran community. Further attention to the semantic significance of these terms in their Hodayot contexts may suggest a strong association between "false doctrine" along with the more literal meanings of "flatter" (*h-l-k*) and "deride" (*l-v-z*). *H-l-k*, for example, occurs in the formulation "seekers of smooth things" 1QH, 15:32; 4Q169, 11 2:4, III 3:7; 4QpHab II 7; CD, 1, 18), a defamatory title for opponents of the Qumran sect.³³

The viraginous, effusive speech of the seductress always stands in tacit or explicit contradistinction to the righteous speech of Wisdom (Proverbs 8:8). Endeavors associated with wisdom, such as speaking with great dedication and skill, are executed by the Seductress for the opposite result: pronouncing malevolent falsehoods. Later clues in 4Q184 more strongly associate the figure in 4Q184 with antitheses of Wisdom we encounter in Proverbs, but even these portraits share terminological affinities with Wisdom personified, so that the author capitalizes on tension that results from reversing Wisdom imagery and using the same terms to describe diametrically-opposed figures. Starkly polarized, these figures provide an ideal template upon which the 4Q184 author can distinguish his group from a demonized "other."

Body and Sheol

The description of her open mouth initiates the itemization of her body parts (*a la* the itemized Proverbs 4:20-27 description of Wisdom's anti-type), and the initial lines anticipate an emphatic connection between her open body and her open house. As the poem unfolds, we discover that she occupies social, cultural, and spatial margins, and as such, she invites transgression of social boundaries, promoting others to go astray from defined religio-social norms. In addition, her description as a boundary figure elides distinctions between cosmic and mundane realms, confusing the difference between her physiological nether regions and the netherworld that she metonymously signals.

Like flattery, the action of "reaching for the Pit" (stich D) stands out both in the Proverbs material and in this text. The beginning term of stich D most probably occurs in the lacuna that terminates line two, so that only "in perversity [they] are touched and her hands go down to the

³² See Gazov-Ginsberg, 283.

³³ This phrase finds biblical echoes, of course, in Daniel 11:32 as well as Isaiah 30:10 in which a "rebellious people" wishes the prophets to speak "smooth things" rather than the truth. *L-v-z*, on the other hand, appears in the formulation "interpreters of lies" (1QH II 14, 31, IV 7, 9) (see colon B2) is also often associated with false doctrine (1QH II 22, 28, VI 5, VII 34; 1 QpHab X 10-11).

Pit" is legible. If Isaiah 59:3 ("For your palms are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity") provides any clue, the lacuna at the end of line two may have contained the term *'ezba'ot* ("fingers") in parallelism with "her hands" of the same stich.³⁴ It is difficult to know just how long the lacuna was and how many characters it would have accommodated. One other possibility would be the term *kapeah* ("her palms"), a less space-consuming term which would not interrupt the downward direction of her description. If either restoration might be valid, there would exist a strong correlation between Third Isaiah's image used to disparage apostate Israel and the image here employed for an agent of apostasy.³⁵ Her desecrating touch reminds the reader that she is an agent and aggressor, defiling with a caress.

The term *sh-v-h* ("Pit") of the same colon (D2, "her hands grasp the pit," c.f. 1QH VII, 29) functions here as a synonym for Sheol and is otherwise associated with unsavory women in Proverbs who make others prone to apostasy. In Proverbs 22:14, for example, the mouth of a strange woman is a deep pit into which those who incur the Yahweh's indignation will fall, and likewise, in Proverbs 23:27, we find that "a harlot is a deep ditch, an alien woman is a narrow trench."

The description of reaching downward to the Pit continues in stich E, with her feet "going down to do evil" in cola E (cf. Proverbs 5:6). This downward motion adds to the existing pattern of describing the woman from her head (mouth, that is) downward, through her kidneys and to her feet. This parallel of downward-progressing structural and thematic elements anticipates further associations with the underworld, which emphasize the metaphorical woman's evil. This stich continues the theme of reaching for the Pit, and recalls Proverbs 5:5, in which the juxtaposition of the verb *y-r-d* ("to go down") and the noun *raglayim* ("feet") is repeated in a similar context: "a foreign woman's feet go down to death." The term "feet" appears in the Hebrew Bible as an occasional euphemism for penis (Isaiah 7:20; Ruth 3:7; possibly Exodus 4:25), suggesting that it might serve as a masculinizing *double entendre* for genitals here.

The correspondence between a seductress who leads the righteous astray and "the reaching for the Pit" of colon E1 also correlates with the Proverbs motif in which foreign women or seductresses dwell in or lead apostatizing victims to the underworld. For instance, Proverbs 5:6 reads: "Her feet go down to death her steps take hold of Sheol, she does not make level the path of life; her ways wander and she does not know it,"³⁶ and likewise, Proverbs 2:18-19 reads, "For her house sinks down to death, and her paths to the shades; none who go to her come back, nor do they regain the paths of life." Such cosmic "othering," already embedded in a text that severs

³⁴ See Gazov-Ginsberg, 285.

³⁵ F. Garcia-Martinez proposes an alternative restoration, *yadeah* ("her hands"), which would take up less space in the lacuna, but would interrupt the trend of describing the figurative woman from head to foot. (Ibid., 379) Should "fingers" be the intended reading, however, the stich would fit in a trend in the Hebrew Scriptures in which fingers appear as agents in defilement (Exodus 8:19) and purifiers of defilement (Exodus 29:12; Leviticus 4:6, 17, 25, 30, 34, 8:15, 9:9, 14:16, 27; 16:14, 19). In addition, the plural subject *'ezba'ot* (or *kapeah*) would correspond in number to the form of *b- 'l* (niph'al perfect, third person plural) which follows the modifying term + preposition, *ba'ul*.

³⁶ Both hemistichoi of this line are recalled in Isaiah 59:7 ("Their feet run to do evil") and similarly in Job 31:5; Proverbs 1:16, 6:18.

the righteous from the wicked, implicitly teaches the reader that the associates of her orthodox counterpart will dwell in a place of life and safety.

Further associations between 4Q184, Proverbs and apostasy appear in the following section (F-L) of 4Q184, describing her attire. Stich F begins with the incomplete “foundations of darkness,” introducing the Qumranic language of two dualized spirits, although the lacuna at the end of the line prevents us from knowing whether the foundations of darkness pertain to the woman’s body or her clothing. Given the perplexing hemistich that follows (“many are the transgressions in her skirts”), the phrase may indeed have been polysemic, referring to both her body and her *accoutrement*. The term *kanaf* in the following phrase is daunting to decipher, because attested referents are both literal (“skirt,” Jeremiah 2:34; Zechariah 8:23) and metaphorical (a euphemism for “lap,” Babylonian Talmud Shabbat 5a, or “genitals,” for males: Deuteronomy 27:20, 23:1; Ezekiel 16:8; Ruth 3:9; for females Babylonian Talmud Yevamot 4a, 49 a).³⁷ Preferring the sartorial referent here, Gaster posits that this hemistich suggests “the practice of stashing money in the lappet of the robe.”³⁸ The common term for the harlot’s wage, *’etnan* (Deuteronomy 23:19; Isaiah 23:17-18; Ezekiel 16:31, 34, 41; Hosea 9:1; Micah 1:7) would help to strengthen his interpretation, but it does not appear here.

Money stashing aside, both sartorial and anatomical referents are semantically possible here, inasmuch as later phrases of the poem describe her ornamentation and indicate the destruction brought about by her sexual prowess. The simultaneity of both valences, then, creates a *double entendre* in this phrase. Her genitals are filled with transgressions, presumably sexual deviance, and her garments are filled with transgressions, the ways of sin generally. James Sanders’ edition of the Psalms Scroll of Cave 11, another Qumran sapiential text, heightens the probability of this reading. One psalm, 11QPs^a Sirach, praises Wisdom, extolling her desirability and beauty in

³⁷ In addition, the term *kanaf* could refer to a physiological wing. Mention of wings here would interrupt the downward pattern of her anatomical description, but the phrase “a multitude of transgressions are in her wings” would fit the earlier pattern of coupling a negative image or act with each of her body parts. Lest the possibility of our female personification actually bearing wings seem unreasonable, the Zechariah 5:9 offers a possible parallel description of a winged woman. Here in one of Zechariah’s visions, two women physiologically possess “the wings of a stork”. The angelology of both the Hebrew Scriptures and Qumran literature would have expected wings for angelic figures (cf. Isaiah 6:2; 4Q405 20 2.8). Since we have already noted our metaphorical figure’s association with the underworld, could it be that she is portrayed as a supernatural figure that possessed wings. Baumgarten (p. 138) argues that the seductress of 4Q184 indeed bore wings, and these wings would have been a recognizable demonic characteristic. Baumgarten marshals evidence from the Burney Relief, in which a winged netherworld deity appears, with four horns on her head and claws for feet. He construes the figure to be Lilith, who appears winged in the Talmud (b. Niddah 24b). Lilith was not foreign to the Qumran corpus; she appears with a host of demons in 4Q510 and shares responsibility for the apostasy of the righteous: “And I, the Master, proclaim the majesty of the [King of Glory] to frighten and terrify all the spirits of the destroying angels, and the spirits of the bastards, the demons, Lilith, the howlers, yelpers and they who strike suddenly to lead astray the spirit of understanding” (trans. Vermes).

³⁸ Gaster, 495.

simultaneously erotic and reverent language, filling the poetic fragment with dual valences.³⁹ Although the 11QPs^a Sirach text is a positive description of the Seductress' counterpart, its "double talk" provides a timely parallel to the negatively eroticized rhetoric in 4Q184.

In the third section (I-L), which describes the metaphorical figure's abode, we find that her tents are "in the midst of night" (literally, the *'ishon*) "pupil," cf. Proverbs 7:9, in which a father warns his son that men encounter seductresses in "the pupil of the night"). The description recalls Proverbs 7:27 ("Her house is a way to Sheol, going down to the midst of the night"), suggesting a temporal, night/day duality to augment the cosmic duality that polarizes Wisdom from the Seductress. The Seductress is linked with the "eminence of the night," and "her covers are the deep darkness of twilight." Stich K, "from the foundations of deep darkness she pitches dwelling and she abides in the tents of Silence," develops this notion. Here, the poet has selected a telling term, *'afelot*, to convey a sense of severe doom in addition to its referent, "darkness," rendering her powers even more frightful. Besides describing the dark of night (Deuteronomy 28:28), *'afelah* expresses the unnatural darkness Moses caused for fall over Egypt (Exodus 10:22) and the darkness of the Day of the Lord (Amos 5:20; Jonah 2:2; Zephaniah 1:15). *'afelah* characterizes the ways of the wicked in Proverbs 4:19 (cf. Jeremiah 23:12; Isaiah 59:9), and Job 10:22-23 associates *'afelot* with the gloom of the underworld. *Neshef* ("twilight"), too, has biblical precedents that define the term as the time at which adultery takes place (Job 24:5; esp. Proverbs 7:9).

The final hemistich of stich H tells us her ornaments *'adi* are touched with ruin recalling earlier mention of defilement, perhaps with regard to her fingers, and the author again recalls the metaphorical Pit. The many Hebrew Bible instances of *'adi* (are associated with portraits of both chaste women (2 Samuel 1:24; Jeremiah 2:32; Ezekiel 16:11; Isaiah 49:18, also 1QM 19:7) and personifications of wayward Israel as harlot (Jeremiah 4:30: "What do you mean that you dress in scarlet, that you deck yourself in ornaments of gold that you enlarge your eyes with paint," and Ezekiel 23:40: "For them [idolaters] you bathed yourself, painted your eyes, and decked yourself with ornaments"). As in narratives featuring aggressive women (even the valorized Judith), the application of fragrances and other embellishments serve as a prelude to seduction. Thus, in both the Qumran and Hebrew scriptures instances, use of *'adi* in negative contexts accompanies metaphorical depictions of seductive and/or apostatizing feminine figures.

The following three stichoi, I-L, emphatically confirm the Seductress's placement in the underworld, again correlating with the abode of Wisdom anti-types. Her actions and description enforce her existential relationship with Sheol: she reaches for the Pit, embraces the Pit, lives in the Pit, and she is the vacant pit who will be filled. The spatial abode of this metaphorical figure, then corresponds closely to that of the Proverbs seductresses who, in turn, negatively balance Wisdom's secure dwelling, which is free of dread and evil (Proverbs 1:30). Her described station recalls and negates Wisdom, who is associated with light: "In the midst of everlasting fires, not in the midst of all luminaries is her inheritance." Her fiery fate is fraught with reminders of the doom she signals-- her own death and the fate of her associates. According to Leviticus 21:7-9, the punishment for harlotry was precisely by means of fire—they were to be burned at the stake.

³⁹ James A. Sanders, *The Psalms Scroll of Qumran Cave 11 (11QPs^a)*, Discoveries in the Judean Desert of Jordan, vol. 4 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), 81.

But “everlasting fire” specifically expresses the concept of fiery final judgment, which was not unknown in the Hebrew Bible (cf. Isaiah 33:14; Ezekiel 21, 32; 30:15-16), and dominated Qumranic thinking about the final end of the wicked (1 QpHab X, 5:13; 1QH VI:18; CD II:5). The language of inheritance would not have been lost on the Qumran audience, and the notion of associating the good with the bright is also well attested in Qumran dualism (cf. 1 QS III:13-IV:26; IX: 27, 31).

The summation distinguishes itself from the rest of the text in that it switches from a description of the Seductress’s anatomy, clothing and abode to a definite statement of who she actually is: “And she is the beginning/chief of all the ways of perversity,” a striking opposition to Proverbs 9:10 (Psalms 11:10), “fear of Yahweh is the beginning of Wisdom.” At this crucial phrase, the reader is plainly admonished to avoid the apostatizing ways the Seductress represents and implicitly urged to follow the author's own prescription for the righteous life.

Dead Man Stalking

After the medial summary statement (M), the fourth section (N-Q) introduces the figurative “ways,” a recurrent motif in the portrayals of seductress figures in Proverbs at home with the cosmic dualism and language of the righteous and the wicked “ways” throughout Qumran literature. The first hemistich, though incomplete, specifies that “she lies in wait in the secret places.” Directly following description of her house and gates, we find that the Seductress is not confined to the privacy of her home. In fact, her displacement from home intensifies her disregard for the propriety modeled by Wisdom and the good wife of Proverbs, for just when we read a description of her house (albeit a corrupted one), the Seductress parades her resistance to domesticity by leaving it.

The strong resemblance to portraits in Proverbs continues: The verb “to lie in wait” (*'-r-b*) in the same morphological form, appears in the Proverbs 23:28, a description of a seductress that reads, “indeed she waits in ambush like a robber and increases the transgressions of men.” Proverbs 7:12 similarly uses the verb: “now in the public place, now in the square, she lies in wait on every corner.” The public exhibition indicated in the second stich sharply contrasts with the secret scenario of the former: “in the broad places of the city she covers herself and in the gates of the village she stations herself.” Like other harlot figures, such as Tamar who executes her plans at the crossroads, or Rahab who lives in the very wall of the city of Jericho and administers the passage of the spies in and out, the Seductress operates at boundaries. Indeed, unlike a good wife or daughter, she exists as a boundary, regulating her own orifices, and thus her sexual penetration and speech.

Just as Seductress's body geographically inhabits and operates on boundaries, the poet, in turn, inscribes dual notions of the feminine on geography, drawing a fine line between safe territory and dangerous terrain. As “the beginning of all the ways of perversity” her ways are ways of both death and sin, the opposite of Wisdom's ways in Proverbs 3:17: “Her ways are the ways of pleasantness and all her byways are peace.” Again, the author heightens the difference between Wisdom and her 4Q184 antithesis by tacitly evoking and reversing Wisdom imagery. The public locus of a seductress in Proverbs 7:12 is strikingly similar to the location of Wisdom in Proverbs 1:20-33 and in Proverbs 8. Association on the one hand between the public places and gates and

the seductress figures, and on the other hand, parallel mention of the public places and gates in which Wisdom is situated reminds us of the fine, culturally determined line between shameful and honorable public presence for women. The public square and city gate are places in which schools, teachers, and public classes would have been found, thus Wisdom is naturally at home here. Ironically, however, the same geography helps to characterize the seductress in an unmistakably negative way. As Phyllis Byrd notes, "She approaches strangers and businessmen by the roadside and in the public squares, and she lives in the shadow of the wall or on the outskirts of the city, where the refuse is dumped."⁴⁰

The third stich (P) of this section further elaborates the Qumran seductress's ways, and her tracks become more and more specific in type: "Her tracks are the strayings of perversity, and her byways are the wrongdoings of transgression." The first term of this stich, (*ma'agaloteah*, "her tracks") bearing both the literal referent of a wheel rut made by rolling wheels and the figurative referent of a "path of life" is used with a positive valence for Wisdom's paths of life in Proverbs 2:9 and 4:11, but in a negative sense describing the paths of the temptresses in Proverbs 2:12 and 5:6. The language of a worn, physical path elided with one's conduct introduces again the moral and social offensiveness of the ill-chosen path-- the totality of her manner is condemned, not just her promiscuity or religious malpractice. In the second half of the colon ("her byways are wrongdoings of transgression"), the same phenomenon occurs with the first term of the phrase, *unetivoteah* ("and her byways"). This term bears both the literal and metaphorical referents for the "byway" and "way of life", and the sense of "path of life" again breaks down into positive or negative alternatives associated with either Wisdom or her counterpart in Proverbs. Proverbs 7:25 warns, for example, "let your heart not decline to her ways; do not go astray on her byways. This instance directly contradicts the ways of Wisdom in Proverbs 3:12, whose as we have already noted, are the ways of pleasantness, and her byways are peace.

The fourth stich (Q) of this section directs the reader to her gates and confirms the previously discussed characterization of her abode, conflating with earlier references to body: "Her gates are the gates of death; at the entrance of her house she steps into Sheol." In Proverbs 22:14, for example, the mouth of a strange woman is a deep pit into which those who incur the Yahweh's indignation will fall, and likewise, in Proverbs 23:27, we find that "a harlot is a deep ditch, an alien woman is a narrow trench." Playing on these Proverbs elements, the poet conflates the Seductress's home with her body, and indeed, Sheol. This is not a great interpretive leap, in a language for which "house" can mean "womb," and the womb, in turn, determines womanhood. With the turn of a phrase her body and her dwelling meet.⁴¹ The access to her house and her womb are elided, her vagina is the gate of Sheol, her womb death itself. By physically inviting men into her Pit, the alien Seductress is reminiscent of Potiphar's wife, another foreign woman who attempted to seduce a most righteous victim.⁴²

Here, we should note again Proverbs 5:5 in which the figurative seductress's steps follow the path of Sheol. The juxtaposition of *mavet* ("death") and Sheol in both the Proverbs passage and

⁴⁰ Phyllis Byrd, "The Harlot as Heroine: Narrative Art and Social Presupposition in Three Old Testament Texts," *Semeia* 46 (1989): 119-39.

⁴¹ Mieke Bal, *Lethal Love: Feminist Readings of Biblical Love Stories* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987).

⁴² See Alice Bach, 30, 43.

in this stich suggests again that the metaphorical figure of 4Q184 was inspired by the portraits of the Proverbs seductress, whose guests are, according to Proverbs 9:18, in the valley of Sheol. If the reconstruction "all her inheritors go down to the Pit and all who enter, they will not return" for the final stich of this section is viable, this phrase echoes Proverbs 2:19, which reads: "none who go into her will return, nor do they reach the paths of life." In both the Proverbs and 4Q184 instances, mention of the futility of returning directly follows a description of either metaphorical figure's underworld abode.

Glaring Error

The power of the Seductress is not limited to persuasive speech and physical magnetism, however. She flouts an arresting and penetrating stare, potent enough to misdirect men and lead them to ruin. Her stare defies the fixed gaze of male, only to be objectified by the narrator, who uses the example of her destructive gaze to condemn what she signals.

Stich V elaborates on her seductive method in the style of Proverbs. It reads: "Her eyes glance here and there, and her eyelids she lifts wantonly. "The action of raising one's eyelids appears in Proverbs as a sign of haughtiness (cf. 30:13), but in an especially apt passage, Proverbs 6:25, the author warns against eyelid entrapment: "Do not desire her beauty in your heart; do not let her capture you with her eyelids." In Ben Sira 26:9 the notion is even clearer: "The licentiousness of a woman is made known by her raised gaze and her eyelids." Presumably, the action is especially offensive because her gaze supplants the usual dominance of his. By means of her penetrating gaze, the Seductress initiates her own penetration. As sexual agent, she renders her lovers passive. But as a result of emasculating her victims, she is condemned by the narrator, as was Jezebel, who upset the dominance of the male gaze and haughtily looked upon her pursuers from a window before meeting a grisly fate (2 Kings 9:30-37). In both cases, an "orthodox" narrator shamed the transgressive, misplaced gazer, ultimately restoring her as object of the male gaze.

The final section of fragment one (W-BB) contains frequent use of the language of "ways," as in section three, but emphasizes the power of her seduction by pointing to the integrity of the men she victimizes. The poet creates a balance between each virtuous quality and the description of the seductress's nullification of it. Like Wisdom, her victims are a negative expression of her. Couched in metaphorical language in which Israelite apostatizers are likened to indiscriminate sexual agents. The first stich of the section (W) parallels in two hemistichoi the strength of those whom she misguides, while continuing the discussion of her method: "To look at a righteous man and turn him back, and a mighty man, she causes him to stumble." The second hemistich contains the hiphil imperfect third person feminine singular of *kh-sh-l* ("to stumble"), which bears a *double entendre*, which compliments the *derekh* ("way," "path") language of the physical path and way of life. In addition to its literal referent of "to stumble," *kh-sh-l* bears the figurative referent in Qumranic and biblical literature, which associate stumbling with apostasy. In Jeremiah 6:21, for example, the prophet names the consequence of straying from the ancient paths of Jerusalem: "Therefore, thus says the Lord: Behold: I will lay before this people stumbling blocks against which they will stumble" (c.f. Isaiah 8:15, 28:15). This biblical association between and apostasy would not have been lost on possible Qumran readers of 4Q184, since the subject of the text leads her victims from the "correct path" to destruction.

The next two stichoi (X-Y) elaborate on the types of people she leads astray, emphasizing their upright, though thwarted intentions. Stich X reads: "she lifts her eyelids to upright men and prevents the righteous elect from keeping the commandment." Like the verb *hk-sh-l* (which appears in the first hemistich), *n-t-h* ("turn aside") also appears in figurative expressions for apostasy. In Isaiah 30:11, the root suggests apostasy in a passage where the prophet puts words into the mouths of those who wish to lead Israel astray: "leave the way, turn aside from the path, let us hear no more of the Holy Ones of Israel"). Just prior to this passage in Isaiah appears the equation of false prophecy with the speaking of smooth things, an activity twice attributed to the wayward-leading exemplar of 4Q184. In an even more compelling passage, Proverbs 7:21, the author of Proverbs uses the verb *n-t-h* to express the actions of an apostatizing seductress: "With much seductive speech she seduces him; with her smooth talk she compels him." In the Hebrew, we note here again the juxtaposition of the roots *n-t-h* and *h-l-k* ("smooth talk") in a discussion of abandoning the "right way." Again, the bible supplies the components for a new lesson, teaching at once the difference between good women and bad women, orthodoxy and apostasy.

Conclusion and Reflections

In 4Q184, the symbol of heretical woman functioned socially to mediate conflicts between men, orthodox and heterodox. Bereft of any subtlety, the poet fashions a figure that resists everything of value in author's orthodoxy. The poet warns against the upsetting of usual principles governing social propriety by providing the detailing of the seductive modes of a woman who would corrupt the most righteous of men. In addition, the poem is built on sapiential rhetoric that possibly functioned to limit the roles of women within traditional Judaism, inasmuch as the narrator enforces hegemonic social values by equating treachery of woman who departs from wifehood and lusts after forbidden men with Wisdom's antipode. As the height of respectable feminine, Wisdom is an orthodox standard, against whom the feminized enemy to orthodoxy, the Seductress, is defined.

Rhetorically, invoking the strange woman as a threat provides a basis for solidarity between father and son. Writing in the discursive mode borrowed from Proverbs, the poet expects filial obedience from reader. The rhetoric assumes an alliance between god and narrator, a dynamic that only allows for (and indeed, enlists) a complicit reader, an audience harmonious with agenda of implied author. Constructed for a male spectator, masculinist politics are inscribed on feminine bodies. Like wisdom that is pleasantly eroticized (Proverbs 3:22, 4:6-8, 8:11), the Seductress, and her relation to men and the divine, is presented in erotic terms. Her sexual deviance expresses her heresy, and the narrator's assumption of the reader's disgust for such behavior removes the Seductress from the sympathy of the audience. Alienated from the reader, her depiction teaches the despised position of those who deviate from the author's own ideals of orthodoxy.

Rather than a "real" woman, or even a code for a particular, specified anti-Essene group, she is a vehicle for promoting the ideals of the orthodox poet, an alarming example of the fate of the wayward. An emblem legitimated by the feminine models in the Hebrew Bible upon which the poet draws, the evil woman as heretical symbol rages anew. Her amplified presence in 4Q184 affirms an ideological "siege mentality" that manifestly distinguishes "in group" from "other" expressed in other Qumran documents, such as the War Scroll and Temple Scroll. Even though

the 4Q184 poet indeed "used women to think with," or used femininity to encode religious difference, we must be reminded that the document is a cultural product that functioned in a gendered society. Its constructed knowledge about gender was likely imposed on a sympathetic audience, so even though the poem itself is a cultural fiction, we can only imagine the palpable social effects of these intangible, defamatory words.