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MANICHAEAN COSMOLOGICAL NARRATIVE
THE CASE OF THE MANICHAEAN FIRST MAN**

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**APPROACHING THE STUDY OF GENDER IN LATE ANTIQUE
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Abstract

The application of recent models of sex and gender to late antique Jewish and Christian literature has yielded considerable knowledge of constructions of gender in these fields. This progress is hitherto unmatched in Manichaean studies, in which research has been limited to the role of women within the Manichaean movement. This paper explores models and methodology in research concerning gender construction in late antique Manichaean cosmological narrative. This will be exemplified by an analysis of the emergence of the construction of masculinity as endurance in the literary characterization of the mythological Manichaean First Man, which will be interpreted in the context of the changing socio-political circumstances of the Manichaean community. The adoption of endurance as a masculinized trait signifies the absorption of constructions of masculinity from Jewish and early Christian martyrological literature, in which the Greek philosophical virtue of endurance (ὕπομονη) is presented as a valorized masculine response to oppression and a form of resistance to Roman power. However, the Manichaean concept of endurance of persecution has a distinct interpretation which reflects the Manichaean ethos of the suffering of life in the body.

Introduction

The religion of Manichaeism flourished in the Roman Empire, Central Asia and beyond between the third and eighth centuries before succumbing to persecution from rival faiths. Mani, the founder of the faith, was born in Persian Mesopotamia in 216 A.D. and was raised in a sect of Judaeo-Christian origin until his non-compliance with sectarian doctrine resulted in his expulsion. Mani claimed to be the final embodiment of a series of prophets sent throughout human history to various geographical places.¹ Mani's dualist doctrine is entwined with a dramatic cosmological mythology, which expounds the primeval existence of two kingdoms of darkness and light respectively, conjoined in a macrocosmic battle of which the human body is the microcosmic site of conflict. As a consequence of this conflict, an element of the Divine remains entrapped in the material world and the human body. Mani's cosmology is peopled by multiple divine and demonic beings with gendered titles such as Father, Mother, Maiden and Son. The gendered status of these mythological beings offers a lens through which to glimpse constructions of gender in Mani's writings and in subsequent Manichaean texts.

¹ See citation from Mani's *Šābuhragān* in Al-Bīrūnī, *The Chronology of the Ancient Nations* 207.15-18, translated in John C. Reeves, *Prolegomena to a History of Islamicate Manichaeism* (Comparative Islamic Studies) (Sheffield and Bristol, 2011), 102-103.

In 'A Prolegomena to the Study of Women in Manichaeism,' Kevin Coyle highlights the absence of research related to the place of women in Manichaeism.² Coyle observes that recent advances in the study of the feminine in Gnostic texts are unmatched by Manichaean studies.³ Given the claim of Manichaeism as the final expression of Gnosticism in late antiquity, such research is overdue.⁴ Furthermore, the acknowledged influence of the ex-Manichaean Augustine of Hippo on Christian doctrine concerning women further necessitates research concerning Manichaean views on women.⁵

More recent research in Manichaeism considers the role of women in the Manichaean movement. Jessica Kristionat has explored the roles allowed to women in the Manichaean community and in Manichaean praxis.⁶ Kristionat finds no evidence of sex differentiation in the roles of the male and female Manichaean Elect. The representation of Mary Magdalen in Coptic Manichaean literature has been addressed by Antti Marjanen and Kevin Coyle. Marjanen has explored the representation of Mary Magdalen as purveyor of knowledge to the apostle Peter and her role as 'the paragon of a faithful believer' and identification with wisdom.⁷ Nicholas Baker-Brian's analysis of Augustine's manipulation and propagation of rumours relating to the abuse of women within the Manichaean community explores Augustine's use of rumour as a strategy of anti-Manichaean invective.⁸ Majella Franzmann has provided a preliminary discussion of broadly-stereotyped feminine-gendered imagery in Manichaean cosmological narrative.⁹ However, research concerning constructions of gender in Manichaean literature is otherwise sparse and Manichaean cosmological mythology in particular remains hitherto an untapped source of knowledge. Furthermore, there remains a notable and puzzling silence concerning Manichaean constructions of masculinity. This paper seeks to address this *lacuna* in Manichaean studies with an exploration of the emergence of the construction of masculinity as endurance in the literary characterization of the Manichaean First Man. The roots of this construction of masculinity in Jewish and early Christian martyrological literature will be discussed whilst addressing the specific Manichaean interpretation of endurance.

The first part of this paper will discuss the application of models of sex and gender to the field of religious studies, particularly in relation to the construction of masculinity as endurance of suffering in Jewish and early Christian martyrological literature. This will be followed by a discussion of methodological issues encountered in the study of gender in Manichaean cosmological literature. Finally, the absorption and adaptation of the construction of masculinity as endurance from Jewish and early Christian martyrological literature into the characterization of the Manichaean First Man will be approached. The Manichaean interpretation of endurance

² Kevin C. Coyle, 'A Prolegomena to the Study of Women in Manichaeism', in *Manichaeism and its Legacy* (Nag Hammadi and Manichaean studies 69) (Leiden and Boston, 2009), 141- 154.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Jessica Kristionat, *Zwischen Selbstverständlichkeit und Schweigen. Die Rolle der Frau im frühen Manichäismus* (Oikumene 11; Studien zur antiken Weltgeschichte 11) (Mainz, 2013).

⁷ Antti S. Marjanen, 'Mary Magdalene in the Manichaean Psalm-book', in *The Woman Jesus Loved: Mary Magdalene in the Nag Hammadi Library and Related Documents* (Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies 40, Philosophia Antiqua) (Leiden, New York and Koln, 1996), 203-215 (212). Also K. Coyle, *Manichaeism* (2009), 141-186.

⁸ Nicholas J. Baker-Brian, 'Women in Augustine's anti-Manichaean writings: Rumour, rhetoric, and ritual', in Markus Vinzent (ed.), *Studia Patristica 70: Papers presented at the sixteenth International Conference on Patristic Studies held in Oxford 2011* (18: St Augustine and his Opponents) (Leuven, 2013), 499-520; id. 'Between Testimony and Rumour: Strategies of Invective in Augustine's *De moribus manichaeorum*' in Alberto J. Quiroga Puertas (ed.), *The Purpose of Rhetoric in Late Antiquity. From Performance to Exegesis* (Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum 72) (Tübingen, 2013), 31-53.

⁹ Majella Franzmann, 'Mothers, Virgins and Demons: Reading Beyond the Female Stereotypes in Manichaean Cosmology and Story', *Humanities Australia* 1 (2010), 56-63.

reflects the persecution encountered by the Manichaean community after Mani's death and the relation of this experience to the Manichaean ethos of corporeal life.

1. Approaches to the Study of Gender in Religious Studies

Studies of the construction of gender and sex in late antique religion have absorbed models and theories from the modern discipline of gender studies, which emerged in the 1950s from the work of pioneers such as the psychologist of endocrinology, John Money.¹⁰ Historically, gender has been viewed as socially constructed and secondary to biological sex. More recently, theorists have challenged this model. Judith Butler argues for the artificiality of both sex and gender:

Gender is not to culture as sex is to nature; gender is also the discursive/cultural means by which 'sexed nature' or 'a natural sex' is produced and established as 'prediscursive,' prior to culture, a politically neutral surface *on which* culture acts.¹¹

In his research on formations of masculinity in rabbinic Judaism, Daniel Boyarin upholds this position, defining gender as: 'the praxis and process by which people are interpolated into a two- (or in some cultures more) sex system that is made to seem as if it were nature, that is, something that has always existed.'¹² Raewyn Connell constructs gender as a method of ordering social practice in relation to biological parts and reproductive processes.¹³

Connell's model of hegemonic masculinity has proved an important heuristic research tool in Jewish and Early Christian studies of gender. Connell defines hegemonic masculinity as 'the currently most honored way of being a man.'¹⁴ Hegemonic masculinities are temporally, historically and culturally variable.¹⁵ Connell's further research with James Messerschmidt supports the co-existence of subordinate masculinities amongst communities experiencing marginalisation or oppression.¹⁶ Boyarin broadens Connell's model to include 'tactical' masculinities as forms of resistance to oppressive authority.¹⁷ This is exemplified by the rabbinic 'trickster' figure, which valorizes escape and cunning as masculinized methods of resistance.¹⁸ Boyarin also identifies 'gender-bending' as a form of resistance to Roman power, exemplified by the assumption of feminine-gendered traits such as suffering into rabbinic masculinity.¹⁹

Research into Jewish and early Christian martyrological texts reveals the absorption and assimilation of alternative cultural models into masculinities as a consequence of intercultural contact. As discussed by Stephen Moore and Janice Capel Anderson, this is exemplified by the assimilation of the masculinized trait of endurance (ὕπομονη) from Greek philosophy into the Jewish martyrological text 4 *Maccabees*, in which the torture and execution of the Maccabean martyrs is transformed into a performance of masculinity.²⁰ This model of masculinity challenges the Roman hegemonic masculinity of domination and penetration, described by

¹⁰ John Money, *Love and Love Sickness: The Science of Sex, Gender Difference, and Pair-bonding* (London, 1980).

¹¹ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble, Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (Routledge Classics) (New York, 1990), 7.

¹² Daniel Boyarin, 'Gender', in Mark C. Taylor (ed.), *Critical Terms for Religious Studies* (Chicago and London, 1998), 117-135, 117.

¹³ Raewyn W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Cambridge, 2005), 71.

¹⁴ Raewyn W. Connell and James W. Messerschmidt, 'Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept', *Gen. Soc.* 19 (6) (Dec. 2005), 829-859, 829.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Daniel Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct: The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man* (Contraversions: Critical Studies in Jewish Literature, Culture, and Society) (Berkeley, 1997).

¹⁸ *Id.* *Carnal Israel: Reading Sex in Talmudic Culture* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1993).

¹⁹ *Id.* *Unheroic Conduct*, (1997), 6.

²⁰ Stephen D. Moore and Janice Capel Anderson, 'Taking it like a Man: Masculinity in 4 Maccabees', *JBL* 117 (2) (Summer 1998), 249-273.

Boyarin as ‘the dominant fiction of Roman cultural engendering’.²¹ Early Christian martyrological texts show continuity with and adaptations of the model of masculinity as endurance in 4 Macc.²² These models of masculinity in Jewish and early Christian literature offer valuable heuristic frameworks with which to approach the analysis of masculinity in Manichaean literature. The following section will explore some of the methodological challenges encountered in the exploration of gender in Manichaean literature.

2. Methodological Challenges and Considerations

This section will consider three methodological considerations encountered in the exploration of gender construction in Manichaean cosmological narrative. Firstly, the diverse range of languages in which Manichaean texts are preserved complicates the identification of mythological characters. Secondly, identification of concurrent gender hegemonies is necessary in order to interpret gender construction in Manichaean literature. Thirdly, gender construction may be affected by the changing historical circumstances of the Manichaean community, leading to gender reformations. This is particularly pertinent when tracing the development of Mani’s doctrine by his followers subsequent to his death.

The Manichaean faith, whilst originating in Sasanian Persia, was propagated extensively through missionary work throughout the Roman Empire, Central Asia and China. The historical Middle Persian and Parthian text M2 indicates that Mani initiated a mission to the west of the Sasanian Empire by his disciple Mār Addā and a mission to the east by Mār Ammo.²³ Central to the dissemination of the Manichaean message was a ‘canon’ of literature composed by Mani, which, in a Middle Persian fragment considered to be part of the *Šābuhragān*, Mani lists as one of ten advantages of his religion over others.²⁴ In the Coptic *Manichaean Homilies* (see below), Mani’s close disciple Koustaōs lists the following texts as canonical:

The *Gospel* and the *Treasury of the Life*, The *Treatise* and The *Book of the Mysteries*, The *Book of Giants* and The *Epistles*, The *Psalms and Prayers* of my Lord, his Picture(-book), his apo(caly)pses, his parables and his mysteries ...²⁵

Mani wrote in Aramaic, with the exception of the *Šābuhragān*, which is composed in Middle Persian and dedicated to King Shāpūr I with the intention of securing patronage for Mani’s mission to the Sasanian Empire.²⁶ The *Šābuhragān*, composed in 240 A.D., is chiefly eschatological in content and describes the punishment of those who persecute the Manichaean faithful at the eschaton.²⁷ A further collection of Middle Persian fragments (M 98/99 I, M 7980–7984), collectively known as *Mir. Man I*, have linguistic parallels with the *Šābuhragān* and hence potentially comprises a cosmological component of the text.²⁸

Historically, knowledge of Manichaeism has been reliant on secondary sources, such as the numerous anti-Manichaean writings of the ex-Manichaean Augustine of Hippo. However, this century Manichaean texts have emerged at two significant sites. The fourth-century remains

²¹ D. Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct* (1997), 6.

²² Stephanie L. Cobb, *Dying to be Men: Gender and Language in Early Christian Martyr Texts* (New York 2008). See also *ead. Divine Deliverance: Pain and Painlessness in Early Christian Martyr Texts* (Oakland, 2016).

²³ M2, in Hans-Joachim Klimkeit, *Gnosis on the Silk Road: Gnostic Texts from Central Asia* (Australia 1993), 202-204.

²⁴ M5794 + M5761, MMII, 295-296, KG2205-2207 +2210-12, in Iain Gardner and Samuel N.C. Lieu, *Manichaean Texts from the Roman Empire* (Cambridge, 2004), 109.

²⁵ *Ibid.* 152.

²⁶ See Nicholas J. Baker-Brian, *Manichaeism: An Ancient Faith Rediscovered* (New York, 2011).

²⁷ David N. MacKenzie and Mani, ‘Mani’s “Šābuhragān”’, *BSOAS* 42 (3) (1979), 500-534. See also: Mani and David N. MacKenzie, ‘Mani’s “Šābuhragān”- II’, *BSOAS* 43(2) (1980), 288-310.

²⁸ Friedrich C. Andreas and Walter B. Henning (eds.), *Mitteliranische Manichaica aus Chinesisch-Turkestan* (Sitzungsberichte der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften) (Berlin, 1932).

of a Manichaean community at Medinet Mani in Egypt has rendered a number of Coptic Manichaean texts, including community texts such as the *Manichaean Psalm-book*, *Manichaean Homilies*, *Kephalaia* and more latterly community letters written by Mani.²⁹ The *Manichaean Psalm-Book* includes psalms attributed to Mani and his close disciples and dates to the fourth century.³⁰ The Coptic *Kephalaia* consists of two codices, the first and larger of which is titled *The Kephalaia of the Teacher* (henceforward *Berlin Kephalaia*).³¹ The text takes the form of a stylized series of questions and answers between Mani ('the Teacher') and disciples, who seek clarification concerning doctrinal and cosmological issues from Mani.³² Attributed to members of Mani's immediate circle of disciples, the text appears to represent a systematisation, redaction and elaboration of Mani's teachings.³³ The second *Kephalaia* codex (henceforward the *Dublin Kephalaia*) is chiefly concerned with Mani's time at the Sasanian court and continues to be studied and translated.³⁴ The *Manichaean Homilies*, dating to c. 275-350 A.D, comprise four papyri in the genre of community sermons and discourse, each of which is attributed to a member of Mani's inner circle of disciples.³⁵

Manichaean texts from the Turfan oasis in East Turkestan are preserved in various languages including Middle Persian, Parthian, Bactrian and Sogdian.³⁶ Consequently, surviving Manichaean texts are extant in a diverse number of languages. This problematizes the identification of mythological beings and their gender in Mani's mythology. However, the titles assigned to the divinities frequently indicate gender through kinship terms (such as father, maiden, son, and mother) and regal terms (such as king). The task is complicated further by the Manichaean practice of adapting names of mythological beings according to audience and regional culture in order to increase the accessibility of the Manichaean message. This practice originates in the writings of Mani himself. In the Middle Persian *Šābuhragān*, Mani adopts the names of the Zoroastrian pantheon for his mythological beings to reflect the religion of the Sasanian court. The chief archon of the Kingdom of Darkness assumes the name of the Zoroastrian evil spirit, Ahramen.³⁷ This is further exemplified by the Middle Persian and Parthian hymn M471, *Sadwēs and Pēsūs*.³⁸ As discussed by Mary Boyce, in this hymn the Manichaean divinity entitled the Maiden of Light assumes the name of the Avestan rain-goddess Sadwēs, reflecting parallels in mythological role.³⁹

²⁹ Aloïs van Tongerloo, 'Coptic Manichean Texts', *Encyclopædia Iranica* VI (3) (1993), 260-264.

³⁰ *The Manichaean Psalm-book, Including psalms by Syrus, Heraclides and Thomas. A Transcription and Translation of the Coptic Text. With Plates* (Manichaean Manuscripts in the Chester Beatty Collection 2). ed. Charles R.C. Allberry, (Stuttgart, 1938).

³¹ Iain Gardner, *The Kephalaia of the Teacher: The Edited Coptic Manichaean Texts in English Translation, with Commentary* (Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies 37), (Leiden 1995).

³² Id. 'An Introduction to the Chester Beatty Kephalaia Codex' in Iain Gardner, Jason D. BeDuhn and Paul Dilley (eds.), *Mani at the Court of the Persian Kings: Studies on the Chester Beatty Kephalaia Codex* (Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies 87), (Leiden, 2014), 1-12.

³³ Timothy Pettipiece, 'The Faces of the Father: "Pentadization" in the Manichaean Kephalaia (Chapter 21)', *VC* 61 (2007), 470-477. Also id. 'Coptic Answers to Manichaean Questions: The Erotapokritic Nature of the Kephalaia' in Marie-Pierre Bussières (ed.), *La littérature des questions et réponses dans l'antiquité profane et chrétienne: de l'enseignement à l'exégèse: Actes du séminaire sur le genre des questions et réponses tenu à Ottawa les 27 et 28 septembre 2009*. (Turnhout, 2013), 51-61.

³⁴ See I. Gardner, J. BeDuhn and P. Dilley, *Mani at the Court* (2014) for latest translations.

³⁵ Nils A. Pedersen, *Studies in the Sermon on the Great War: Investigations of a Manichaean-Coptic Text from the Fourth Century* (Aarhus, 1996), 156.

³⁶ Werner Sundermann, *Iranian Manichaean Turfan texts in early publications: (1904-1934)*, (Corpus inscriptionum iranicarum, School of Oriental and African Studies 3) (London, 1996).

³⁷ See D.N. MacKenzie and Mani, 'Mani's "Šābuhragān"' (1979); also Mani and D.N. MacKenzie, 'Mani's "Šābuhragān"- II' (1980).

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*

Preliminary research should establish the prevalent gender hegemonies within which Manichaean texts are composed. In relation to the writings of Mani, two sites of cultural influence are immediately indicated. The first is the exclusively male Judaeo-Christian sect of Mani's youth. The chief source concerning Mani's time in this environment is the Greek *Cologne Mani Codex* (henceforward CMC), entitled *περί τῆς γέννης τοῦ σώματος αὐτοῦ* (On the Origin/Birth of his Body).⁴⁰ The CMC dates between 500-600 CE and mixes historical, biographical and hagiographical information in the style of a 'life' of Mani.⁴¹ The text reveals the sect's Judaeo-Christian Elchasaite origins and focus upon bodily purity through ablution and ascetic practice as core aspects of community ethic.⁴² The second environment of cultural significance to Mani's writings is the Sasanian court of Shāpūr I, from whom Mani sought patronage for his missionary efforts. According to the *Kitāb al-Fihrist* of the tenth-century Islamic bibliographer Ibn Al-Nadim, Shāpūr granted Mani permission to evangelise in India, China and Khurasan.⁴³ The Dublin *Kephalaia*, a text chiefly concerned with Mani's time at the Sasanian court and attributed to Mani's closest disciples, describes Mani's participation in agonistic debates at court with the sage Goundesh, victory in which won access to successively higher sages and finally the king.⁴⁴ However, the extent of Mani's interactions with the court of Shāpūr is contested, as Manichaean accounts are coloured by their hagiographical style. The Sasanian monarch, as embodiment of hegemonic masculinity, propagated his identity through demonstrations of wealth and the production of art, architecture and commemorative inscriptions.⁴⁵ Surviving historical evidence indicates that Sasanian masculinity foregrounded martial prowess, wealth and dominance as indications of masculinity, both in the battle field and at court.⁴⁶ Outside the battle field, martial prowess was demonstrated in stagings of the royal hunt in private grounds, in which the victorious role of the King was pivotal.⁴⁷

The deteriorating historical circumstances of the Manichaean community are significant to developments or reformations in gender construction. Following Mani's death in prison, the persecution of Manichaeism within the Sasanian Empire commenced with the execution of Mani's successor, Sinnaios.⁴⁸ The Zoroastrian chief priest Kartīr, who is implicated in the imprisonment of Mani in the *Coptic Manichaean Homilies*, is a key figure in the persecution of Manichaeism.⁴⁹ Kartīr's political powers grew during the reigns of Hormizd I, Bahrām I and II.⁵⁰ Kartīr boasts of his achievements on four surviving commemorative rock reliefs, including the Ka'ba-ye Zartosht at Naqš-e Rostam, where his actions are cast in cosmic mythological terms. He claims to have ousted with violence the teachings of the Zoroastrian evil spirit and his *devs*

⁴⁰ Birger A. Pearson, Ron Cameron and Arthur J. Dewey (1979) (trans./eds.), *The Cologne Mani codex (P. Colon. inv. nr. 4780): Concerning the origin of his body* (Early Christian literature series 3: Texts and Translations 15) (Montana, 1979).

⁴¹ See Albert Henrichs 'Mani and the Babylonian Baptists: A Historical Confrontation', *HSCP* 77 (1973), 23-59; *Ib.* 'The Cologne Mani Codex Reconsidered', *HSCP* 83 (1979), 339-367; *Ib.* 'Literary Criticism of the Cologne Mani Codex', in Bentley Layton, (ed.), *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism*, vol. II. (Leiden, 1981), 724-733.

⁴² CMC 67.83-20; 71.88.8-16; 73.89.26.

⁴³ Al-Nadim, *The Kitāb al-Fihrist*, in J.C. Reeves, *Prolegomena* (2011), 38-39.

⁴⁴ *Dublin Kephalaia* 369 11-12/G243 in Paul Dilley, 'Mani's Wisdom at the Court of the Persian Kings: The Genre and Context of the Chester Beatty Kephalaia', in I. Gardner, J.D. BeDuhn, and P. Dilley, *Mani at the Court* (2014), 15-51, 43.

⁴⁵ For discussion of iconography of Shāpūr I, see Matthew Canepa, *The Two Eyes of the Earth: Art and Ritual of Kingship between Rome and Sasanian Iran* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 2010), 53-78.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones, *King and Court in Ancient Persia 559-331 BCE* (Debates and Documents in Ancient History) (Edinburgh, 2013), 127-150.

⁴⁸ For chronology of Manichaeism after Mani, see Michel Tardieu and Malcolm DeBevoise (trans.) *Manichaeism* (Urbana and Chicago, 2008), 91.

⁴⁹ Hans J. Polotsky, *Manichäische Homilien*, Manichean Manuscripts in the Chester Beatty Collection 1 (Stuttgart, 1934), 45.

⁵⁰ Oktor Skjærvø, 'Kartir', *Encyclopædia Iranica* XV/6 (2011), 608-628.

(demons) from the empire, aligning these with rival faiths including Manichaeism: ‘and Ahramen and the devs great beating and hostile treatment befell, and the teaching of Ahramen and the devs from the empire departed and Jews and Buddhist monks and Brahmins and Nazarenes and Christians and [MKTK-y] and *Zandik* (Manichaeans) within the empire were driven out ... And idol destruction and dwelling of the devs and burning down ...’⁵¹ Metaphors for persecution survive in the *Coptic Manichaean Homilies*. This is exemplified by an image of persecution as the silencing of cooing doves and the killing of their young by Error (Coptic: Plane), a feminine-gendered hypostasis: ‘She stopped the melody of the psalms in [the] m[outh] (?) . . . | [.] the strings which glorify with (?) the lutes . . . | . . . she killed the doves . . . | . . . which coo about the mysteries of God. / she opened (?) their dovecotes and she released them. She dipped | [her hands in the] blood of their young.’⁵²

The identification of the emergence of subordinate and tactical masculinities in marginalized communities signals the possibility of reformations in masculinity in the persecuted Manichaean community. The following section will explore the application of the models of gender and methodology discussed above to constructions of masculinity embedded in the characterization of the Manichaean First Man in Manichaean cosmological narrative. The development of a Manichaean construction of endurance as a valorized masculine trait which absorbs but adapts the tradition of early Jewish and Christian martyrological literature will be discussed.

3. Manichaean Constructions of Masculinity: The Warrior and Endurance

The construct of endurance is described by Iain Gardner and Samuel Lieu as: ‘the most characteristic tone of the Manichaean ethic, its very summation of life lived in this world.’⁵³ The valorization of endurance as a masculine trait in Manichaean literature appears first in the letters of Mani to his community and is developed in the characterization of the First Man as paradigm of endurance. The roots of the Manichaean construction of endurance as a masculine virtue lie in Jewish and early Christian martyrological literature.

The masculine virtue of endurance emerged first in the Stoic school of Zeno of Citium (335–263 B.C.).⁵⁴ Endurance was constructed as subordinate to the four cardinal virtues of Wisdom, Courage, Justice and Temperance. In *Lives of Stoic Philosophers* (c. 230 A.D.), the third-century doxographer Diogenes Laertius describes the supporting role played by endurance in the Stoic model of virtue:

For they say that the man who possesses virtue is able both to perceive and to put into practice what must be done. But what ought to be done must be chosen, and endured, and held to, and distributed so that if a man does some things by deliberate choice, and some in a spirit of endurance, and some by way of just distribution, and some patiently, then he is wise, and courageous, and just, and temperate.⁵⁵

The absorption of the Greek concept of endurance as a prized male characteristic in Jewish literature reflects exposure to Hellenistic culture and ideology. This is exemplified by the martyrological text 4 *Maccabees* (henceforward 4 Macc) which is dated to the mid-first century A.D. and composed amidst the Roman oppression of the Jewish faith.⁵⁶ In this text, the

⁵¹ Martin Sprengling, ‘Kartīr, Founder of Sasanian Zoroastrianism’, *AJSL* 57(2) (1940), 197-228, 205.

⁵² *Coptic Manichaean Homilies* 12:3, translated in N. A. Pedersen, *Studies in the Sermon on the Great War* (1996), 237.

⁵³ I. Gardner and S.N.C. Lieu, *Manichaean Texts* (2004), 241.

⁵⁴ Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Stoic Philosophers*, Charles D. Yonge (trans.) and Keith Seddon (ed.), *A Summary of Stoic Philosophy: Zeno of Citium in Diogenes Laertius* (Book Seven), (US, 2007).

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* 87.

⁵⁶ Larry R. Helyer, *Exploring Jewish Literature of the Second Temple Period: A Guide for New Testament Studies* (Illinois, 2002), 402-412, 404.

Maccabean martyrs' endurance (ὑπομονῆ) of torture and execution is lauded as a worthy masculine response to the tyranny of Antiochus IV.⁵⁷ As observed by George Nickelsburg, 4 Macc develops the narratives of 1 and 2 *Maccabees*, but is 'transposed into the key of Greek philosophy.'⁵⁸ This is achieved through the identification of key Jewish religious virtues with Hellenistic philosophical concepts. Throughout the text, religious piety (εὐσέβεια) is identified with Reason (λογισμὸς) as a significant factor in the battle to subdue fear and pain.⁵⁹

The assimilation of the Maccabean martyrs' suffering to the virtue of endurance (ὑπομονῆ), transforms their execution into a performance of political resistance. This is consistent with Daniel Boyarin's identification of the development of tactical masculinities as a form of resistance in Jewish literature.⁶⁰ Endurance is presented as an active performance of resistance that reverses the dynamic between dominator and dominated. This power reversal is voiced by one of seven Maccabean brothers during his torture:

To the tyrant he said, 'Do you not think, you most savage tyrant, that you are being tortured more than I, as you see the arrogant design of your tyranny being defeated (νικώμενον) by our endurance for the sake of religion?' (διὰ τὴν εὐσέβειαν ἡμῶν ὑπομονῆς)⁶¹

The masculine status of endurance is indicated by its identification with manly courage (ἀνδρεία) and with martial imagery which marks the martyr's body as the site of conflict.⁶² The battle for control over the martyrological body is ultimately lost by Antiochus, who will subsequently invoke the endurance of the martyrs as exemplar to his own soldiers.⁶³

In 4 Macc, endurance is defined as the overcoming of fear and the bearing of physical pain. However, the text, whilst detailing graphically the ripping of limbs and flesh, hastens moments of suffering, which are presented as fleeting, in contrast with the ever-lasting torment of Antiochus in the world to come.⁶⁴ Endurance is individually and communally redemptive: the martyrs achieve immortality and the purification of the nation of Israel: 'the tyrant was punished, and the homeland purified – they having become, as it were, a ransom for the sin of our nation. And through the blood of those devout ones and their death as an atoning sacrifice, divine Providence preserved Israel that previously had been mistreated.'⁶⁵

A further remarkable aspect of this text is the masculinization of the Mother of the seven Maccabean brothers. As discussed by Stephen Moore and Janice Capel Anderson, this is achieved by the use of masculine-gendered imagery of courage, battle and conquest.⁶⁶ The text attributes her with manly courage (ἀνδρειώσας),⁶⁷ she is acclaimed as a 'soldier of God in the cause of religion' (δι' εὐσέβειαν θεοῦ στρατιῶτι)⁶⁸ and achieves the conquering of a tyrant (τύραννον ἐνίκησας)⁶⁹ through the overcoming of her maternal compassion (σπλάγχνα).⁷⁰ Her masculine courage (ἀνδρεία) is employed as a tool with which to challenge unmanly behaviour:

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ George W.E. Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature between the Bible and the Mishnah: An Historical and Literary Introduction* (Philadelphia, 1981), 1981.

⁵⁹ 4 Macc, in Michael D. Coogan, et al. (ed.), *The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha: New Revised Standard Version*. (Oxford and New York, 2007), 362-383. See David A. deSilva, *4 Maccabees* (Guides to the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha) (London, 1988), 13-14.

⁶⁰ D. Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct* (1997).

⁶¹ 4 Macc 9:30, 374.

⁶² Ibid.1:11, 363 and 15:30, 380.

⁶³ Ibid. 17: 23, 382.

⁶⁴ Ibid. 18:5, 382.

⁶⁵ Ibid. 17:21-22, 382.

⁶⁶ S. Moore and J. Capel Anderson, *Taking it like a Man* (1998).

⁶⁷ 4 Macc 15:23, 380.

⁶⁸ Ibid. 16:14, 381.

⁶⁹ Ibid. 16:14, 381.

⁷⁰ Ibid. 15:23, 380.

‘Do not consider it amazing that reason had full command over these men in their tortures, since the mind of woman despised even more diverse agonies.’⁷¹ This ‘gender-bending’ draws her into the masculine arms of endurance.

The Maccabean brothers invoke the endurance (ὑπέμεινεν) of Isaac as inspiration: ‘Remember whence you came, and the father by whose hand Isaac would have submitted (ὑπέμεινεν) to being slain for the sake of religion (εὐσέβεια).’⁷² Isaac is invoked as an ancestral paradigm of fearlessness in death: ‘when Isaac saw his father's hand wielding a sword and descending upon him, he did not cower (οὐκ ἔπτηξεν).’⁷³ The invocation of Isaac as a paradigm of endurance in 4 Macc relates to transformations identified by Géza Vermès in the interpretation and characterization of *Genesis 22* in Jewish literature dating from the first century A.D. onwards. Isaac is transformed from nescient victim to willing but fearful participant in his imminent sacrifice by his father Abraham. Géza Vermès identifies the first instance of this reformation in the first-century *Genesis Fragment Targum*. This text is considered as a gloss or aide-memoire for the *Pentateuchal Palestinian Targums*.⁷⁴ The *Genesis Fragment Targum* elaborates specifically upon verse eight of *Genesis 22*, in which Abraham’s intention to sacrifice Isaac is hidden. The *Genesis Fragment Targum* adds a confession by Abraham of his intention to sacrifice Isaac: ‘At all events, God will provide himself the lamb, O my son; and if not, my son, Thou art for a burnt-offering, my son.’⁷⁵ This addition transforms Isaac from nescient victim to knowing participant in his own sacrifice. Isaac’s acquiescence is indicted by a second elaboration upon *Genesis 22.8*, which changes from ‘So they went both of them together’ to ‘So they went both of them together - one to slaughter and the other to be slaughtered.’⁷⁶ In further texts, Isaac’s determination to endure is embedded in his request to Abraham to bind him. Isaac’s request to be bound relates to the suppression of physical manifestations of fear, such as kicking and shaking. In *Fragment Targum 12*, Isaac asks: ‘bind my hands properly that I might not struggle in the time of my pain and disturb you and render your sacrifice unfit and be cast into the pit of destruction in the world to come.’⁷⁷ The *Codex Neofiti* of the *Targums*, which dates between the pre-Christian era and 200 A.D., mirrors the purpose of binding as fear of struggling and thereby invalidating Abraham’s sacrifice. Here Isaac asks: ‘Bind me properly that I may not kick (resist) you and your offering be made unfit.’⁷⁸ This theme is expanded in the fourth-century midrash *Genesis Rabbah*, in which Isaac seeks to overcome his fear of physical pain:⁷⁹

R. Isaac said: When Abraham wished to sacrifice his son Isaac, he said to him: Father, I am a young man and am afraid that my body may tremble through fear of the knife and I will grieve thee, whereby the slaughter may be rendered unfit and this will not count as a real sacrifice; therefore bind me very firmly.⁸⁰

In the *Fragmentary Targum*, Isaac’s sacrifice is communally redemptive. Abraham prays: ‘Now I pray before you, O Lord God, that when the children of Israel come to a time of distress, You may remember on their behalf the binding of Isaac their father, and loose and forgive them their

⁷¹ Ibid. 14:11, 378.

⁷² Ibid.13:12, 377.

⁷³ Ibid. 16:20, 381.

⁷⁴ Géza Vermès, ‘Redemption and Genesis 22: The Binding of Isaac and the Sacrifice of Jesus’, in *Scripture and Tradition in Judaism: Haggadic Studies* (Leiden, 1973), 193-227.

⁷⁵ *Genesis Fragment Targum*, ibid. 194.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ *Targum 12*, ibid. 194.

⁷⁸ *Fragment Neofiti*, ibid. 194.

⁷⁹ Martin McNamara (trans./ed.), *Targum and Testament Revisited: Aramaic Paraphrases of the Hebrew Bible: A Light on the New Testament* (Biblical Resource, 2nd ed.) (Grand Rapids 2010).

⁸⁰ *Genesis Rabbah 56:8* in Mary Gerhart and Fabian Udoh (eds.), *The Christianity Reader* (Chicago and London, 2007), 192.

sins and deliver them from all distress.’⁸¹ This communally redemptive quality of endurance is evident in 4 Macc.

In early Christian martyrological literature endurance of pain and torture is individually rather than communally redemptive and becomes central to the formation of Christian identity. Brent Shaw identifies the central role of the tortured Christian body as the site of active resistance in the struggle with Roman power. Shaw states: ‘In the power struggle between Christians and the Roman state, and in the passions of the martyrs, the consciously elaborated ideology of hypomonê took on greater and greater significance, until it came to have a commanding presence in Christian perceptions of the body.’⁸² Johannes Vorster observes that endurance was traditionally viewed as a feminine trait, associated with passivity and the pain of childbirth, but is absorbed into masculinity through the Hellenic concept of self-control:

Endurance, strictly speaking, belonged to the world of the female, because it was a virtue associated with passivity and more specifically with giving birth and the pain that had to be endured during this process. Even though this was hailed as a female virtue, what provided it with status was the male component, because ‘endurance’ suggested a measure of self-control, which was not a distinctive feature of the female body. Yet, the bodies of males were not usually associated with the passivity of lying down and surrendering one’s body to something that had to be endured. Their bodies were modelled on standing erect, inflicting pain and dying on the battlefield; female bodies were seen as suffering bodies, lying prone, giving birth in bed.⁸³

As discussed by Paul Middleton, the masculinization of endurance in Christian martyrological literature is achieved by the use of agonistic motifs, such as gladiatorial imagery.⁸⁴ Furthermore, Vorster argues that the gladiatorial model permits the entry of the ‘imperfect’ female body into the male world of martyrdom.⁸⁵ This is exemplified by the diary of Vibia Perpetua (182-203 A.D.) prior to her martyrdom, in which Perpetua speaks of dreams of becoming male in a gladiatorial arena of martyrdom: ‘The day before we were to fight with the beasts I saw the following vision ... My clothes were stripped off, and suddenly I was a man.’⁸⁶ The use of masculine gladiatorial imagery is one of the literary techniques used to defeminize female martyrs, rendering them male or sexless.⁸⁷ These examples mirror the ‘gender-bending’ in 4 Macc discussed above and maintain the masculine status of endurance.

Judith Perkins identifies the second-century discursive context of the suffering body in which early Christian martyrological texts arise.⁸⁸ This is consistent with Elizabeth Castelli’s observation of the Christian martyrological reinscription of ‘suffering as salvation,’ which

⁸¹ *Fragmentary Targum 12:14*, G. Vermès, *Scripture and Tradition* (1973), 195.

⁸² Brent Shaw, ‘Body/Power/Identity: Passions of the Martyrs’, *J ECS* 4(3) (Fall 1996), 269-312, 309.

⁸³ Johannes N. Vorster, ‘The Blood of Female Martyrs as the Sperm of the Early Church’, *R&T* 9(1) (2003), 8-41, 24.

⁸⁴ Paul Middleton, *Radical Martyrdom and Cosmic Conflict in Early Christianity* (The Library of New Testament Studies) (London, 2006).

⁸⁵ *Ibid.* 26.

⁸⁶ ‘The Passion of Perpetua and Felicity’, in *Women’s Religions in the Greco-Roman World: A Sourcebook*, ed. Ross Shepard Kraemer (Oxford, 2012), 356-368, 363.

⁸⁷ See, for example: Elizabeth A. Clark, ‘Sex, Shame, and Rhetoric: En-Gendering Early Christian Ethics (1990 Presidential Address)’, *JAAR* 59(2) (Summer 1991), 221-245; Shannon Dunn, ‘The Female Martyr and the Politics of Death: Examination of the Martyr Discourses of Vibia Perpetua and Wafa Idris’, *JAAR* 78(1) (March 2010), 202-225; Alwyn Pettersen, ‘Perpetua: Prisoner of Conscience’, *VC* 41(2) (June 1987), 139-153; Brent D. Shaw, ‘The Passion of Perpetua’, *Past & Present*, 139 (May 1993), 3-45; Maureen A. Tilley, ‘The Ascetic Body and the (Un)Making of the World of the Martyr’, *JAAR* 59(3) (Autumn, 1991), 467-479.

⁸⁸ Judith Perkins, *The Suffering Self: Pain and Narrative Representation in the Early Christian Era* (London, 1995), 3.

presents suffering and death as desirable outcomes.⁸⁹ However, Stephanie Cobb observes that the language of ‘divine analgesia’ is evident in martyrological texts, reflecting a textual dualism in which divine deliverance allows spirit to overcome bodily suffering.⁹⁰ Cobb comments: ‘The spirit that embraces the rewards of heaven conveys an important somatic benefit to the Christian: it attains impassibility for an otherwise vulnerable body.’⁹¹ It is into this literary tradition that the Manichaean construction of endurance makes an entry as an oppressed community facing persecution.

Endurance is introduced as a spiritual practice by Mani and undergoes development in Manichaean literature as the circumstances of the Manichaean community evolve and deteriorate. The theme of endurance emerges in two letters written by Mani to the Manichaean community. Coptic translations of these letters (*P.Kell. Copt. 53* and *P.Kell. Copt. 54*) which date between 350-370 A.D. have survived at the site of the fourth-century Manichaean community at Medinet Mani in Egypt.⁹² In these letters, Mani offers his own experience of betrayal from within the Manichaean community as an exemplar for the practice of endurance (Coptic: *upomonh*) and long-suffering (Coptic: *mntapoh*) in community relations. In *P.Kell. Copt. 53*, Mani alludes to Christ’s betrayal (*John 13.18*) in order to present himself as a Christ-like figure:

I myself also, this thing has happened to me: One who eats salt with me at the evening table, my garments upon his body, All these things I have endured from my children and my disciples; they whom I saved from the bondage of the world and the bondage of the body. I took them from the death of the world. I, all these things I have borne and endured from time to time, from many people.⁹³

Here Mani uses three strategies to intensify the narration of his betrayal. Firstly, he emphasises the spiritual redemption he has given to his followers. Secondly, he indicates a close relationship with those who have betrayed him. through kinship terms of parent and child, Thirdly, Mani represents his endurance as a repeated and continuing process which has been practised at different times with different people. As observed by Nicholas Baker-Brian, Mani presents the endurance of suffering as offering ‘spiritual ennobling’ for the individual and community.⁹⁴

Mani’s construction of endurance as a worthy masculine response to betrayal and dissent is borne up and developed in further Manichaean literature through the interplay of constructions of masculinity embedded in the Manichaean First Man, who plays a critical role in Manichaean cosmological mythology. The emanation of the Manichaean First Man from the Mother of Life is necessitated by a planned invasion by the Kingdom of Darkness, marking the First Man as a martial figure. Narrations of his departure to battle with his five sons as armour in the Coptic *Manichaean Psalm-book* and the *Berlin Kephalaia* are replete with imagery of courage, weaponry and victory. This is exemplified by the *Psalms of Thomas*, in which the First Man is characterized as a keen warrior who willingly leaps and races to battle:

The little one among the tall stepped in.
He took up arms. He armed his waist.
He leapt and raced into the abyss.

⁸⁹ Elizabeth Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory: Early Christian Culture Making* (New York, 2004).

⁹⁰ Cobb, *Divine Deliverance* (2016), 63-92.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² *P.Kell.Copt. 53* 41.5-19, in Iain Gardner, *Kellis Literary Texts 2* (Dakhleh Oasis Project Monograph 15) (Oxford, 2007), 4.

⁹³ *P.Kell.Copt. 53* 41.5-19, *ibid.* 47.

⁹⁴ Nicholas J. Baker-Brian, “‘Putrid Boils and Sores, and Burning Wounds in the Body’”: The Valorization of Health and Illness in Late Antique Manichaeism,’ *HTR* 109/3 (July 2016), 422-446, 433.

He leapt and got to their center to battle them.⁹⁵

This characterization is consistent with a martial construction of masculinity which, as discussed above, mirrors the prevalent Sasanian hegemonic masculinity. However, this martial characterization is transient. In the *Manichaean Psalm-book*, the First Man laments: his battle results in defeat, imprisonment and the theft of his five sons who are devoured by the demons of the Kingdom of Darkness:

The youth groaned and wept in the pit
which is at the bottom of Hades;
The youth groaned and wept,
his cry [to the great brightness went] up ...⁹⁶

The First Man's suffering contains an element of persecution as he turns from hunter to hunted: 'The false gods that have rebelled have taken their armour against me. The goddesses, the daughters of shame, have set up their armour against me. The goddesses, the daughters of shame, have set up their spears.'⁹⁷ This portrait of the suffering First Man marks a departure from his characterization as enthusiastic warrior and the emergence of an alternative construction of masculinity which encompasses vulnerability and persecution. However, the lamentation of the First Man is also an expression of the plight of the Divine entrapped within materiality and hence the Manichaean ethos of life within the corporeal body.

In the *Psalms of the Wanderers*, the suffering of the First Man is transformed into a paradigm of endurance, which accompanies him to the battlefield:

The first man, he was sent out to the fight,
And endurance came to him
He left his land of light behind him, he went out to the Land of
Darkness and Endurance came to him.
He left also his men behind him, he went out to the field – (?)
... and endurance came to him.⁹⁸

The *Psalm of the Wanderers* offers further exemplae of martyrdom drawn from biblical, apocryphal and Manichaean literature.⁹⁹ Particular attention is paid to figures from the *Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles*.¹⁰⁰ The psalm includes female martyrs, whose textual masculinization through martial imagery or rejection of female sexuality follows in the 'gender-bending' tradition of Judaeo-Christian martyrological literature. For example, Thecla (a martyr in the original sense of witness) is described as 'a despiser of the body, ... the lover of God.' The martyr Maximilla is a 'shamer of the serpent' and Aristobula is a 'champion in the fight'.¹⁰¹

The psalm assures that the endurance of the Manichaean faithful will be rewarded with rest from persecution, promising eternal life in the Kingdom of Light 'with no foe and no enemy and no adversary from henceforth.'¹⁰² Suffering and endurance bring individual redemption and kinship with the martyrs, which is defined with masculine-gendered terms of brothers, fathers

⁹⁵ *Manichaean Psalm-book*, 204.24-28. For discussion of the authorship of the *Psalms of Thomas*, see Frank Forrester Church and Guy G. Stroumsa, 'Mani's Disciple Thomas and the Psalms of Thomas', *VC* 34(1) (1980), 47-55.

⁹⁶ *Manichaean Psalm-Book*, 209.13-21.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.* 29.22-28.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.* 141.4-9.

⁹⁹ For specific works see K. Coyle, *Manichaeism* (2009), 226.

¹⁰⁰ *Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles II: The English Translations – Primary Source Edition* ed. William Wright (London and Edinburgh, 1871).

¹⁰¹ *Manichaean Psalm-book*, 192.25-193.3. See discussion of 'manly women' in Kim Haines-Eitzen, *The Gendered Palimpsest: Women, Writing, and Representation in Early Christianity* (New York, 2012), 124-126.

¹⁰² *Manichaean Psalm-book* 143.29-30.

and sons: 'We also, my brothers, have our part of suffering, we shall join in their suffering and rest in their rest... We are true sons, the heirs of their fathers.'¹⁰³

The adoption of endurance as a masculine characteristic places the *Psalm of the Wanderers* in the Judaeo-Christian martyrological literary tradition and may be interpreted as the emergence of a tactical masculinity as a consequence of persecution. The First Man's endurance provides a primordial template upon which the suffering and oppression of the Manichaean community may be mapped. However, the endurance of the Manichaean First man relates not only to the experience of persecution, but also to separation from his divine origins and his encounter with materiality. This reflects the Manichaean construction of the entrapment of the Divine within the human body. Manichaean literature is permeated with imagery of the body as a corpse or prison. In the *Manichaean Psalm-book*, the human body is described as 'the offspring of hell'¹⁰⁴ and 'the creature of the darkness'.¹⁰⁵ In the Middle Persian text M131, the body is an 'edifice of horror... stronghold of death poisonous form'.¹⁰⁶ The Sogdian confessional texts S9 + S13 (600-900 A.D.), describe the body as 'this body of death' (MP. *nasah*: corpse).¹⁰⁷ The Manichaean interpretation of endurance is thus uniquely connected to the suffering of life in the body and the necessity of this suffering for redemption. This paper will close with a summation of this ethos as expressed in the *Psalm of the Wanderers*:

There is nothing that is free from suffering that will rest in the end;
the very seed also that is sown, until it dies, finds not the way
to live,
but by its death gives life also.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰³ Ibid. 143.20-24.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. 99.4.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. 159.31.

¹⁰⁶ M131 in K. Coyle, *Manichaeism* (2009), 107.

¹⁰⁷ S9 + S13 R ii 30 in H-J. Klimkeit, *Gnosis* (1993), 38-39.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. 143.24-26