

Ostriches into Sirens: Towards an Understanding of a Septuagint Crux

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As her name denotes, Na'amah, the sister of Tubal-cain, was 'pleasant' and so was Na'omi, the mother-in-law of Ruth. In the case of Na'omi, the connection between her personality and her name was established in the biblical narrative itself (Ruth 1:20): **וְתֹאמַר אֵלֶיהֶן אֵל תְּקַרְאֵנָה לִי נְעָמִי קְרָאן**: **לִי מְרָא כִּי הִמַּר שְׂדֵי לִי מְאֹד** [i.e. *Pleasant*], call me Mara [i.e. *Bitter*], for the Almighty has dealt bitterly with me".¹ The particulars, however, about Na'amah were introduced only in post-biblical exegesis.

Na'amah's appeal consisted in that she was both physically attractive and musical. The notion of her physical beauty has been discussed by Pearson, who ingeniously identified her with Norea, an intriguing female figure that appears in Gnostic texts from Nag Hammadi, in Mandaeen and Manichaean literature, and in Christian heresiological writings (Irenaeus, Epiphanius and Philaster):² the proper name 'Norea' and alternative forms have all been convincingly traced back to *Ἐρραία* ('beautiful'), a Greek translation of 'Na'amah'.³ Once 'the sons of God' and 'the daughters of men' of

¹ Biblical passages in English are quoted from B. M. Metzger and R. E. Murphy (eds), *The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocryphal / Deuterocanonical Books*, Oxford / New York, 1989. Unless stated otherwise, translations throughout this article are the author's.

² B. A. Pearson, 'The Figure of Norea in Gnostic Literature', in G. Widengren (ed.), *Proceedings of the International Colloquium on Gnosticism* (Stockholm, 20–25 August 1973), Stockholm, 1977, pp. 143–152; idem, 'Revisiting Norea', in K. L. King (ed.), *Images of the Feminine in Gnosticism*, Philadelphia, 1988, pp. 265–75, where Pearson updates his earlier study; idem, 'Jewish Sources in Gnostic Literature', in M. E. Stone (ed.), *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period*, Assen/Philadelphia, 1984, pp. 443–481, esp. 467–469. On Norea, see also B. Layton, 'The Hypostasis of the Archons, or the Reality of the Rulers', *HTR* 67:4 (1974), pp. 351–425, esp. 366–371; *HTR* 69 (1976), pp. 31–101; G. A. G. Stroumsa, *Another Seed: Studies in Gnostic Mythology*, Leiden, 1984, esp. pp. 53–65; R. Leicht, 'Gnostic Myth in Jewish Garb: Niriyah (Norea), Noah's Bride', *JJS* 51 (2000), pp. 133–140.

³ See Pearson, 'The Figure of Norea' (as in n. 2), p. 150: 'The change of name, from Na'amah to Noraia, can be accounted for by suggesting that haggadoth dealing with Na'amah were appropriated in Greek-speaking Jewish communities, and in the process the name was translated into Greek, a phenomenon which occurs even in the LXX (e.g. Eve—*Ζωή*, Gen. 3:20).' Pearson takes the name Noraia/Norea to be a compound of Na'amah and Horaia and compares it to No'emzara (Na'amah and 'Emzara), another such portmanteau word found in the Armenian *Gospel of Seth*. It may be noted that the adjective **נְעִמִי** is translated with *ὀραῖος* in the Septuagint of Song 1:16; cf. also 2 Sam 1:23 and 1:26. Pearson's suggestion could be added to W. Horbury's fine discussion of the name *Ἐρραία*, attested in a Jewish inscription from Leontopolis (Tell el-Yehoudieh), see W. Horbury and D. Noy, *Jewish Inscriptions of Graeco-Roman Egypt (with an index of the Jewish inscriptions of Egypt and Cyrenaica)*, Cambridge, 1992, p. 66. For the name 'Norea', see also Layton, 'The Hypostasis of the Archons' (as in n. 2), *HTR* 67:4 (1974), p. 366.

שהיתה מנעמת בתוף לעבודה זרה

'And the sister of Tubal-cain was Na'amah. R. Abba b. Kahana said: Na'amah was Noah's wife; and why was she called Na'amah? Because her deeds were pleasing (*ne'imim*). The Rabbis said: Na'amah was a woman of a different stamp, for the name denotes that she sang (*man'emeth*) to the timbrel in honour of idolatry'.⁶

In the targumim, Na'amah is portrayed along the same lines as the inventor and mistress of melody and song. The Aramaic versions of Gen. 4:22 give the following expansions:

- A. *Ps.-Jonathan* (ed. Clarke):⁷ ואחתיה דתובל קין נעמא היא הות מרת קינין וזמרין ('And the sister of Tubal-cain was Na'amah; she was the mistress of *qinin* and songs')
- B. *Fragment-Targum* (ed. Klein):⁸ ואחות: תובל קין נעמה היא הות בריא קינין וזמרין ('And the sister of Tubal-cain was Na'amah; she was the creator of *qinin* and songs')
- C. *Neofiti* (ed. Díez Macho):⁹ ואחתה דתובל קין הות נעמה בדיה קינין וזמרין ('And the sister of Tubal-cain was Na'amah, the inventor of *qinin* and songs')

With the exception of Targum *Onkelos*, which gives no expansion whatsoever, the Aramaic versions present Na'amah as either the 'mistress' (*Ps.-Jon.*), or the 'creator' (*Fr.-Tg.*), or the 'inventor' (*Neof.*) of קינין וזמרין. Although the meaning of קינין is straightforward (= 'songs'), the exact shade of קינין in the Aramaic of these passages seems to have been ignored by translators and lexicographers alike. Both Klein¹⁰ and Sokoloff¹¹ imposed on the Aramaic term the nuance of its Hebrew cognate (Hebrew קינה = 'dirge'). Thus, Klein translates as follows: 'And the sister of: Tubal-cain was Na'amah; she used to

⁶ Text: *Bereschit Rabba* mit kritischem Apparat und Kommentar von J. Theodor, vol. I, Berlin, 1912, p. 224. Translation: H. Freedman and M. Simon (eds.), *Midrash Rabbah*, London, 1939. The identification of Na'amah with Noah's wife is a theme worth exploring in its own right; see the secondary literature cited in n. 2 above. It should be considered further in the light of a contribution by R. Mellinkoff, 'Cain's Monstrous Progeny in *Beowulf*, Part II: Post-Diluvian Survival', *Anglo-Saxon England* 9 (1981), pp. 183–197, esp. pp. 190–192, who regards this twist as 'evidence of a struggle to let some of Cain's seed survive' the Flood. On נעמה אחרת, see G. G. Stroumsa, 'Aher: A Gnostic', in B. Layton (ed.), *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism. Proceedings of the International Conference on Gnosticism at Yale, New Haven, Connecticut, March 28–31, 1978*, vol. II (Sethian Gnosticism), Leiden, 1981, pp. 808–818, esp. pp. 817–818.

⁷ E. G. Clarke with W. E. Aufrecht, J. C. Hurd and F. Spitzer, *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan of the Pentateuch: Text and Concordance*, Ktav Publishing House, Hoboken, New Jersey, 1984, p. 6.

⁸ M. L. Klein, *The Fragment-Targums of the Pentateuch According to their Extant Sources*, vol. I: *Texts, Indices and Introductory Essays*, Rome, Biblical Institute Press, 1980, p. 48.

⁹ A. Díez Macho, *Neophyti I*, Targum Palestinense; MS de la Biblioteca Vaticana, Tomo I *Génesis*, Edición Príncipe, Introducción General y Versión Castellana, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Madrid/Barcelona, 1968, p. 25.

¹⁰ Klein, *The Fragment-Targums*, vol. II, p. 9.

¹¹ M. Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic of the Byzantine Period*, Bar Ilan University Press, 1990, p. 491a.

compose dirges and songs'. Sokoloff, apparently following Klein whose edition he quotes, ascribes to 𐤒𐤓𐤕 the same meaning, i.e. 'dirges'. Maher¹² does the same and translates the *Ps.-Jonathan* passage: 'And the sister of Tubalcain; she was a composer of dirges and songs'.

On the other hand, Díez Macho,¹³ the editor and translator of *Neofiti*, renders the Aramaic original accurately: 'y la hermana de Tubal Qayin fue Naamá, la inventora de canciones y cantos'. There is, indeed, evidence that the meaning of the word in Aramaic differs from that of its Hebrew cognate. In Syriac, ܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ primarily means 'song': in his verse homily *On the Deluge*, the great West Syrian poet Jacob of Serugh (d. 521) speaks of 'songs' (ܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ) in a passage that describes how the Cainite women, 'the daughters of men', seduced the Sethites, 'the sons of God': it is hardly conceivable that they would have attempted to allure the Sethites by singing dirges to them:

ܐܪܘܢ ܩܘܪ ܐܦܘܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ
ܩܘܪ ܐܦܘܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ

'They roared out strange songs and fascinated them as well as newfangled melodies and stupefied them';¹⁴

ܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ
ܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ

'Cunning Jubal sharpened songs instead of arrow-points and, by playing upon the strings, shot at the sense of hearing as if by pulling the bow-string'.¹⁵

In the Syriac recension of *Physiologus* (ed. Land), ܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ is used for the sweet song of the Sirens:

¹² M. Maher, *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan: Genesis*, Edinburgh, 1992, p. 35.

¹³ Díez Macho, *ibid.*, p. 24.

¹⁴ P. Bedjan (ed.), *Homiliae Selectae Mar Jacobi Sarugensis* (henceforth JSB), vol. 4, Paris, 1908, p. 7, ll. 12–13.

¹⁵ JSB 4:7:16–17. ܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ in l. 13, quoted above, and in l. 20 (ܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ); 'They [sc. the Sethites] began to ask about the melodies, *What are they?*') may be a resonance of Na'amah (ܢܥܡܐ): it is a well-established fact that Syriac poets delighted in paronomasia. The same conclusion as to the neutral, if not positive, sense of ܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ in Jacob's writings is drawn from JSB 1:187:11, 1:190:19, 2:441:5; P. Bedjan (ed.), *S. Martyrii, qui et Sahdona, quae supersunt omnia*, Parisiis, Lipsiae, 1902, p. 782:8; J. P. Amar (ed.), *Jacob of Serugh, Homily on Mar Ephrem, Critical Edition of the Syriac Text, Translation and Introduction*, PO tome 47, fasc. 1, no 209, Turnhout, 1995, p. 64, couplet 153.

ܦܫܠܢܘܢܝܢܘܢ ܕܢܘܢ ܕܢܘܢ ܕܢܘܢ ܕܢܘܢ
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‘Physiologus teaches and says about the Sirens: “They are murderers for they sing their songs at sea and those who travel by ship, when they hear their sweet voices, throw themselves into the sea and perish.”’¹⁶

In Mandaic, *qinta* simply means ‘hymn’, ‘song’, and none of the examples cited in the standard *Mandaic Dictionary* indicates any connection with mourning, e.g. *brika qintaikun hilita . . . d-mn pumaikun npaq* (‘blessed is your sweet hymn . . . which proceeded from your mouths’).¹⁷ Finally, the fact that at II Chronicles 35:25 the Jewish Aramaic translator chose the term אִילִיִּיתָא instead in order to render Hebrew הַקִּינֹת, traditionally associated in that context with the Book of Lamentations, may be said to point in the same direction.¹⁸

It appears, then, that the Aramaic term had a neutral, if not positive, meaning, while its Hebrew cognate developed the nuance ‘song of lament’. Although occasionally bilingual Jews might have confused the two distinct applications, the context of Gen. 4:19–22 as well as Na’amah’s involvement in the seduction of ‘the sons of God’ favour the sense ‘(alluring or sweet) songs’ for קִינִיָּן in the targumim. Now that this point has been clarified, I would like to suggest that the Aramaic versions ascribed consciously to Na’amah qualities of the Greek Σειρήνες, the Homeric songstresses who sat in a meadow and allured with their sweet song passing sailors to their death (*Odyssey* XII).¹⁹ I do not imply direct literary dependence on the *Odyssey*: my assumption is that the seductive Sirens had become so well-established in the folklore of the Mediterranean as to inspire such an elaboration.

Sirens in the Septuagint

Conformity to ornithological truth is no warrant for poetic felicity.

J. A. W. Bennett, *Middle English Literature* (Oxford, 1986), p. 3

Hugo Rahner discussed the symbolism of the Sirens in his celebrated book *Greek Myths and Christian Mystery*:

The Alexandrine translators who produced the Septuagint found six places in the ancient Hebrew books where there was mention of mysterious beasts referred to as *tannim* and *benot yaanah*, terms which mean literally *jackals* or *hen ostriches*. They render these words by the Greek Σειρήνες (Sirens). What inspired

¹⁶ J. P. N. Land, *Anecdota Syriaca*, vol. IV, Lugduni Batavorum, 1875, p. 44.

¹⁷ E. S. Drower and R. Macuch, *A Mandaic Dictionary*, Oxford, 1963, p. 411b.

¹⁸ R. Le Déaut and J. Robert, *Targum des Chroniques*, tome II, Rome, 1971, p. 166.

¹⁹ See A. Heubeck and A. Hoekstra, *A Commentary on Homer's Odyssey*, vol. II (Books IX–XVI), Oxford, 1989, pp. 118–120.

this gross but most interesting mistranslation in the minds of these Hellenistic translators is a mystery which has hitherto remained unsolved. The result, however, is plain enough: for over a thousand years Greek Christians read the word 'Sirens' in the passages concerned, and the association of ideas connected with these mythical beings, so universally familiar in the folk-lore of antiquity, was sufficiently strong to arouse in the Christian Greek much the same horror that these deadly creatures had inspired in pagan forerunners and contemporaries.²⁰

The six Septuagint passages in which *Σειρήνες* ('Sirens') occur are (corresponding terms are underlined):

1. Isaiah 13:21: ... *καὶ ἀναπαύσονται ἐκεῖ σειρήνες, καὶ δαιμόνια ἐκεῖ ὄρχήσονται ...*
(MT ושכנו שם בנות יענה ושעירים ירקדו שם)
2. Isaiah 34:13: ... *καὶ ἔσται ἔπαυλις σειρήνων καὶ ἀλλή στρουθῶν ...*
(MT והיתה גוה תנים חציר לבנות יענה)
3. Isaiah 43:20: *Εὐλογῆσει με τὰ θηρία τοῦ ἀγροῦ, σειρήνες καὶ θυγατέρες στρουθῶν*
(MT תכבדני חית השדה תנים ובנות יענה)
4. Job 30:29: *Ἀδελφὸς γέγονα σειρήνων, ἑταῖρος δὲ στρουθῶν.*
(MT אה הייתי לתנים ורע לבנות יענה)
5. Jeremiah 27(50):39: *Διὰ τοῦτο κατοικήσουσιν ἰνδάλματα ἐν ταῖς νήσοις, καὶ κατοικήσουσιν ἐν αὐτῇ θυγατέρες σειρήνων ...²¹*
(MT לכן ישבו ציים את איים וישבו בה בנות יענה)
6. Micah 1:8: ... *ποιήσεται κοπετόν ὡς δρακόντων καὶ πένθος ὡς θυγατέρων σειρήνων*
(MT אעשה מספד כתנים ואבל בבנות יענה)

It has been recognised that the Septuagint betrays the translators' familiarity with Aramaic. Amid the evidence that has been regarded as pointing to this, there are Greek transliterations of Aramaic words which mirror the original Hebrew terms. Thus, at Isaiah 8:21, the Hebrew phrase **וקלל במלכו ובאלהיו** ('and he will curse his king and his gods') was translated *καὶ κακῶς ἐρεῖτε τὸν ἄρχοντα καὶ τὰ πάταχρα* ('and you will revile the ruler and the idols'). Apparently, the translator understood **אלהים** to mean 'idols' and glossed it with the term for 'idol' in Aramaic. Another example of this kind is found at 14:1, where *γιώρας* (Aramaic **גיורא**) stands for Hebrew **הגר** ('the proselyte').²² Other aramaicisms may be the result of etymological exegesis: at Habakkuk 3:16, **לקול צללו שפתי** ('my lips quivered at the sound') is rendered *ἀπὸ φωνῆς*

²⁰ H. Rahner, *Greek Myths and Christian Mystery*, Eng. tr. B. Battershaw, London, 1963, p. 357.

²¹ As has already been noted by H. Kaupel, 'Sirenen in der LXX', *BZ* 23 (1935–36), pp. 158–165, esp. p. 159, n. 1, and H. J. Schoeps, *Aus frühchristlicher Zeit. Religions-geschichtliche Untersuchungen*, Tübingen, 1950, pp. 95–97, esp. 96, n. 1, the rendering *θυγατέρες σειρήνων* ('daughters of Sirens') in Jeremiah and Michah is a hebraism of no importance for the problem under consideration.

²² I. L. Seeligmann, *The Septuagint Version of Isaiah. A Discussion of its Problems*, Leiden, 1948, pp. 49–50.

προσευχῆς χειλέων μου ('from the sound of the prayer of my lips'). In this case, צלל ('to quiver') was derived from Aramaic צלי ('to pray').²³ Septuagint renditions such as these cannot be explained unless the intermediary Aramaic term is identified.

In the targumim, the construct chain בנות יענה, found in the Hebrew original of the six Septuagint passages quoted above, corresponds to בנת נעמיין (Tg. Job ברת נעמייתא): the Aramaic term for 'ostrich' is נעמא (cf. Syriac ܢܥܡܐ), a homonym to the name of Tubal-cain's sister (Gen. 4:22; cf. Tg. Ps.-Jonathan: נעמא). I would like to suggest that the 'gross but most interesting mistranslation' (Rahner) of Hebrew 'ostriches' with Greek 'Sirens' in the Septuagint may be explained as follows: at Gen. 4:22, the targumic glosses that present Na'amah as a Siren (an alluring songstress) are but the late records of an early tradition that had been encouraged by the general context of Gen. 4:19–22 (on the Cainites' association with the invention of crafts and music) and had already developed before the Septuagint was undertaken. Na'amah the Siren was subsequently associated with ostriches by means of paronomasia within the pale of a community that could operate in Aramaic: the Septuagint translators belonged to such a milieu.

There is, however, a difficulty that at first sight might thwart this attempt at explaining the crux in the Greek version. Out of the six Septuagint passages under discussion, it is only Isaiah 13:21, Jeremiah 27(50):39 and Micah 1:8 that equate 'ostriches' with 'Sirens': unless we explain the fact that at Isaiah 34:13 and 43:20, as well as at Job 30:29, the rendition σειρήνες corresponds not to בנות יענה ('ostriches'), but rather to תנים ('jackals'), the interpretation suggested above cannot be sustained. I shall try to show that the inconsistency does not at all affect the validity of the hypothesis that Na'amah is concealed behind all Sirens in all six Septuagint passages; rather, it pertains to intrinsic problems of the textual transmission of the Septuagint.

Originally, differences in translation equivalents made scholars believe that the Septuagint of Isaiah, as we now have it, is the work of two different translators, i.e. one who produced chapters 1–39 and another who produced chapters 40–66.²⁴ However, more careful analysis has shown many important similarities between the two parts which the older view, postulating multiple authorship, could not accommodate. Horizontal strata traced in the text may suggest a translator-reviser theory, as opposed to that of multiple authorship, for the two units. It seems that there was an original Greek translation which was later revised partially. Revisions of this kind have been recognised in the present textual situation of other Septuagint books as well.²⁵

According to the textual development just described, it is suggested that בנות יענה ('ostriches') was originally translated with the term σειρήνες in all three Isaiah passages under the influence of the exegetical tradition about Na'amah. This original rendering is still preserved at Isaiah 13:21, while at 34:13 and 43:20, it stands for תנים ('jackals'), as a result of the work of a

²³ E. Tov, *The Text-Critical Use of the Septuagint in Biblical Research*, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 179.

²⁴ Seeligmann, *The Septuagint Version of Isaiah*, p. 39.

²⁵ Seeligmann, *The Septuagint Version of Isaiah*, p. 40, n. 2.

reviser who was unaware of the particular association. Moreover, the original correspondence found at Isaiah 13:21 is shared by Jeremiah 27(50):39 and Micah 1:8 (the rendering of בְּנוֹת יַעֲנָה with *θυγατέρες σειρήνων* in the last two passages supports the hypothesis that the Septuagint of Jeremiah chs. 1–28 was the work of the translator(s) who produced the Greek version of the Twelve Prophets).²⁶ Job 30:29 agrees with the revised Isaiah passages.²⁷

The discontinuity in the transmission of this subtle embroidery may be explained by the hypothesis that, as opposed to the original translator, the reviser of the Septuagint Isaiah was not at home with Aramaic: as in Greek there could be no sound association between *Νοεμα* (Na'amah in the Septuagint of Gen. 4:22) and *στρουθός* (Greek for 'ostrich'), the original association turned into a riddle. The Greek Church Fathers, unaware of it, reset the six Septuagint passages in the context of a christianised Homeric world.²⁸

Sirens / Na'amah and Lilith

I would like to suggest that the passage into which the tradition about Na'amah the Siren was first read is Isaiah 34:13–14, where בְּנוֹת יַעֲנָה ('ostriches') occur together with לִילִית ('Lilith'), a *hapax legomenon* in the Hebrew Bible that the Septuagint rendered with *δνοκένταυροι*, a compound of *δνος* and *κένταυρος*, denoting hybrid creatures.²⁹ This suggestion is based on the occurrence of the pair Sirens (Na'amah)/ Liliths and the pair Na'amah (the Siren) / Lilith in later sources, to which we shall turn next. Awareness of the hybrid form of the Sirens (half birds and half women)³⁰ could have prompted similar notions about Lilith: the term *δνοκένταυρος* proves to be an apposite rendering of לִילִית ('Lilith'), who then could match Na'amah the Siren not only in function, but also in bodily form.³¹

²⁶ E. Tov, *The Septuagint Translation of Jeremiah and Baruch. A Discussion of an Early Revision of the LXX of Jeremiah 29–52 and Baruch 1:1–3:8*, Scholars Press, Missoula, Montana, 1976, pp. 135–151, esp. p. 137.

²⁷ In my opinion, Kaupel, 'Sirenen in der LXX' (as in n. 21), pp. 158–165, and Schoeps, *Aus frühchristlicher Zeit* (as in n. 21), pp. 95–97, who discussed the occurrence of Sirens in the Septuagint in the context of post-biblical Jewish demonology, missed the point.

²⁸ For the way in which the Church Fathers dealt with the problem, see Rahner, *Greek Myths* (as in n. 20), pp. 353–371; D. R. MacDonald, *Christianising Homer: The Odyssey, Plato, and the Acts of Andrew*, New York/Oxford, 1994; E. Piccini, 'Le sirene nella patristica latina', *Vetera Christianorum* 33 (1996), pp. 353–370. For a curious transformation of the Sirens in the East Syrian monastic writer Isaac of Nineveh (seventh cent.), see S. P. Brock, 'From Antagonism to Assimilation: Syriac Attitudes to Greek Learning', in N. G. Garsoian, T. F. Mathews and R. W. Thomson (eds.), *East of Byzantium: Syria and Armenia in the Formative Period*, Washington, DC, 1982, pp. 17–34, esp. p. 29 (now reprinted in S. P. Brock, *Syriac Perspectives on Late Antiquity*, Variorum Reprints, London, 1984).

²⁹ As it has been explained in the preceding section ('Sirens in the Septuagint'), my hypothesis is that, prior to its revision, at Septuagint Isaiah 34:13 *σειρήνων* corresponded to בְּנוֹת יַעֲנָה, not to תַּנִּיִּים. At Isaiah 34:14, the use of the plural *δνοκένταυροι* for singular לִילִית may have been chosen in analogy to the plural *σειρήνες* (for the reason, see below).

³⁰ Homer does not describe the Sirens as hybrid creatures; they are presented as such in the visual arts, see Heubeck and Hoekstra, *A Commentary on Homer's Odyssey* (as in n. 19).

³¹ If my interpretation is correct, *δνοκένταυροι* at Isaiah 13:22, where it stands for אַיִים, can be explained as an interpretative retrojection under the influence of the tradition about the two

Sirens (ܫܝܪܝܢ) are summoned together with Liliths (ܠܝܠܝܬ) in a problematic passage in the Syriac *Apocalypse of Baruch* (*II Baruch*). The Syriac text was based on a Greek original, now lost, composed by a Jewish writer by the turn of the first century C.E.. The Greek text itself is believed to be a translation of a Hebrew, or Aramaic, composition.³² *II Baruch* 10:8 reads as follows:

ܐܘܢܝܢܝܢ ܕܫܝܪܝܢ ܕܝܡܝܢ ܕܫܝܪܝܢ ܕܝܡܝܢ
 ܕܠܝܠܝܬ ܕܠܝܠܝܬ ܕܠܝܠܝܬ ܕܠܝܠܝܬ
 ܕܫܝܪܝܢ ܕܫܝܪܝܢ ܕܫܝܪܝܢ ܕܫܝܪܝܢ
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'I will summon the Sirens from the sea;
 And you, Liliths, come from the desert,
 And (you), demons and jackals, from the forests:
 Awake and prepare yourselves for mourning,
 And take up with me the dirges,
 And make lamentation with me.'³³

According to the reconstruction of the tradition about Na'amah the Siren, a Hebrew original would have read בנות נעמה ('daughters of Na'amah'), which would have been first translated into Greek as *σειρήνες* and subsequently transliterated into Syriac (ܫܝܪܝܢ). The process would have been the same in the case of an Aramaic original.³⁴

Na'amah and Lilith occur again as a pair in the *Zohar*, the medieval compilation into which many early traditions were incorporated. According to *Zohar* III, 76b–77a, roaring Na'amah dwells in the tumultuous sea from where she emerges and seduces men: her roaring as well as her link with the sea may be said to identify her with the Sirens, the sea-monsters that seduced sailors with their song. The passage, which is reminiscent of elaborations on the *mésalliance* of Gen. 6:1–4, reads as follows:

hybrid creatures, cf. Isaiah 13:21, בנות יענה (LXX *σειρήνες*). I take the first occurrence of *ὄνοκένταυροι* at Septuagint Isaiah 34:14 (*καὶ συναντήσουσι δαιμόνια ὄνοκένταυροις*, MT **אֵת צִיִּים וּפְנֵי צִיִּים אֵיִם**) as a reviser's projection of the correspondence **אֵיִם** / *ὄνοκένταυροι* that had already been established at Isaiah 13:22. At Isaiah 34:11, *ὄνοκένταυροι* may reflect an attempt at harmonisation by a later reviser of the Septuagint Isaiah to whom the tradition about Na'amah the *σειρήν* and Lilith the *ὄνοκένταυρος* was lost. For a different interpretation of the term, see E. Piccini, 'Onokéntavros: demone o animale? (Dalla "nascita" biblica alla esegesi patristica)', *Vetera Christianorum* 35 (1998), pp. 119–131.

³² See A.-M. Denis, *Introduction à la littérature religieuse judéo-hellénistique*, Turnhout, 2000, tome I, pp. 746–747.

³³ I have adapted slightly the English translation by R. H. Charles and L. H. Brockington, in H. F. D. Sparks (ed.), *The Apocryphal Old Testament*, Oxford, 1984, p. 845.

³⁴ This interpretation is in disagreement with P. Bogaert, *Apocalypse du Baruch. Introduction, traduction du Syriaque et commentaire*, tome I, Paris, 1969, pp. 358–359. Bogaert believes that *II Baruch* X, 8 depends on the Septuagint of Isaiah 34:13–14: from the perspective of this article, this is not necessary.

וחד דכורא אשתכח דאתא לעלמא מרוחיה דסטרא דקין וקרן ליה
 תובל קין וחדא נוקבא נפקת עמיה והוּו ברין וטעאן בתראה ואתקרי
 נעמה מינה נפקו רוחין ושדין אחרנין ואינון תליין באוירא ואודעין
 מלין לאינון אחרנין דשכיחין לתתא ודא תובל קין אפיק זייני קטולא
לעלמא ודא נעמה אתרגישת בריגשהא ואתדבקת בסטרהא ועד כען
היא קיימא ומדורהא בין ריגשי ימא רבא ונפקת וחייכת בבני נשא
ואתחממת מגייהו בחלמא בההוא תיאובתא דבר נש ואתדבקת ביה
 תיאובתא נטלת ולא יתיר ומההוא תיאובתא אתעברת ואפיקת זיינין
 אחרנין לעלמא ואלין בנין דאולידת מבני נשא משתכחין לקבלי
 נוקבי בני נשא ומתעברין מגייהו ואולידין רוחין וכלהו אזלין ללילית
 קדמיתא והיא מגדלת לון

There was a certain male who came into the world from the spirit of the side of Cain, and they called him Tubal-cain. And a certain female emerged with him, and human beings go astray after her, and she was called Na'amah. From her other spirits and demons came forth, and they are suspended in the air, giving information to others who are below. This Tubal-cain brought deadly weapons into the world. *And Na'amah makes a roaring noise and cleaves to her side, and she still survives. And her dwelling is among the breakers of the great sea, and she goes out and makes sport with men, warming herself on them in dreams with human desire, and cleaving to them.* She receives this desire but no more, and she becomes pregnant through this desire and brings other kinds [of demons] into the world. The sons that she bears from mortal men present themselves to the females among mankind and they become pregnant by them and bear spirits. And they all go to ancient Lilith and she rears them.³⁵

³⁵ I have adapted the English translation by D. Goldstein, who translated the Hebrew version of I. Tishby, *The Wisdom of the Zohar. An Anthology of Texts, Systematically Arranged and Rendered into Hebrew by Isaiah Tishby*, Oxford, 1989, vol. II, pp. 542–543.

It may be worth considering here the medieval Armenian text that J. R. Russell translated and discussed in his article 'The Mother of All Heresies: A Late Mediaeval Armenian Text on the Yuskaparik', *REArm* 24 (1993), p. 273–293, esp. pp. 274–275, 'Now it is to be known what heretics are, and from whence they were bestowed. This I write in reply. As Satan spilt his poison in darkness, like Jeleson in the valley, who was crucified, so likewise did Satan conceive and beget Cain, the corrupt one, in the sea. *And Cain conceived and bore Sigl, the three-headed dog, who hunted with two heads and ate greedily, insatiably, with the third. So, too, are the Manichaeans, who wished to lead the Christians astray down their own road. And then the dog Sikl [sic!] conceived and bore the Uskaparek. And the Root of Faith says concerning the Uskaparek that its head is like a dog's; its ears, like those of an ass; its snout, like [the beak] of a crane; its feet, like tubes of iron; and from the waist down, it is like a beautiful woman. It is full of the deeds of impiety, winged and sweet-voiced; and when it cries out on the sea, and puts its mouth between its [outstretched?] wings, it then calls so loudly that when sea captains hear its voice, they halt their ships in the water. And women on land abort their fetuses when they hear the sound.* Now, when the accursed kings of the Persians, Ven and Vnuk, went to the hunt, they heard its voice and came to the sea captains and said, 'Brothers, hunt down that sweet-voiced, marvellous beast for us, and we will give you even half our kingdom!'" Russell, *ibid.* p. 274–276, n. 5, suggests that Sigl (Սիկլ), or Sikl (Սիկլ), may be Scylla. Is it possible that it may be instead a corrupted form of the name

Na'amah in 1 Enoch?

The puzzling occurrence of 'Sirens' in 1 Enoch 19, the last major source to be considered here, will take us back to where we started, namely the Gnostic Norea (Na'amah) discussed by Pearson and Stroumsa (see n. 2 above). In the *Hypostasis of the Archons* (92:18 ff.), the wicked archons attempt to rape Norea (Na'amah), who then cries out for help. In response to her plaintive cry, there comes Eleleth, one of the heavenly Illuminators, and rescues her. Pearson explained this development as 'a typically gnostic hermeneutical inversion':³⁶ according to Jewish sources,³⁷ the Cainite Na'amah (Gen. 4:22) played a major role in the seduction of 'the sons of God' (Gen. 6:1–4), elaborations on whose *mésalliance* with 'the daughters of men' in the *Book of Watchers* (1 Enoch 1–36) formed the basis of the Gnostic traditions about the wicked archons. Stroumsa corroborated Pearson's identification of Norea with Na'amah by drawing attention to the *Midrash of Shemhazai and Azazel*³⁸ and the story there of the maiden Esterah (in other sources Na'amah),³⁹ whom Shemhazai, a leading fallen angel, tried to rape; she, however, pronounced the Tetragrammaton and ascended to heaven to turn into a star: 'the myth of Esterah/Na'amah discussed by Stroumsa shows that the theme of Na'amah's purity and her rescue from an attempted rape was already elaborated in non-gnostic Jewish tradition, perhaps as a minority opinion over against the negative interpretation of Na'amah as a (Cainite) seductress'.⁴⁰

Is it possible to trace pure Na'amah in 1 Enoch? At 1 Enoch 19:2, Uriel says of the daughters of men that the angels had seduced (cf. 1 Enoch 6): *καὶ αἱ γυναῖκες αὐτῶν τῶν παραβάντων ἀγγέλων εἰς σειρήνας γενήσονται* ('And the wives of these angels who transgressed shall become *sirens*').⁴¹ Black was bewildered by the occurrence of 'Sirens' here: 'I have retained the Greek term. . . . Could the original have been *בנות נעמיין* (*Tg. Isa.* 13:21), lit. 'daughters of loveliness', a term apparently applied to these 'desert owls' on account of their

Սելլա (Gen. 4:22, reflecting Greek *Σελα*, or *Σελλα*, for Hebrew **צלה**), a descendant of Cain and the mother of Na'amah the Siren? The spelling **Սելլա** is attested in *The Armenian Commentary on Genesis Attributed to Ephrem the Syrian*, ed. E. G. Mathews, Louvain, 1998, 58:1: could a form **Սելլա** have arisen from **Սելլա** by graphic confusion between **ղ** and **զ**? If this suggestion can be sustained, yet another indirect indication of the Cainite Na'amah as a Siren may be discovered; for the transmission of Jewish apocryphal material to the Armenian literary tradition, see M. E. Stone, 'Jewish Apocryphal Literature in the Armenian Church', in his *Selected Studies in Pseudepigrapha and Apocrypha with Special Reference to the Armenian Tradition*, Leiden, 1991, pp. 3–27. On the three heads of Sigl, see also the comment by J. Grosdidier de Matons on Romanos the Melodist's *τρικέφαλε δράκον* in *Romanos le Mélode: Hymnes*, Introduction, texte critique, traduction et notes par J. Grosdidier de Matons, tome IV, Paris, 1967, p. 525, n. 2. More about ostriches and sirens in Armenian in Ch. Dowsett, 'A Lamentation of Ostriches?', *REArm* 23 (1992), pp. 155–189.

³⁶ See Pearson, 'Revisiting Norea', p. 266.

³⁷ See n. 5.

³⁸ For a presentation and discussion of this text, see J. T. Milik, *The Books of Enoch: Aramaic Fragments of Qumran Cave 4*, Oxford, 1976, pp. 321–339.

³⁹ See Stroumsa, *Another Seed*, p. 56, n. 84.

⁴⁰ Pearson, 'Revisiting Norea', p. 267.

⁴¹ Translation: M. Black, *The Book of Enoch or 1 Enoch. A New English Edition*, Leiden, 1985, p. 36.

attractive looks?'.⁴² I would like to suggest that, given what we know about Na'amah the Siren, Gnostic Norea, and Esterah/Na'amah, it is more likely that the Aramaic original read **בנות נעמא** ('daughters of Na'amah'). Accordingly, 1 Enoch 19:2 appears to imply that 'the daughters of men', whom the angels forced, would be ultimately redeemed. In that case, we have in 1 Enoch the earliest trace of that minority reaction, which Stroumsa and Pearson have discussed, against the negative descriptions of Na'amah as a seductress. If this suggestion can be sustained, Pearson's interpretation of Gnostic Norea as the result of a 'typically gnostic hermeneutical inversion' is not binding: Gnostic thinkers could have simply developed the pattern they had found in 1 Enoch.⁴³ Finally, if Na'amah is indeed present in 1 Enoch, the identification of 'the sons of God' with the Sethites and 'the daughters of men' with the Cainites definitely has its roots in Judaism and can be dated earlier than the time of Josephus.⁴⁴

⁴² Black, *The Book of Enoch or 1 Enoch*, p. 161.

⁴³ Even the name Norea itself, which, according to Pearson (see n. 3), is based on the translation of Na'amah into Greek (*Ωραία*), could be traced to 1 Enoch 6:1: *Καὶ ἐγένετο οὐδ' ἂν ἐπληθύνθησαν οἱ υἱοὶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων, ἐν ἐκείναις ταῖς ἡμέραις ἐγεννήθησαν θυγατέρες ὠραῖαι καὶ καλαί* (cf. Septuagint Gen. 6:2, *ἰδόντες ... ὅτι καλαί εἰσιν*).

⁴⁴ See n. 4.