Against the Text:
Reimagining Creative Struggle in the Hypostasis of the Archons
and William Blake’s The Four Zoas

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Religion 399
Professor Anne McGuire
April 22, 2013
ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν ἡμῖν ἡ πάλη πρὸς αἷμα καὶ σάρκα ἀλλὰ πρὸς τὰς ἀρχάς, πρὸς τὰς ἐξουσίας, πρὸς τοὺς κοσμοκράτορας τοῦ σκότους τούτου, πρὸς τὰ πνευματικὰ τῆς πονηρίας ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις.

For there is not for us a struggle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the mighty ones, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual powers of wickedness in the heavens.

Ephesians 6:12
Abstract

The creation stories of Genesis have left something to be desired for many readers, as seemingly male figures creates the world with minimal effort and personal repercussions. The *Hypostasis of the Archons* and William Blake’s *The Four Zoas* reimagine the primordial cosmos as involving more complex, prolonged acts of creation which require struggle on the part of the creators. This thesis focuses on female figures as acting independently of male figures, specifically addressing the role intention plays in creating. Male responses to these female acts of creation vary from adulation to outrage, but often include rape. Yet in both the *Hypostasis* and the *Zoas*, the children born of these rapes proffer a brighter future for humanity. In both these stories, humankind is descended from the female figures, which sets up the human race to struggle like its primordial predecessors. These texts provide an opportunity for such struggle. One must wrestle with the complex stories and symbols of these texts in order to comprehend what is happening. This proves fruitful though, allowing readers to experience the psychological effects of the text as a primary response, with mimetic understanding becoming a secondary priority. The authors, too, engage in such creative acts, as they engage with previous texts, and as Blake continuously revises his work. There is only so much creative control one can have though when one is mortal, as death will ultimately cause a divide between author and work. As both these material texts have outlived their authors, the texts have fallen into states of disrepair, subject to censorship and loss. This provides the opportunity for further creative acts on the part of readers and scholars, as they fill in gaps and attempt to restore what once was there. In these two texts, the creation story is expanded to include more female figures and is designed to encompass humankind as a whole, allowing these stories to become a part of readers’ personal narratives.
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Introduction

The pangs of struggle inevitably accompany acts of creation for humankind. To labor, to invest time and energy, forges a close relationship between the creator and the created object. Yet creative acts do not always yield a positive outcome; the fruits of one’s labors may be tainted. And the responses of others witnessing the created thing can lead to the suffering of a creator. Yet in Genesis, God, acting singularly, creates quickly and easily without any sort of struggle and without any suffering on his own part, marking the creation stories far removed from the human experience. The texts of the Hypostasis of the Archons and William Blake’s The Four Zoas reject Genesis’ creation stories and instead reimagine the primordial cosmos with both male and female figures engaged in intensive labors of creation. For the female figures, to create is to struggle and even to suffer, particularly when they create inadvertently. Creating something involves lasting repercussions and further efforts as the female figures contend with both the fruits of their labors and negative male responses to their creations. These female figures thwart Genesis’ depiction of a singular creator who is fully aware of his intentions in creating. Furthermore, both the author of the Hypostasis of the Archons and Blake reject any definitive timeframe for creation. Creation has not yet ended for these texts. After all, the very act of reading these texts evokes the creative struggle. Though we as readers may be unaware of our role, of our own creative powers, we still participate as our minds become a space for creating as we interpret texts. These texts are extraordinarily difficult to comprehend mimaically; the authors intend for us to work hard to comprehend the contents of these works. The difficulty becomes something of an adventure; Wilkie and Johnson go so far as to relate grasping The Four Zoas to “trying to pick up a bowling ball with no finger holes” (1), and the same holds true for the complex myths of the Hypostasis. And even beyond reading, we, like the authors, are
compelled to participate in the chain of creative endeavors which began in the primordial cosmos. These stories thus become a part of our own lives, our histories, and our futures. Their model of productive struggle is the paradigm by which we live. Written centuries apart, these two texts raise a cry for a more complex understanding of the creation story and of the creative act as they incorporate female figures as well as humanity at large into the ongoing creative struggle.

This thesis opens with a brief history of the two texts, followed by a discussion of their connections to gnostic tradition. I then discuss female acts of creation, with regards to intention, male response, and children born in light of the male response. I then conclude with a look at how the structures of the texts allow for readers to engage in acts of creative struggle as well. In structuring this thesis so as to streamline the reading process, I have compared the *Hypostasis* to Genesis where applicable given they are so closely related and then subsequently drawn ties to the *Zoas*. Text in Greek, from the Septuagint or otherwise, appears both in Greek lettering and in transliteration.\(^1\) Where possible, I have provided original translations of Greek and Latin texts. Biblical passages not drawn from the Septuagint are from the NRSV. Unless otherwise cited, all translations of the *Hypostasis* come from the Layton translation; citations of the *Hypostasis* are done by translation subsection rather than the page of the codex or page number of the translation.

For sake of convenience, and because so many characters will be mentioned, here is a brief list of the cast of characters who are relevant for understanding this thesis. While this thesis focuses on creative struggle, when it comes to basic identification of mentioned characters, struggle not:

\(^1\) Transliterations from the Greek were done through Logos Bible Software’s transliterate.com.
Hypostasis of the Archons

Immortals:
The parent of the entirety—the invisible virgin spirit (I do not address this figure specifically)
Incorruptibility
Sophia-Wisdom
Eleleth—“one of four luminaries who stand before the parent of the entirety” (Layton 66)

Archons (i.e. Rulers):
Ialdabaoth—chief ruler, androgynous creature made by Sophia
Archons/rulers—ruling powers, extremely selfish, part of the corrupt realm

Humans
Adam—the first human
Eve—counterpart to Adam
Cain—first son of Eve, probably born of her rape by the Archons
Abel—son of Adam and Eve
Seth—brother and male counterpart of Norea (Norea is the more powerful of the two.)
Norea/Orea—daughter of Eve
Noah and his family

The Four Zoas
Albion—the primordial man who represents the totality of human existence. When he falls from
grace, he is divided into four aspects, or Zoas, which each have a female counterpart. I have
provided a chart for your convenience.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zoa’s Name</th>
<th>Represents</th>
<th>Other names/forms</th>
<th>Female Counterpart</th>
<th>Key Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tharmas</td>
<td>Instinct, the senses, the</td>
<td>Spectre of Tharmas</td>
<td>Enion</td>
<td>Tharmas and Enion are in a state of discord when</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>body</td>
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<td>the text opens.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Urizen</td>
<td>Reason, intellect, law</td>
<td>God (most frequently claims to be</td>
<td>Ahania</td>
<td>-not mentioned in this thesis—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>God</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Luvah</td>
<td>Love, emotion, rebellion</td>
<td>Orc-demon representing repressed</td>
<td>Vala</td>
<td>Luvah is not mentioned in this thesis, though Vala</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>desire Jesus takes Luvah’s form</td>
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<td>once Luvah rejects love and</td>
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</table>

3 See McGuire “Virginity and Subversion” page 247.
4 A version of this table appears in my work “From the Sleep of Death: The Translation of the Mystic into
Experience through Anti-Newtonian Form & Content Relationships in William Blake’s The Four Zoas.”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>turns to hate</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urthona</td>
<td>Imagination, wisdom, creativity</td>
<td>Los (fallen name-commonly used) Spectre of Urthona</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Enitharmon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Los and Enitharmon are the children born of the spectre of Tharmas raping Enion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**About the Texts**

**ΘΥΠΟΣΤΑΣΙΚΗ ΝΝΕΧΟΥΣΙΑ**, (hypostasis eksousiai), also known as *Hypostasis of the Archons* or *The Reality of the Rulers*, was found in 1945 as part of Nag Hammadi Codex II. The manuscript is tentatively dated around the fourth century CE and is the only surviving translation, though scholars think that the original text was written in Greek as early as 150-200 CE (Layton 67). This text rewrites much of Genesis, including the creation and animation of Adam. Bentley Layton goes so far as to say that “in the first half of the work the story line intertwines with the wording of Genesis in the Septuagint Greek version, tacitly calling attention to discrepancies between the myth and canonical scripture” (65). This intertwining proves particularly effective, allowing the author to draw attention to key differences between this interpretation and Genesis, such as the role of female figures and the amount of control they have over what they create. The *Hypostasis* has many of the same characters and plot elements as the creation story of Genesis and often adopts the similar structures in terms of speeches or plot descriptions, which makes for a simpler comparison than Genesis to the *Zoas*, which reimagines Genesis through new characters via 18th Century poetry.

Though Blake never had access to the *Hypostasis*, Blake was extremely familiar with the Bible, often drawing inspiration for his poetry and his illustrations, and he incorporated many
Biblical ideas and figures into his own cosmology, including Jesus. The Four Zoas was a personal project which Blake began in 1797 and worked on for about twenty-five years, at which point he gave the text to his friend John Linnell. The work remained in Linnell’s family library for a number of years, with the pages eventually coming loose and getting out of order. During the Victorian era, someone attempted to censor the work, which includes much phallic imagery which was contrary to the Victorian sensibility. Only in the late nineteenth century did scholars attempt to reorder the pages (Magno and Erdman 13-4). And so the work was only mass produced posthumously, and even then, facsimile editions are costly and rare. Scholars’ opinions vary regarding whether or not the text ought to be considered finished, as the manuscript is extremely unpolished, covered in Blake’s revisionary scribbles and rough sketches. Blake addresses the origins of man’s nature in this illustrated work. Part of the work is written and drawn on blank pages, while part incorporates proof pages from his work on Edward Young’s Night Thoughts; collectively, the text is divided into nine nights, which function as chapters of sort. The Four Zoas is one of Blake’s prophetic texts relaying his complex mythology, making it a fitting complement for the Hypostasis. Some scholars, such as Adrian Van Sinderen, author of Blake: The Mystic Genius, contend that this text temporally locates itself before Genesis (40). Given the work deals with the character of primordial man, it could also occur around the time of either of the creations of the first earth-creature, as its inner reason and instinct vie for ultimate control over humankind’s fate. Either way, the Zoas is clearly responding to Genesis.

The similarity in the reimaginings of Genesis in the Hypostasis and the Zoas are astounding. Especially in examining the role of female figures, patterns emerge. A female being undertakes a creative endeavor when she and her male counterpart are not in harmony. The act

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5 I do not focus on the role of Jesus in this particular analysis as he is not particularly engaged with creative acts, nor is he female. For more information, I highly recommend chapter 9, “A Christian Vision,” Andrew Lincoln’s Spiritual History: A Reading of William Blake’s Vala, or The Four Zoas.
often goes awry, leading to the female figure cleaning up after her mess, or if that is beyond her power, infuriating male figures, and even feminine labors that go well lead to male aggression. Such aggression often leads to childbirth, the ultimate struggle as the female figures experience the pangs of birth and child rearing. These future generations carry on the creative torch of their mothers, acting as redeeming figures.\textsuperscript{6}

Both texts, too, have a similar dream-like complexity. Readers’ minds struggle to comprehend the mimetics of the mythologies. This evokes reader experiences which are similar to those of the women, in that readers will inevitably struggle as they engage in the creative acts of interpreting the text and imagining the diegesis. Though Blake would not have had access to the \textit{Hypostasis} given the only remaining translation was found over a century after his death, what emerges from a joint consideration of these texts is this: Genesis has not fulfilled the desire for a creation narrative which includes not only feminine figures but intensive and prolonged labors with ramifications for the creator. Both the author of the \textit{Hypostasis} and Blake seek in their narratives an understanding of creative acts which allows for greater participation and which acknowledges the importance of such continued toil.

\textbf{Seeking to Map the Mind of God: Gnosis in the \textit{Hypostasis} and the \textit{Zoas}}

Both the \textit{Hypostasis of the Archons} and \textit{The Four Zoas} have a similar “Gnostic” bent. The term “Gnostic” is admittedly loaded; in the introduction to \textit{Gnostic Return in Modernity} Cyril O’Regan captures how convoluted this term is, noting “What is being claimed when a discourse is being called \textit{Gnostic} and how we demonstrate this is often not made clear. The claim of Gnosticism is either made too seriously or not seriously enough” (6). He fears the term is too

\textsuperscript{6} Most Blake scholars focus on male figures, with the female figures being treated as supplementary. Here I bring female figures to the fore, namely Enion, in order to examine how Blake is viewing the female emanation as a creating figure.
broadly applied by some, too narrowly constructed by others. Here I hope to strike an appropriate balance.

The term “Gnosticism” is rooted in the Greek word γνῶσις (gnosis), meaning “knowing.” Elaine Pagels explains the word gnosis as follows:

“gnosis is not primarily rational knowledge. The Greek language distinguishes between scientific or reflective knowledge (“He knows mathematics”) and knowing through observation or experience (“He knows me”), which is gnosis. As the gnostics use the term, we could translate it as “insight,” for gnosis involves an intuitive process of knowing oneself. And to know oneself, they claimed, is to know human nature and human destiny. (xix)

A number of different ideas are categorized as “gnostic,” including those of the Valentinians and the Sethians and the modern day Mandaean, and the majority of such ideas have their roots in Hellenic Judaism and Christianity (Layton xv; King 5).7 Christopher Rowland notes that “These ideas are often categorized by a contrast between an ineffable divinity and a hubristic creator divinity (a demiurge) who is the product of a mistake among the highest powers of the cosmos” (80).8 Rowland speaks to modern attempts by scholars to categorize schools of thought using the term gnosis, while Bentley Layton approaches the term through the lens of self-identification and defines gnostics as “an ancient group that called themselves ‘gnostics’—‘people fit to have an acquaintance (gnosis) with god’(xv). At the heart of both self-identification and categorization of

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7 For more information on such terminology, see the introduction to Bentley Layton’s The Gnostic Scriptures and Chapter I, “Why Is Gnosticism So Hard to Define” in Karen King’s What Is Gnosticism? King explains and responds to Layton’s construction of gnostic terminology.

8 Bentley Layton notes in his introduction to The Gnostic Scriptures that “gnostic scripture now seems strange because it rebels against important beliefs shared by many early Christians and their Jewish predecessors, beliefs which even now belong to the core of ordinary Western Judaism and Christianity—especially belief in the goodness and omnipotence of the Creator; gnostics believed that Satan made the world” (xix). While I find Layton’s use of the word “Satan” a bit of an overstatement, or rather a misdirection to modern readers, the beings which engage in creating the world are very often not particularly “good” or “omnipotent,” including Ialdabaoth in the Hypostasis and the Zoas in The Four Zoas. Even Sophia, as will be addressed later in this thesis, in her creation of Ialdabaoth, is not being “good” in that she is acting outside of appropriate behavior by creating without her male consort.
groups lies knowledge; the pursuit of gnostics is the centerpiece of gnostic ideas and the driving force behind gnostic writings.

The Hypostasis as a text fits squarely into the established category of gnostic literature. Layton captures the essence of gnostic scriptures as follows,

Gnostic scripture belongs to [the] category [of] the bizarre. Most readers will find it takes them into a breathtaking world of fantastic symbols, beautifully intricate myths, weird heavenly denizens, and extraordinary poetry—a world that resembles neither modern Christianity and Judaism nor today’s secular culture. Of course, the unfamiliarity of the gnostic world is partly a function of our distance from all the conventions of ancient literature. But even more it is due to the audacity of ancient gnostic theologians, who attempted nothing less than to chart the whole mind of god…and from that chart to show the origin both of the world’s beauty and its imperfection. (xiix-xix)

The Hypostasis has all of these things, the weird and the wonderful. In light of Layton’s comment, I offer this caveat: when we as modern readers find ourselves thoroughly challenged by the text, we must not presume our confusion derives from our distance from the culture from whence the text came. The Hypostasis is intended to be a challenge.

While the Hypostasis is readily accepted into the canon as far as modern scholarship on Gnosticism is concerned, the categorization of Blake as a gnostic has generated some controversy. Harold Bloom attempted to keep the term from being applied to Blake, viewing Blake’s “commitment not only to passion, energy, but also time, history, and social transformation” as making him distinct from classical understandings of Gnosticism (O’Regan 199). O’Regan points out that time and history constitute a resistance to imagination, functioning as an obstacle which separates the human mind from a greater sphere of knowing as they become bogged down in the concerns of the present (199). While Blake did not have any exposure to the traditionally classified “Gnostic” texts to draw upon, especially given that many were not found
until 118 years after his death, he was heavily influenced by Neoplatonism, particularly the *Timaeus* (Harper 55-6). This heavily influenced his cosmology and the ways he approached myth, favoring dualistic structures, though he rejects the good/evil dichotomy early gnostic texts favor and instead “seeks to explain [dualism] by reference to different kinds of activity, both of which are needed in some kind of dialectical relationship.

Both the *Hypostasis* and the *Zoas* in their “Gnosticism” contend with knowledge of the dualism of the body and soul and well as of gendered counterparts. The myths feature a multitude of aspects of the divine. Rowland is careful to note of the Nag Hammadi texts that “these systems are not thoroughly dualistic. The myths tell a story of the emanation from one ineffable and supreme deity to the lower, creator god who is thus not unrelated to the highest god. This means that humanity to an extent reflects the image of the highest being” (81). The highest being has no counterpart; any *gnosis* cleansed constitutes a small part of the attempt to “chart the whole mind of god” (Layton xix). Most importantly, there is a sense that there is a divine knowledge within oneself, a *gnosis*, for which one should strive. Jos van Meurs writes that “Blake’s starting point is Gnosis pure and simple: knowledge of reality is based on the personal, inner experience of man…Material life in the body and senses, what Blake calls “natural” or “vegetative” life,” is only an earthly covering of the spiritual essence that is “infinite” and “eternal” (275). This holds true in both texts, that there is this duality of the material and the spiritual and that the spiritual will trump the material. These texts each allow readers a glimpse into the divine, a taste of the sweetness of the struggle to obtain *gnosis*.

While some may place Blake outside the category of the gnostics, at least in the regards I discuss, the category holds. With such stunning similarities between the *Hypostasis* and the *Zoas*, one cannot help but draw connections, and these connections are inevitably rooted in
Gnosticism. From the choice of epigram to the choice of symbols such as veils, to the rejection of the Genesis creation story and subsequent incorporation of female figures as crucial parts of creation, to the similar complexity of the text itself in the attempt to capture the mind of God which so often leaves readers overwhelmed and confused, struggling in the pursuit of *gnosis*.

**The Struggle against Genesis**

Struggle becomes a central theme from the outset of these texts. To take Ephesians 6:12 as an epigram openly declares a text as engaged with the idea of struggle, and both texts open with lines of Ephesians 6:12. Ephesians 6:12 states:

> ὅτι οὐκ ἐστιν ἡμῖν ἡ πάλη πρὸς αἷμα καὶ σάρκα ἀλλὰ πρὸς τὰς ἀρχὰς, πρὸς τὰς ἐξουσίας, πρὸς τοὺς κοσμοκράτορας τοῦ σκότους τοῦτος, πρὸς τὰ πνευματικὰ τῆς πονηρίας ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις.

(hoti ouk estin hēmin hē palē pros haima kai sarka alla pros tas archas, pros tas exousias, pros tous kosmokratoras tou skotous toutou, pros ta pneumatika tēs ponērias en tois epouraniois.

For there is not for us a struggle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the mighty ones, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual powers of wickedness in the heavens.

Blake includes the verse in full as an epigram, penciled in at the very top of his first page,\(^9\) while the *Hypostasis* only quotes the verse in part, opting for “our contest is not against flesh and [blood]; rather, the authorities of the universe and the spirits of wickedness.”\(^{10}\) Though the *Hypostasis* takes a shortened version, the sentiment is the same: there is not a struggle for us against the flesh but rather against other powers.

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\(^9\) See following page.

\(^{10}\) Blake was clearly knowledgeable regarding Greek: Christopher Rowland quotes a letter by Blake from 1803 which states “I read Greek as fluently as an Oxford scholar & the Testament is my chief master” (190).
This sentence takes an unusual structure for a sentence with a linking verb, in which the subject is typically placed before the linking verb. Here the author of Ephesians places the first
person plural dative pronoun ἡμῖν (hēmin, for us), before the subject, giving weight to the idea that this is “for us,” the recipients and readers of the text. While his intended readership was the community to which he was writing, the ἡμῖν (hēmin, for us) encompasses more ground than the Christians of Ephesus and himself. This ἡμῖν (hēmin, for us) seems to include believers, all who work to uphold good in spite of humanity’s being plagued by “darkness” (κοσμοκράτορας τοῦ σκότους τοῦτος, kosmokratoras tou skotous toutou) and “evil” (πονηρίας, ponērias).

ἡ πάλη (hē palē, struggle), the subject, is slightly delayed from its conventional position at the beginning of the sentence. The syntax leads readers to await the subject which will tell us what “There is not for us” (ὅτι οὐκ ἐστιν ἡμῖν, hoti ouk estin hēmin). Πάλη (palē) has two senses, both psychological in struggling with the passions and physical in engaging in interpersonal struggle. It often is associated with battle or warfare or athletic contests such as wrestling. This lends the author’s appropriation of the word a decidedly material bent. This is not a solely metaphorical usage, referring to mental or spiritual struggle, but a physical one as well. Moreover, it suggests a contest to be won, as πάλες (palēs) are teleological by nature, having a victor, a loser, and of course the conclusion at which point victor and loser are determined. The author declares to his audience that they have made a choice regarding struggle. The struggle against flesh and blood is not the problem. The problem is that which is outside ourselves, that

11 Scholars have determined that Ephesians, though grouped with the Pauline works in the New Testament, was not written by Paul, and was not a letter for a particularly community but rather a letter which circulated amongst various Pauline communities. For more information, see Ehrman 281 ff.

12 Philo’s “A Treatise on the Words that Noah Awoke from His Wine, Or On Sobriety” XIII.65 aligns wrestling with an internal psychological conflict: “And what is said in the scriptures appears to coincide with this, for Shem is planted as a root of excellence and virtue; and from this root there sprang up a tree bringing forth good fruit, namely, Abraham, of whom the self-instructed and self-teaching offspring, Isaac, was the fruit, by whom again the virtues which are displayed in labour are sown, the practiser of which is Jacob, the man trained and exercised in wrestling with the passions, having the admonitions of angels for his gymnastic trainers.” (Emphasis mine.)

13 In Longus’s second century novel Daphnis and Chloe, III. 19.2, πάλην refers to sexual intercourse: “Chloe wrestling with you will wail and weep and lie in blood as if she were slain” (Χλόη δὲ συμπαλαίουσά τοι τὴν πάλην καὶ οἰμόξεται καὶ κλαύσεται καὶ οίματι πρώσεται πολλὸ καθάπερ πεφονευμένη, or, when transliterated, Chloë de sympalaiouso soi tauon ten palen kai oimoxetai kai klausetai kai haimati rheusetai pollo kathaperpephoneumenen).
which would corrupt us, that which would rule us. For the author, we as human beings have overcome so much and yet there is still much with which we must contend; the battle is not yet won.

The anaphora, or repetition at the beginning of successive phrases, of πρὸς (pros, “against”) emphasizes the sheer amount of struggle one experiences, that we are ever against such powers and that such powers are numerous and omnipresent. The struggle is made all the more pressing by the locational aspects of Ephesians 6:12, namely that there are rulers “of this darkness” (τοῦ σκότους τούτου, tou skotous toutou), suggesting an earthly darkness, as well as “in the heavens” (ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις, en tois epouraniois). We are surrounded.

In this thesis, I examine the ways two texts which use this verse as an epigram engage with the idea of struggle, incorporating it into their conceptions of creative acts, as well as the way this creative struggle manifests in reader and narratorial/authorial experience. The Hypostasis renders this verse as it depicts the internal and external struggle of humanity against the dark powers of the cosmos, the Archons. Often the powers are external, constituting distinctive entities with agency. Blake tends to see these powers as existing within his human-esque beings, locating the struggle against the wickedness within. Even in the construction of these texts lies an overarching struggle: a struggle with texts which have come before, namely the Genesis creation stories.

Both these texts resist Genesis in several ways. Both feature acts of creation by female figures, some intentional, some not. The God of the Bible is traditionally viewed as a male figure, and creation occurs at his hands alone. There are texts though which incorporate a female figure into the creation; it is critical to acknowledge the Wisdom texts, in which Wisdom, also called Sophia, is seen as a female figure who functions as an aspect of God and is actively

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14 See following page for an image of Blake’s title page with the epigram.
involved in creation, marking creation as not a male-centric act (Kampen 30). However, she appears in relatively few texts, and the predominant understanding of creation, and the majority of the text of Genesis, is decidedly lacking in a female figure. And so the narrator of the Hypostasis and Blake depict female figures engaged in creation.

Both take a very different approach from either of the two Genesis creation stories. In the first Genesis creation story, 1.1-2.4a, God creates things and then immediately sees that they are “good.” The tale readily falls into a pattern of “And God (ELOHIM) said ‘Let there be X;’ and there was X. And God saw that X was good.” Within this creation story, everything is good. God never needs to revise, and never does he suddenly find that his creations are reacting badly or harming each other, or that his creations have misunderstood their existence. Furthermore, God creates decisively. He determines what is necessary, speaks, and what he wills to happen happens instantaneously. Never do we see God’s response, beyond his seeing that things are good. His creation never acts upon him. The only implication that this creation might be laborious for God is that He takes the seventh day to rest:

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kai \; συνετέλεσεν \; ὁ \; θεὸς \; ἐν \; τῇ \; ἡμέρᾳ \; τῇ \; ἑκτῇ \; τὰ \; ἔργα \; αὐτοῦ, \; ἅ \; ἐποίησεν, \; καὶ \; κατέπαυσεν \; τῇ \; ἡμέρᾳ \; τῇ \; ἑβδόμῃ \; ἀπὸ \; πάντων \; τῶν \; ἔργων \; αὐτοῦ, \; ἕνα \; ἐποίησεν.
\]

καὶ συνετέλεσεν ὁ θεὸς ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ ἑκτῇ τὰ ἔργα αὐτοῦ, ἅ ἐποίησεν, καὶ κατέπαυσεν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ ἑβδόμῃ ἀπὸ πάντων τῶν ἔργων αὐτοῦ, ἕνα ἐποίησεν.

And on the seventh day, God finished his labors, which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all of his labors, which he had done. (Genesis 2:2)

He does not seem to rest because he is tired, but rather because the tasks have been completed and there is no more work for him. The use of the “ἐποίησεν” (epoiësen, had done) in the aorist
aspect in two relative clauses describing the labor makes it clear that He is done creating. Verbs in the aorist typically describe completed actions. The work has been finished.

In the second creation story from the J source, things become a bit more complicated. YHWH ELOHIM, whom I will here refer to as God, creates what He sees fit, making the earth and heavens (2:4), forming ha-‘adam (the earth creature) (2:7), causing flora to grow (2:9), but it is unclear if he is starting from scratch or if some things already existed. *Ha-‘adam* has no sexual identification, being neither male nor female.\(^{15}\) Trible declares in *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* that “the earth creature is not male; it is not ‘the first man.’…Instead, the earth creature here is precisely and only the human being, so far sexually undifferentiated. The complete story of creaturehood is a process, a tale that is being told” (80). Trible maintains that God enjoys creation based the name of the Hebrew name for the garden of Eden, *‘eden*, means “enjoyment” (79-80). For all his pleasure, ELOHIM is largely unaffected by his creation in this creation story, excepting that he chastises his creations upon their violating his rules, namely when Adam and Eve eat of the forbidden fruit (2:6-19). The creative act is easy, and the fruits of God’s labors are relatively low-maintenance, with him becoming involved in human affairs only when he deems necessary over the course of time, with relatively few immediate negative repercussions for God himself. Admittedly though He must contend with the serpent and the ill-fated snack time of Adam and Eve, and then tends to their descendants, even in Christian tradition sending his son in order to give human beings eternal life (John 3:16). However, His creations do not ever physically impact Him. God cannot be accessed by them physically. He can access them though, providing clothes as needed once Adam and Eve find themselves abashed at their nakedness. Phyllis Trible notes that “Life begins with the creation of *ha-‘adam*. Creation is a process, not a

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\(^{15}\) While I do not discuss Albion, the primordial man of *The Four Zoas*, it must be acknowledged that Albion is a decidedly male figure and in fact his coming into existence is never described. He exists beyond the realm of time.
fait accompli” (God 79). Yet Trible refers to the creation of plants and animals for the delight of ha-‘adam, which she states ends upon God placing Adam in the garden (79-80). The process has an end point at which it is completed. Critically, creation is not an intensive, continual labor for God.

In these two reinscribings of Genesis, the Hypostasis and the Zoas, there is great struggle involved in a creative act, and in fact creative acts can have grave consequences, ranging from the need to correct or revise one’s creation to traumatic acts of rape. Creative acts affect the creators profoundly, often causing them to suffer, and many creative acts are anything but “good.” Creative intention is often unclear, with the characters lacking God’s decisiveness. An act of creation is often the catalyst for a series of events, many of which are harmful or even disastrous for the creator.

Additionally, these texts treat creation as an act by multiple beings. The Genesis stories feature acts performed by one figure alone, though there is a notable exception regarding the suggestion of plural creator figures at Genesis 1:26-7:

καὶ εἶπεν ὁ θεός Ποιήσωμεν ἄνθρωπον κατ’ εἰκόνα ἡμετέραν καὶ καθ’ ὁμοίωσιν… καὶ ἐποίησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν ἄνθρωπον, κατ’ εἰκόνα θεοῦ ἐποίησεν αὐτὸν, ἄρσεν καὶ θῆλυ ἐποίησεν αὐτούς

And God said ‘Let us make a person in our image and in likeness…and God made a person, in the image of God he made it, he made them male and female.

God specifically states that a plural group of people, an “us” should make man in their image, using the first person plural form of the verb “make” (Ποιήσωμεν, Poiésomen) as well as the first person plural adjective “our” (ἡμετέραν, hēmetēran). Seizing upon this verse, for centuries
readers have taken this plurality as license for imagining not only a multitude of divine beings but also that said divinity may have both male and female forms, as he makes them both “male and female” (ἀρσεν καὶ θῆλυ, arsen kai thely). This has in turn informed wisdom literature, including the Hypostasis; Nils A. Dahl notes in “The Arrogant Archon and the Lewd Sophia: Jewish traditions in Gnostic revolt” that “the god against whom the radical gnostics revolted was, obviously, the God of exclusivist, biblical monotheism” (690). For the author of the Hypostasis and Blake, creation is not the responsibility of one sole all-knowing figure. Instead, it occurs at the hands of a number of beings, who ideally work in male/female pairs. Additionally, creation has no set end point. At no point does anyone feel the need to take a day off and rest, or to comment that what he or she has made is good. They must contend with what they have created from the instant of creation onwards, and so must subsequent generations.

Furthermore, this act of contending with creative acts extends to the role of the readership. Both these texts are markedly hard to understand, whereas the narratives of creation in Genesis are quite straightforward, not marked by hefty symbols or intentionally complicated mimeses to evoke the mind of God as gnostic texts are wont to do. Readers become co-participants in the creative process as they attempt to comprehend what is occurring in the Hypostasis and the Zoas. Armed with Biblical knowledge, one can at least get a sense of the traditions which informed these texts additional challenges lie in wait. Both the Hypostasis and the Zoas resist traditional reading structures. Readers must constantly revise their understandings of the mimeses, or rather, their understanding of what the work is describing. Additionally, there is an experiential component to reading these texts. Readers do not merely take in a plot and

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16 C.L. Crouch’s article “Genesis 1:26-7as a Statement of Humanity’s Divine Parentage” specifically addresses on page 11 the appropriateness of gender neutral terminology in describing the divine-human relationship as a parent-child relationship. While gender is only mentioned in a few parts of the article, Crouch provides a nuanced understanding of balancing the male-female terminology in favor of the gender neutral term “parent.”
characters with their minds. They experience the frustration, the confusion, the turbulence of the cosmoses of these texts. Readers are meant to struggle. Confusion does not mean one is not comprehending the texts properly, but rather that one is being engaged by and is wrestling with the text properly. One might say, ὅτι ἐστιν ἡμῖν ἡ πάλη πρὸς ἔπεα καὶ γνῶσιν (hóti estin hēmîn hē pálē prós épea kai gnōsin) or “for us the struggle is against words and knowledge.” But a worthwhile struggle it is indeed.

The authors and narrators engage with such struggle as well as they revise and supplement the Genesis creation stoies. As they create, they must destroy what has already been written. The narrator of the Hypostasis does so by rewriting the familiar stories, lending new voices to the characters and new conflicts. Blake not only is proposing a new understanding of the creation of the inner life of man, but also he engages in revising his own work. He does so visibly through his revisionary scribblings and numerous insertions and deletions. When considered together, these two texts present powerful examples of creative struggle, leaving readers with a sense of the role creative struggle plays in their own lives as they engage in creative acts or as they interpret others’ work.

17 Blake has two characters literally wrestle, one symbolizing physicality and the other creativity, in his text as a testament of the productivity of struggle. See Penney page 22ff.
Intention in Female Creative Acts

These texts both uphold female figures as playing a critical role in creation. Rather than adopting a male or androgynous singular creative power, the author of the *Hypostasis* and Blake use female figures to explore the ideal creation scenario: a harmonious creative act in which balanced male and female forces engage. As the female figures are separated from their counterparts either by their own desire to act singularly or by emotional distancing from their partner, their creative acts are tainted, becoming menacing figures which threaten their creators’ well-being.

The female figures of these texts complicate the idea of the role of intention in creation. In Genesis, the desire to create is straightforward. God determines what He would like there to be upon the earth, and he makes it happen. For these figures, the act of creating is far more complicated. In the *Hypostasis*, Sophia does not realize what creating without her male consort might entail. For Enion of *The Four Zoas*, engaging in a creative act typical for her daily life shifts radically following a dispute with her counterpart. In both these cases, the acts of the female figures are in part determined by her relationship to a male figure. This fits the dualistic male/female construction which pervades Gnostic imagery.

Sophia transgresses the traditional understanding of creation as she independently creates a figure in the *Hypostasis of the Archons*, with her transgression occurring out of willful desire rather than a lack of control or awareness which occurs at the hands of Enion in the *Four Zoas*. The author of the *Hypostasis* writes, “And the great angel Eleleth, Understanding, spoke to me, saying ‘Within limitless aeons dwells Incorruptibility.’ Sophia, who is called Pistis, wished to create something, alone without her consort; and her product (work) became celestial images” (McGuire 94.2-8). Sophia’s desire to create is not merely to create but to create “alone without
her consort.” The appeal of the attempt lies in her ability to do so singularly. Aware of this appeal, she knows in acting alone she violates the conventional procedure of co-creation. Conventional co-creation, or emanation through the interaction of a male spiritual principle and a female spiritual principle, is grounded biological reproduction through male and female interaction.

Describing Sophia’s individual act of creation, the author of the Hypostasis emphasizes the position of this creation in regards to the realms of being and becoming:

“A veil exists between the Things Above and the Aeons below; and shadow came into being beneath the veil; and that shadow became matter; and that shadow was cast apart. And that which she had made became a product in the matter, like a miscarriage (houhe). And it took (its) pattern from the shadow, and became an arrogant beast resembling a lion." It was androgynous (ouhoutshime), as I have already said, because it was from matter that it came forth. (8-9)\(^{18}\)

The Things Above constitute the realm of being, while the Aeons below are a part of the realm of becoming. Plato establishes the realm of being as that of timeless Forms, while the realm of becoming is subject to time and subject to change (Cornford 98). The Things Above cannot be affected by the things in the realm of becoming, though in the Hypostasis they can affect change in the realm of becoming accordingly. The shadow “came into being beneath the veil” and is thus in the realm of becoming. The relationship between “shadow” and “matter” here is extraordinarily complex. The shadow “became matter,” and yet it still exists as a separate entity from said matter in that it can be “cast apart.” Sophia’s creation then becomes “a product in the matter,” which had previously been shadow. Then the product “took (its) pattern from the shadow.” So the shadow has become matter, which then remodels itself in the form of the shadow. Here the shadow seems to have some kind of agency in that it seemingly “took its

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\(^{18}\) McGuire translation.
pattern” and “became an arrogant beast” on its own, whereas “that which she had made” was merely “a product in the matter.” In acting alone, Sophia created something beyond her control, something which is capable of morphing independently, without her input. This results in a twisted, malformed creation. The matter is a corrupted version of the initial shadow. The corruption takes on an appearance similar to a lion. Diedre Good proposes in *Reconstructing the Tradition of Sophia in Gnostic Literature* that “the lion-likeness of Ialdabaoth is the terrible result of his aborted birth from Sophia. Good seems to understand “like a miscarriage” (*houhe*) very literally, thinking that Sophia makes an abortive attempt. However, the creation of Sophia seems to exist outside herself. The birth has not been aborted. It was never intended to be a birth. It was always externalized, happening beneath the veil to the point that it suggests a shadow cast upon fabric. That it is like a miscarriage refers to its being a flawed creation.

Sophia and others then must handle the consequences of her creative acts, which has brought the corrupt into the realm in which incorruptibility dwells. Another reading, suggested by Anne McGuire, views the veil as formed through Sophia’s attempt to create on her own, in that the corrupt realm did not exist prior to her solitary endeavor. The creation, Ialdabaoth, is androgynous and assumes titles creative powers for itself. It proclaims, “’It is I who am god, and there is none other apart from me.’ When he said this, he sinned against Eternity” (94). Here the androgynous being makes two mistakes. It falsely proclaims itself god and simultaneously discounts the existence of figures apart from itself. Nils A. Dahl abstracts a pattern amongst Gnostic interpretations of Genesis which includes what he terms a “vain claim.” Such claims derive from Isaiah 45:5, 6, 18, 21 and 46:9; here Ialdabaoth is clearly channeling the same sentiment as Isaiah 45:5 “I am the Lord, and there is no other; besides me there is no god” (Dahl 693).

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19 Personal correspondence, March 2013.
Immediately one “apart from [it]” sees fit to correct Ialdabaoth, as “a voice came forth from the above (the realm of) authority, saying ‘you are mistaken, Samael’-which is, ‘god of the blind’” (25-6). And so in her eagerness to create singularly, Sophia has created this blind god figure, who has no understanding of the world in which it lives to the point that it must be corrected by outside figures.

Sophia herself must intervene upon the androgynous being issuing a challenge that “If any other thing exists before me, let it become manifest to me” (26). The narrator writes that “immediately Sophia stretched forth her finger and she put Light into matter; and she pursued it down to the regions of chaos.” Sophia, unlike the voice from the above, is not correcting her creation but rather substantiating what the voice has said, in that something exists before this androgynous creature. By stretching “forth her finger” and “put[ting] Light into matter,” Sophia engages in another act of creation as she manipulates the matter by putting Light into it. She acts, in hopes of revealing to her creation that not only is it alone a creatively endowed figure, but she also underscores the responsibility of pursuing that which one has created, of following it through, as she physically “pursued it down to the regions of chaos.” In her chasing the light into chaos, she provides a parallel scenario for why she has created the light and chased it: she attempts to “chase” the androgynous one, to turn him from his blindness and chaos and bring him knowledge. Sophia maintains her responsibility for her creation. The work does not cease for her once it exists: it must be tended, chased. The creative act is not something one completes and walks away from with ease. One is still responsible for one’s creation after it has come forth. Sophia’s rebellious intention to make a being without the help of her consort went awry, and she contends with the fallout accordingly.
In contrast, Blake paints a portrait of a female figure whose lack of intention to create causes problems, transforming the creative act into a compulsion for the figure of Enion. Toying with the power balance between creator and creation, Blake paints Enion as consumed by her work, physically and emotionally suffering as she is “Terrified & drinking tears of woe…Shuddring…Sleepless her food was tears” (Night the First page 5 lines 18-20). The self-destructive nature of Enion’s creation suggests that in some acts of creation, something must be lost or sacrificed. This provides a lens for reading every subsequent act of creation in the text, from the Lions of Urizen creating the divisions of the deep utilizing the “scales…That Luvah rent from the faint Heart of the Fallen Man” (Night the Second page 28 lines 32-3) to the wine-pressing in Night the Ninth that requires human beings be destroyed as they serve as the grapes.

This direct suffering on the part of the creating one stems from the lack of Enion’s foreknowledge of her own creative act. Enion retrospectively considers her weaving in the following speech:

…Wherefore was I born & what am I  
I thought to weave a Covering for my Sins from wrath of Tharmas  
I thought Tharmas a Sinner & I murdered his Emanations  
His secret loves and Graces Ah me wretched What have I done  
For now I find that all those Emanations were my Childrens Souls  
And I have murderd them with Cruelty above atonement  
Those that remain have fled from my cruelty into the desarts  
And though the delusive tempter to these deeds sittest before me  
In this thy world not mine tho dark I feel my world within  

(FZ I page 6 lines 17-8, page 7 lines 1-7)  

Enion establishes a dichotomy between conscious and subconscious intention. She actively intended “to weave a Covering for [her] Sins”-a conscious decision. However, she admits that she “thought Tharmas a Sinner” and subsequently “murdered his Emanations His secret loves and Graces.” These seem to be secondary impulses, with Blake distinctively forsaking the

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20 All references to The Four Zoas are cited in terms of the page of the manuscript rather than of the edition used.
infinitive of purpose he employed in the phrase “to weave a Covering,” marking a newfound realization on Enion’s part as she tries to understand her unintentional past thoughts and actions. In narrating the weaving of Enion Blake notably describes her as “Wondring” when “she saw her woof begin to animate” (Night I page 5 line 20).\footnote{A woof is the thread which is drawn through the loom to create a row of stitches or the woven fabric created (\textit{OED}).} One does not wonder at understandable, pre-planned things. One wonders at things fantastic, things thus far unconsidered. Clearly this sort of creation was not her intention. Without having power over her own subconscious motivations, Enion has lost control over the weaving process through which she was realizing her conscious desires. Thus the woof animates, undertaking what Enion herself consciously could not do. Blake notes of the woof that it animates “not/As Garments woven subservient to her hands but having a will/Of its own perverse & wayward” (Night the First page 5 lines 20-22). This is Enion’s own “perverse & wayward” will, rather than being some mystic animation engendered by the cosmos. It is not magic but rather a manifestation of subconscious desires. This subconscious creative act contrasts sharply with the unintentional education Enion supplies to the Spectre of Tharmas. It is in hearing his creator that the Spectre gains the capacity to communicate, a capacity which he turns against his creator as he chastises her for thinking her creation. The human-esque canvas is perhaps the easiest to unintentionally mar, and those of the young all the more easy. The Spectre becomes representative of parental influence upon a child as Enion enables his ability to speak and also takes on a teenage-esque tone as he addresses Enion, for all intents and purposes a mother figure, and condemns her actions. Not only claiming to be “pure” in comparison to Enion’s sin and pollution, the Spectre claims that he “will bring to rigid strict account/All [her] past deeds” (Night I page 6 lines 10-11).
The Spectre’s words to Enion confirm that it is Enion’s subconscious that is at fault in this act of creation. He disparagingly imparts the following speech to Enion:

This world is Thine in which though dwellest that within thy soul
That dark & dismal infinite where Thought roams up & down
Is Mine & there though goest when with one Sting of my tongue
Envenomd thou rollst inwards to the place whence I emerged
(FZ I page 6 lines 13-16)

The tumultuous world within Enion, the darkest parts of herself, from whence the Spectre has come are to blame. Enion, not dwelling in the material world and focusing on her conscious desires, can still be sent into this inward world, being forced to consciously dwell upon her dark subconscious within, just as she is now forced to contend with her subconscious desires in the form of the Spectre that are manifested externally. It is these roaming thoughts, forced to wander rather than being explicitly acknowledged and dismissed, that have led to the creation of this dark Spectre. The wandering thoughts have created this transgression between the worlds of being and becoming, resulting in this disastrous creation.

Wilkie and Johnson propose a reading of Enion’s weaving based on her fallen state, which may help explain her inability to act with intention. They write:

Enion’s method of creation is weaving, another recurrent image in the Zoas; throughout it has both positive and negative associations. .. Enion begins weaving as if she were still one of the unfallen Emanations…but since Enion has now fallen into contention with Tharmas this activity goes awry and her creation takes on an independent life…it is characteristic of both Enion and Tharmas in the fallen state that they begin reflex actions that produce unintended results’ because the signals of instinctive communication, which should be reflexive, have been jammed, their behavior has become irrelevant to their situations. The result is pathos and absurdity (26).
Her attempt to weave a covering for her sins transforms in light of her fallen state. No longer able to communicate instinctively even with herself as she is unaware of her actions, she persists in her weaving.

Weaving is a fairly conventional act for the female emanations. Unfallen weaving, which is done by female figures who remain in an Edenic state because they have not had rifts come between themselves and their counterparts, looks very different. Blake describes this phenomenon in the lines which immediately precede Enion’s failed attempt, lending context to Enion’s attempt:

In Eden Females sleep the winter in soft silken veils
Woven by their own hands to hide them in the darksome grave
But males immortal live renewd by female deaths. in soft
Delight they die & they revive in spring with music & songs

Blake paints a cozy, pleasant scene in the first line. The description of “sleep[ing] the winter” evokes thoughts of butterflies in cocoons, or bears hibernating for winter. Wilkie and Johnson compare them to “self-sacrificing butterflies or Psyches” (23). The females are creatures which take a temporary sojourn and emerge once more. They take a temporary respite from the world for the winter, only to return anew come spring. Wilkie and Johnson comment that “This season rhythm, like everything else that is natural in the wholesome and innocent sense of the word ‘natural,’ has been disrupted in Tharmas’ constricted relation with his emanations” (23).

Additionally, the females are comfortable. A “soft silken veil” sounds quite pleasant, with the sibilance capturing the decadent smoothness of the silk. The second line changes the scene dramatically. “To hide them in the darksome grave” sounds ominous; napping in a grave sounds
anything but pleasant. The veils are not intended for coziness or warmth but rather “to hide
them.” They not only must enter the grave but hide themselves in these temporary shrouds.²²

In the *Hypostasis*, it is a veil which divides the realm of being from the realm of
becoming. Similarly, here the veils separate the female figures from the world beyond them,
becoming a boundary which defies time. The females leave the realm of being and venture
within their veils, if only until spring, to the world where time holds them in its grip. Blake’s
veils are numerous and individual but mark a similar boundary as the veil of the *Hypostasis* in
that on one side of the veil, time and change exist. Beyond the other side of the veil lies a
changelessness, the realm of incorruptibility in the *Hypostasis*, while within the veil lies the
ultimate state of becoming: death, as the sweet sleep of stasis through temporary death for the
female figures of the *Zoas*. The male figures escape death and the realm of becoming and can
live eternally in the realm of being, by the females entering into the realm of becoming on their
behalf. There is one crucial difference, from the *Hypostasis* however. In *The Four Zoas*, it is the
uncorrupted female figures of Eden who enable the male figures’ escape from death through
these veils, making their veil-creation positive, whereas in the *Hypostasis*, the veil marks a
division caused by Sophia’s misdeeds and the resulting division between the realm of
incorruptibility and the newly existent realm of corruptibility.

In the third line, Blake reveals the intention of the female figures. The “Females” hide
themselves away within the grave such that the men may be “renewd by female deaths.” Female
figures are once more an animating source. Their deaths fuel the cycle of male regeneration.

²² This evokes Adam and Eve attempting to cover their nakedness in Genesis 3:7 and Adam’s statement that he was
attempting to hide himself, “And I was frightened, because I am naked, and I hid” (καὶ ἐφοβήθην, ὡτι γυμνός εἰμι,
καὶ ἐκρύβην). For Adam and Eve, the covering happens but once and is the result of obtaining illicit knowledge,
whereas the Zoas cover themselves annually in order to be reinvigorated. For the Zoas, such a covering is positive,
while for Adam and Eve, it is the means through which God realizes they have eaten the forbidden fruit and
subsequently removes them from Edfen.
Through the female death, male life is sustained. The female figures are responsible for providing for this regeneration as they weave with “their own hands.” For the female figures, this is no source of trouble. Blake speaks tenderly of their deaths. The poetic language here is so sweet, so alluring. It is not in the throes of agony, fear, wrath, or worry that they die but “in soft/delight.” By using the unusual enjambment as he starts a sentence with “in soft” at the very end of a line, Blake creates a sense of continuity that as one line flows into the next so too do the seasons change and the female figures reawaken once more. And they revive “with music & songs,” though whether this is what awakens them or what they do upon awakening is unclear. The allure though is that this is a pleasant experience for them, and they have not been traumatized by their respites in “the darksome grave.”

For all the darksome language of the grave, this is not some annual sacrifice on the females’ part. The female figures are an animating force. They have the power to renew the male figures. Moreover, they are aware of their power as animating forces. They understand that their ability to animate is bound to their annual deaths. So they approach the event with “Delight.” They weave and prepare accordingly, knowing full well that they will awaken once more come springtime. The intentionality here is poignant, beautiful. As beings who have not fallen, they need not struggle and their labors are light and pleasant.

This passage exemplifies the gnostic ideal of the dualistic male/female pair working in harmony an ideal which collapses as Enion is overcome by anger at her partner. The state of being fallen and removed from one’s ideal state of being is tied to disunion and separation from one’s partner in both of these texts. Enion can no longer weave in the same way now that she and Tharmas are emotionally distant from one another; there will be no “soft silken veils” for her. Similarly, Sophia has separated herself from her ideal relationship with her partner. In acting
singly, Sophia deviates from the conventions of creating with one’s partner. She is removed from the ideal creative state.

**Male/Androgynous Responses: Sexual Violence**

Being removed from an ideal state of peace and harmony, even successful creative acts of female figures often incite wrath from the male figures around them. This wrath leads to sexual violence as the androgynous and male figures attempt to establish dominance over the female body. In light of the dualism of male/female harmony breaking down, male figures exert their individual power over the female body. Sexual violence constitutes a false attempt to reestablish the male/female balance. Combining a male and female body, or an androgynous and female body, through force does not a pair in harmony make, but rather establishes male dominance. In the *Hypostasis*, the spirit-endowed woman is able to avoid rape partially by transforming herself, while in the *Zoas*, the spectre of Tharmas overpowers his creator and fathers two dreadful children upon her.

The spirit endowed woman of the *Hypostasis*, also known as Incorruptability, was wont to look down “into the region of waters,” which would reflect her image. Seeing her reflection, the archons, who are androgynous, “became enamored of her. But they could not lay hold of that image” as they only possessed soul, but not spirit, so “they cannot lay hold of those that possess a spirit.” They devise a plan to capture her by luring her with a modeled form of a male counterpart (4). Following the rulers’ creation of a female figure from the body of Adam in the *Hypostasis*, the female figure speaks with the man from whose form she was brought, as “the spirit-endowed woman came to him and spoke with him, saying ‘Arise, Adam’” (241). It is this act which reawakens Adam from the sleep of ignorance into which the Archons placed him so
that they might bring this female figure forth, which leads Adam to describe her as his mother, which poses an interesting contrast with the Genesis version of this story in terms of Adam’s recognition of female power:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Genesis 2:21-23</th>
<th>Hypostasis 823</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept;</td>
<td>The rulers took counsel with one another and said, ‘Come let us cause a deep sleep to fall upon Adam’ And he slept—Now the deep sleep that they ‘caused to fall upon him and he slept’ is ignorance—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>then he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh.</td>
<td>They opened his side like a living woman. And they built up his side with some flesh in place of her, and Adam came to be endowed only with soul.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man.</td>
<td>And when he saw her,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Then the man said, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; this one shall be called Woman (‘ishah),”</td>
<td>he said, “It is you who have given me life, you will be called ‘mother of the living’—For it is she who is my mother. It is she who is the physician, and the woman,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for out of Man (‘ish) this one was taken.”24</td>
<td>for she has given birth.”25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The differences are quite striking. Phyllis Trible suggests in “Eve and Adam: Genesis 2-3 Reread” that in fact in Genesis 2 “The birth of woman corresponds to the birth of man but does not copy it. Only in responding to the female does the man discover himself as male. No longer a passive creature, ‘ish comes alive in meeting ‘ishshah” (77). However, the earth creature was already animate. It is not so much that ‘ish “comes alive” as that ‘ish comes to exist as a distinctive, male being. In contrast, in the Hypostasis Adam does actually “come alive” through

21 In the Hypostasis, the creation of such an earth-creature, ἀδᾶ (adam), occurs at sections 5-6, in which an the archons create a male counterpart in order to lure the female being they desire from eternity to earth. An androgynous spirit enters into the soul-endowed man, ἁγγύξικος (psykhikos), lying on the ground.
24 From the NRSV and its annotations.
25 Unless otherwise noted, subsequent translations are from the Layton translation.
the spirit-woman. He awakens from his deep sleep of “ignorance” to find her there. Her names are entirely her own, not derived from his in anyways. She garners her own titles: mother, physician, woman.

The male counterpart’s process of recognizing the female counterpart differs between the two texts. In Genesis, God directs Adam to the woman, whereas Adam sees the woman all on his own in the *Hypostasis*. Adam of Genesis emphasizes that woman has been made from his body, his rib, whereas Adam of the *Hypostasis* has been given life by the woman and recognizes her as animating him. The woman has come out of him to take on her own separate female form, leaving some of her animating force so that he might speak. In the *Hypostasis*, the woman comes forth from Adam so that he might live, not so that they might be separate creatures male and female. Upon looking at her, Adam immediately recognizes her power and openly declares what he has recognized in her.

The idea of sight is paramount here, in that it is upon his seeing her that he knows this instantly. He has heard her call to him, he has seen her face, and he knows who she is both in relation to him and in relation to the living. The shift in addressee halfway through the statement is particularly noteworthy. Adam first speaks to the spirit-endowed woman herself, saying “It is you...you will be called,” making their interaction direct. He then turns to declarative statements issued at large, noting “It is she who is” and “for she has.” He sees fit to acknowledge her power to her and then to the world in general. Adam fixates upon the creative power of a female figure, as one who is a “mother” of both “the living” and of him himself, as the one who “has given birth.” He reveres her as a creative figure in her own right in that she has animated him and has the capacity to bring life to the world.
Critically, we have thus far only seen her speak two words: “Arise, Adam.” Otherwise, she has only been spoken to and spoken of by Adam; it is through Adam’s words that we see the full ramifications of her power to animate. However, it is not the larger ramifications of her words as stated by Adam that frustrate the rulers, but rather those two words of “Arise, Adam” which spur a strong reaction from the rulers, who find her ability to animate frustrating. The text describes their rage as follows: “Then the authorities came up to their Adam. And when they saw his female counterpart speaking with him, they became agitated with great agitation, and they became enamored of her” (9). It is her powerful speech ability that agitates and appeals to the authorities so.

Here agitation is tied to being enamored. Frustration and sexual impulses converge for the rulers, as they are simultaneously enraged by her ability to speak with Adam and enthralled by it, seeing her as a suitable figure for sexual congress, as the text notes that “They said to one another, ‘Come, let us sow our seed in her,’ and they pursued her” (9). While the Archons are androgynous, they do possess the decidedly male seed, with the desire to sow it in her, and conceivably impregnate her, resonating with male embodiment. However, the female figure recognizes their folly and is at least in part able to thwart their sexual advances.

And she laughed at them for their witlessness and their blindness; and in their clutches, she became a tree, and left before them her shadowy reflection resembling herself, and they defiled it foully.— And they defiled the stamp of her voice, so that by the form they had modeled, together with [their] (own) image, they made themselves liable to condemnation. (9)

In having the power to transform herself into a tree, she makes a bold declaration of her power. This differs greatly from the tale of Daphne and Apollo in Ovid’s Metamorphosis I.452-567, another tale of a woman turning into flora in order to escape the sexual advances of a man. Daphne, unlike the female figure of the Hypostasis only escapes her amorous suitor’s clutches
after she calls out to her father the river god Peneus for help, crying “fer, pater,” inquit “opem! si flumina numen habetis, qua nimium placui, mutando perde figuram!” (“Bring help, father!” she said. “If, you have the power Rivers, destroy my figure, which has pleased too much, by changing it”). The female figure of the *Hypostasis* needs no intervention on her behalf; she can transform herself.

Yet her power is more than that over the physical world, the ability to materially mutate. She has the ability to laugh, to recognize “their witlessness and their blindness.” She possesses a wisdom unknown to them, the ability to discern what is right, what is not the witless and blind path but the clear and correct path, and seeing them stray, she finds herself amused. They think to threaten her, and yet she recognizes that in their threats they in fact threaten themselves, making “themselves liable to condemnation.” She has the moral upperhand, and she knows it. Giving them no power over her emotions, she fears not, and instead she laughs. However, they are still able to defile both “her shadowy reflection resembling herself” and “the stamp of her voice.” Not only do they rape the shadow of her physical form, but they are able to access and overpower that which originally frustrated and attracted them: her voice. But she has defeated them in that by becoming the tree she evaded them in part.

In contrast, Enion in the *Four Zoas*, plagued by her own guilt, succumbs to a horrifying rape at the hands of her own creation, the spectre of Tharmas. The spectre menaces the miserable Enion, chastising her, and heralding himself as her superior:

Glorying in his own eyes Exalted in terrific Pride
The Spectre thus spoke. Who art thou Diminutive husk & shell
If thou hast sinned & art polluted know that I am pure
And unpolluted & will bring to rigid strict account
All thy past deeds [So] hear what I tell thee! mark it well!
      remember!
(FZ page 6, lines 8-12)
The spectre considers Enion as entirely at fault and as a thoroughly inferior being, a mere “husk & shell” rather than a “pure/And unpolluted” being such as himself. Furthermore, he contends that it is his role to ensure that Enion pay penance for her sins. His intention to “bring to rigid strict account/All [her] past deeds” places him in a position of power to not only place value judgments upon Enion’s actions in creating him but to also avenge them as he sees fit. Just as the rulers of the *Hypostasis of the Archons* thought it their right to violate the body of the female spirit as they saw fit in light of her creative behavior, so too does the spectre conceive of himself as having a right to punish Enion for her actions in creating him. His punishment occurs on the next page, as he engages in an act strongly suggestive of rape:

Mingling his horrible brightness with her tender limbs then high she soard
Above the ocean; a bright wonder that Nature shudder’d at
Half Woman & half Spectre, all his lovely changing colors [which]
mix
With her fair crystal clearness; in her lips and cheeks his poisons rose
In blusses like the morning, and his scaly armour softening
A monster lovely in the heavens or wandering on the earth
(*FZ* page 7, lines 8-11).

This passage harkens back to the language of pollution from the spectre’s speech to Enion. He considered himself “unpolluted,” and yet here “his lovely changing colors” bled into “her fair crystal clearness” and “his poisons” rise into her cheeks. He merges his “horrible brightness” with her “tender limbs.” Enion is described in positive, beautiful language, whereas Tharmas is described with negative terms, depicting him as tainting such individual beauty here as he mingles with her to form this “monster” which is “lovely” but a monster nonetheless.

Coupling this convoluted text with the available images serves to complicate readers’ understandings further.
Enion, though her countenance and upper body appear very human in the drawing on page seven, possesses this “fair crystal clearness,” which might evoke her radiant and obvious beauty but, in light of Tharmas’ bizarre coloration, may actually refer to a state of transparency.
Regarding Tharmas, we have just seen the embodied Tharmas in the sketch at the bottom of page six, looking placid and decidedly human.

*The Four Zoas*, page 6

from Erdman and Magno, 120
Presumably, though the drawing is black and white, some may even mentally color in the lines in their mind’s eye, producing a flesh-toned Tharmas. Now, on top of being “horribl[y] bright[],” he is “changing colours,” “lovely” ones at that even as he possesses this “horrible brightness.” He is “scaly,” lending to Enion’s form this monstrous quality. Viewing pages six and seven in tandem, we see a decided parallel. Both figures extend horizontally, heads towards the edge of the page. Yet Tharmas rests, and Enion shrieks as if in agony. Tharmas maintains his full human embodiment, whilst Enion’s form is transformed into “half beast,” as one of Blake’s reneged edits called her.26

Interestingly, Magno and Erdman proffer two similar but decidedly disparate readings of this image of Enion’s “half Woman & half Spectre state,” apparently not realizing they provide incompatible interpretations. They maintain that page seven is from Enion’s view, writing “From her perspective, his body takes serpent form while hers remains human. While the relationship is seen from the male point of view on page 6, it is shown on page 7 from the female…the male has become a half of one body, which she perceives as her own” (29). But a few paragraphs later, Magno and Erdman declare that “Visibly opposed to the sleeping but human spectre on the opposite page, Enion appears to embody the loathed part of himself which Tharmas scorns” (29). The spectre SERPENT bestial half of Enion cannot be simultaneously Enion’s view of what is happening to her body during her sexual involvement with Tharmas as well as a manifestation of Tharmas himself based on his conception of her. Either her tail is representative of Tharmas’ embodiment as a separate entity intertwined with her, or it is an image showing her similarity to him in his own eyes. I find that the text itself lends itself to the interpretation in which this is her

26 This paragraph and the following paragraph come directly from my piece “From the Sleep of Death: The Translation of the Mystic into Experience through Anti-Newtonian Form & Content Relationships in William Blake’s The Four Zoas.”
viewpoint, especially given the text’s emphasis on their merging to become this monstrous being.

In either understanding though, one thing is decidedly clear: Enion is the epitome of misery, be she that which Tharmas hates about himself or be she the victim of his force. The image of Enion shrieking in horror, her hair aflame as her lower limbs become serpent-esque, her hands to her head as she gazes desperately heavenward—this is no consensual sex act but rather one of violence and force. Her body is no longer her own, no longer hers to control and also no longer recognizable in form, as it is transformed into the serpentine shape. The spectre’s threats have been realized: she has been forced to come to terms with her actions through this horrific act.

The Children Born of Rape

The children associated with these rapes ultimately prove a force for good and for reestablishing a proper order. While this in no way legitimizes sexual violence, it is interesting that both authors chose to give humanity a history grounded in creative acts which led to rape. Both children of these rapes are tied to the humankind’s collective story. In the Hypostasis, Cain, as the child of Eve’s rape, will commit the first murder of a fellow human being. Norea, his half-sister, must also contend with her mother’s rape as it leads to her being able to access the story of her spiritual heritage. In the Zoas, Enion bears twins Los and Enion, who ultimately will help Albion be restored once more, securing a more peaceful fate for humanity.

In the Hypostasis, it at first seems unclear whether the Archons or Adam is the father of Cain. The text of Genesis makes explicit that Cain is the child of Adam:

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\text{Adam δὲ ἐγνώ Ευαν τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ, καὶ συλλαβοῦσα ἔτεκεν τὸν Καιν, καὶ ἐἶπεν Ἐκτησάμην ἄνθρωπον διὰ τοῦ θεοῦ.}
\]
Adaμ de egnō Euan tēn gynaika autou, kai syllabousa eteken ton Kain, kai eipen Ektēsaµēn anthrōpon dia tou theou.

And Adam came to know his wife Eve, and she conceiving bore Cain, and she said ‘I have born a man through God.’

(Genesis 4:1)

The Hypostasis is much less clear:

Moreover they [the Archons] threw mankind into great distraction and into a life of toil, so that their mankind might be occupied by worldly affairs, and might not have the opportunity of being devoted to the holy spirit. Now afterwards, she [Eve] bore Cain, their son, and Cain cultivated the land. Thereupon he [Adam] knew his wife; again becoming pregnant, she bore Abel, and Abel was a herdsman of sheep. (10-11)

That the text immediately transitions from the Archons throwing mankind “into great distraction and into a life of toil” to “Now afterwards, she bore Cain, their son” may mark “their” as referring to the aforementioned plural Archons and the ambiguity of Cain’s paternity, though it could also refer to Adam and Eve as a couple (Luttikhuizen 93). Adam has not been mentioned in a while, and the mention of the conception of Abel is the first time it is noted that he and Eve have sexual congress. Gerard P. Luttikhuizen agrees with the majority of other commentators in expressing a preference for Cain as begotten by the archons as it allows there to be a “sequel” to the “story of the rape of the sarcic Eve by the demonic rulers” (93). The story of Norea is indeed marked by the tale of her mother’s rape, and by extension, her brother’s birth from said rape as evidence that the fleshly Eve was so affected by the archons. So here let us presume that Cain is the child of the rape of Eve, while his brother is clearly the product of Adam and Eve’s sexual
union. Cain then goes on to kill Abel out of envy, and he is subsequently doomed to “exist groaning and trembling upon the earth” (11).

Unlike Cain and Abel, Eve’s third and fourth children, Seth and Norea, are marked by wisdom, conceived and born “through an exchange with the spiritual realm.” Adam again has sexual congress “[knew] his female counterpart Eve, and she became pregnant, and bore [Seth] to Adam” Eve notes of Seth “I have borne man through God, in place [of Abel] (Hypostasis 12). The divine has had a hand in this child in that he has been borne “through God.” In Gnostic tradition, Seth becomes the renowned for his wisdom. Luttikhuizen writes that the use of the term “counterpart” refers to the spiritual Eve, and that “No doubt Seth’s father was the spiritual Adam [i.e. the male counterpart]. But it remains unclear who was the father of Norea” (94).

There is no mention of Adam knowing Eve, but still it says “Again Eve became pregnant, and she bore [Norea] And she said, ‘he has begotten on [me a] virgin whom the forces did not defile.’” Eve knows that Norea will not be defiled, that that which befell her mother’s fleshly body will not happen to Norea. Norea, as a spirit-endowed being born of the spiritual Eve, is extraordinarily wise and is able to recognize the corruptness of the rulers and that they in fact did not rape her mother.

The Archons clearly believe though that they managed to have sexual congress with Eve, which they mention in their attempt to rape Norea, who denounces them:

The rulers went to meet her intending to lead her astray. Their supreme chief said to her, “Your mother Eve came to us.” But Norea turned to them and said to them, “It is you who are the rulers of the darkness; you are accursed. And you did not know my mother; instead it was your female counterpart that you knew. For

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27 Luttikhuizen notes that there us some ambiguity about this in that Adam is not mentioned explicitly as Abel’s father but rather a “he,” though it seems extraordinarily likely that what Luttikhuizen terms the “fleshly-psychic Adam” is the singular fatherly “he.” (93).
28 From a conversation with Anne McGuire, April 2013.
I am not your descendent; rather it is from the world above that I come. (15)

So Norea’s sibling Cain is not so much a child of rape as he might be the presumed child of a misunderstood rape, as the rulers never sexually assaulted her spiritual mother but only their female counterpart. Norea takes the opportunity to provide clarity at long last. The chief ruler persists in his attempt to have his way with her. The text states that “The arrogant ruler turned, with all his might, [and] his countenance came to be like (a) black (...): he said to her presumptuously, “You must render service to us [as did] also your mother Eve: for I have been given (?) [...]]” (15). Pheme deems this her moment to reveal her status as part of what Pheme terms a separate race: “When the archons attack Norea, she proclaims the superiority of her origins. The angel Eleleth, who comes in answer to her prayers for help, repeats the inviolability of the gnostic race” (101). Norea and Eleleth force the rulers to reevaluate their understanding of the world and of the female figures with whom they interact. For all his presumption, “The arrogant ruler” has been bested by the power of knowledge. Norea has the power of knowing the rulers’ identities on her side, as Norea proclaims the rulers to be “rulers of darkness” and “accursed” while knowing that she is not descended from them or of their world.

While this proclamation is not a creative act in its own right, she creates an opportunity to identify these beings and redeems her mother’s reputation amongst the rulers in the process. She rewrites the narrative which the rulers had believed and affirms her mother’s power for both herself and for the readers of the text. In denying her mother’s rape, she establishes herself as a wise power descended from those of the spirit realm and as a force with which the rulers must reckon, refusing to be rendered a subordinate and to fall into the pattern of subjection of a female figure by the archons. She does this in part through her denouncing them and in part through her
statement that there is no pattern in which she as a spiritually imbued woman can fall as her mother’s spirit was never raped (McGuire “Virginity and Subversion” 252-3).

We, as readers, inherit this tradition of possessing spiritual power and having a spiritual origin. Eleleth promises to Norea that “you, together with your offspring, are from the primeval father, from above, out of the imperishable light, their souls are come. Thus the authorities cannot approach them because of the spirit of truth present within them; and all who have become acquainted with this way exist deathless in the mind of dying mankind” (257). McGuire notes that “The account of Norea’s struggle against the Rulers thus extends the subversive power of Noea’s speech as it specifies the character of her ‘assistance’ to generations of humankind…By identifying with the children of Norea, the reader—male or female—who has witnessed the depiction of power in the text, is invited, or empowered, to take on the virginal power of Norea and exercise it in some way” (257). As readers, this is our inheritance, but it is only through Norea’s narrowly avoiding rape and identifying that her mother was not actually raped that we have access to this information.

The story for Enion is much less heartening; tragically for Enion of The Four Zoas, Tharmas does manage to rape her, and there is no escape for her spiritual self as it is irrevocably intertwined with her embodiment. Enion’s punishment by Tharmas in light of her unintentional creation is prolonged in that her ability to create then causes her further misery as from this scene she conceives and painfully gives birth to two children, Los and Enitharmon, the Adam and Eve of The Four Zoas, who then cause her a great deal of misery as she cares for them (Lincoln 41):

Till with fierce pain she brought forth on the rocks her sorry & woe
Behold two little Infants wept upon the desolate wind.
The first state weeping they began & helpless as a wave
Beaten along its sightless way growing enormous in its motion to
Its utmost goal, till strength from Enion like richest summer shining
Raisd the bright boy & girl with glories from their heads out beaming
Drawing forth drooping mothers pity dropping mothers sorrow
They sulk upon her breast her hair becomes like snow on mountains
Weaker & weaker, weeping woful, wearier and wearier
Faded & her bright Eyes decayd melted with pity & love

(FZ Night I 8.1-10)

The image of the sorrowful children comforted by this “strength from Enion like richest summer shining” strikes the heart. Enion as mother hears the cries of her offspring and gives of herself to raise them up “with glories from their heads out beaming.” Her efforts on their behalf transform her. Enion transforms from this radiant creature who instills her light in her children into a dulling aged wretch in the final lines. She has given all her inner light to them out of her maternal affection.

Just as in her creation of the spectre, Enion has had no agency in engaging in the act of creating her children. They have been forced upon her through sexual violence. They bring both love and misery, causing a slow deterioration as she becomes “weaker & weaker” and “wearier and wearier.” Blake blends the physical with the emotional here. By describing her “Eyes decayd melted with pity & love,” he expresses the effects the emotions have upon the body. Her sorrow has destroyed those “bright Eyes.” Her suffering manifests outwardly, as “her hair becomes like snow on mountains.” Blake’s employment of the words “decayd” and “melted” paints a powerful image of a woman gradually collapsing, losing her former brightness and radiance with the efforts of child rearing. In her “drooping” and “dropping” she grows ever closer to the ground. Blake proffers a lesson to women: motherhood is painful. In providing and sustaining life to another, you must give of yourself. Blake’s reverence for motherhood shines through; he has a profound awareness of the physical and emotional struggles of child bearing and rearing.
Similarly to Norea redeeming her mother’s honor in that the archons never raped her spiritual self, in the *Zoas*, Tharmas and Enion’s children will ultimately prove their salvation. Though obnoxious and selfish in their younger years, they redeem their parents, as the creative imagination is able to redeem instinctive powers for something greater than bestial self-indulgence. Wilkie and Johnson succinctly capture the fates of these characters which will unfold over the course of the next eight Nights:

After their mutually infecting quarrel, Tharmas and Enion copulate in anguish and generate Los and Enitharmon. The two new characters, as Zoas of the imagination, will eventually be the agents of redemption in the poem. For a long time, however, they are repellant figures…since these embodiments of man’s power to see and shape are the offspring of the instinctive powers, Blake’s point seems to be that the first panicky impulse after the instinctive recognition that a fall has occurred is to evoke, just as instinctively, the power to do something—anything—about it; for the action of Los and Enitharmon, though misguided, is a dynamic, a potential for change that makes redemption possible. Like Shelley, Blake sees the regenerating spark in man not as mind or even heart itself but as an imaginative, creative force arising from instinctive sources. (29)

This passage captures the desperate desire to do something, anything, in a moment of crisis. When things fall apart, the “first panicky impulse” is to act. After the stress of her quarrel with Tharmas, Enion sits down to weave her usual covering, thinking her end result will be the covering for her sins, and ends up with a Spectre. But being divided from him emotionally now she cannot do so properly. She is not aware of her actions, or that the fight would so impact her everyday efforts. In attempting to focus her energy by doing “something—anything” about the fight, she causes both herself and Tharmas greater suffering. Fortunately, this emphasis on redemption at least provides a light at the end of the tunnel. She will once more be reunited with Tharmas. Her children will eventually learn to create productively instead of destroying her, or destroying each other as they are wont to do later in the text, and they ultimately help resolve the
quarrel amongst the emanations so that Albion can be restored. So it is the quarrel of Tharmas and Enion which will ultimately lead to their salvation, and by extension as humanity descends from these primordial beings, ours. One can only be saved if one has fallen after all.

For both these texts, positionality is key. The participants in the narrative cannot fully realize what they are doing and what the ramifications of their actions might be. It is the narration which gives readers the benefit of comprehending what the effects of their actions might be. When the narrator announces that Sophia intends to create by herself, we know from the narrator’s considering it necessary to share that fact that it will play a role in shaping the outcome of her creative attempt. When Blake gives us the context of what typically happens when a female weaves and we find Enion’s process sounding not nearly so cheerful as Blake described the other females, we know that something is awry. The narrators give us clues as to the outcome of the creative acts. They anticipate our investment in their stories, that we will be curious as to why and how things go wrong. Furthermore, they ask us to undertake our own acts of creation and destruction as we progress through their texts, seeking a fuller understanding.

**Reader Interpretations as Acts of Creation**

Both these texts read like something out of a dream, or rather out of a nightmare. Beyond the outlandish characters and the horrific violence, we find ourselves caught up in a sea of confusing images, lions with tails, veils, flying serpents. These authors inundate our imaginations with the bizarre, and we as readers find ourselves wholly destabilized. This is because such texts as these demand a type of reading one does not do every day, a reading less caught up in technicalities and fully grasping what is happening at every moment and more invested in the psychological effect of the text.
In all of this, we become hyper-aware of our position as readers. We, like Sophia herself, like Enion herself, are alone in our minds as we decipher such a passage. We might discuss the text with someone later, defending or redefining our understandings based on a conversation with another, or even take up a helpful scholarly text to guide our comprehension, but our inaugural understanding must by necessity be derived singularly. Whether we intentionally chose to read alone or find ourselves puzzling through something, unaware that we would be so challenged, we inevitably find ourselves caught in the cycle of creation, destruction, and revision. In interpreting texts, we are always engaged in an act of creation as we bring the texts to life in our minds.

This difficulty in accessing the details of the text but understanding the underlying emotion is due to a reversal in typical narrative structure on both of these texts’ part. Wilkie and Johnson write that Blake “reverses the normal psychological process of understanding narrative, a process in which far-reaching or universal implications occur to us only after we have first understood what is literally happening” (2). This reversal, in which we have access to the greater implications before attaining full understanding of the plot itself, requires a loss of conventional understanding on the part of readers. The Hypostasis myth in attempting to capture the mind of God as extraordinarily complex follows this reimagined reading process as well. We may not understand the complex relationship between the spiritual Eve and her body, but we understand her horror at being subjected to archontic whims through rape. We may not understand Norea’s background as a spiritual figure, but the power in her speeches resonates with our emotions—we see it is possible to defy the forces which seek to constrain us even as we do not understand how such defiance is possible. We must lose our first impulse to understand why Enion counts and weaves Tharmas’ nerves and veins and instead let ourselves be swept up in the emotion the scene
evokes—fear, woe, and confusion. We must lose our desire to know exactly why Enion cannot stop weaving, or even what is happening regarding her weaving, and in turn focus upon the panic and sorrow she experiences during those nine nights of weaving. The primary purpose is the psychological response, the secondary mimetic comprehension.

I offer in this section hypothetical readings as examples of reader processes rather than authoritative close readings. To this end, I privilege possibility rather than objectivity. The critical aspect of readers’ struggles lie with the differing constructions and opinions which are possible, with the acts of reading, comprehending, and revising, rather than with my own scholarly understanding of these texts.

Deciphering the text of the *Hypostasis* evokes a cycle of creation and destruction in the reader’s mind, beyond the scope of the diegesis of the text. One particularly complex aspect is the relationship between the invisible and the visible, the realm above and the realm below. An early passage in parts three and four illustrates this nicely, as the author explores the relationship between the differing realms and the idea of visibility: “And [Sophia] established each of his offspring in conformity with this power—after the pattern of the realms that are above, for by starting from the invisible world the visible world was invented. As incorruptibility looked down into the region of the waters, her image appeared in the waters; and the authorities of the darkness became enamored of her.”

Here readers engage in acts of creation and destruction as they parse the meaning of these terms. Incorruptibility exists in the upper realm of the invisible in that she must “look[] down.” Therefore she has no image; based on the term “invisible world” we surmise that there is no visible aspect to her. Yet we are told that “her image appeared in the waters.” So, though invisible within her own realm, she casts a reflection in the lower realm. We as readers must now reevaluate, destroying our previous understanding of both incorruptibility as

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29 3-4.
invisible and the realm in which she exists. We shift from a conception of things in the invisible realm as totally lacking in appearance no matter their location in favor of their only lacking in appearance so long as they are located in the upper realm. They have visages. They simply do not appear in this upper realm, and only become visible when their invisible visages can reflect upon a material surface of the lower realm, such as the waters. Even within these brief few lines, we have reevaluated our conception of the structure of the cosmos within this text and found ourselves with a new understanding of the complexities of sight within these two realms.

Earlier I discussed the passage on Sophia’s individual act of creation and matter. Let us turn to it once again, this time with a mind toward the reader’s own acts of creation and destruction:

A veil exists between the Things Above and the Aeons below; and shadow came into being beneath the veil; and that shadow became matter; and that shadow was cast apart. And that which she had made became a product in the matter, like a miscarriage. And it took (its) pattern from the shadow, and became an arrogant beast resembling a lion.” It was androgynous (ouhoutshime), as I have already said, because it was from matter that it came forth. (8-19)³⁰

For the first time, readers see a definitive division between the realms in the form of the veil. Readers understand the shadow as an interaction between light and matter, in that something has been obstructed, perhaps even envisioning the shadow being cast upon the veil. Yet readers learn that the shadow will “become matter,” and so readers determine a new relationship: a shadow in this cosmos does not require matter initially. They then understand the shadow as a sort of phantasm. Yet it has some sort of substance in that it can be “cast apart.” So the readers have an immaterial object that can be physically acted upon in that it can be rent in two. From this they determine that the shadow was not initially matter, that it functions similarly to the reflection of Incorruptibility as it spans the two realms. This might lead to a reevaluation of the understanding

³⁰ McGuire translation.
that a shadow does not require matter initially. Or perhaps the readers take another stance in their reading, viewing the shadow being cast apart as having to do with the rippling of a veil, that even in its lack of substance can still be affected by the material world around it. Somehow, they conclude that matter exists. The matter then becomes a production the matter, so that which Sophia has created is not the matter of this object in its entirety but only part. The matter then “took (its) pattern from the shadow” even as this is the shadow which has recently become matter. The shadow became matter, which in turn mirrors the appearance of the shadow, becoming a lion-esque androgynous creature. Processing all of this is, and should be, overwhelming for the reader. To parse through the happenings as I have done does not happen upon a first reading. The first reading leaves one inundated with images of lions and miscarriages, of shadows and veils. We grab the nouns we know and cling to them in our minds, but we are unsteady, unsure how to process we are reading as the being mutates. This myth is asking so much from our minds; it is so difficult to process mimetically. But instantly we receive the psychological effects of the passage. We find ourselves as horrified as Sophia as her creation slips from her control. And most importantly, we find ourselves struggling to regain our mimetic foothold, to create in our minds in full that which has been described. Our own creative labors are underway.

Reader responses to Blake are notoriously complex as well as he also creates moments of struggle for his readers. Regarding the act of artistic creation in which Enion is engaged, Blake describes the scene in which Enion weaves the Spectre of Tharmas as follows:

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From her bosom weaving soft in Sinewy threads
A tabernacle for Jerusalem she sat among the rocks
Singing her lamentation
…[Tharmas] sunk down into the sea a pale white corse
In torment he sunk down & flowd among her filmy Woof
His Spectre issuing from his feet in flames of fire
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In gnawing pain drawn out by her lovd fingers every nerve
She counted.

(FZ page 5, lines 6-8, 13-17)

In this passage, Blake creates a scene with images designed to challenge even the most active imagination. We have a bizarre combination of sea and flame, which seems counterintuitive in that water does not naturally coexist with fire. But anyone familiar with the two substances, as all humankind should be, can still envision it even without full understanding as they merge familiar imaginings of water and fire, which adds to the dreamlike quality of the text as one gains an image in return for a letting go of control of understanding. The image of loom in tandem with an image of nerves and veins is perhaps a little easier to visualize, especially in the modern era of horror films, but it still provides quite a challenge. One must first render highly physical one’s human-esque visions of Tharmas, if he is to have such nerves and veins. If a reader was imagining the gods as something not truly embodied, this image certainly proves a challenge to their interpretations as they now must picture them removed and spanning a loom as Enion weaves. The images evoked by the text can be quite problematic as readers engage in their acts of imaginative creation and simultaneous loss, yielding control to Blake as he at one moment suggests one image or interpretation, which shortly thereafter must be destroyed and then be replaced by another.

Even a single word can provide such opportunities for creation, destruction, and reconstruction of understanding on the part of readers. The word “lovd” used in the earlier quoted passage, quoted again below for convenience of discussion, poses particular issues for readers’ understanding:

His Spectre issuing from his feet in flames of fire
In gnawing pain drawn out by her lovd fingers every nerve
She counted. Every vein & lacteal threading them among
Her woof of terror. Terrified & drinking tears of woe
Shuddring she wove—nine days & nights Sleepless her food was
tears
Wondring she saw her woof begin to animate. & not
As garments woven subservient to her hands but having a will
Of its own perverse & wayward Enion lovd & wept
(FZ page 5, lines 15-23)

Immediately readers must make a decision regarding the agency of the one loving the fingers.

Are Enion’s fingers loved by Tharmas even as he is “in torment” as his Spectre comes forth, or are they loved by Enion herself, “shuddering” and she weaves and weeps?

With either reading come new complications. If the fingers are loved by Tharmas, the situation is determined by the time in which the action of love occurred. If we adopt a time frame in which the fingers are loved for him at that present moment during which he is suffering, making “loved” a present passive participle (i.e. the fingers being “lovd” by Tharmas), we have either a masochistic example in which he loves the things which cause him pain. If we choose a time frame in which the fingers were loved in the past by Tharmas, “loved” becomes a perfect passive participle (i.e. the fingers having been “lovd” by Tharmas). The fingers, loved by Tharmas in the past, suggest a time previous to this moment of weaving in which Tharmas cherished Enion and her body. Taken as a perfect passive participle with Tharmas as agent, “lovd” creates a moment of insight for readers into a loving relationship between Tharmas and Enion. This contrasts with their current relationship, which is plagued by jealousy but which must at some point have been rooted in love.

If the fingers are loved by Enion, readers again must examine the time frame for the act of love. They could interpret “lovd” as a present passive participle, (i.e. the fingers being “lovd” by Enion), in which Enion loves her fingers even if as they have lost control of the garments which “hav[e] a will/Of its own” and as she suffers accordingly. This interpretation yields an
example of sadomasochistic narcissism, in which she loves her own fingers even as they cause both her and Tharmas to suffer, delighting in them as they cause her pain. Should readers consider “lovd” as a perfect passive participle with Enion as agent (i.e. the fingers having been “lovd” by Enion), the word suggests that or at the very least a past distinctive appreciation of her physicality of the past, that she used to love her fingers. With this interpretation, the love no longer exists in the present moment, having been rejected in light of the suffering caused by the fingers. This one word proffers myriad interpretations. Readers are forced to assign the word accordingly, creating in their own minds the situation which best fits their interpretation of the word “lovd” as related to the characters of Enion and Tharmas in this case.

Let us venture that a reader interpreted “lovd” as suggesting that the fingers are presently loved by Tharmas at the moment of his suffering. The reader then provides himself with an understanding of how the fingers could be loved by Tharmas. He appropriately fills in the details that establish Tharmas’ love for Enion as so passionate it can withstand such pain, rendering Tharmas as a deeply feeling character who is undeterred by agony. From this point on, the reader continues his reading, basing his understanding of the scene between the two characters on this undying love of Tharmas, which casts Enion’s infliction of pain upon her devoted love into a heart-wrenching light.

A few lines later the reader comes across the line that concludes “Enion lovd & wept.” Upon further consideration, the reader finds himself reevaluating his previous designation of “lovd,” and ultimately decides that the two instances of love should be considered jointly. The reader destroys his previous interpretation and creates a new one, concluding that perhaps “lovd fingers” best denotes that it is Enion who perversely loves her fingers at that moment of her weaving. Enion, engaged in this act which simultaneously creates and destroys, is overcome by
emotion for both her own embodiment which is currently subjecting such pain onto Tharmas as well as towards Tharmas. And so, the simple reading of a few lines in complicated by the interpretation of a single word, forcing readers into their own acts of creation and destruction as they determine the interpretation that best aligns with the text and with their own constructions of the characters.

Admittedly, this process is not as consciously delineated as that which I have described. These dreamlike texts babble across the surface of our consciousness as our brains grapple with the complexities of the narratives, struggling to process the mimesis of the texts. Readers receive the psychological effects first, being lulled into a dreamlike state as so many of these complexities elude readers on a first reading. When one goes back, hoping to comprehend the mimetics, much of this analysis as I have described occurs nearly instantaneously, excepting for those particularly meticulous readers and scholars who are willing to probe the text and its many complications. For many readers, such a careful reading may prove daunting. Readers are unused to having to probe a text so much just to comprehend what is going on in the story, let alone whose fingers are “lovd.” This is a good thing. It means readers are engaged with the text, that they are experiencing the pangs of mental labor as they attempt to comprehend.

It is such struggle which has captivated readers of these texts. The endeavors required by readers embed the dreams that are these texts into readers’ minds. It pushes the text beyond the bounds of the work and into our lives. McGuire’s earlier mentioned investment in the role of the readers and their being “invited, or empowered” to identify with Norea, be the reader “male or female” is a thought-provoking conclusion as McGuire allows the text extends beyond its bounds as a work to be considered during the reading process and into the lives of its readers following the reading (257). I would push this emphasis on the critical role of identification farther, in that
the struggles of the characters’ create a parallel for the struggles of the authors, as well as of the
readers.

Even beyond our lives as readers, we glean important lessons about creative acts from these texts. Creation knows no true end point. It may have an impetus in intention or in accident, but once a creative act begins, it calls for another act and another. It calls for revision, for reprimand. It leads to consequences, good and ill. These acts can be both creative and destructive; ultimately the act of creation is so intimately tied to destruction that they meld. To destroy is to participate in a creation by one’s self or by another. The creator and those who interact with a creation must examine their responsibilities regarding the created object or being. And of course, there is the loss of control which occurs with any creation outside one’s self. For good or ill, producing something leads to the possibilities of harm, which imbues the creative act with risk.

**Authorial Creative Power**

Throughout this thesis, I have addressed the ways in which these authors have reimagined the text of Genesis. In these works, the authors attempt to rewrite the story of human spiritual development as they see fit. This gives them a great deal of power as they rewrite the stories with which we are familiar. My personal favorite example is the story of Noah from the *Hypostasis of the Archons*. A chart provides easy access to how much more information is included in the Noah story of Genesis as opposed to the *Hypostasis*:³¹

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Genesis 6:12-22</th>
<th>Hypostasis of the Archons 13-14</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>And God saw that the earth was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted its ways upon the earth.</td>
<td>Then humankind began to multiply and improve.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

³¹ See Gerard P. Luttikhuizen’s “Biblical Narrative in Gnostic Revision: The Story of Noah and the Flood in Classic Gnostic Mythology” in *Interpretations of the Flood*. While this text does not address the *Hypostasis* version of the Noah story in favor of examining longer, more complex tellings of the flood story, it provides a helpful overview of the differing roles of the Creator God in Genesis and in what Luttikhuizen terms “classic Gnostic” texts.
And God said to Noah, “I have determined to make an end of all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence because of them; now I am going to destroy them along with the earth.

Make yourself an ark of cypress wood; make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and out with pitch. This is how you are to make it: the length of the ark three hundred cubits, its width fifty cubits, and its height thirty cubits. Make a roof for the ark, and finish it to a cubit above; and put the door of the ark in its side; make it with lower, second, and third decks.

For my part, I am going to bring a flood of waters on the earth, to destroy from under heaven all flesh in which is the breath of life; everything that is on the earth shall die.

But I will establish my covenant with you; and you shall come into the ark, you, your sons, your wife, and your sons’ wives with you. And of every living thing, of all flesh, you shall bring two of every kind into the ark, to keep them alive with you; they shall be male and female. Of the birds according to their kinds, and of the animals according to their kinds, of every creeping thing of the ground according to its kind, two of every kind shall come in to you, to keep them alive.

Also take with you every kind of food that is eaten, and store it up; and it shall serve as food for you and for them.”

Then Orea came to him wanting to board the ask. And when he would not let her, she blew up the ark and caused it to be consumed by fire.

Noah did this; he did all that God commanded him.

Again he made the ark, for a second time.

The rulers took counsel with one another and said “Come, let us cause a flood with our hands and obliterate all flesh, from man to beast.”

But when the ruler of the powers came to know of their decision, it said to Noah, “Make yourself an ark from some wood that does not rot…

…and hide in it—you and your children and the beasts and the birds of heaven from small to large—and set it upon Mount Sir.”

The Genesis version is stunningly specific. God dictates what sort of wood to use, the size of the ark, what animals and food to bring. He even establishes a covenant with the family of Noah.
And Noah of course “did this; he did all that God commanded of him.” The *Hypostasis* version departs from the Genesis story in several ways. Firstly, there are multiple rulers plotting the flood. This is not a tale in which a violent but still somewhat kindly God wanted to destroy all the corrupt people but Noah and his family. This is a tale in which a group of horrible god-like figures determines that they will destroy humanity even as it begins to “multiply and improve,” and only one, the leader, sees fit to save part of humankind. Particularly interesting is that they intend to cause this flood “with [their] hands.” The God of Genesis has no need to interact with the material world physically in order to affect change. The rulers, however, do, and they are specifically embodied like a human being, at least in so far as they possess hands. There are no specific instructions to take two of each animal aboard, which is mentioned explicitly in the Bible.

Additionally, we never see Noah obeying initially in the *Hypostasis*. Clearly he built the first ark, as Orea has an ark to destroy and the story concludes that “Again he made the ark, for a second time.” However, for the author of the *Hypostasis* there is no need to clarify that Noah did indeed initially obey the ruler. His obedience is implicit in the statement that demand placed upon him and in our own present existence as, should we accept the tale, anyone alive would be descended from Noah. But perhaps the most powerful addition of all is that of Orea attempting to board.

The story reads like something out of a bad horror film. When denied passage, Orea simply blows up the boat. The author gives no commentary about Noah’s reaction. He simply rebuilds. Just as Norea has the power to instantaneously set the ark ablaze, so too does this narrator have power to destroy and rebuild the conventional Genesis story. The author has the

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32 This is not to say that Orea is villain, for as the hallmark of wisdom, she is anything but. However, simply bring able to blow something up as one wills, especially a large boat, is a pretty terrifying skill, a skill which certainly would be worthy of a villainous foe.
power over texts of the past. Interpretation is power. However, the texts of the past shape the author’s writing and reading, informing his/her approach in that texts of old are etched into the corners of his/her consciousness. An author must inevitably wrestle with the texts which have come into the world before her.

Blake adds an additional level of complexity beyond contending with the text of Genesis. He subjected his own work to extensive editing, even changing the title of the work from Vala to The Four Zoas. Blake’s editing process was extensive, with much of the work marked by his scrawls as he made additions to his poem in the margins, crossed through words in favor of a better phrase, and altered his illustrations as he saw fit. He was given to adding insertions in the margins or scribbling through passages which he found lacking. He engaged in a cycle of writing, drawing, then revising his writing, as he worked towards realizing his vision for the contents of each page. Often he would use proofs from a project with Edward Young’s Night Thoughts, recontextualizing the images on the pages as he scrawled his own poetry into textboxes designed for printing (Magno 3-4).

Blake grappled with conventional page structure as well, railing against the constraints of the Newtonian text, which features blocks of text surrounded by matching illustrations. Jason Allen Snart observes that “Experiencing Blake’s art, readers are confronted with narrative perspectives within the text that change with almost every turn of the page. Readers are thereby challenged to reformulate their own perspective in regards to the visual and/or verbal elements of the page” (56). But Blake is not just confronting readers; in confronting readers, he is wrestles with preconceived notions of reading, his own included. One such convention with which he struggles is the ideal of
the text being legible, the images clearly visible, a place for everything and everything in its place. Two particularly fascinating pages are born of Blake’s engagement with this convention of page structure as he ventures into the realm of nigh illegibility.

For instance, Blake collapses text and image so that they coexist within the same space and must be read simultaneously. In the ninth and final Night of the Zoas lie two pages which particularly lend themselves to a wholly experiential reading because of their extreme text and image overlap. Pages 126 and 132 recall abstract expressionist artworks:
The Four Zoas, page 126
from Erdman and Magno, 240
The images sprawl across the page, at first seemingly indifferent to the presence of text. Magno and Erdman cautiously note that page 126 is best understood in conjunction with page 127, conjecturing that the images reflect Vala’s vision of the sun as described in the text on page 127 (92). Vala makes a beautiful address to the sun, crying out, “Look how the beams foreshew the rising of some glorious power/The sun is thine he goeth forth in his majestic brightness /O thou
creating voice that callest & who shall answer thee” (4-6). In an attempt to provide clarity, Magno and Erdman provide a tidied up outline of the image as it would appear when distinct from the text (93). The point of the image, however, is the ambiguity as the text blends into the sketch. Just as Vala struggles to determine what the sun should look like, the sun is hidden from readers. They cannot easily determine what they are seeing or what its significance is. The text is as much a part of the image as the scrawled circles, obscuring the sketch intentionally. Here the text simply becomes a different sort of drawing.\textsuperscript{33}

Magno and Erdman additionally ignore the use of having text and sketch intersecting on page 132. They discuss the mimetics of the image, which according to them depicts two giants as harbingers of the apocalypse standing over Tharmas and Enion. Yet they overlook the text as part of the image (95-6). Admittedly Blake rejects a degree of basic legibility by creating pages that are so difficult to read as he prioritizes experience over the mimetic. Blake certainly could have provided a separate page had he wanted to fill it solely with the drawing. Though fairly unusual, several pages of the \textit{Zoas} contain only a drawing or only text.\textsuperscript{34} Blake captures the turbulence of the moment described, as Enion and Tharmas find joy in one another even as horror overcomes them. The moment is complicated, the emotions fraught, just as this page is convoluted. The intersection is not something to be glossed over, let alone totally overlooked. It serves the purpose of allowing readers to experience the complexity of this moment for the characters. Blake forces readers to look at the text more closely, deciphering where text ends and image begins as they attempt to read. He refuses to give readers an easy way out, challenging himself and challenging readers as he rejects typical standards of clarity, instead providing a

\textsuperscript{33} Both this paragraph and the one which follows originated in my work “From the Sleep of Death: The Translation of the Mystic into Experience through Anti-Newtonian Form & Content Relationships in William Blake’s \textit{The Four Zoas}.” They have been edited for inclusion in this thesis.

\textsuperscript{34} See Appendix pages 11 and 12 respectively.
powerful experience. He provides a moment of struggle for his readership as they attempt to process what they are seeing, even as he himself struggles with the presumed ideals for how an illustrated page ought to look and function.

An additional level of struggle comes with the limits of the text as artifact. Texts are subject to damage over time, and through the years many people have played a hand in the preservation and development of these texts. While the authors may have met their end years ago, it is important to acknowledge that the material object can outlive its creator, and that either through death or through separation creators at some point lose control over their created objects. We have been left with what remains from various acts of destruction to these texts, or at the very least, acts of loss. As I have previously mentioned, there is but one known version of the *Hypostasis*, and it only exists in translation. All original copies and other translations have been lost to the sands of time or destroyed. Relatively few scholars work in ancient Coptic; rare is the person who can appreciate the book in even its early translated form. Even then, some words are difficult to read or translate. This forces scholars to insert the ever handy “[… ]” into their work to show where the physical page has deteriorated and left blanks in the manuscript, or to take educated guesses. We know something is missing. We just cannot get to it. We must fill in the blanks with our minds accordingly, making our best guess as we work with the text. Blake’s text in the hands of the Victorians suffered the over eager eraser of a censor and took extensive efforts to reassemble—a few pages are in fact doubled, and there has been much dispute over the proper placement of a part of Night VII, to the point that Magno and Erdman see fit to provide two sets of numbers for those pages in their facsimile. Texts outside of an author’s material control are inevitably subject to such
alteration and damage. Fortunately, many scholars are willing to contend with these issues on behalf of future readers. They give generously of their time and energy in order to provide the opportunity to others to encounter the texts. From Bentley Layton and Anne McGuire’s translations of the *Hypostasis* from the Coptic to Magno and Erdman’s laboriously created facsimiles of the *Zoas*, scholars have helped make these works accessible to a broader public, enabling more readers to experience and to struggle with these texts.

**Conclusion**

Paul A. Cantor conjectures in *Creature and Creator: Myth-making and English Romanticism* that *The Four Zoas* act as an “anti-creation myth” in that “The lesson of *The Four Zoas* seems to be that the quest for the definitive history of creation is itself a potentially divisive enterprise” (73). No singular narrative will ever fully comply with the desires of its readership, be it a creation account or otherwise. And yet authors have tried again and again to produce some sort of account of creation. Both the author of the *Hypostasis of the Archons* and William Blake saw a need to reimagine creation and the creative act, saw a lack in Genesis, and while they may not provide a “definitive history of creation,” they each provided a thought-provoking and challenging version which explores the cosmic scheme of creation. By incorporating female figures, they establish that beings of either gender have the power to create. They capture how laborious and complex creating can be, both for their characters and ourselves as readers and interpreters. And importantly, they incorporate readers into the struggle of creation as we engage in our own small struggles in engaging with the texts, but also as we are invited in these texts to
identify as descendants of these female figures. These creative labors are our inheritance as humankind.

We act in the dark, surrounded by dark powers, consciously and unconsciously aware of the implications of our deeds. We create in the blind hope that our present endeavors may have a desirable effect. The authors have created these texts in the hopes that when we awaken from the dreamlike state of reading these works, we do so with an awareness of the struggle to create, of the dangers of responses to creative acts, of the role of intention in engaging with the material world. In struggling through the texts, we can better identify with both the characters and authors, extending our knowledge of such struggle to any creative endeavor we encounter. Our imaginations, our own creative powers, fill in the gaps of any text we encounter as we attempt to understand extremely complex works of literature. Creation is not over, and no creation account is definitive. We have inherited from our foremothers the opportunity to participate in the ongoing creation which surrounds us. And this will be, and should be, a struggle. We live in a fallen, imperfect world in which we wrestle with works created by others and with our own labors. We interpret, we create, we labor, we toil.

ἐστιν ἡμῖν ἡ πάλη (For us there is a struggle).
Works Cited


