

Univerzita Pardubice
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**Vidění, proroctví, šílenství: Textové a obrazové
přístupy Williama Blakea a Josefa Váchala**

Diplomová práce

2007

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**Visions, Prophecies, Madnesses: The Textual and Pictorial
Approaches of William Blake and Josef Váchal**

Thesis

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Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to respond to a conclusion proposed by the lay public suggesting the similitude between the works and lives of the British poet and engraver William Blake and the Czech writer and versatile artist Josef Váchal. Despite the span of nearly one century which separates the two artists, the backgrounds of their lives offer a number of analogies providing explanations for characteristic parallels between their artistic productions.

Besides, special attention is given to map all most explicit influences which made both artists strive for a linkage of textual and pictorial elements into one compact unit: the book. In case of William Blake, this concerns his unique interpretation of *illuminated books* from the early stage of his production, which is connected to Blake's revolutionary invention of relief etching. As far as Váchal is concerned, the subject of this study becomes the artist's attempt to reproduce a *beautiful book*, characteristic especially of his early works.

This thesis tries to verify particular similarities and differences of social impacts on forming the artists' conception of their book production.

Abstrakt

Cílem této práce je reagovat na stále častěji se objevující úsudky laické veřejnosti o podobnosti mezi tvorbou a životy britského básníka a rytce Williama Blakea a dílem českého spisovatele a všestranného umělce Josefa Váchala. I přesto, že oba umělce od sebe odděluje období téměř celého století, nabízí se v pozadí jejich životů řada analogií poskytujících vysvětlení pro charakteristické paralely jejich uměleckých produkcí.

Zvláštní pozornost je věnována zmapování nejzřetelnějších vlivů, které u obou umělců vypůsobily shodně zanícené úsilí o spojení textové a obrazové složky v jeden kompaktní celek – knihu. V případě Williama Blakea se jedná o unikátní ztvárnění *iluminovaných knih* především z raného období jeho tvorby, které je spojeno s objevem Blakeovy převratné metody leptu. U Josefa Váchala je předmětem studia úsilí o znovuvytvoření *krásné knihy*, které se naplňuje především v raných dílech jeho tvorby.

Tato práce se snaží verifikovat jednotlivé podobnosti a rozdílnosti společenských vlivů na utváření koncepce knižního díla těchto dvou umělců.

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1. Introduction

“Is Váchal primarily a graphic designer or a poet, or is he both? It would not surprise me; William Blake was both too” (as qtd. in Neznámý Váchal 139).

Already in 1944, while Josef Váchal was still active in the sphere of art, an Austrian painter Alfred Kubina sent an intriguing letter about the characteristics of Váchal’s personality and his artistic values to his own friend František Holešovský, who had familiarised him with Váchal’s work. The letter, part of which appears above, might have created a real incentive for many admirers of both artists to commence a relentless quest for a link between William Blake, the British Romantic poet, and his Czech 20th century follower. Even though a growing number of the lay public has promptly begun to join the effort to support such a link, the question arises as to whether the analogy can be justified in terms of historical and artistic background of both artists.

Realizing that Blake and Váchal’s active lives were separated by a period of more than one hundred years, to say nothing of the diverse cultural and social settings of their respective societies, the obvious relations between the artists may gradually begin to recede. On the other hand, there are a considerable number of apparent connections between Blake and Váchal which, after receiving a thorough inspection, could validate the grandiose claims about the similarities of the two personae.

One of the most remarkable resemblances may be seen in the fact that both Blake and Váchal proved themselves to be amazingly versatile artists. Having been apprenticed to James Basire, an established and respected engraver, young Blake launched his career as a skilled and budding craftsman. Since the age of twelve, he had been making his first attempts as a poet, composing poems he was to publish later in *Poetical Sketches* and some other works. Also, Blake has been greatly recognised as a distinguished painter as well as an originator of his own intricate mythology, which he continued to develop particularly from the early years of the 19th century.

Likewise, as a fourteen-year-old boy, Váchal was sent by his father to receive vocational education in the workshop of Jindřich Waitzman, an eminent Prague bookbinder. After finishing his apprenticeship, Váchal did not feel quite content with his overall artistic knowledge yet, and thus proceeded to broaden his skills by enrolling

in courses of landscape and figurative painting. His intrinsically critical and ironic personality meant that Váchal soon began to devote a substantial amount of time and energy to writing, a means by which he could best communicate his provocative remarks and original ideas.

In addition to that, there are many other fields of activity in which both artists successfully experimented: pottery and furniture decoration, woodcarving, wall painting and tarot design, to name a few. Nonetheless, Blake and Váchal's distinctive piece of work, which sharply distinguishes them from the majority of other artists, represents their truly unique form of a book, in all respects perceived as an artistic artefact rather than as an ordinary product of the book manufacture. Thus, the analogy suggested by Alfred Kubina, which likens Blake to Váchal, could be better understood in terms of principles both men exploited in production of their extraordinary bookish masterpieces.

Their books, to a certain degree extravagant for their times, demonstrate an all-round product of the two aspiring artisans who vigorously endeavoured to unify their professional experience and strived for a symbiosis of illustrations and texts. Such a conception of a book, having its roots in the Gothic and Baroque periods, involves not only the two obvious areas of art (painting and writing) but it also extensively employs a variety of skills related to the craft of the book production. Therefore, Blake and Váchal did not conceive the book only as a medium combining the pictorial and textual elements, but paid equal attention to other aspects of the book architecture, such as the quality of paper and paints, layout, bookbinding, appropriate techniques etc. Consequently, the effort Blake and Váchal had put in production of their books resulted in impressive and often voluminous works, known as the *illuminated books* and *beautiful books* respectively, which stood out in the multitude of similar pieces particularly for its original symbiosis of the textual and pictorial elements.

The objective of this paper is to investigate the validity of the argument which proposes a resemblance between Blake and Váchal, using their conception of the book as the framework for such investigation. The first part of the paper is to examine the main contemporary events and movements in the political, economical and artistic areas which could have impacted the two artists in their literary and pictorial works. Such a description is provided particularly to help reveal why both artists found so little foundation in their respective societies. The following section extends the subject area

beyond their contemporary societies, seeking for potential sources and influences from other fields, periods or artistic styles. This creates a platform for analysis of Blake's and Váchal's concrete techniques which they used in their writings. The third part endeavours to explain motives for combining the textual and pictorial elements together, as well as to provide a brief description of individual aspects of the book concepts. The chapter also summarizes the reception of Blake and Váchal's books at their respective times, suggesting possible causes for the lack of attention of the contemporary readers and buyers.

The structure of the paper is organised in three main chapters mentioned above. Every chapter is subdivided into two parts, each of them dealing with Blake and Váchal separately.

2.1 Blake and revolutions

The second half of the eighteenth-century, together with the Romantic period in Britain, almost entirely coincided with the reign of George III, “the first of the Hanoverian kings to be born and brought up in Britain” (“British Timeline” website). His sixty-year-long rule was marked as the time of dramatic changes in political and social life. As Litvack states,

the age was one of revolutions – not only the emancipatory turmoils in America and France, but also the massive expansion of the industrial base in Britain, which changed the whole pattern of labour and social structure (231).

Three years prior to the coronation of George III, William Blake was born into a nonconformist family of a hosier James Blake and his wife Catherine Hermitage. Although young Blake claimed to have acquired visionary abilities as early as an eight-year-old boy, he could not anticipate the dramatic events that were going to accompany him during his life. In 1793, the year which marked a mid-point of his life’s pilgrimage, Blake summarized and described the “shadow of the great events” that had been cast upon the British nation in a letter addressed to his friend, John Flaxman:

terrors appear’d in the Heaven above And in Hell beneath, & a mighty & awful change threatened the Earth. The American War began. All its dark horrors passed before my face Across the Atlantic to France. Then the French Revolution commenc’d in thick clouds, And My Angels have told me that seeing such visions I could not subsist on the Earth... (as qtd. in Ackroyd 165).

In May 1756, Britain got deeply engaged in war conflicts with France and its continental allies. The Seven Years’ War between Britain and France extended the battlefield also to America, leading to the first global clash in modern history. Even though Britain emerged victorious from the war, the time of relative calm lasted only for two years.

The introduction of the Stamp Act in 1765, which was to raise taxes used for defence of the American colonies against France, alongside the levy imposed on imported goods, shifted the centre of political attention to America where it sparked widespread outrage among the local colonists. The disorder in the first American settlements and the unstable circumstances between Britain and its colonies, dictated

“the birth of the clamorous, noble and defective sibling”, the United States (Johnson 183).

The American Revolution, together with the revolution in France, “represented the culminations of an eighteenth-century process of agitation for social and political change” (Litvack 232). The declaration of the Rights of Man, the storming of the Bastille, the execution of the king (Louis the XVI), and the establishment of the republic – all these turbulent events in France caused the cry of “Liberty, Equality, Fraternity” to echo across the continent.

In Britain, the news of the revolution initially received a warm welcome from across the political spectrum. Charles James Fox, the opposition Whig leader, expressed his enthusiasm about the revolution after he had learnt of the storming of the Bastille: “How much the greatest event that has happened in the history of the world, and how much the best” (as qtd. in Britain and the French Revolution, website). According to Maurois, some philosophers, scholars and writers of that time viewed the situation not only as an opportunity in which France’s power could be emasculated, but also as a hope for its neighbouring continental rival to emerge from the revolution restored and renewed (344). Maurois also suggests that between 1789 and 1792 “the British were serenely confident France would without vacillation decide for institutions similar to those in Great Britain” (344).

According to Craig, many thinkers and writers, including Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron or Blake, considered the French revolution “as the great hope for the future of the human race”, an opportunity which “would guarantee civil liberties” (387). Consequently, the spirit of the time had inspired the establishment of radical groups across Britain, including the “London Corresponding Society” which began to form around a Scottish shoemaker Thomas Hardy. Its programme, until it was banned by the government in 1794, included concepts of parliamentary reform, universal male suffrage, a secret ballot and annual parliaments (“British Timeline”, website). The atmosphere in Britain, particularly in London, resembled a time before a rising of the sun.

In 1789, a Welsh moral and political philosopher Richard Price depicted the events in France „as the dawn of new era“:

Behold all ye friends of freedom... behold the light you have struck out, after setting America free, reflected to France and there kindled into a blaze that

lays despotism in ashes and warms and illuminates Europe. I see the ardour for liberty catching and spreading; ...the dominion of kings changed for the dominion of laws, and the dominion of priests giving way to the dominion of reason and conscience (as qtd. in Philip, website).

“The ardour for liberty catching and spreading”, to use Price’s words, signified a change in the policy of Britain in the 1790’s. Radical London groups began to seem uncertain about the prospect of the revolution, realising the unceasing danger of every thought which had its origin in France. Besides, according to Maurois, the nature of the revolution in France did by no means appeal to the conventions of the British nation (345). Instead, Britain pursued to behold more importance in the spiritual revolution arriving with the movement of Methodism, which was represented particularly by John Wesley (360). Furthermore, the provocative French with their newly appointed leader smothered the cumulative signs of radicalism in London as Britain entered a war with France which was to last twenty-years.

Blake’s reaction to the events in France, as well as to the situation in his home country, corresponded with the general attitude of the British society. At first, he seemed to express his pro-revolutionary stand fairly openly. In his biography, Peter Ackroyd describes Blake as “a vehement republican and sympathiser with the Revolution” who “courageously donned the famous symbol of liberty and equality – the *bonnet rouge* – in open day, and philosophically walked the streets with the same on his head” (159). The revolutionary spirit of liberty is apparent in many of Blake’s early works, such as *The Songs of Innocence*, *The French Revolution (A Poem, in Seven Books)*, a work which Blake left incomplete and which he actually never published; or *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, including a closing poem *A Song of Liberty*. In her epilogue to the *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Sylva Ficová mentions David V. Erdman and H. Bloom as the literary critics who perceived and argued for *A Song of Liberty* as an obvious “political allegory” in Blake’s works (Blake, 71). There can be no doubt about Blake’s awareness and involvement in the political events of his time. The omnipresent amplifying voice of liberty in London generated an urgent desire for a change, a longing for a better future which Blake closely sympathised with and which he expected to come. In fact, he had already begun to summon up his thoughts and ideas on how such transformation should come to life.

However, in his later life, Blake adopted a rather reserved position on the political events in Britain. Perhaps disillusioned, he lost some of his irascibility that prodded him into the critique of politics. Still, he remained ready to make bold remarks about the area whose significance in Blake's life continued to fade:

I am really sorry to see my Countrymen trouble themselves about Politics. If Men were Wise the Most arbitrary Princes could not hurt them If they are not Wise the Freest Government is compelled to be a Tyranny Princes appear to me to be Fools Houses of Commons & Houses of Lords appear to me to be fools they seem to me to be something Else besides Human Life (as qtd. in Ackroyd 165).

Another transformation, however, had already been striking at the foundation of Hanoverian Britain: the industrial revolution. Ever since the invention of the steam engine by James Watt in 1765, elements of industrial revolution infiltrated every field of human's activity. Leon Litvack rightly insists that the "industrial revolution played a more significant role in transforming the lives of the British people [than any other revolution]" (232). In 1771, Richard Arkwright put the first cotton mill into operation by using his invention known as a water frame which had to ensure the spinning of the yarn - the first giant step towards "the automation of the labour-intensive industries" ("British Timeline" website). The local wool manufacture in rural areas soon began to move and concentrate in larger urban units, taking an advantage of the "collective manufacturing processes" (Litvack 232). This change in work organisation caused an enormous number of the British population to flow from rustic areas to city agglomerations where they were often awaited by

inadequate wages, long hours of work under harsh discipline in sordid conditions, and the large scale of employment of women and children for tasks that destroyed both the body and the spirit (Abraham 3).

Consequently, segregation by material property resulted in a deepening class division: the owners of the industrial plants prospered, while the landless and impoverished workmen surrendered to hopelessness. Women were seen as inferior to men, and there was no outlook for children to be protected by law as concerns the working age limit (Abraham 3). During this time, the French revolution began to cross the English Channel, seeking an audience to the "Hymn of Liberty" among its blue-collar adherents.

Since most of Blake's income came from engraving, a craft he had been apprenticed to as a young boy, he could have ensured his living well had he devoted himself only to this profession. As Ackroyd mentions, print selling "was one of the fastest growing trades in London" (97), and the industrial revolution could only bolster its importance in a society thirsty for new information. The fact that Blake demonstrated to be both an artist and a tradesman heralded his neutral, perhaps even positive attitude towards the coming transformation of the industries. Again, Ackroyd states that

quite unlike [Blake's] Romantic successors, whose experience of the industrial revolution turned them irrevocably against commerce...[Blake] believed that he was about to make his fortune (114).

The consequent events, however, proved that Blake grossly overestimated his newly invented methods of engraving and etching in which he had cherished much hope. The turn of the century found Blake on the brink of poverty. He accepted commercial work only in times of critical circumstances. The rest of the time, he dedicated his complete self to developing a mythology which was to be the embodiment of his own perception of the world.

Obviously, the political and economic turmoil of the late eighteenth century in Britain had its reflection in the artistic movement known as Romanticism. According to Craig, at the turn of the 19th century, the meaning of the word "romantic", presently used to designate the period after the age of the Enlightenment, was "to some people a term of abuse, a word connoting irresponsibility....to others, 'romantic' was a synonym for such words as "wild", or "extravagant", or "visionary"" (384). In order to characterize the period, Abraham uses the words of William Hazlitt who described it as "the dawn of a new era, a new impulse had been given to men's mind" (as qtd. in Abraham 4). The impulse, which, to use Abraham's words, primarily affected poetry "as an imitation of human" (Abraham 5), prompted the artists to abandon the established conventions. Instead, the spirit of individualism and imagination became a requisite constituent of the artists' production.

The consequences of the industrial development together with the revolution resonating across Europe yielded an atmosphere of hope for a new beginning. As Abraham concludes, "everything was possible, and not only in the political and social realm but in intellectual and literary enterprises as well" (4). Romantic artists sensed a

need to isolate themselves from the outer world so that they could question the issues concerning the purpose of life (Pijoan 183). The individualistic tone of every piece of writing was bringing diverse perspectives of a wide range of writers, very often unified upon the common questions of social and political themes of the age.

While the period of the Enlightenment meant a proclamation of reason above the senses, the Romanticism introduced imagination as its principal condition of a successful work. The source of inspiration no longer laid in a realistic depiction of objects, but rather in “an impression ... received from objects of sight” (as qtd. in Craig 384). This impression was to arise as a natural overflow of feelings the artists acquired through “all kinds of passions which helped to stimulate their imagination” (Pijoan 183). Craig recalls an analogy once used by Alexander Pope who compared the truly Romantic poetry to growing things when saying that “if poetry comes not as naturally as the leaves to a tree it had better not come at all” (as qtd. in Craig 385). Even though there are many other features typical of the Romantic period, Abraham best summarizes the significance of individualism and imagination for this era when he notes that a Romantic poet

located the source of a poem not in the outer world, but in the individual poet, and [the poet] specified that the essential materials of a poem were not external people and events, but the inner feelings of the author, or external objects only after these have been transformed or irradiate by the author’s feelings (5).

Thus, Blake could be seen as an ambiguous “half-Romantic artist”. On one hand, the individualistic approach of his fellow Romantics, who tried to escape their respective societies, never impacted Blake in the same way. Surely, he sought means to present his own personal thoughts and ideas in a “Romantic style”, and in this respect, he must be seen as a Romantic. Nevertheless, as Ackroyd states, “he remained much closer to the people whom he wished to address in his work” (33), and by this, he should be distinguished from his strongly individualistic successors.

On the other hand, there could hardly be a more typical representative among the Romantics who would portray the image of a visionary better than Blake. Imagination played a prominent role in Blake’s oeuvre, and visions were something he considered to be an inseparable part of his personality. In fact, he was convinced that visions were caused directly by his fertile imagination (Ackroyd 192). There were occasions when Blake wished he had had the same qualities as others: “O why was I born with a

different face? Why was I not born like the rest of my race” (“The Letters”, website), and times when he could not imagine to be deprived of his visionary skills: “Inspiration & Vision was then & now is & I hope will always Remain my Element my Eternal Dwelling Place” (as qtd. in Ackroyd 52). Armour Craig uses Blake’s own words to best summarize the artist’s attitude towards the two most significant features of Romanticism: “One Power alone makes a Poet: Imagination, The Divine Vision” (386).

2.2 Váchal and wars

The period which becomes a subject of this chapter could be marked by two seemingly incomparable dates. In 1884, the first steam-powered tram was put into operation in the Czech territory. Eighty-five years later, in July 1969, man accomplished their successful cosmic venture in the space. The giant leap which had occurred in the field of industry and science had been preceded by crucial small steps being taken at the political stage. Many nations were to experience the horrors of two world wars, and Europe was about to decide on its new organisational scheme. The span of eighty-five years also defines the life of Josef Váchal.

At the end of the 19th century, after more than two hundred years of subjugation by its neighbouring power, the Czech nation began to feel strongly uneasy about the hegemonic control imposed by the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The shift from passive to active policy meant that, since 1874, all representatives of the Czech nation resumed to participate in the Imperial Council, and thus, continued to struggle for an increase of its national autonomy. The assumption that

loyalty [of the Czech nation], manifested repeatedly to the throne, could not remain unnoticed; the emperor would realize and accept the urgency of Czech claims as well as the benefits, which could result from greater decentralisation, to the entire monarchy (Bělina 110)

transpired to be false. The Czech nationalists no longer sought to achieve “merely” the same privileges as other, more favoured, nations in the monarchy. The objective became a fight for raising confidence in gaining complete national independence.

Quite naturally, the opponent who needed to be overcome had been represented by a large number of the German-speaking population. Czech writers and intellectuals, such as Jaroslav Vrchlický, were appropriately aware of offensive means they held in their hands since writing: “only two weapons we have, a book and a school” (as qtd. in Bělina 137).

Education manifested its importance in social and economic rise, as well as in enhancing consciousness of the national identity right across the Czech society. An unofficial contest for expansion of both Czech and German schools displayed greater determination of many Czech village or town councils to invest substantially larger sums of money in founding new schools than their German-speaking fellow citizens.

Jiří Pokorný claims that in the second half of the 19th century, forty-three new Czech schools were established, in comparison with only nine schools where German was spoken as the official language (5).

Similarly, book publishing played a fundamental role in “strengthening the position of the national movement” among the public (Bělina 137). Between 1888 and 1909, the largest encyclopaedic work in Czech literature, Otto’s Educational Dictionary, was published in order to champion greater knowledge of the Czech nation. As Pokorný summarises, the Czech nation

had fiery advocates in assemblies and in the Imperial Council; it fought to the death for every inch of the land of the St. Wenceslas’ crown; Czech literature and art elevated themselves to respectable heights; it had theatres, museums; it possessed community, national and political institutions; it longed to force a way of industry and trade... (5).

Nevertheless, before the Czechs could reach their long awaited independence, once again, they had to prove themselves as loyal soldiers of the emperor.

The assassination of the successor to the Austro-Hungarian throne, Francis Ferdinand d’Este, in Sarajevo on June 28 1914, started the First World War between the Central Powers and the Western Allies, known as the trench warfare. The Czech lands were still under the rule of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and thus, the deployment of the Czech soldiers along the front line came to pass with very little enthusiasm. Pokorný mentions a contemporary anecdote to describe the mood of the Czech recruits:

When St. Peter asked the French, the Germans and the Czechs what they fought for in the war, the French replied: for the Republic and the nation; the Germans claimed they fought for the emperor and the country; and the Czechs answered: for eight kreuzers a day (171).

During the war, censorship, particularly imposed on the daily press, smothered the spark of the Czech politics. However, Czech resistance movements, consisting of people who could no longer tolerate the silent exploitation of the Czech lands, began to formulate their demands at home as well as abroad. “Mafia”, the most influential resistance organisation, was founded by a group of prominent politicians, writers and journalists forming around the university professor T.G. Masaryk, who realised the urgency of the situation. After four years of negotiations with western powers about a right of the Czech nation to its independence, alongside four years of dreadful and

exhausting fights in the trenches, the end of the First World War marked the beginning of the first republic – Czechoslovakia.

The political events at the turn of the century had negligible impact on early years of Váchal's life. Since his obsessive preoccupation with developing the best possible artistic skills shielded him from increasingly nationalistic atmosphere in the country, Váchal, although one may expect him to do so, never demonstrated the capabilities to strike the empire with his arrogant criticism and insults. In *Malíř na frontě*, published eleven years after the end of the First World War, Váchal denounced those writers who had been drawing their inspiration from the tumult of the pre-war years and, on the contrary, explained the reasons for his absence from the political involvement:

The author of this book proclaims beforehand that, at that time, he was distant from such feelings since he was tormented only by troubles how to obtain paper for a new book...and also because the writer of these lines is a man living only for his work from which he could not be distracted by an earthquake, not even by an erupting war, starting somewhere far in the south, which he had expected since 1912 anyway (12).

Besides, in *Malíř na frontě* Váchal described his personal two-year engagement in the war, which he did not avoid in the end. Having been recruited in November 1916, he was sent to the Slovenian town of Soča, the periphery of the so called Soča front line. In November 1918, when he returned home, the horrors of the war had been engraved in his face. In *Nejlépa tlačiti vlastní káru sám*, Jiří Olič described him as a “thirty-four year old man whose white hair looked like it belonged to a man aged seventy: he went grey one night after an enemy attack” (86).

The first months of the new republic were crucial in terms of securing the borders and proclaiming its sovereignty. The newly established Czech government had to address a number of issues on political, economical and social level. The world was yet to adopt its attitude towards fascism and communism and the economical crises of the late 1920's was about to affect economies of many countries, including Czechoslovakia. In 1938, four leaders of the most powerful European states signed the Munich agreement by which it was decided that Czechoslovakia had to surrender the border area to Germany. Another war was approaching Europe and the Czech statehood came to the point of testifying its firmness once again.

A bullet-point version of the course of events may well illustrate Váchal's reaction to the political and economical affairs after the end of the First World War. As a result of his artistic fiasco, Váchal resolved that the best way to repay the "world" for not acknowledging his genius is to withdraw from the epicentre to the fringe of the society. While the direct participation in the First World War led Váchal to producing a number of reflections upon the war, the following world conflict inspired the artist to writing only a few minor works. Together with his partner, Anna Macková, he moved to Studeňany and spent the last years of the war in seclusion and peace of the tranquil village. His diary writings overflowed with notes of everyday events and chores, unlike the political and social events which, only occasionally, drew Váchal's closer attention. As Olič states

Váchal went through all ideological changes (even the most radical ones) without changing anything on the anarchistic foundations of his spiritual mission; at times, when the former visitors of the Olšanská villa belonging to S.K. Neumann became national artists, he remained one of the last anarchists and romantics (Olič 1993, 193).

As far as economy is concerned, the turn of the 20th century is sometimes referred to as "the second industrial revolution". Towards the end of its existence, the Austro-Hungarian Empire represented predominantly an agrarian territory. However, it quickly adopted some modern technologies which, applied particularly to metallurgical, electrotechnical, chemical and engineering industries, helped to improve the technical development of the monarchy (Mencl 31). The First World War, according to Bělina, had negative impact on the economy, especially in sense that it destroyed the inherent relations between mutually dependant industries, and suspended the transport connections which had linked the traditionally industrial centres (165). Therefore, Czechoslovakia, although with the industry developed above the standards of its neighbouring ex-imperial countries, had to undergo comprehensive reforms. Together with the enthusiastic spirit of the independent republic, the economic growth quickly reached the level of the steadily rising pre-war economy and continued to display further increase until the early 1930's, which struck most of the European countries with economic crisis.

Having mentioned that the political events, except the First World War, generated only little interest for Váchal's inspiration, the economic and industrial

development in the 20th century seemed to bother him even less. On one hand, he took a great advantage of technological innovations of that time for inventing and experimenting with new techniques in various fields. In a letter to Sigismund Bouška, Váchal listed a number of methods which had been employed for one of his most extensive works, *Receptář barevného dřevorytu*, and which he had personally invented or experimented with, for example: printing of several colours from one plate, vertical and horizontal engraving, experiments with grids, inventing self-generating coloured grid (Olič 1993, 161). On the other hand, the economic situation in Czechoslovakia, quite legitimately, evoked almost no attention of the seclusive artist. Throughout his life, Váchal's financial struggle, caused by insufficient recognition from his audience, led to a survival in misery and poverty. In many cases, it were only a few Váchal's friends and supporters, or his own inventiveness, that helped him to carry through the gloom and hopelessness. Hence, the notes he made about the last days of the Second World War, may well describe his troubled situation: "my stomach hungry, no bread left – drinking hooch I fell asleep hypnotised, wide dreams through the whole night" (Váchal, Deníky 227). Simply, he seemed more concerned with art than anything else.

Contrary to previous movements in arts, which could be distinguished and defined to specific eras, the turn of the twentieth century meant the coming of a number of modern artistic styles, difficult to be dated to concrete periods, and instead, rather associated with their typical representatives. As Wittlich maintains, the artists "parted ways with the existing aesthetic norms of the customary historicism and decided to do original work" (Summary). Consequently, the new era issued growing demands for fresh approaches to express the challenges and latest trends of the civilization. The movements and their timings varied across the continent, also differing in the areas of arts which they affected. Czech late nineteenth and early twentieth century artists were under the influence of several aesthetic movements.

Art Nouveau, an attempt for uniting all areas of arts into one distinct style, emerged with its own characteristic language, which, being derived from symbolism and natural forms, was not based on "slavish imitation of nature, but rather on imaginative production being inspired by natural symbols" (Cirici 55). Although it played a key role particularly in architecture, the movement also affected all other areas of art.

Art Nouveau's contemporary, as Symbolism is sometimes referred to, initially appeared as a literary movement. Pierre Courthion regarded William Blake as an originator of modern symbolism, however, also naming the poet Jean Moréas who published the first symbolistic manifesto (7). The movement declined all realistic expressions of the outer world. On the contrary, it drew its inspiration from the world of myths, legends, fairy tales and poetry. At its beginning, Czech Symbolism concentrated around the magazine *Modern Revue*, founded by Arnošt Procházka, but soon overflowed into other areas of art, particularly into painting.

Another artistic movement, arguably having its foundations in Germany, derived its name from a Latin word *expressio*. Expressionist characteristic feature was to capture strong emotional content through which its audience would be able to share the same feelings with its writer. Czech form of expressionism became most apparent around a group called "Osma".

Besides these most discernible movements, there were many other trends and styles that affected the Czech art at the beginning of 20th century, for example: Impressionism, Cubism, Decadence, Catholic spiritism, Surrealism and others. Since Váchal was under direct influence of many of these as well as the previously mentioned movements, a closer attention will be paid to them particularly in the third part of this thesis which will attempt to reveal their concrete impacts on Váchal's production.

3.1 Blake and visions

As it has been mentioned, Blake may appear as an ambiguous representative of the Romantic movement. Unlike the next and perhaps more typical generation of Romantics, he did not despise trade nor did he withdraw from the urban turmoil of finance and competition. However, the complexity and obscurity of Blake's paintings and writings, alongside his overly charismatic personality, plunged him into involuntary seclusion and isolation which, consequently, resulted in production of highly individualistic works. Such an individualistic approach consisted in imagination as an instrument providing the artist with much of his inspiration. In a letter to Reverend John Trusler, who had commissioned Blake to complete four watercolour paintings for him, Blake defined the source of his inspiration with the following words: "To Me This World is all One continued Vision of Fancy or Imagination" ("The Letters", website). Indeed, the visionary experiences played a significant role in his original artistic production.

Blake was said to start having the visions as early as a four-year old boy. Ackroyd mentions that it was Blake's wife, Catherine Boucher, who reminded the artist of his first encounter with the visionary ecstasy: "You know, dear, the first time you saw God was when You were four years old. And he put his head to the window and set you ascreaming" (as qtd. in Ackroyd 23). Ackroyd also suggests that Blake's eidetic imaginary, arguably acquired through extensive reading of biblical literature, was not unusual at that time. Nevertheless, the fact that the artist retained the skill throughout his life is what Ackroyd sees as an exceptional trait:

What is remarkable, however, is the extent to which an ordinarily childhood capacity was maintained by him until the end of his life. Perhaps there is a sense in which, with all his contrariness and extreme sensitivity, he remained a child; perhaps the experience of his infancy was so strong that he was always the small child (25).

Blake's visionary capability continued to intensify, gradually demonstrating growing importance for the artist's life as well as for his production.

In 1788, one year after the death of his younger and much beloved brother Robert, Blake experienced a vision which radically transformed the techniques he had employed in composing his prints as well as the composition of his works. Robert

appeared to William Blake in a dream, supplying him with instructions on a method which Blake later developed into a technique known as relief etching. The encounter of Robert with his brother was described by one of Blake's contemporaries:

Blake, after deeply perplexing himself as to the mode of accomplishing the publication of his illustrated songs without their being subject to the expense of letter-press, his brother Robert stood before him in one of his visionary imaginations, and so decidedly directed him in the way which he ought to proceed, that he immediately followed his advice (as qtd. in Ackroyd 112).

Publishing of the "illustrated songs", for which Blake had long been seeking a suitable printing method, commenced with *All Religions are One* and *There is No Natural Religion*. The concept of these books, proposed in order to unify illustrations and texts, is now referred to under the term *illuminated books*. Blake was so pleased with the results of the newly developed technique that he continued using it for the rest of his life. The main climax of the *illuminated books*, however, occurred particularly in 1790's with works such as *The Songs of Innocence and of Experience* or *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*.

However, the significance of visions in Blake's works did not cease with the revelation of the relief etching. Ackroyd rightly claims that "he [Blake] remained to the end of his life, a biblical artist and poet who also considered himself to be a prophet" (141). Blake admitted that visions, dreams and prophecies were an integral part of his personality. When writing *The Four Zoas*, which had been largely influenced by Edward Young's *Night Thoughts*, Blake described the role of the visionary features in a letter to Thomas Butts, explaining that he had "written this Poem from immediate Dictation...without Premeditation & even against [his] Will" ("The Letters", website). A few weeks later, Blake sensed an urgency to elaborate the subject, sending Butts another comment about his poem:

I may praise it, since I dare not pretend to be any other than the Secretary; the Authors are in Eternity. I consider it as the Grandest Poem that this World Contains ("The Letters", website).

Thus, works such as *The Four Zoas*, *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, *America a Prophecy* or *Europe: a Prophecy* represent writings which are labelled as prophetic books. However, contrary to Blake's previously mentioned evaluation of the

significance of his visions, Alfred Kazin suggests that the prophetic aspect in Blake's books may sometimes be overemphasized:

It is impossible, for anyone who has studied the Prophetic Books carefully, to see him [Blake] as an enraptured scribe singing above the clouds. His visions in these books were an attempt to force down his own uneasiness. He could find peace only by creating an epic world so singularly his own that it would supplant every other (Kazin, website).

Although Kazin does not support the claim of Blake being an artist who obtained the subject of his writings solely through visions, he does not refute the argument either. It cannot be doubted, however, that Blake perceived himself as a prophetic writer. Therefore, the question is to what extent his inspiration should be attributed to the visionary skill and what credit should be assigned to other stimulative impulses.

It has been suggested that another source of Blake's visions could have its origin in literature, which he largely collected and studied. Prior to examining individual literary genres and authors that could have impacted him, it should also be remembered that Blake did not receive any formal education neither did he conceal his hostile attitude towards the traditional form of schooling. He openly expressed his opinion about schools when saying: "There is no use in education, I hold it wrong. It is the great Sin. It is eating of the tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil" (as qtd. in Ackroyd 10). On the one hand, Blake expressed his scorn for gaining knowledge at educational institutions, but on the other, he resolutely devoted himself to self-development through extensive reading and private study. Ackroyd points out that such an autodidactic approach could have been the cause for Blake's often defective usage of the language, claiming that "his spelling and grammar are never orthodox, and he was maladroit with figures of any kind" (11). Even though Blake rebelled against education, he was a fond reader of all literature available to him at that time.

Since his parents belonged to a nonconformist church, the Bible represented a subject of Blake's regular and thorough reading. In many of his illustrations, Blake portrayed a scene with a number of people gathered around a person who reads from an open book¹. This could have been a scene in which Blake frequently participated at home during his youth. As Ackroyd states "his [Blake's] early biographers do agree upon a single aspect of his childhood, however, since it is one that affected his entire

¹ Such an example can be found on plate #3 of Songs of Innocence

life – his closest and most significant attachment was to the Bible” (13). Blake’s paintings frequently contained an Old or New Testament character, used a story based on the Bible, or at least implemented an allegory to a biblical motif. The inspiration Blake drew from the Bible also saturated his entire poetry. Ackroyd summarizes that

Blake’s poetry and painting are imbued with biblical motifs and images; the very curve and cadence of his sentences are derived from the Old Testament, while his passages of ritualistic description and denunciation come from the words of the great prophets that were heard in the house in Broad Street² (13).

The books that Blake read and admired were also outside the orthodox biblical context. At the age of fourteen, he began to conduct his first poetic experiments which were largely under the influence of works by Edmund Spenser and John Milton. The books of the latter of the two poets affected Blake in such a way that he did not only wish to imitate his inspiring predecessor, but endeavoured to rewrite Milton’s most appraised poem, *Paradise Lost*. Ackroyd mentions one characteristic typical of both Milton and Blake which could have caused young Blake to become an adherent of his literary idol:

Both of them were in the line of inspired poets whose mission was to arouse England from spiritual slumber and fulfil its Covenant; both of them asserted the primal grace of this country when, as Milton put it, ‘our ancient Druids’ created ‘the cathedral of philosophy’. God, he wrote, ‘hath yet ever had this island under the special indulgent eye of his providence’. Or, in Blake’s words, ‘All things begin & end, in Albions Ancient Druid Rockey Shore’ (327).

Above all, Blake believed that the spiritual inheritance Britain had once received could never perish. A hope that the splendour and glory of the British Isles would emerge in a new form of spiritual awakening within a reformed nation persisted his complete work. Such adoration of his country’s history had its origin in another literary era of which Blake had been a fervent admirer: the Gothic period

As Ackroyd suggests, Blake’s “education in what Nicholas Hawksmoor once called the hidden tradition of ‘The English Gothick’ proceeded indirectly, however, and almost fortuitously” (43). The incident, which Ackroyd mentions as an incentive for Blake’s avidity by the Gothic art, happened during the artist’s apprenticeship as an engraver in a workshop of James Basire. Until two other trainees arrived to the

² The house in Broad Street in London was a place where William Blake was born and spent most of his childhood

workshop, Blake had been an exemplary apprentice. However, the disputes between the two newcomers and the strong personality of William Blake began to grow in its intensity. This compelled their master to send Blake to nearby Westminster Abbey in order to obtain copies of statues, busts and sepulchres for a work which Basire had been commissioned (43,44).

Blake, who was thrilled by a sudden discovery of the historical wealth in Westminster Abbey, spent several weeks working among its walls. According to his early biographers, “Blake used to climb on top of the grey or black marble tombs, in order better to capture the solemn repose of their occupants, ‘frequently standing on the monument, and viewing the figures from the top’” (as qtd. in Ackroyd 45). The young artist, whose posting to Westminster was to copy the tombs of the English kings, became enchanted by the multitude of the artistic objects which appealed to his aesthetic imagination. As an example, Ackroyd mentions the portrait of the Ancient of Days extending over the tomb of Richard II which fascinated Blake so much that he imitated the picture of the “old man” during his whole life (46). Surely, Blake must have been also inspired by the tombs of the monarchs inserted into the stone floor of Westminster Abbey, since he later reintroduced a number of figures lying or hovering in the same position as he had observed in the “temple built by Albion’s Children”. Providing a summary, Ackroyd maintains that

these “Gothic” memorials became the source and inspiration of his [Blake’s] art: here “he found a treasure, which he knew how to value. He saw the simple and plain road to the style of art which he aimed, unentangled in the intricate windings of modern practice”... He found in the “Gothic” statuary and paintings of the Abbey – and in the great body of the church itself – what he ever afterwards called “true Art”, a sacred art, an art of vision rather than verisimilitude or proportion”. To Blake, Gothic art seemed to show heaven in the world, and the world in heaven... (46, 48).

Parallel, or even prior to his positioning in Westminster, Blake was entirely taken with painters that he considered to be the real “Masters of Art”. To one of his early biographers, Blake mentioned “Raphael and Michael Angelo, Martin Hemskerck and Albert Dürer, Julio Romano and the rest of the historic class” as the artists whom he greatly admired already as a young apprentice (as qtd. in Ackroyd 29). Ackroyd further points out that “these are certainly exotic choices for a child, especially since they were considered to be hard, dry, almost ‘Gothick’, and quite out of the contemporary

fashion” (40). Thus, it is no surprise that Blake became a subject of mockery and ridicule for his unconcealed admiration for these artists. Some time after a quarrel with Sir Joshua Reynolds, a master at the Royal Academy Schools where the young artist became a student in 1779, Blake made a note about another incident that occurred between him and George Michael Moser, Royal Academy’s first keeper and one of the teachers:

I was once looking over the Prints from Rafael & Michael Angelo. in the Library of the Royal Academy Moser came to me & said You should not Study these old Hard Stiff & Dry Unfinished Works of Art, Stay a little & I will shew you what you should Study. He then went & took down Le Burns & Rubens’s Galleries How I did secretly Rage. I also spoke my Mind I said to Moser, These things that you call Finished are not Even Begun how can they then, be Finishd? The Man who does not know The Beginning, never can know the End of Art (as qtd. in Ackroyd 62).

Blake insisted that it were the “stiff and dry” painters and engravers to whom the Academy students should look up. Himself, he was inspired by their clear and distinct line which “achieves complex effects of light and space without ever losing the balance and drama of composition” (Ackroyd 30). Blake’s passion for the “Masters of Art” did not cease during his whole life, suggesting that Blake perceived the Gothic artist as the best possible models to learn from.

In addition to the direct effect of the Gothic style, Blake was also largely under the influence of the contemporary Gothic revival. Ackroyd reports that Blake was a fond reader of Gothic fiction and “even copied out some lines from Ann Redcliffe’s bestseller of 1794, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, onto the back of one of his prints” (186). It is also known that the artist was familiar with Matthew Lewis’ *The Monk*, a real “shocker”, as characterised by Alexander (202). The origin of the Gothic fiction, a literary genre combining features of horror and romance, is often attributed to Horace Wallpole and his *The Castle of Otranto: A Gothic Story*. Horace claimed to have found the motif for the story in a manuscript by Onuphrio Muralto, and developed its individual fragments into a model of the Gothic fiction. Its prominent elements revolved around horror and mystery scenes in haunted houses and Gothic castles. Stories involved features of mystery, supernatural, secrets and madness. As Alexander claims, “manuscripts were all the rage” at that time, and cycles of works, which claimed to have its origin in medieval and distant past, were becoming increasingly popular (202).

One such cycle, often referred to as Ossian³, was supposedly discovered and collected by James Macpherson who translated it from its ancient Gaelic language. Although some critics, particularly Dr Johnson, tried to decline its popularity when challenging the authenticity of Macpherson's Ossian, the cycle of poems enjoyed phenomenal success not only in London but also among many European artists. Blake did not succumb to the disputes over Ossian's genuineness; instead, he felt deep fascination for Macpherson's supposed discovery. Ackroyd states that

in Ossian's work he [Blake] discovered an extraordinary landscape of heaths and ghosts, of dreams and yews and misty hills. The themes were of battles lost and won, of youth destroyed and betrayed, all conveyed in the sublime cadence of presumed antiquity (49).

Apart from Ossian, Blake could draw inspiration from other authors of medieval poetry such as Thomas Chatterton. Similarly to Macpherson, Chatterton also imitated archaic sources of literature, making use of medieval manuscripts which were kept at St Mary Redcliffe, Bristol. Having created an imaginary poet Thomas Rowley, Chatterton copied the manuscripts from Bristol and pronounced his invented character to be the originator of the poetry. Leaving aside the fact that such falsification provoked further discussion about the validity of this literary genre, Chatterton greatly contributed to the source of Blake's imagination. Ackroyd claims that Chatterton "divined a truth and acquired the authority of the past in a manner unavailable to the orthodox scholars and fashionable critics of the period" (50). Such authority appealed to Blake who had been striving for a fresh look at the history of the British Isles with its necessary revival of the patriotic and sacred image. Shortly before his death, Blake openly confessed his preoccupation with the mediievally-appearing literature:

I Believe both Macpherson & Chatterton, that what they say is Ancient, Is so... I own myself an admirer of Ossian equally with any other Poet whatever Rowley & Chatterton also (as qtd. in Ackroyd 50).

It may seem that Blake became a pariah who was not accepted nor did he accept the society in which he lived. Kazin comments on this when saying that "to measure the full depth of Blake's alienation from his age is impossible. Like Tharmas in *The Four Zoas*, he felt himself 'a famish'd Eagle, raging in the vast expanse'" (website). Nevertheless,

³ The person of Ossian was said to be a third-century oral Irish bard whose narrative eipcs presented a subject of its hero Fingal.

there were times when Blake liberated himself from the obsession with his ancient idols, and endeavoured to approach the society in order to draw the inspiration from its modern and pioneering movements.

Although Blake never became an advocate of one particular literary or religious orientation, some thoughts or systems occupied his mind more than the others. This was also the case of a Swedish scientist, theologian and mystic Emmanuel Swedenborg. Swedenborg was said to have conversations with angels and ghosts – concrete experiences which led him to founding a twisted doctrine based on Christian faith. He did not wish to compare it to theology or philosophy since its basic principle was derived from personal dreams and visions. Ackroyd quotes one of Swedenborg's beliefs that "immediately on the Death of the material body, (which will never be re-assumed), man rises again as to his spiritual or substantial body, wherein he existeth in perfect human form" and adds that this was "one of Swedenborg's most remarkable doctrines, since it suggests that the spiritual form takes human shape and that heaven or hell are extensions of our human desires and capacities" (Ackroyd 101). Blake was eager to accept such theories because, firstly, he also shared the opinion that there should be no separation of the spiritual and earthly world, which, in fact, he saw as one; and secondly, the complete theological system that Swedenborg proposed attracted his attention particularly for its unity and homogeneity. Even though Blake and his wife initially attended meetings of the Swedenborgian New Church, they abandoned their co-belief with Swedenborgians after several months.

After a few years, Blake had a similar burst of enthusiasm for the mystical writings of Paracelsus or Jacob Behmen. The two visionaries believed that they were unveiling the ancient sources of wisdom, which Blake had strived for all his life. Since their doctrines concentrated on visible signs and symbols of God's existence in this world, Blake could have felt strong attraction to such declaration. As a result, he once noted that he knew "of no other Christianity and of no other Gospel than the liberty both of body & mind to exercise the Divine Arts of the Imagination" (as qtd. in Ackroyd 151). Nonetheless, Paracelsus and Behmen's doctrine could not entirely merge with the spiritual world of Blake, and therefore the artist also dismissed their beliefs.

Thus, Blake could be seen as a man seriously contemplating about the spiritual arrangement of the world. In Preface to his poem Milton, Blake wrote

I will not cease from Mental Fight
Nor shall my Sword sleep in my hand;
Till we have built Jerusalem,
In Englands green & pleasant Land (“The Letters” website).

Nevertheless, he was unable to associate himself fully with any organisation, doctrine or movement which would provide him with a satisfactory view on questions he had tried to address. It is important to remember that Blake’s concern was not with one minor issue but with the whole complexity of the spiritual and material worlds. To provide a balanced view, it needs to be said that, in many cases, Blake did not strive for agreement with others at all cost. From his early childhood he was an obstinate man who “despised restraints & rules, so much that his Father dare not send him to School” (as qtd. in Ackroyd 10). Consequently, it was perhaps due to his rebellious personality that he felt uneasy to adjust to requirements of one particular system and fully accept it. Thus, when he could not find an adequate system, he had to create one himself. In Jerusalem, Blake let his central character Los express how the artist could have felt: “I must Create a System. or be enslave’d by another Mans I will not Reason & Compare: my business is to Create” (Bindman 449). As a result, Blake created a large mythological system of facts derived from various ancient sources of wisdom that he had respected. The system was to represent an antipole to contemporary faith in mechanical nature and deistic revelation. He was to include this mythology in most of his later works.

Although all close attention has been paid to Blake so far, he had one faithful companion who deserves a special treatment. In 1782, William married his wife Catherine Boucher who became his lifelong confidant and assistant. In spite of the fact that their marriage remained childless, it was described by many as a successful and trouble-free relationship. William Hayley depicted the marriage and the personality of Catherine Blake during the Blakes’ three-year stay at his house as

the only female on Earth, who could have suited Him [Blake] exactly. They have been married more than 17 years & are as fond of each other as if their Honey Moon were still shining – They live in a neat little cottage, which they both regard as the most delightful residence ever inhabited by a mortal; they have no servant : - the good woman not only does all the work of the House, but she even makes the greatest part of her Husband’s dress, & assists him in his art – she draws, she engraves, & sings delightfully & is so truly the Half of her good man, that they seem animated by one Soul, & that a soul of indefatigable Industry &

benevolence – it sometimes hurries them both to labour rather too much... (as qtd. in Ackroyd 243, 244).

Even though their married life did not show many signs of disagreement, in the first years of their marriage Catherine expressed her “general discontent with her husband’s opinions on sexual matters” (Ackroyd 78). Ackroyd continues to describe Blake’s “interest in the practices of sexual magic” which also passed into his poems:

Yet in his poetry there are also images of fear and revulsion; the horror of the female (together with the horror of passivity and softness) is forcefully expressed, while the dread of female power and female domination becomes a constant refrain. There are powerful hymns to sexuality, as opening the gate into eternity and inspiration, but their power is of rhetorical and often impersonal kind (78).

Regarding the professional life, Blake found in Catherine a flexible and laborious assistant. Although Catherine was illiterate, as Kazin claims, Blake taught her to read and write, and introduced her to the secrets of engraving and colouring (website). Ackroyd says that Catherine “‘was the devil’ in charge of the press work, including both the paper and the printing, while Blake busied himself over the inking of the plates” (190). Despite the lack of professional skills, Catherine was a helpful and patient wife who enabled Blake to devote himself to work and develop his method of relief etching, as will be seen later.

3.2 Váchal and spirituality

The first half of the twentieth century brought a boom of various movements and modern aesthetic styles. It would be quite inconceivable to suggest that the period had no or little impact on Váchal's artistic production. As Jůlius Hůlek states,

Váchal rose from Art Nouveau's Symbolism and Decorativism...and his work exhibits a strong Expressionist tendency... We can also trace elements of geometric abstraction...and surprising links particularly with surrealism (307, 308).

In spite of the fact that the features of these movements can undoubtedly be discovered in many of the artist's works, Váchal rarely expressed nor admitted their major influence upon his own production. In October 1919, Váchal sent a letter to Sigismund Bouška in which he announced commencing "a new phase of his Expressionist painting" (as qtd. in Olič 2000, 96). Although this may seem as a contradiction to what has been said, in the following sentence of the same letter Váchal adds a bit of detachment and apathy when saying: "Perhaps somebody of the dead Expressionists is leading my hand" (96). This could demonstrate that Váchal was well aware of the movements and groups of artists which surrounded him, but, for reasons which may be unveiled later, did not want to fully associate with any of them. Olič summarises that "the artist's contempt for contemporary art and cultural centres is pronounced in a number of letters which Váchal sent to his friends" (Olič 1993, 175). Overall, to some movements, however, Váchal felt more attracted than to those from the period in which he lived. Romanticism can be given as one such example.

In his *HOVĚZÍ NA DIVOKO aneb KOŠÍŘSKÉ NÁMLUVY neboli OSUDNÍ NÁSLEDKOVÉ půjčeného Dějepisů města Prahy*, Váchal calls himself a late Romantic writer:

My eyes rested on the shelf above where the boots, which Eva had sent to me, awaited to be put on for the first time. They are said to have come from a murderer, as the coats I wear from the suicides, like a late Romantic, not being a rheumatic (as qtd. in Olič 1993, 241).

Although the ironic tone of this quote considerably devalues Váchal's self-labelling as the Romantic writer, it is not the only argument for which the poet should be seen as a descendant of more typical Romantics. However, it needs to be said that Váchal was by

no means an adherent of the official branch of Romanticism. Olič comments on this saying that

Váchal knew well that there were two kinds of Romantic literature. Of course, he rejected its officially propagated form as championed by the literary history. Compared to the so-called Romanticism of literary salons (represented by writers such as Goethe, Schiller, Byron and others), Váchal professed the other 'illegitimate' branch – folk or trivial Romanticism. This branch of Romanticism produced most of the often anonymous works... (Olič 1993, 154).

Váchal's image of Romantic literature corresponded with its official trend in the aspect of individualism. As a child born out of wedlock, Váchal soon realised that he was not to lead an easy and comfortable life. He never became a long-lasting adherent of any of the artistic movements, except for a group *Sursum*, of which he became one of the co-founders. Eventually, he resigned his membership of the group in 1911, announcing his decision in a letter to Emil Pacovský:

...my stay in Sursum would lead to nothing good, neither for me nor for You. As for making further sacrifice for the cause and working with those who a man loves, I would not mind that, but to swallow insincere insults and jests like sweets on one hand, and infantile pride on the other, for that I am, my boy, a bit too hard... (as qtd. in Olič 1993, 44).

In his Memoirs, Váchal later explained that he "could not follow in movements...which he did not want to understand, without the need of making compromises (1995, 202,). Therefore, Váchal could be seen as a highly individualistic and solitary artist whose intention was, by no means, to blend in with the contemporary society and its respective movements. Instead, Olič sees him as a person who made every possible effort to avoid the people's company, when saying that

Váchal – as a true Romantic – longed to find the sources of human sentiment; he adored nature and wanted to compare the secrets of primeval forests in the Bohemian Forest with the forests in Slovakia (Olič 1993, 136).

Consequently, one of Váchal's long-lasting passions, which he continued to pursue during his life, became travelling. He organised and made extended trips all over Czechoslovakia, frequently walking distances of hundreds of kilometres. The Giant Mountains, southern Bohemia, the Bohemian Forest, and Slovakia belonged to his most popular destinations. Váchal marked the visited places on the map together with notes he made into his diary about the sites where he had sensed an extraordinary presence of

Romantic and mythological elements. The Bohemian Forest, to which Váchal travelled repeatedly, became a valuable source of his inspiration. According to Olič, “Váchal believed the Bohemian Forest was the Devil’s favourite turf” (Olič 1993, 133). However, the artist did not exalt the entire area of the mountains, explaining that under such a term he understood

only the unspoiled corner of the border area beyond the part, which too cultivated and adjusted to human interests, even the Royal forest with the Black and the Devil’s lakes, constitute a modern form of Stromovka.⁴ But even farther from there, where until now wetlands, where masses of wood not touched by bark beetle decay and rot, and where human steps rarely enter, there lies the typical Bohemian Forest (as qtd. in Olič 2000, 156).

The described parts of his popular destination were imprinted in many of Váchal’s works, for example in *Šumava umírající a romantická*. Its reader and viewer could admire dark woods full of secret nooks and crannies, fast-flowing streams, moorlands, storms, blizzards, dying old trees – places and objects of Váchal’s thrill and possibly also visions. Similar descriptions of nature scenes were to evoke feelings and emotions which would elevate the spirit of its audience. Besides, Váchal did not hesitate to involve aspects of dread and horror which he had seen in works of Edvard Munch.

Munch, whose exhibition in Prague impacted a number of Czech artists, was the first painter who took the courage to portray horror. As Olič states, “it was not horror of death, but primarily horror of life, youth, uncertainty, sex – horror unnamed and unnameable” (Olič 1993, 24). Váchal also visited Munch’s exhibition and, according to Olič, left with a “deep emotional experience” (1993, 11). It could have appealed to him particularly for its resemblance with the style which the artist admired ever since he was a small boy: the Baroque.

Váchal was a collector and a fond reader of various literary genres with obvious preference in medieval and Baroque literature. He manifested a thorough knowledge of literature from the Baroque period in *Komika z doby temna*. In this book, written in a form of a lecture, Váchal becomes a powerful advocate of the Baroque genre, for which he “only had admiration and words of appreciation” (Olič 1993, 149). Another work which proves to be largely under the influence of the Baroque style could be seen in *Přírodopis strašidel* for which Váchal drew motifs from various fields, but, as Olič

⁴ Váchal probably refers to a nature reserve in Prague, originally known as the Royal Park

mentions, his “most dominant source and literary models remain to be writers of the Baroque period” (Olič 1993, 109). As Olič also claims, Váchal particularly referred to or quoted from works by Štěpán Rájecký, Tobiáš Pacovský or Antonín Koniáš (1993, 109). *Přírodopis strašidel* may also explain why the Baroque literature raised so much interest for Váchal. Faithful to its name, the book introduces a unique and extensive list of supernatural creatures, which the artist claimed to have encountered. The detailed inventory could have served only an informative function, but, together with the formal arrangement, it seems more likely that its purpose was to provoke fearful and horrific feelings, so much characteristic for the Baroque literature.

Having mentioned that Váchal was an enthusiastic collector of books, it needs to be added that his desired literary genres, for which he was particularly willing to pay a large sum of money, fell also into the Baroque style. Josef Portman, whom the artist commissioned to acquire any book of worth, became one of Váchal’s providers of the so called *bloody novels* and *market songs*. Both of these genres date back to the Baroque period and represent a folk or trivial form of the official Baroque literature. A *market song* may refer to a primitive song drama with a static illustration to support the lyrical story, as well as to an independent form of Czech folk singing with texts printed out in order to unify the content and help its distribution. A *bloody novel* represents a trivial genre on the periphery of literature with all characteristic features of the novel. Its exceptionality, however, lies in the content of the plot, which usually describes a number of independent stories lacking in logical sequencing alongside the grotesque and humorous language it uses. Váchal became a collector and an enthusiast of these two styles in literature. It was not uncommon that he read and studied the books more than once. By this, he acquired a thorough knowledge of the structure of such books and could attempt to write his own imitations of the original *market songs* or *bloody novels*. Besides these two genres, Váchal also closely followed literature which provided him with information on issues concerning the religious and theosophical movements of that time.

Theosophical literature played a significant importance in Váchal’s life. As a boy he was introduced to theosophical and psychic circles by his father, Josef Aleš, with an intention to protect his son from the growing influence of anarchism. As Olič describes,

the theosophical society represented a sort of a higher qualitative degree of contemporary gnosticism (its threat had been crawling across Europe), an attempt to surpass spiritualism....and not only that: theosophy confidently asserted itself into a place that had been reserved for philosophy and theology (Olič 1993, 19).

The rapidly spreading Theosophical society endeavoured to study ancient religions, philosophies and sciences in order to search for new psychic forces inside the human body. In many areas it was related to occult or magical movements, widely employing instruments of mediums and prophecies. The theosophical movement was comprised of so many streams and trends that, on its global level, it demonstrated a great amount of disunity. Even though it has been said that Váchal never belonged to a particular group, his deep attachment to the Czech Theosophical Society, which commenced from his teens, is the exception to the rule. In a preface to *Slovníček barev a linií*, he recalled his beginnings in the Theosophical society:

As a sixteen-year old, I whirled directly into a lately established Theosophical society in Prague. Since that time, I drank deeply from anything that smacked of the Unknown and had a taste of ‘the other side’...at the beginning gathered especially from Čupr’s old Indian doctrine and other German translations. Later, we proceeded to honour the literature from France. Karel Weinfurter, an intellect unusual for his destiny, assisted greatly in directing the study of the occult sciences. Supporters of spirituality long divided themselves into believers and seekers (as qtd. in Olič 1993, 20).

In addition, Váchal became an avid reader of *Lotus*, a magazine of the theosophical society. Olič states that the period in which Váchal showed his most intensive interest and participation in occult sciences culminated around 1903 when the artist “was attending private seances in Schnik’s studio, and notoriously known seances in the cellar studio of a sculptor Ladislav Šaloun” (Olič 1993, 20). In the same place Olič mentions that the walls of Šaloun’s studio, where the spiritual meetings took place, were painted with deep red from ox blood.

Besides its “magical” meaning, these decorated rooms could have had other impact on the young artist. After Váchal purchased his own studio in Prague, he decided to “beautify” its rooms with similar ghastly paintings as he had seen at Šaloun’s. Olič describes the studio as “half a craftsman’s workshop, and the rest as a magical study, a studio and a bedroom” (Olič 1993, 127). One may assume that Váchal adopted a taste for room decorating since, between 1921 – 1924, he repeatedly travelled to Litomyšl to

visit his friend Josef Portman who commissioned him with painting a small-town house in which he lived. Váchal accepted the request and spent several months in Litomyšl. The result of his work was astonishing. The whole house, at present the town's tourist sight known as Portmoneum, had been converted into a bizarre daunting place to live in. Váchal decorated the walls, ceilings, as well as many pieces of furniture with incredibly horrific scenes and devilish figures of his imagination, often using motifs he had embraced through the engagement with the Theosophical society. Even though this is only one example how Váchal utilised his obsession with dark spirituality, it serves the purpose of illustrating the significance which the mystical and magical forces played in his life. In a catalogue published on the occasion of Váchal's exhibition in Prague in 2005, Rumjana Dačeva summarises that

the theosophical doctrine, devoted to exposing secrete spiritual facts, attracted Váchal's attention so much that it became his lifelong interest. It opened to him a way to realize and comprehend his own irrational experiences, as well as provided him with a platform for intellectual and artistic production which helped release his inner self from curses of anxious state of mind. Intuitively, Váchal sensed a great life theme with a wide range of motifs that could be imbued with his visions (7).

Similar to other members of the Theosophical society, Váchal also proudly boasted of his visionary skills. According to Olič, Váchal's visionary experiences found their origin in the time when the artist worked as a book-binding worker in the workshop of Antonín Bechberger. Olič recollects how Váchal often "woke up in the middle of the night and, with terror in his eyes, he observed how something was pulling down his duvet" (Olič 1993, 18). In *Paměti*, Váchal returned to these events and tried to provide an explanation for his experiences, stating that a large amount of his visions could have been caused by his wild and pubescent fantasy (70). On the one hand, he may have tried to downplay the sources of his experiences in childish dreams, but on the other he acknowledged that such visions and hallucinations had a dominant and irreplaceable role in process of his production. Olič quotes an excerpt from one of Váchal's early works, where the artist admits that higher and supernatural forces were commonly present during his process of writing:

The blue coat turned its colour into green and biting light poured out of a burning Turquoise. The green colour of adultery was boiling and changed into the colour of copper. In the willows, there I saw a goat, full of shamelessness,

with a weird genital, and on its back a courtesan lounged. I heard a singing artist, singing the hymns of love... (as qtd. in Olič 1993, 36).

It needs to be mentioned that, although categorically denied by Váchal, his experiments with consumption and inhalation of plant extracts could also have impacted his sensitive abilities to obtain visions and hallucinations. Leaving aside that even Olič refuses these experiments, which Váchal executed on his own body, to “have any impact on his artistic production” (Olič 1993, 83), the fact that Váchal was a heavily addicted tobacco smoker and a frequent consumer of alcohol could support and advance the argument about the cause of his visions. However, even if Váchal were seen as a visionary mystic, the lack of attention and publicity that his supernatural character traits received must have been greatly demotivating for him.

Nevertheless, there is no doubt that the artist perceived art as a means of propagating spiritualism in the contemporary world. This was also the reason why he became an agile promoter of establishing a literary group which tried to foster awareness of spirituality not only in the artistic circles but also help in spreading it among the public. The group *Sursum*, which was founded on the initiative of Emil Pacovský, and of which Váchal was a leading member, held such a belief. As Olič proposes, the *Sursum* members were expressing their “conviction about the spiritual mission of art and the role of an artist as a missionary of spirituality” (Olič 1993, 39). The core *Sursum* group felt deeply dissatisfied with the ideological and spiritual climate of the Czech society and began to strive for its restoration. Olič further suggests that the *Sursum* group comprised artists of diverse beliefs and ideas such as catholics, protestants, atheists, buddhists or anarchists - they all could unite on one single clause of their creed: the spirituality (43). As it has been mentioned, Váchal eventually resigned his membership of *Sursum*. His obsession for occult and magical sciences, however, continued to prosper during his whole life.

Since all these personal interests must have reflected themselves in Váchal’s works, it was no surprise that the prophetic and occult books were perceived as something shocking by large public of the early twentieth century. The same effect was incurred by books dealing with issues of eroticism, such as *Erotikové*.

In an epilogue to this book, Jaroslav Anděl mentions a story, according to which

Josef Váchal recalls how, at the beginning of 1913, he received a visit from two young Czech women writers who reacted to his work in an interesting fashion: '...they advised Deml and me to devote ourselves more to eroticism and to mysticism. (!)' (Váchal 2001, 62).

And this is, perhaps, what Váchal did. Possibly under the influence of Edvard Munch, Váchal could be seen as a protagonist of pornographic art in Czech culture. He produced works with erotic themes as early as in the first decade of the twentieth century. Besides nude photography, the artist created a set of erotic playing cards and expressed symbols of eroticism in many of his works. *Erotikové* accounts among the most characteristic of such works. As Anděl suggests, Váchal created this series

at a time of social and political turmoil. However, the collection was also inspired by events in his own emotional life. In 1920 he made the acquaintance of the painter Anna Macková and in the course of that same year their friendship developed into a passionate love affair (Váchal 2001, 62).

The fact which needs to make this quotation complete is that Váchal's wife Marie was at that time on the point of dying, suffering from tuberculosis. Quite puritanically it could be suggested that Váchal's sense of traditional Christian values, of which he was aware, did not prevent him from developing an adulterous relationship with Anna Macková. Thus, one may propose that the emotional and sexual aspects in his life were so apparent and strong that Váchal not only drew his inspiration from it, but also considered it to be his opponent and adversary. This may also be the reason why Váchal did not gain a better appreciation among the adherents of the Czech Catholic Modernism.

He was well acquainted with members of this literary group since some of them later became the co-founders of the Sursum organisation. Olič claims that Váchal may have also been a subscriber and a regular reader of its magazine called *Meditace* (Olič 1993, 39). Some of the Catholic Modernists admired Váchal's indisputable talent of a graphic designer and invited the artist to illustrate their books. This was the case with a Catholic priest and publisher Josef Florián who felt a strong urgency to preserve the great works of some of the world authors, particularly French, and thus set up his own publishing house in Stará Říše. Since he knew and highly regarded Váchal's graphic works, Florián invited the artist to his house with an intention to discuss a possibility of their mutual co-operation. It may be due to their common attraction to the medieval

literature that a sudden but short relationship between the artists began to develop. Váchal repeatedly travelled to Stará Říše to visit the educated publisher and expressed his fascination for Florián's neatness and piety. On the contrary, Florián quickly recognised Váchal's fondness for dark spiritualism and in a letter articulated his concern for Váchal's religious orientation:

For that matter we hope that, one day, you will come to your senses and finish flirting with devils, at least before the general people. We hope so even more since it is our most faithful and best friends who are then harmed by such deeds in the first place (as qtd. in Olič 2000, 60).

Even though their friendship was thwarted by dissimilar views on religious issues, Váchal's search for true spiritual experiences within Christianity also continued during his deployment on the front line during the First World War. Váchal's engagement in the army duties in Sočia near the Italian border had a dramatic impact on the artist who had long been contemplating the genuineness of diverse religions. His twenty-eight-page booklet *Modlitby (Prayers)* can provide an example of a significantly Christian-orientated publication which Váchal created amidst the fights of the war. As Olič says, it contained 30 coloured illustrations bound in manually-carved covers which "Váchal carried with him during the war, almost like a charm" (Olič I 86).

At this point, one more poet from the circle of Christian Modernism should be mentioned – Jakub Deml. He entered into conversation with Váchal regarding the illustrations to his *Hrad smrti*. It is likely that the two artists may have first been introduced by Josef Florián whose ecclesiastical Christian attitude Váchal rejected almost ten years before. Although Deml's formal occupation of a priest may not have left a profound impression on a renowned graphic designer, his fellow-poet's writings met with Váchal's wide acclaim. On receiving Deml's request to illustrate *Hrad smrti*, Váchal felt delighted and honoured for being commissioned for such work. In a letter to Deml, Váchal expressed his admiration for the poem and also mentioned the uneasiness he felt about being assigned the illustrative contribution to the book:

Your Worship! Indeed, THE CASTLE OF DEATH is a good and powerful thing such has never been written in the Czech lands. Surely, the friends in Modern Revue would be delighted by it. Once I used to adore Poe immensely and my soul was filled with pictures to go with his terrific descriptions; but all has faded away now! And, frankly, I am afraid to do any work on Your Book; I do not trust my force since I would not like to weaken the effect of Your words. (Deml, appendix).

Váchal eventually completed the illustrations to Deml's book and their partnership continued to develop for a few more months. Following a similar pattern as with Florián, however, Deml also began to realise that the spirits which provided the artists with inspiration were unlike. In a letter dated from 1913, Deml officially announced to Váchal that their friendship was to wreck: "...I plead with you - if you meet me by chance either in a cafe or in church or in a street, please ignore me. Being an artist, you must understand my reasons better than anyone else" (as qtd. in Olič 1993, 62). In a correspondence with one of his friends, Deml clarified the argument for which he wished to lose the contact with Váchal: "...well, I saw through and became terrified to the core of my soul: I beheld that Váchal was possessed" (as qtd. in Olič 1993, 62).

These two collapsed friendships may best illustrate the spiritual balance in Váchal's life. On the one hand, there can be no doubt that Váchal's strong conviction about the importance of religion attracted him most evidently to Christianity. On the other hand, he never abandoned his lifelong interest in theosophical and occult sciences, which, perhaps, prevented him from closer contact with members of the Catholic Modernism. As Dačeva maintains,

Váchal remained fluctuating half way between God and Devil....The spiritual atmosphere of the Catholic magazine [Meditation] provoked Váchal's interest in medieval and Christian mysticism which temporarily distracted him from the occult....however, he believed in the omnipotence and power of imagination, and the process of his production interpreted as coincidence of higher cosmic powers (9,11).

Finally, a brief mention should be made to Váchal's partner Anna Macková with whom the artist lived since the death of his wife in 1922. In an excerpt from *Krvavý román*, Váchal describes a scene in which he acts under a pseudonym of Mr Paseka and Anna Macková is given a name of Anna Kocourková:

Old Paseka listened stoutly to curses muttered from her charming lips. This lady, given a name Anna Kocourková, was a companion of Paseka's publishing house. She was a fairly decent girl, with a sympathetic appearance and excellent cuisine. The villain Paseka held on to her especially because she cooked for him and Tarzan so deliciously that the old dog never complained. Apart from that, Paseka borrowed money from her for his publishing house... (Váchal 1990, 248 - 249).

Although imbued with irony, these words may well suggest how the relationship of these two artists was organised in reality. Similar to Váchal, Anna Macková was a graphic designer and thus became his personal assistant. On many occasions her responsibility included setting up fonts or observance over the bookbinder's press. Despite the fact that she was considerably younger than Váchal, Macková became his patron and supporter. When they left Prague, they moved in Studeňany and stayed in a house which used to belong to Macková's parents. Especially towards the end of their lives, there were events when Macková performed a more dominant role in their household. In 1958, without Váchal's awareness, she signed and submitted for him an application form into the Artist's Union – a step which Váchal would never have consented with. Overall, she was a faithful and close companion, sharing a significant portion in Váchal's artistic production who never received any acknowledgement from his fellow artist.

4.1 Blake and the Illuminated book

As has been said, visions and the new method of relief etching were the key factors in emergence of William Blake's *illuminated books* – works which represent the unification of textual and pictorial media through poetry and illustrations. Such symbiosis of these two forms was by no means unusual for art in the eighteenth century. In fact, the first efforts to combine writing and text could be noticed a long time before Blake reinvented its modern alternative. Therefore, the question cannot be posed whether Blake demonstrated a combination of poetry and illustrations in his works, nor if he should be assigned the ownership of the copyright for the *illuminated books*. The issue which this part addresses, however, is to suggest reasons for combining the poetical verses and paintings as well as define devices by which Blake endeavoured to achieve his ambitious objective.

Having mentioned that Blake was not the first artist who originated the idea of joining poetry and illustrations, it should be mentioned that such a procedure was commonly used for production of manuscripts by printing centres in the Middle Ages. The skills of reading and writing were rare among the public in the twelfth century and literacy was almost exclusively reserved to monks, aristocracy and men in higher position. Thus, monasteries became centres of book production employing specially trained monks in order to copy the manuscripts by hand in designated workshops known as scriptoriums. Such manuscripts constituted real works of art, especially for its ornamental illustrations executed by illuminators. However, the lengthy and skill-demanding process performed separately by scribes and illuminators signified the cost of such works as well as their restricted availability. Since the beginning of the twelfth century, the concept of books began to undergo important changes particularly in distribution of texts and illustrations. According to Pravoslav Kneidl, the full-page illustrations and Romanesque painted initials were replaced by “petty pictures which comprised a fundamental element of delicately painted Gothic initials” (35). Consequently, such an alternation meant a gradual shift of importance from textual component to the pictorial expression of the painting. The transition also became noticeable in usage of different terminology – the word *illumination* gradually

developed into a new term, *illustration*. Perhaps it was the rising importance of illustration which revived the long-time argument over the status of poetry and painting.

Horace, one of the greatest Latin poets, first gave notice to the delicate balance and close alliance of the two arts, suggesting their mutual dependence upon each other. *Ut pictura poesis* – as is painting so is poetry – advocated the significance of each of two *Sister Arts*. In their article on the influence of *Sister Arts* in works of William Blake, John Bender and Anne Mellor maintain that “at the root of the Sister Art tradition was a debate, or *paragone*, contending for the superiority of one art over the other” (297). Bender and Mellor continue to explain why there existed tendencies to uplift such a rivalry:

The proponents of painting claimed it to possess an educative force and a power of moral suasion equal to or surpassing that of poetry. The advocates of poetry, on the other hand, continued to insist upon poetry’s superior ability to engage the mind in a process of intellectual and spiritual growth (297).

Around the eighteenth century, the argument over the supremacy of the two arts finally began to reach a consensus acknowledging that there was no need for one art to be ranked above the other (Bend, Mellor 297). However, the tension continued to mount in the area of illustrated books.

As Ackroyd reports, Blake lived “in an age that encouraged the alignment of poetry and painting as an aesthetic whole, and in which illustrated books of various kind were enormously popular” (112). Since illustrations were usually supplied by engravers while the composition of text was in hands of poets or writers, this meant that the segregation of work continued to divide the art of the early nineteenth century. Bender and Mellor summarise that

although the Royal Academy’s celebration of the grand style in painting attempted to establish a parity between the arts in the England of Blake’s day, the priority of the verbal text clearly remained alive in the tradition of book illustration. Here design was intended to serve the written text, and illustrative engravers such as Blake himself continued to be viewed as no more than artisans (298).

Therefore, Blake’s contribution to the production of a book, if he had pursued his career of an engraver, would have been only of a craftsman. This could mean that his job would have involved precise but monotonous routine of reproducing and transposing the original works onto the contemporary printing media of copper plates. Such a career

prospect could, by no means, appeal to Blake since he did not perceive himself only as an artisan but also as an artist. It may be his visionary skills, as described earlier, that help to explain why Blake could not conform to the future of “merely” an engraver. His life was overflowing with dreams, visions and imagination. He proclaimed the imagination to be the power that “alone makes a Poet”- a calling which he soon heard resonate in his mind. In addition to this, Blake gradually began to notice that his purpose of life was not to be enslaved by another man. On the contrary, he felt an urgency to create his own system in order to protect himself from being absorbed by other distrustful conventions. Furthermore, Blake’s visions provided the artist with enough stimuli to transfer them into a textual form. Hence, Blake must be seen as an artisan and an artist – an engraver and a poet, a painter respectively. Consequently, the words of Geoffrey Keynes may well finalize the argument about Blake’s intention to combine his manual and artistic potential:

Blake had become fully aware that he was the complete artist. He knew that poetry and design are the same thing in different forms, and he possessed the originality and craftsmanship needed for the practice of both, separately or simultaneously. He was not content, therefore, to see his poems only in a written form or in ordinary print as were his earlier *Poetical Sketches*. He wished to have them clothed in a design and colours, so that each poem-picture formed an artistic whole (Keynes 10).

The fact that Blake conceived of his works as a synthesis of poems and pictures is also supported by Ackroyd who comments that for Blake “the connection between poetry and painting was a much more intense and serious one. He saw them as aspects of the same vision, which must be reunited in order to raise the perceptions of fallen man” (196). To include an explanation of what such raising ‘the perceptions of fallen man’ could mean from the point of Blake’s mythology is beyond the scope of this work. However, Blake’s own acknowledgement of the significance of poem-picture combination, which he described in a letter to Dawson Turner, best illustrates the determination for such a symbiosis:

Those [books] I printed for Mr Humphry are a selection from the different Books of such as could be Printed without the Writing, tho to the Loss of some of the best things. For they when Printed perfect accompany Poetical Personifications & Acts, without which Poems they never could have been Executed (“The Letters”, website).

In this respect, Blake possessed all necessary prerequisites to synthesize the textual and pictorial elements of his works. It has also been demonstrated that the unification of poetry and paintings was always his intention since he endeavoured to propose an integrated book which would consume its reader to maximum possible extent. One piece of a jigsaw, however, had yet to be found to enable Blake to complete his vision of a picture-poem book: a suitable technique.

Since the invention of movable type in the fifteenth century, the profession of bookprinting expanded outside the monasteries, spread rapidly across Europe and established its important centres particularly in Germany and other influential European countries. The beginnings of British book printing were closely connected with the name of William Caxton who established his modern printing house in the proximity of Westminster Abbey. Although the discovery of mechanical printing brought about a virtual economic and cultural revolution, especially in terms of more effective and considerably cheaper circulation of literature, the process of publishing illustrated books still remained a domain of two exclusive professions. Not taking into account the originator of the work, the handling of the textual part was almost exclusively a responsibility of a printer, while an engraver was frequently commissioned the portion which involved the transfer of the pictorial element. A typical material for constructing the printing plate in the fifteenth century prevailed to be wood. Thus, woodcutting was a technique commonly adopted for creating the plate which was then used for printing. Later, the material of the plate was replaced by copper into which an engraver either cut the image mechanically or used a process of etching. In an introduction to Blake's *Illuminated Books*, David Bindman compares the traditional and Blake's techniques employed for printing the illustrated books.

The traditional method was to produce the text by letterpress: metal type, set by a skilled craftsman, was printed on to paper as many times as required by another craftsman using a mechanical press. Illustrations, in Blake's time and later, were typically prepared by engraving or etching (both intaglio methods)⁵ on thin copper plates, which had to be run through a separate press because they required different pressures to squeeze the ink from lines incised into the plate. Blake's books, by contrast, are hand-made objects, individually produced by the author-artist himself, and even copies of the same book can differ from each other in the complement of pages, page order, colour, and occasionally the wording. Of course, he could – and occasionally did – produce books with text

⁵ Intaglio is a technique in which the image is incised into a surface known as the matrix or plate.

and design printed in intaglio, but these were less striking in effect, needed a special press, and the print-run would be limited because of wear on the copper. (Blake 7).

Here, Bindman reports the main difference between the two methods. Whereas the former traditional technique generally involved more than three people to compose a print with the procedure still resembling a craft, the latter could reduce the number of participants in the work's production and suggested a more artistic process of its origin. Thus, on the frontispiece of many of Blake's *illuminated books*, Blake described himself as "The Author & Printer W Blake". In her epilogue to *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Sylva Ficová adopts an argument that "Blake decided to be his own printer and published because he had established poor position and reputation" from his previous production (Blake 72). Such a statement, however, may not be strictly correct since Blake, even later, occasionally commissioned other publishers to issue some of his works. Besides, if he planned to become his own publisher, he could have done so even earlier before designing his invention of printing. A more reasonable explanation to Blake's decision to become his own printer may be found in connection with the attempt to unify the textual and pictorial elements of his book. As mentioned above Blake wanted to combine the two forms but did not have a suitable technique. When he made his discovery, he found himself in possession of one which perfectly suited his needs.

Blake attributed the new method of Illuminated printing (known also as relief etching) to the vision of his brother Robert who had appeared to him in a dream and disclosed to Blake a description of the revolutionary method of etching. Blake himself claimed that the method was dictated to him by his brother to whom he spoke after his death several times, and that Robert described to him the whole procedure of etching. Later, when Blake composed his remarkable piece *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, he proposed an allegory of how knowledge is transmitted from generation to generation, being partly a parallel to the description of his special procedure:

I was in a Printing house in Hell & saw the method in which knowledge is transmitted from generation to generation. In the first chamber was a Dragon-Man, clearing away the rubbish from cave's mouth; within, a number of Dragons were hollowing the cave. In the second chamber was a Viper folding round the rock & the cave, and others adorning it with gold, silver and precious stones. In the third chamber was an Eagle with wings and feathers of air: he

caused the inside of the cave to be infinite; around were numbers of Eagle-like men, who built palaces in the immense cliffs. In the fourth were Lions of flaming fire, raging around & melting the metals into living fluids. In the fifth chamber were Unnam'd forms, which cast the metals into the expanse. There they were reciev'd by Men who occupied the sixth chamber, and took the forms of books & were arranged in libraries (Keynes² xxii)⁶.

This excerpt, as mentioned on plate 15, resembles what Blake had been told by his brother Robert in a vision: the technique of etching, using the reverse procedure of etching away the background and leaving the image and the text standing up in relief, as in a woodcut. The whole process was rather complex and the etching itself took between 6-8 hours of careful and laborious work. Once a copperplate, usually 2mm thick, was planished by the plate-maker, Blake beveled the edges of his copperplate and rounded the corners to prevent the paper from cutting or creasing. Then, the plate had to be carefully polished so it could receive an acid resistant film which would later stop an acid bath from biting into the plate. This acid resistant film, containing a virgin wax and asphaltum, was then drawn or written directly onto the copperplate with brushes and quill pens, requiring a certain time to dry and harden before the plate could be exposed to acid which would etch away the uncovered parts of the plate. This resulted in a ready plate with the desired relief painting which was then inked with one or more colours and printed under either a screw or a rolling press. In this phase, Blake also used the shallow parts of the plate (those etched away) which could be dabbed with colour and printed simultaneously. Blake and his wife Catherine subsequently coloured the printed sheets with watercolour washes.

Although this may seem as a facile job, it required a long training to master every single part of the whole process, particularly writing and painting in reverse, since the final design after the plate was printed appeared in the inverted form. When looking at a print made in this way it seems unbelievable that Blake managed to draw the painting onto the copperplate in reverse, bearing in mind every minuscule detail which would have to appear inverted on the paper. It is even more astonishing to observe the textual part which Blake wrote sometimes directly, without any preparatory composition, on to the plate with such precision and sense for every detail that its reader

⁶ All quotations labeled as Keynes² refer to Keynes' book *Blake – The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*

may presume the text had been set into type separately, after the plate had been painted. Ackroyd comments on this when saying that Blake, even as a young boy, kept

a notebook in which he experimented with his signature – as if he were about to engrave it upon a plate – and practised the invaluable art of ‘mirror writing’ or reverse writing...It is perhaps not unreasonable that a man who can write fluently in both directions might be intrigued by the concept of ‘oppositions’ and ‘contraries’(49).

Ackroyd notices that Blake’s experiments with signature marked a moment which could have predetermined the artist’s future career of an engraver. It also helps to explain the ease which Blake manifested in reverse writing. His *illuminated books* undoubtedly represent admirable works of writing in reverse. On the other hand, Blake was apprenticed to an engraver and therefore such a skill became a routine element of his work. Another suggestion proposed by Ackroyd in the same excerpt is the fact that Blake, as an engraver who was able to write in both directions, could also be fascinated by the concept of ‘oppositions’. This aspect can be noticed in an infinite number of places in Blake’s writing. However, the suggestion can have an even more intriguing impact when reconsidering the unification of poetry and painting as two mutually dependant or *contrary* forms of art in Blake’s work. Nonetheless, the new method of printing provided Blake with a technique in which, together with his own professional skills, he was able to achieve the perfect unification of texts and pictures of his *illuminated books*.

As for the textual element of Blake’s production, it almost solely carries the content part of the work, serving as a literary unit with both poetic and prosaic components. To characterise the works in general, especially the Illuminated prints of the 1790’s, they almost exclusively concern books with prophetic and apocalyptic themes. As Bindman insists, Blake was also “responding to the upheavals of the times” which included some of the dramatic historical events mentioned in the first chapter of this thesis (8). Thus, in *Song of Innocence*, for example, Blake proposed a penetrating social critique of inequality and wrongfulness of the British society in the eighteenth century. Regarding a comprehensive knowledge of diverse philosophical and theological doctrines, particularly thoughts of the Swedish theologian Emmanuel Swedenborg, which Blake had adopted, the artist produced his adverse reaction to these movements in works such as *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. His later *illuminated*

books, for instance *Jerusalem*, extended Blake's rebellious attitude and reluctant acceptance of other poets' theories, and introduced his prophetic views on the "sleeping giant of Albion" (Vultee, website). In short, Blake used predominantly his poetic skills to incorporate the philosophical and theological ideas into the themes of his books, intending to spread them among the public, and thus affecting their readers. Alfred Kazin reports that "Blake's concern is not with the coherence of his theme, but with his need to get everything in" and then continues that "Blake demanded nothing less of his reader than they should devote their lives to the education of his work" (Kazin, website). Additionally, Blake presumed his reader to be an educated and well-read man who would be able to understand his complex prophetic mythology. In a letter to reverend Dr Trusler, Blake expressed his rage at the idea that he, an artist, should lower himself to explain the content of his works to its readers:

You say that I want somebody to Elucidate my Ideas. But you ought to know that What is Grand is necessarily obscure to Weak men. That which can be made Explicit to the Idiot is not worth my care ("The Letters", website).

The pride and anger apparent in these words may also later help to understand why distribution of Blake's books achieved only little success.

As opposed to the textual side, the pictorial elements of Blake's works were to serve both the illustrative as well as symbolic purposes. Kazin states that "the symbols always have an inner relatedness that leads us from the outer world to inner man" - an argument with which Blake would fully identify (Kazin, website). Therefore the paintings which contain rather a substantial part of the page represent not only an illustrative function but often involve a symbol which also appears somewhere in the surrounding text. Besides the painting directly related to the text, there are many other minor aspects which seem to only decorate the text, however, their presence is more important than it appears to be. Blake frequently used miniature pictures of birds, grapevines, clouds and others to illustrate the text between individual lines or along the margins. David Erdman argues that these decorations could possess greater impact than they seem to have when commenting on the pictures of birds of paradise which

are so frequently and so uniformly augurs of what their name tells that I have come to trust their presence as images of hope even in pages where no hope is otherwise offered by pictures or text: they remind us how to read the text, in these instances (Erdman 19).

Erdman continues to give an example of the general title page of *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* where he illustrates his case on one such instance: “the bird of paradise that flies on an upward diagonal towards “Songs” carries in its mouth a golden apple, so that we may recognize bird as serpent metamorphosed” (Erdman 19). Apparently, Blake uses the design to illustrate the symbolic meaning of the textual part to maximum extent. Hence, the combined statement that Erdman makes about Blake’s unity of pictorial and textual may well summarize this point:

Yet the poet’s work is not perfectly ‘done’ until that moment when the reader, travelling the line of text, becomes a spectator, seeing at one pulse beat the single visualizable picture’...and then, between that and the next pulsation, leaving these mortal things, text and picture, to enter into Noah’s rainbow, into eternal world that ever growth’... ‘then he would be happy’ (Erdman 10).

To say that Blake was well pleased with his revolutionary method of Illuminated printing could evoke an ambiguous impression. On the one hand the technique surely allowed him to achieve a dynamic integration of text and design, but on the other, it needed further developments in order to demonstrate its full potential. Thus, the method became Blake’s successful invention which he constantly continued to redesign. David Erdman reports that Blake was particularly concerned about paper, ink, but also “the copper surfaces of his plates, the varnish or ground that must hold its delineations firm and adhere to the copper rock” (Erdman 11). Ackroyd notices another aspect of Blake’s printing process that resulted in a great variety of coloured prints: experiments with colour printing. Ackroyd states that

he [Blake] had begun putting colours on relief-etched copper plates, and then printing out the results in the press or with the pressure of his hand. The colour was mixed with size or gum, not water, and the impressions upon the paper are noticeable for the thick, variegated and mottled texture of paint; it was a method that emphasised mass and surface (Ackroyd 190).

These experiments, together with the fact that the distribution of paint on individual moulds and finishing touches with pen were executed manually by Blake or his wife Catherine, resulted in startling originality of each of the print. Such variations did not concern only distinct tints of each copy, but in many cases altered the overall significance of the part of the design. In a depiction of plate 10 in the *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Erdman proposes a question of possible various interpretations of the print since, as he says, “in some copies the ground beyond the grass on which the Devil

kneels suggests a brink of cliff edge; in some^{HI} a stream fills this area, inky, or with foam; in G flames” (Erdman 107)⁷.

Eventually, once the books had been professionally bound, they originated in wonderful and unique unification of picture-poem *illuminated books*. Blake did not wish to achieve a roaring success but believed that the works, undoubtedly artistic artefacts, would draw the attention of a wide circle of potential readers. Therefore, in a prospectus of 1793, he made a confident assertion about the benefits of the Illuminated printing:

The Labours of the Artist, the Poet, the Musician, have been proverbially attended by poverty and obscurity... This difficulty has been obviated by the Author of the following productions now presented to the Public; who has invented a method of Printing both Letter-press and Engraving in a style more ornamental, uniform, and grand, than any before discovered, while it produces works at less than one fourth of the expense (“The Letters”, website).

However, it transpired that Blake’s works enjoyed only moderate success. Blake believed that the Illuminated printing would enable him to produce a higher quantity of his works for a significantly lower price. Such an assumption proved to be almost impossible since the colouring of individual plates, if Blake wanted his works to retain high standard, appeared to be extremely time-consuming, leading to only a very limited number of each book. Besides, the material costs of copper, varnish, wax, turpentine and acid, together with fine wove paper, raised the price of his work, which, according to Ficová, “must have exceeded the price of standard printing cost” (Ficová 72). Eventually, the grudging recognition that Blake received for his intricate prophetic mythology as the content of his books deprived him of the multitude of readers he had hoped for, even from among his best companions. Consequently, Blake’s revolutionary method of Illuminated printing, the extensive collection of the *illuminated books* uniting the pictorial and textual aspects, and his indisputable aptitude as an artist had to be suspended until it could receive its deserved appreciation by early Pre-Raphaelites. One of them, John Ruskin was the first to notice and praise Blake’s work when saying:

[it] is of the highest rank in certain characters of imagination and expression; in the mode of obtaining certain effects of light it will also be a very useful example to you. In expressing conditions of glaring and flickering light, Blake is greater than Rembrandt (as qtd. in Ackroyd 366).

⁷ An example of various colour modifications of this plate are displayed in the Appendix

4.2 Váchal and the Beautiful book

Váchal's artistic production represents works from various fields and of diverse nature. As mentioned above, during his life Váchal penetrated to almost every area of art which he had encountered. Oldřich Koblížek, a Brno connoisseur of art, insisted that "Váchal was first and foremost a graphic designer" (as qtd. in Olič 1993, 63). Such a claim may be regarded perfectly legitimate for two compelling reasons: firstly, Váchal received most of his design education in studios of renowned artists of that time, and secondly, his own graphic works similarly demonstrate the considerable and undoubted talent of a designer. However, it has been stated earlier that Váchal also acquired and developed skills of a painter and a writer, resulting in a vast number of extensive and fascinating books. Thus, in an epilogue to Váchal's *Vidění sedmera dnů a planet* Jiří Olič proposes that it is the book which "provides a tangible evidence of how much Váchal longed to become an artist" (Váchal 1998, *Vidění sedmera...*). Therefore, if Váchal is perceived as a versatile artist, he may be seen so especially for his book, a true artefact, in which he aspired to unite his skills of a writer, a graphic designer and also of a bookbinder. In other words, Váchal chose his most beloved object - book - to become the proclamation of his artistic production.

As stated earlier, Váchal was a bibliophile who, above all, enjoyed collecting and reading literature of various genres, particularly that from the Baroque period. The profound knowledge of the wide range of Baroque authors reveals that he must have studied these works thoroughly before attempting to produce his own titles. The fact that Váchal initially parodied the original copies of the Baroque books, particularly his most cherished collections of the market songs, by adding extra lines or illustrations along the margins could be a typical trait of his character. At the same time, he may have meditated on the structure and composition of the market song, admiring especially the combination of their textual and pictorial elements. The aesthetic taste of these books, however, stood in total contrast to the mass-produced literature of Váchal's time. Ivan Kruis, when commenting on the poor quality of book-publishing in the early years of the twentieth century, also mentions some other trends that "commenced to assert efforts for reformation of book production during the last two decades of the

nineteenth century”. He continues to describe these trends, which gradually permeated most of the European countries, as

first independent of each other, with the aim of restoring the dignity, nobleness and harmony of the book. The ideals of manually written and abundantly illuminated and illustrated medieval codices begin to revive. The growing ‘flame of interest’ for a beautiful book is once again flickering between the authors of the books and their readers (as qtd. in Váchal 1996, Váchalův Havran 67).

The revival of the *beautiful book* could be successfully traced to the British Isles where it was initiated by members of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, particularly by William Morris. A founder of the Kelmscott-Press publishing house, Morris noticed that the technical developments connected with the industrial revolution had rather negative effects on the publishing sector, resulting in books characteristic of their “grooviness, unimaginative austerity changing into constrained agony and ugliness” (as qtd. in Váchal 1996, Váchalův Havran 67). Since he did not want to conform to such approaches in book publishing, Morris began to devote himself to an intensive study of medieval literature. The aesthetic aspect of particularly the Gothic book captured his attention so much that he, as the owner of the Kelmscott-Press, adopted a number of features of the medieval book and decided to promote them in contemporary publishing industry. As a result, Morris created a set of rules that concerned the layout of the book together with other principles which a publisher should be aware of during the process of book publishing. Regarding these guidelines, Morris suggested that the publishers should “consider only four areas: 1. paper; 2. font types; 3. proportional spacing of letters, words and lines; 4. page position on a paper” (Kopáč 54). Luboš Kopáč proposes an exposition of this bullet-point summary when interpreting Morris according to whom the paper should be handmade and of high quality. On the other hand, the fonts did not require much attention as long as its developer avoided an overdecorative design. Regarding the spacing, Morris had suggested that the typographer used interstices which were no greater than necessary for a concrete font. Finally, the page margins were assigned specific values and Morris also stated that the page should be kept as unadorned as possible (Kopáč 54). These rules, alongside the general concern for excellent quality of all segments composing the book, affected the printing industry in Britain in the last decade of the nineteenth century. Gradually, the revived form of

Morris' *beautiful book* began to spread into other European countries, particularly to Germany but also to Czechoslovakia.

The tension over the aesthetic legitimacy of the book production between the Czech artists and book publishers resembled the situation in Britain before the rules for the *beautiful book* were established by William Morris. The revival of the book seen as an artistic artefact attracted a number of Czech artists who supported such attempts, among them for example Karel Dyrynk, Vojtěch Pressig or Zdenka Braunerová. Dyrynk, a leading protagonist of the struggle for the book revival, became also a mouthpiece of the group, especially for *The Beautiful Book* which he wrote, designed and also set all by himself. In this work, he established a variety of principles which should help to coordinate the unified structure of the *beautiful book*, and also validated the author of a book as an originator of a real artistic product when saying:

Indeed, such an artist does not regard a book as a subordinate item. Instead, he considers its decoration and setting being a work of the same significance as a coloured painting or a sculpture. And only then, if the artist approaches the decoration of the book with joy and passion, the result of his work will achieve the same artistic appreciation as any other object of design (Dyrynk 1909, 68).

A similar definition of the book as a piece of art has already been mentioned in connection with Váchal and his strive for being recognised as an artist. Although no evidence has emerged so far about Váchal's intense involvement in the *beautiful book* revival movement, it is certain that the artist was aware of, and possibly developed friendships with individualities comprising its core group. Although there seems to be no personal acquaintanceship with Karel Dyrynk, the two artists were informed about each other and mutually examined their works. Thus, in his *Typograf o knihách*, Dyrynk devoted a part of his study on the conception of the book to Váchal, particularly to *Vidění sedmera dnů a planet*. Dyrynk claimed that the work was an "intriguing bookish wonder...a peculiar book which, according to its conduct, had been derived from the time prior to the Gutenberg's invention" (Dyrynk 1911, 298). Furthermore, Dyrynk also commented on the unique and well-developed typefaces which Váchal created and used in his books. In return for such acknowledgement, Váchal wrote a letter in which he thanked Dyrynk for taking interest in his fonts (Resler 132). Apart from Dyrynk, there were at least two occasions when Váchal encountered the other leading personalities of the *beautiful book* movement. According to Olič, Váchal wished to become a student of

the real professional and scholar on the contemporary typefaces, Vojtěch Pressing. A possibility of their cooperation, however, failed due to Pressing's long-term academic stay in the United States. As regards the friendship with Zdeňka Braunerová, Olič declares that she was one of the few artists who supported Váchal and the group Sursum at time of its establishment (Olič 1993, 57). From what has been said, it is clear that Váchal was well aware of the *beautiful book* reformists who may have affected the production of his own books. Ivan Kruiš declares that Váchal was an adherent and a follower of Dyrynk's rules on the book publishing when saying that

Váchal, from the very beginning, took advantage and exercised his skills of a craftsman in areas of individual-style bookbinding, designs, selection of paper and cutting his own typeface. He devoted a meticulous attention to the organisation and relationship of typographic and design features in a book, to texts and illustrations as one, unit as well as to the technique of printing (Váchal 1996, Váchalův Havran, 71-72)

Consequently, Váchal's book production may be perceived as completely impacted by the *beautiful book* movement. Nonetheless, the artist's omnipresent individualistic personality urged him to restrict any influence which could reduce his artistic imagination and leeway which he required.

Therefore, Marcela Mrázová may be right in her judgement that Váchal's book did not originate merely under the influence of the *beautiful book* movement. She claims that "[Váchal], by no means, wanted to create a 'beautiful' book – his book attempted to exceed all introduced criteria for the book design" (1968, 6). Mrázová further explains that "contrary to Morris' aesthetic conduct of the book which led to standardization, Váchal understands the work on a book as a unique opportunity for self-expression of the artist" (1966, 4). Thus, Váchal proceeded to develop his unique conception, perhaps more affected by the Baroque form of the market song, which resulted in often voluminous works combining both textual and pictorial elements.

As mentioned above, a *market song* may refer to a primitive drama in which a vocalist describes a static illustration to support its lyrical story. Another form of this genre is represented by printed lyrics, often accompanied by an illustration, which was meant to be published and sung by the public. According to Olič, in both cases the content of the *market songs* involved stories which informed its reader about recent local events, usually some criminal offences. The story often began with a broad

introduction which was to set up the general situation. At the end, there was often a satirically educational conclusion which should provide its readers with advice and application for their lives (Olič 1993, 186). As Olič continues, “Váchal admired the *market song* particularly for its trivial form, rustic expressiveness and comedic content” (186). This is, perhaps, why a great deal of Váchal’s books may be categorised as works belonging to Neoprimitivism or trivial literature. Olič writes that “there was no such a stupidity that would not appeal and inspire...Josef Váchal” (Olič 1993, 206). Thus, Váchal’s *market song*, respectively its content, corresponded with its original form. Váchal frequently addressed issues which captured his momentary attention. Jiří Hůlek characterises Váchal’s *market songs* as purely satiric:

The original naivety of the market song, underlined by linking literary and pictorial poetics (spelling and morphology combined with trivial, naive wood engravings) fulfilled their satirically updated function. . . . Most of Váchal’s early market songs and bookish experiments describe memorable events being presently experienced, often concerned with his acquaintances, his friends or his rivals (Váchal 1990, 310).

In one such market song, Váchal described his scorn for universal principles of life:

Here, you can see how Death eschewed the hamlet of Bezděkowci for a long time, travelling rather far away through Hejšovina instead, for Death could not bear the reek of Váchal’s socks. And the sheikh was immensely pleased about this, as was everyone in his house, all of whom blessed Váchal, who had begun travelling toward his wife who was in his own country (as qtd. in Olič 1993, 98).

The other part of the *market song*, the pictorial component, was usually represented by an engraving which accompanied the semantic structure in order to help the audience visualise the tale and to deepen the emotional feelings it tried to evoke. The original model of the *market song* corresponded, to some extent, to what Váchal was experimenting with: an engraving cut, as a whole, into one plate. Such a technique, considerably older than the method in which the type needs to be cut first and then set, resulted in a real unification of the textual and pictorial parts. Hůlek claims that such a procedure can be easily distinguished for large size of the fonts and numerous illustrations, an example of this may be seen in *Vidění sedmera dnů a planet* (Váchal 1990, 310). The illustrations which appear in Váchal’s form of the *market song* generally remain uncoloured; perhaps to better imitate its Baroque style. Nonetheless, Váchal used the high-quality black ink for printing his books, paying also close

attention to selection of the paper. It would be incorrect, however, to suggest that Váchal employed only the technique in which he engraved the text and the illustration into a mould as one piece. Since font played a strategic aspect in many of his books, the other method was also widely used as it will be described later.

On the whole, Váchal became an author of works which were affected by attempts for the revival of the *beautiful book*, as well as which endeavoured to imitate the original form of the *market song*. The result of these influences brought an original and unique form of a book which combined the textual and pictorial elements. This symbiosis may be also underlined by the fact that a part of Váchal's life belonged to the Art Nouveau period.

It has been suggested in the first chapter of this thesis that the Art Nouveau artists tried to achieve a unity between all areas of art. Besides, they were also commonly addressing the conflict of interests between an artistic and a pragmatic outlook on art. Their intention was to produce objects of art which would fulfil the requirements to be used in everyday practical life. At the same time, they insisted that these subjects retained also their aesthetic quality. In terms of Váchal's books, this meant that, on the one hand, the textual part was to express socially-critical attitudes towards society; on the other hand, the text on its own could not satisfy its reader and needed to be included in a more complex medium: a book. Remembering that Váchal received both artisan and artistic education, he possessed all essential prerequisites for meeting the two Art Nouveau ambitious approaches. Thus, in his book, Váchal unified a number of art professions such as a writer, a poet, an illustrator, a painter, a font designer, a typographer and a bookbinder. At the same time, he composed an item which was meant to serve both a practical as well as an aesthetic purpose. Such a double-function may be noticed in Váchal's implementation of various typefaces.

Fonts hold an exclusive place in many of Váchal's books, being not only a medium for conveying a message but also for representing symbolic units which interlace with the rest of the illustration to create a higher complexity. Váchal mastered various fonts to invoke diverse points of view in his reader, often combining these together to convert the physical appearance of a book into an aesthetic item, adding artistic value to the content form through merely a manipulation of fonts. As Hůlek states, Váchal experimented with various fonts, their size, density and also shapes

(Váchal 1990, 310). Apart from the size and density, which could have interested Váchal particularly from the point of the *beautiful book*, Váchal's choice of fonts needs some further explanation. Since Váchal held that the beauty of book was its aesthetic function, he paid immense attention to fonts as a symbolic component for creating a bookish artefact. In 1926, after he began to cut and cast his own fonts, Váchal made a note in his almanac describing his new passion:

The first 4000 letters of 'd'as' was cut into lead, and the whole book *Carducciho Satanu* set into type with it. *Zpěv příkladný o Vilímovi a Běle pro mládence a panny* was set with the second font 'gnom'. The third, 'malarie', would be used for *Mor v Korčule...*(Olič 1993, 120).

Mrázová provides a detailed description of each of the mentioned fonts, including a number of letters that were cut. The figure for every font almost always exceeds two thousand, which suggests that Váchal must have spent an enormous amount of time on designing the fonts (1968, 26). Mrázová also reports that there seems to exist several variants for every font. In case of "d'as", she notices that the letter "z" appears in six variants, whereas the letter "m" only in four (1968, 26). In the same place, Mrázová further describes the font "malarie", including a quotation of Karel Dyrynk on his view of Váchal's typeface:

At some places, the font is sparse; at others it tends to clump together. It is easily legible, but it reads 'as if you walked on a winding, rugged and stony path...it is peculiar, bizarre, as intended for printing of some witch grimoires' (Mrázová 1968, 26).

The emotional experience that Dyrynk mentions after seeing the font was something that Váchal strived for. The artist wanted the typefaces to have a symbolic function which would help its reader to become an observer of the action contained in the text. Besides, the decorative font was less likely to flow into and join with the surrounding illustrations. On the contrary, Kruis declares that "the illustration does not dominate, does not supplant the text in background. Vice-versa. It is balanced with the textual page and its line possesses related features with the lines of the fonts" (Váchal 1996, Váchalův Havran, 75).

Finally, Váchal also wanted to achieve a similar unity between the book and its binding. He knew that the cover would be the first thing to attract its reader and therefore he paid close attention to selection of material and other decorative elements.

Mrázová points out that Váchal usually bound his books in leather or parchment, often bearing a unique decoration (Mrázová 1968, 27). The mentioned decorative element could be either represented by colouring of its front and rear covers, or involved some other font ornamentations. For his *Krvavý román*, Váchal used an exceptional symbolic decoration on the spine of the book where he hollowed out a superficial groove to enable the blood of the reader to flow away as he is absorbed in reading through the novel.

Consequently, Váchal's books are a result of a versatile artist who dedicated an enormous amount of time to their production. Since Váchal often included the time he spent working on the title at the end of the book, we may learn that the three hundred and seven pages of *Ďáblova zahrádka aneb přírodopis strašidel* consumed more than 3560 hours of laborious work. Besides, the respective cost of Váchal's works was considerably higher than the price of more standard books, stretching up to 1800 crowns for the mentioned title. Even ten times higher was the price of *Receptář barevného dřevorytu* which sold only one copy for library holdings. Furthermore, some titles were so voluminous and heavy that any manipulation with them was virtually impossible. A typical example of such a book may be *Šumava umírající a romantická* which Váchal published in eleven copies and whose weight reached a massive twenty kilograms. Thus, it is no surprise that Váchal was often able to print a very limited number of copies, rarely exceeding twenty items of the same title. This made the books practically unreachable to the public, and Váchal was destined to rely on financial award from patrons and sponsors. However, this may be also seen as a way how Váchal wanted to guarantee that his books would not be published on a massive scale, which would undoubtedly deprive them of being real artistic artefacts. Such a claim can be also interpreted as a means of patenting or copyrighting by which Váchal may have prevented others to reproduce his works; in fact, this was also the case of the fonts he produced and subsequently burned.

Hence, Váchal's most distinct work of art may be represented by his unique and bizarre books which often attributed an archaic appearance. For the reasons mentioned above, their antiquated taste did not, and also could not, attract a wide amount of readers. Instead, Váchal never received any acknowledgement neither appreciation for his lifelong artistic production. The fact that a few weeks before his death Váchal was

granted the title of a merited artist only intensified his omnipresent irony and scorn for official art. Váchal died weak and in solitude. He left only a few “beautiful” and extravagant books.

5. Conclusion

This thesis attempted to provide a comparative analogy of respective periods, lives and works of William Blake and Josef Váchal, which would either verify or disclaim the suggestions on their similitude, particularly in the area of their book production

In spite of over one hundred years which separated their lives, the background information mentioned in this thesis provided some hints on the events which either directly affected the two artists or that contributed to forming their personalities. In this respect, both Blake and Váchal showed very little concern for political and economical affairs in which their countries became involved. Except for the early years of the French revolution when Blake displayed a burst of enthusiasm for a promise of better prospect of the British nation, he seemed to overlook and ignore the dramatic politics of his time. Likewise, Váchal did not understand why he should be troubled by the political events. He underwent and personally experienced the turmoil of the First World War, which seemed to have left so much distress on his face that it excluded the possibility of Váchal's further engagement in the politics. As a result, it is correct to suggest that both Blake and Váchal did not seek an active involvement in the public life; instead they retired to live in seclusion and on the fringe of the society.

However, there is another thing from their respective times that the two artists had in common: their interest in following new inventions and conducting new experiments. They both lived in eras which observed a rapid industrial development. Blake, although a Romantic, proved to be obsessed with seeking new methods which would suit his needs for printing the *illuminated books*. Thus, he took a great advantage of methods which became available to him due to new discoveries and improvements in many industries. Similarly, Váchal's productive life belonged to the period widely known as the "second industrial revolution". Although he adopted rather a medieval method of wood engraving, Váchal devoted an infinite amount of time to developing the procedure. He conducted quite a number of various experiments in order to achieve its further improvement. In this respect, both artists demonstrated almost equal absorption in challenges of contemporary science and industry.

Regarding their personal focus and interests, a few remarkable discoveries have been made. Firstly, both artists should be perceived as individuals with a strong inclination for spirituality. As concerns Blake, this was especially due to his family Christian background in which he was brought up. From his childhood Blake became a fond and avid reader of the Bible which he continued to contrast with other theological or philosophical doctrines during his whole life. Blake endeavoured to create and formulate his own views about the spiritual and earthly life which resulted in his complex and intricate mythological system. Besides, Blake also believed that he had considerable visionary and prophetic skills which helped him in composing his texts. As regards the Czech engraver, Váchal also felt attracted by the theological issues. In his case, however, the Christian faith played a less significant contribution. Despite Váchal's acquaintance with authors from the Catholic Modernism, the greatest influence upon his life and production was represented by his obsession with spiritualism, occult and particularly his lifelong involvement in the Theosophical society. As opposed to Blake, Váchal's primary objective was not to express his own attitude towards the theological issues. Instead, he often proposed his knowledge compendium on a matter that he considered significant.

Secondly, it has been suggested that Blake and Váchal looked for inspiration also outside their respective periods. This proved to have significant influence on both authors who found it hard to identify themselves with their contemporary societies and movements. In case of Blake, there was an apparent influence of the Gothic style which he first observed in Westminster Abbey and continued to admire during his whole life in works of the Masters of Art. Besides, the impact of the Gothic revival, particularly the emergence of the Gothic novel, arguably challenged the Romantic writer to direct his passion also towards the medieval literature as regards their content and structure. Similarly, Váchal's lack of content with the contemporary artistic movements shifted his attention to styles of other periods. As stated above, Váchal perceived himself as the last Czech Romantic writer and painter. Besides, the hobby of collecting and studying the Baroque literature largely affected the choice of his own production. Therefore, his works, especially the conception of books, were under the major influence of the Baroque movement.

Blake and Váchal's main similarities, however, have been found in approaches to their books. They both experimented with combining the textual and pictorial elements which resulted not only in a unification of these two segments, but also in a totally unique conception of a book. Blake's *illuminated books* were a perfect match for the mythological system which Blake originated since it took a great advantage of the technique of illuminated printing. Thus, Blake's *illuminated books* represent a rare unity between the text and the illustration. Similarly, Váchal also managed to create an artefact which combined the textual and pictorial parts into one unified piece. He also invested a great effort into producing a book which in many respects resembled the concept of William Morris's *beautiful books*. Further more, Váchal transpired to be a typical Art Nouveau representative, especially for eliminating the gap between the pragmatic and aesthetic function of his works. Although the books differ greatly in their content and conduct, Blake and Váchal originated the real artistic artefacts which may be compared particularly for their unity and extensiveness.

To conclude, this paper's initial suggestion about the similitude of the two artists proposed some unquestionable similarities between the personalities, lives and works of William Blake and Josef Váchal. It attempts to suggest that the basis for comparison is especially allowed due to the forms of their books which greatly exceeded the standard works of the contemporary publishing industries. Although some areas were particularly difficult to handle for the lack of resources on the topic, the suggestion about the resemblance of the two authors may be validated. The findings of this paper may also hint a direct influence on Váchal's production by the Pre-Raphaelites movement. This could be an interesting subject of further study, especially due to some arguments which propose the Pre-Raphaelites' interest and influence by William Blake.

6. Resumé

V roce 1912 vytvořil Josef Váchal několik černobílých grafik, které společně vydal pod názvem *Mystifikové a vizionáři*. Součástí tohoto cyklu byla rytina, kterou Váchal pojmenoval podle svého britského romantického předchůdce – *William Blake*. Tato rytinová grafika je jediným přímým odkazem, v němž Váchal projevil své možné seznámení se s životem a dílem Williama Blakea. Kromě této ojedinělé grafické práce existuje několik víceméně náhodných zmínek od dalších autorů, kteří na možnou podobu Váchalových grafik s některými pracemi Williama Blakea příležitostně upozornili. Doposud však nebyla vydána publikace, která by se komplexnímu srovnání obou umělců věnovala a která by tak poskytla bližší stanovisko k vzrůstajícímu hlasu především z oblasti laické veřejnosti o nabízející se podobnosti mezi Williamem Blakem a Josefem Váchalem. Tato diplomová práce se proto do jisté míry stává průkopnickým bádáním, které se snaží ozřejmit společné rysy obou autorů a tím následně potvrdit či odmítnout zmíněná tvrzení o jejich podobnosti.

Při shromažďování informací o životech a tvorbě obou umělců byla užita celá řada především literárních zdrojů. Některé prameny byly získány z elektronických médií a jsou společně s ostatními primárními či sekundárními zdroji uvedeny v příloze této práce. Základem se staly především biografické monografie, které svým obsáhlým výčtem ze života autorů předložily několik zajímavých styčných ploch, v nichž se u Blakea i Váchala nabízí prostor k vzájemnému srovnání. Tyto podněty jsou pro snazší orientaci rozděleny do tří oblastí.

V první části se práce snaží oba umělce zasadit do jejich konkrétních historických období a alespoň krátce nastínit politické, hospodářské či umělecké události, které mohly mít vliv na utváření jejich osobností či uměleckých koncepcí. Zajímavým zjištěním je především fakt, že oba autoři se na rozdíl od svých současníků neobávali působení průmyslového rozvoje na svou tvorbu, ale naopak prokázali odvahu a odhodlání si tyto často nekonvenční změny pro svou práci osvojit. I proto je možné oba autory vnímat jako individualistické umělce, kteří místo toho, aby se přidali k politickým či společenským hnutím usilujícím o formování jejich národů, raději investovali své veškeré úsilí do co nejlepšího zvládnutí jejich uměleckých technik.

Druhá část se zaměřuje na již zcela konkrétní vlivy, které na oba umělce působily a utvářely charakteristické rysy jejich tvorby. Blake i Váchal se zde shodně ukazují jako osobnosti s vrozeným a vybudovaným citem pro osobní spiritualitu. V Blakově případě se jedná o jeho výjimečné vizionářské schopnosti, které široce uplatnil v průběhu celé své tvorby. U Váchala je to pak především jeho zaujetí pro teozofické nauky, které podstatným způsobem uplatnil především v obsahové části svého díla. Oba umělce v rámci této části spojuje ještě jeden výrazný aspekt, a sice jejich intenzivní zájem o literaturu a knižní tvorbu z období gotiky, respektive baroka. Blake i Váchal se o středověkou literaturou zajímali především proto, že v ní nacházeli dokonalé spojení textové a obrazové části, a tedy i uplatnění pro umělecké a řemeslnické dovednosti.

V poslední části je hlavním tématem právě koncepce knižního díla obou autorů. Je zde předložena otázka, která se snaží zodpovědět hlavní důvody, které Blakea i Váchala vedly k úsilí o vytvoření knihy jako uceleného uměleckého díla. V Blakově případě sehrálo hlavní roli objevení metody reliéfního leptu, pomocí níž Blake dosáhl dokonalého spojení textu a ilustrace. Tato metoda se však stala pouze prostředkem, díky němuž Blake začal své iluminované knihy vytvářet. Motivy, které ho na tuto myšlenku přivedly, však byly poněkud odlišné. Blake se ve své četbě obracel především ke gotické literatuře a autorům, kteří se jí snažili napodobovat. Odtud znal dobře přepisy literárních děl, jejichž nedílnou součástí byly nejen samotné ilustrace, ale i další ornamentální dekorativní prvky. Je tedy možné, že se snažil tato díla svým způsobem napodobovat. Na druhou stranu byl Blake natolik originálním autorem, že v žádném případě nekopíroval obsahovou podobu těchto knih. Naopak, toužil vytvořit vlastní druh knihy, do níž by mohl vhodně zakomponovat jeho mytologický pohled na uspořádání světa. Především díky tomu, že se v mládí vyučil rytcem, mohl nyní skloubit řemeslné i umělecké dovednosti a vytvořit svou podobu iluminované knihy.

Rovněž Váchalova kniha je výsledkem několika vlivů. Podobně jako Blake, i Váchal se obracel v hledání vzorů k literatuře mimo rámec jeho doby, a sice k literatuře barokní. Obdivoval barokní knihy, především kramářskou píseň, jejíž tituly sbíral a s jemu typickou ironií je parodoval. Kramářská píseň, žánr snad až primitivní literatury, Váchala upoutala především pro spojení krátkého textu lokálního významu a drobné ilustrace. Protože se Váchal cítil být nejen malířem a spisovatelem, ale i knihařem a

bibliofilem, rozhodl se spojit několik podob umění do jedné, zcela atypické koncepce knihy. Tu mohl formovat rovněž pod vlivem hnutí za obnovu krásné knihy, jehož vůdčí postavou v Čechách byl Karel Dyrynk. V průběhu třetí kapitoly však vyplývá, že Váchalovo povědomí o tomto hnutí nebylo natolik intenzivní, aby Váchala dokázalo podnítit k převzetí pravidel, která Dyrynk a jeho spolupracovníci po české krásné knize vyžadovali. Výsledkem je tedy dílo, které, i když ne zcela, se podstatně vymyká všem tehdejším knižním produkcím.

Přesto je u obou autorů zřejmá snaha o vytvoření knihy, která v sobě sjednocuje literární i výtvarnou tvorbu. Pro takové spojení oba umělci uplatňovali rozdílné metody, které jsou v třetí části této práce rovněž zmíněny. U Williama Blakea jde především o metodu reliéfního leptu, zatímco Váchal se věnoval již trochu zastaralému dřevorytu. Výsledkem jejich tvorby tedy byla kniha, kterou je třeba chápat jako skutečný umělecký artefakt. V této souvislosti se jako zajímavá otázka jeví i ne příliš výrazné přijetí děl obou autorů, což v podstatě předurčilo nízký zájem o Blakovu i Váchalovu tvorbu na celou řadu dalších let.

Jak již bylo zmíněno, práce je rozdělena do tří částí, přičemž každá z nich nabízí oddělený pohled na oba autory. Závěrem není rezolutní konstatování, které potvrzuje či vyvrací vzájemnou podobnost těchto autorů, ale jakési kompendium přinášející vztyčné body, v nichž se Blake i Váchal v řadě aspektů potkávají. Zajímavý pohled by mohlo přinést další studium vlivu Williama Blakea na skupinu prerafaelitů, především na Williama Morrisa, na jehož snahy o obnovu krásné knihy navázali v českém prostředí především Karel Dyrynk a Zdena Braunerová. Nabízí se tedy prozkoumání přímého propojení Williama Blakea a Josefa Váchala, respektive vlivu, který Blake mohl na českou knižní tvorbu dvacátého století mít.

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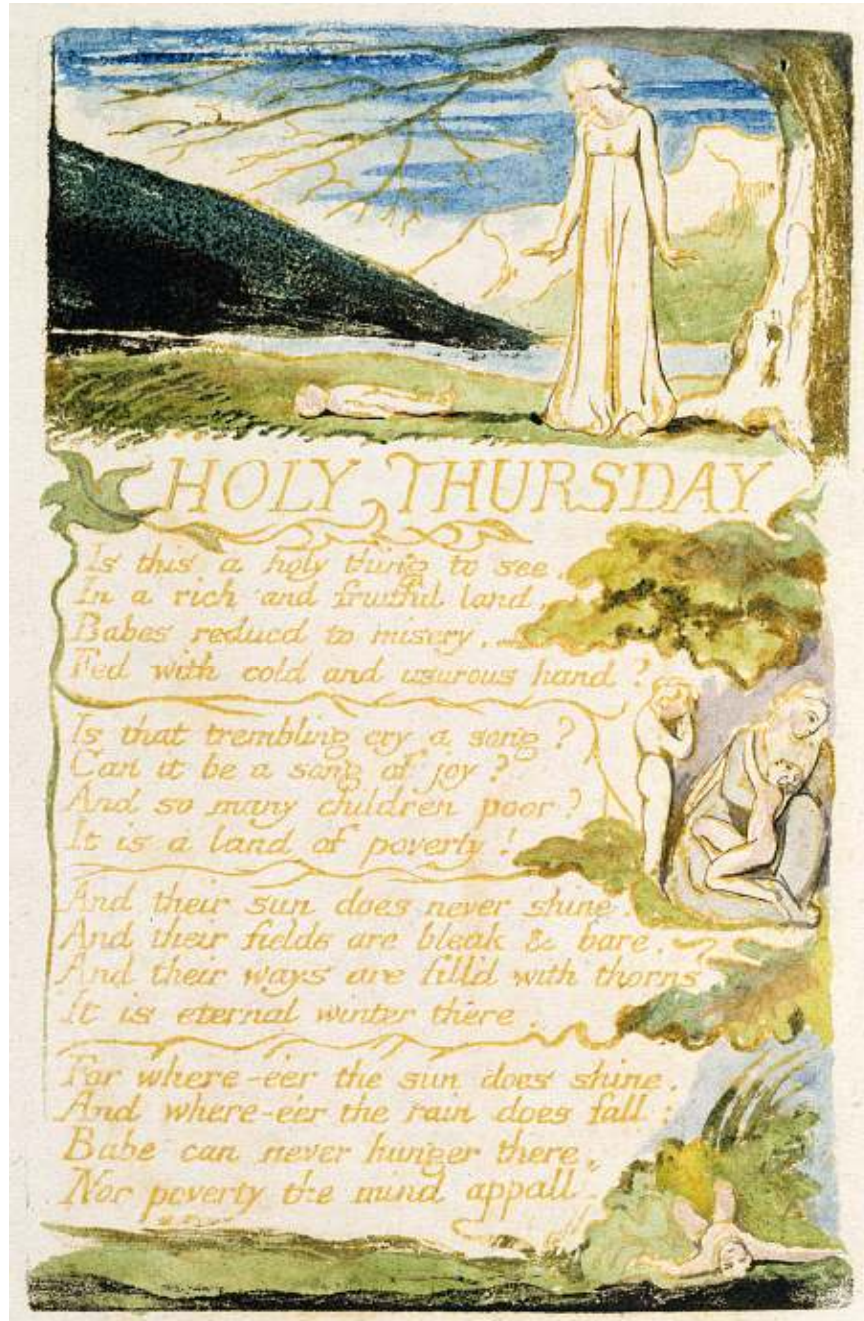
Appendix 1 – Portrait of William Blake



Appendix 2 – Portrait of Josef Váchal



Appendix 3 – William Blake: Songs of Innocence and of Experience, copy B “Holly Thursday”



Appendix 4 – Colour alternation in Plate 10 of The Marriage of heaven and Hell



Copy D



Copy H

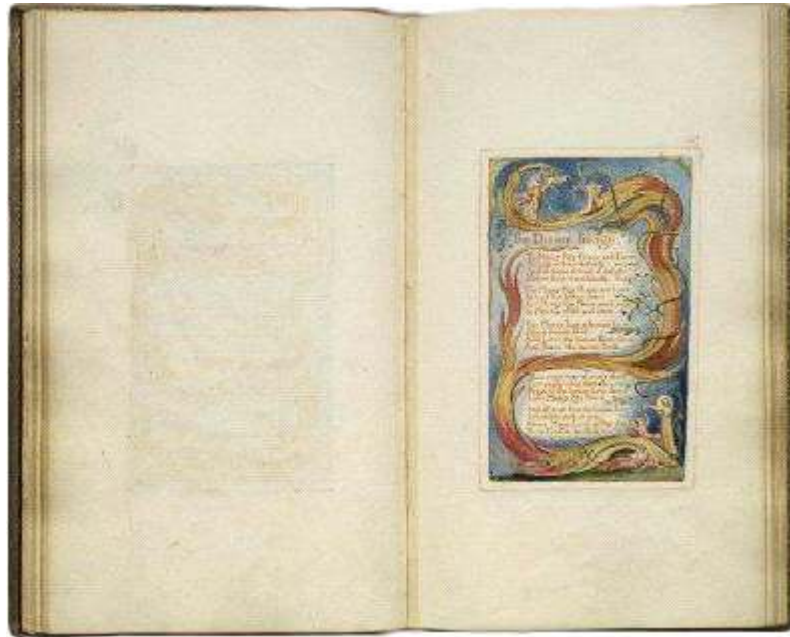


Copy F



Copy G

Appendix 5 – An example of an original book by William Blake: Songs of Innocence





Jak už to řek' ten moudrý Řek: euthymia či-li klid duše zvláště prý se doporučuje jezdcům, a to v těchto třech případnostech: jedou-li s vrchu, mají-li cos polámaného a hlavně prý v ten čas před zahájením nové jízdy, neboť v tu dobu zrovna nejvíce nebezpečí kolem číhá; jeden český kazatel, ve svém rozjímání o jždě z nebezpečí hříchu, při polámání dobrých skutků a o nebezpečí odpočinku duchovního, též zmiňuje se o euthymii a pravi, že nejvíce tohoto stavu ztheologii získati možno, když i krásná umění a věda selhaly. Jiní tvrdí, že jen zdravý duch v zdravém těle k euthymii dospěti může, jiní, že tak tajnými cestami se děje a opět jiní tvrdí, že absolutní euthymie u jednotlivců zcela individuálního ražení jest. Anž bychom zaměřovali euthymii s obyčejnými stavy klidu a spokojenosti, musíme mnohým chauffeurům přiznati, že k euthymii docházejí cestami neobyčejnými, o čemž vás hned poučím:

Jeden šofér, aby mu lépe dlouhý čas ušel, než na něho přijde opět k jždě řada, do hospody k šenflokovům zacházel, aby tam (jak on říká,) klid duše své žádoucí nalezl a hrdě sobě pivem prolévat! mohl. Obě s vždy však ven vycházel a do dálky pátravým okem k museu hleděl, kde těch silovozů stanoviště se nacházelo.

Otázan jso, proč tak činí, odpověděl: „Já tak dělám jednak pro klid své duše, zde-li mi na štaflu někdo vůz neukrad a jednak proto, abych viděl, je-li na mně k jždě už řada: dokud zřím tu statul u musea nehybnou a nepohnutelnou býti, vidím, že dost času ještě k práci mám; jakmile však uhlídám, že ten svatej Václav z té štafaje naproti mi jede, aneb spatřím z té sochy více jezdců ke mně se blížit, tu hned na štafi pospíchám, abych jízdu svou nezmeškal a o klid duše své nepřišel.“



8. Tuto se ukazuge, co wšsečno Wawřinec uwiděl, když za swým nowým pánem šel, ale nic se nelekal. • Geho nowý pán byl welmi bohatý a wšsečno zjštal, co chtěl, neboť byl ďáblu zapřsaný a wšseliké potwory ho poslauchaly. • Wawřinec gsa učenliwý, brzy geho pilným žákem se stal, různé praktyky prowáděl a černému kunštu se zaučowal.



Appendix 9 – Czech quotations mentioned in the thesis

Bělina, 110

...věrnost, kterou trůnu opětně osvědčil, nezůstane bez odměny; císař pochopí a uzná naléhavost českých požadavků i prospěch, který by z větší decentralizace mohl vzejít pro celé mocnářství.

Bělina, 137

Dvě zbraně máme, knihu jen a školu.

Bělina, 137

...posílila pozice národního hnutí.

Blake, 72

...se Blake rozhodl být svým vlastním tiskařem a vydavatelem, protože neměl žádné postavení a žádné jméno.

Blake, 72

...byla vyšší než cena běžné tiskařské práce.

Cirici, 55

...otrockém napodobování přírody, ale na imaginativním tvoření, čerpajícím své symboly z přírody.

Dačeva, 7

Teosofické učení, zasvěcené odhalování skrytých duchovních skutečností, přitahovalo Váchala natolik, že se stalo jeho celoživotním zájmem. Otevřelo mu cestu k pochopení vlastních iracionálních prožitků a poskytlo prostor pro intelektuální a uměleckou tvorbu, zbavující jeho nitro prokletí úzkostných stavů. Váchal intuitivně vycítil velké životní téma s množstvím námětů, které mohl naplňovat svými vizemi.

Dačeva, 9, 11

Váchal však zůstal rozkolísán v půli této pouti mezi Bohem a d'áblem.... Duchovní atmosféra katolického časopisu podnítila ve Váchalovi zájem o středověké umění a křesťanskou mystiku, který ho načas odvedl od okultismu...Věřil ve všemohoucnost a sílu imaginace a proces tvorby chápal jako působení souhry vyšších kosmických sil.

Deml

Důstojný Pane! Skutečně, Hrad smrti je dobrá a silná věc, jaká nebyla dodnes v Čechách napsána. Jistě by v Moderní revue měli z ní radost. Miloval jsem kdysi nesmírně Poeta a mněl jsem plnou duši obrazů k jeho úžasným líčením, leč jak vše vybledlo dnes! A mám-li říci pravdu, bojím se něco pracovati k Vaší knize, nedůvěřuji své síle a nechtěl bych oslabit účinek Vašich slov.

Dyrynk 1909, 68

Ovšem takový umělec nehledí na knihu jako na předmět podřízený, ale považuje výzdobu a výpravu knihy za dílo stejné důležitosti s barevným obrazem neb sochou. A jedině tehdy, přistoupí-li takto s radostí a láskou k výzdobě knihy, bude výsledkem jeho práce dílo právě tak umělecky cenné, jako kterýkoliv umělecký předmět výtvarný.

Dyrynk 1911, 298

Zajímavou knižní kuriozitou je ...Vidění sedmera dnů a planet..., jež do dřeva vyryl a v kůži svázal Josef Váchal. Prazvláštní kniha, jejíž způsob provedení vzat z doby ještě před vynálezem Gutenbergovým.

Johnson, 183

...pomohli na svět hlučnému, noblesnímu a defektnímu potomku...

Kneidl, 35

... drobné obrázky, které tvoří ústřední součást jemně malovaných gotických iniciál.

Kopáč, 54

Musím uvažovat pouze o čtyřech bodech: 1. o papíru; 2. o formě písma; 3. o poměrné vzdálenosti písma, slov a řádek; 4. o umístění stránky na papíře.

Maurois, 344

...byli Angličané upřímně přesvědčeni, že se Francouzi bez vážnějších zmatků rozhodnou pro instituce podobné institucím ve Velké Británii.

Mrázová 1966, 4

Proti morrisovské estetizaci knižní úpravy, která směřovala k standardizaci, chápe Váchal práci s knihou jako jedinečnou příležitost k uměleckému sebevýrazu.

Mrázová 1968, 5-6

Rozhodně nechtěl tvořit „krásnou“ knihu – jeho kniha se měla vymykat všem zavedeným kritériím o jejím vzhledu.

Mrázová 1968, 26

Místa je písmo řídké, jinde vytváří zase shluky. Je dobře čitelné, ale čte – li se, jako byste šli po nerovné, hrbolaté a kamenité cestě...je podivné, bizarní, jako určené k tisku čarodějných, zaklínacích knih.

Olič 1993, 19

Theosofická společnost představovala jakýsi vyšší kvalitativní stupeň dobového gnosticizmu (jehož strašidlo tehdy obcházelo Evropou), snahu o překonání spiritismu, tehdy již zdiskreditovaného vírou v mluvící stolečky a magické lidské řetězy. A nejen to: theosofie se libovolně dosazuje na místo, do té doby vyhrazené filozofii a teologii.

Olič 1993, 20

Šestnáctiletý vpadnul přímo do nedávno v Praze ustanovené Theosofické společnosti a od té doby pil plným douškem vše, co Neznámem a druhým břehem zavánělo... Čerpala se zpočátku z Čuprova učení staroindického a překladu z němčiny. Později přicházela ke cti literatura francouzská – k usměrnění studia věd okultních značnou měrou přispěl

Karel Weinfurter, duch to svými osudy neobyčejný. Stoupenci duchovna dělili se dlouho na věřící v cokoliv a hledatele...Navštěvuje soukromé seance v Schnikově ateliéru a především pověstné seance v ateliéru sochaře Šalouna, kde zdi byly narudo natřeny volskou krví.

Olič 1993, 24

A nebyla to jen hrůza ze smrti, ale především hrůza ze života, z mládí, nejistot, ze sexu, hrůza nepojmenovaná a nepojmenovatelná.

Olič 1993, 39

...vlastní přesvědčení o duchovním poslání umění a úloze umělce jako misionáře spirituality.

Olič 1993, 44

...můj pobyt v Sursumu nevedl by k dobru ani mému, ani Vašemu. Což o to, přinášeti další oběti pro věc a pracovati s těmi, které by člověk měl rád, ale polykati jako cukrátku neupřímné urážky a vtipy s jedné a klukovskou pýchu se strany druhé, na to jsem holenku přece jen trochu tvrdý...

Olič 1993, 62

...úspěšně Vás prosím, potkáte – li mě náhodou, ať v kavárně, ať v kostele, ať na ulici, abyste mě úplně ignoroval. Jsa umělcem, pochopíte mě lépe, než kdokoliv jiný... inu já uviděl náhle, a zděsil jsem se do hloubi duše: já uviděl, že Váchal jest posedlý...

Olič 1993, 63

Váchal je v první řadě výtvarný umělec.

Olič 1993, 86

Poněvadž bývalo dosti černé emailové barvy, přidával jsem k písmu rozličné ocásky, kudrlinky a parádu nejnemožnějšího stylu – na tabulkách sočského hřbitova mohla se mnohá exkurze výtvarných mučenců učit...

Olič 1993, 109

Nejdůležitějším pramenem a literárním vzorem mu ale zůstávají spisovatelé doby barokní...

Olič 1993, 120

Prvého „d'as“ vyřezal jsem do olova 4000 liter a vysázena jím byla kniha Carducciho Satanu. Zpěv příkladný o Vilímovi a Běle pro mládence a panny sázen druhým písmem „gnom“. Třetí písmo „malaria“, kterým sázena bude knížka Mor v Kordule.

Olič 1993, 127

...byl z poloviny řemeslnickou dílnou a zbývající částí magickou pracovnou, ateliérem a obytnou místností.

Olič 1993, 133

Umělec věřil, že Šumava je oblíbený Dáblův rajón.

Olič 1993, 136

...Váchal – jako pravý romantik – toužil najít prameny lidského citu, zbožňoval přírodu a chtěl srovnat tajemství pralesa českého na Šumavě s pralesem slovenským.

Olič 1993, 149

...pro kterou měl autor jen obdiv a slova uznání...

Olič 1993, 154

Váchal dobře věděl, že existuje dvojitá romantická literatura, a samozřejmě že odvrhl oficiálně hláсанou její podobu, jak ji prosazovala literární historie! Oproti takřečenému romantismu literárních salónů (představovaného jmény Goetha, Svillera, Barona a dalších) vyznával Váchal jeho druhou nelegitimní větev – romantismus lidový, triviální, jakým byla vytvořena většina děl často anonymních.

Olič 1993, 175

Umělcovo pohrdání současným uměním a kulturními centry je vysloveno v řadě dopisů, které Váchal posílá přátelům.

Olič 1993, 186

Váchal na kramářské písni oceňoval právě její triviální formu, rustikální výraznost a komediálnost.

Olič 1993, 193

Váchal procházel všemi ideovými proměnami (i těmi nejradiálnějšími), aniž by měnil cokoli na anarchistických základech svého duchovního misionářství; je z posledních anarchistů i romantiků v době, kdy se bývalí návštěvníci olšanské vily S.K.Neumanna stávají národními umělci.

Olič 1993, 206

Nebylo stupidity, která by našeho Váchala neoslovila a neinspirovala.

Olič 1993, 241

Zrak mi utkvěl nahoře na polici, kde boty kanadky, Evou mi poslané, očekávají zítra prvního mého obutí. Prý pocházejí od vraha, jakož i kabáty po sebevrazech nosím, jakožto pozdní romantik, když reumatik nejsem.

Olič 2000, 60

Ostatně doufáme, že v tomto smyslu přijdete jednou do rozumu a přestanete s d'ábly koketovat alespoň před obecným lidem, zvláště když to potom naši nejvěrnější a nejlepší přátelé bolestmi odnesou.

Olič 2000, 96

Začínám novou fází svého malování expresionismem.

Snad někdo z mrtvých expresionistů vede mou ruku

Olič 2000, 139.

Je Váchal také básník a nejenom grafik, nebo obojí v jednom? Nic bych se tomu nedivil, William Blake jím byl přece rovněž!

Olič 2000, 156

Šumavou ovšem rozumím pouze onen dosud nedotčený kout země v pohraničí, co kolem, již příliš kultivováno a přizpůsobeno zájmům lidským, i Královský hvozd s jezery Černým a Čertovým jest již dnes jakousi Stromovkou. Ale tam dále, kde dosud slatě, kde hnije na místech ani kůrovcem 1871 nedotčených spousta dřeva a kam velmi málo přijde lidská noha, tam dosud typicky krásná Šumava.

Pijoan, 183

...využívali všech druhů pohnutí, jež umožňuje představivost.

Pokorný, 5

...máme ohnivé zastánce na sněmích a v říšské radě, bijeme se takřka na život a na smrt o každou píď země koruny svatého Václava, české písemnictví a umění zomhlo se k výši velice důstojné, máme divadla, muzea, instituce osvětové, národní i politické, toužíme klestiti cestu průmyslu a obchodu...

Pokorný, 171

Když se svatý Petr v nebi ptá Francouze, Němce a Čecha, zač bojovali, odpovídá Francouz Za republiku a národ, Za císaře a vlast, tvrdí Němec. Za osm krejcarů denně, říká Čech.

Váchal 1990, 248-249

Zmužile naslouchal starý Paseka kletbám, které se z jejich spanilých rtů jen hrnuly. Tato dáma byla společnice Pasekova nakladatelství, jménem Anna Kocourková. Byla to dívka namnoze ucházející, sympatická svým zjevem a výbornou kuchyní. Padouch Paseka se jí hlavně proto přidržoval, že znamenitě jemu i Tarzánovi vařila, takže ten pes si nikdy nestěžoval. Kromě toho si Paseka vypůjčoval od ní peníze pro svoje nakladatelství.

Váchal 1990, 307-308

Váchal vyšel ze secesního symbolismu a dekorativismu ... Váchalovo dílo jeví silné tendence expresivní ...Vysledujeme též prvky geometrické abstrakce ...vykazuje překvapující souvislost zejména se surrealismem

Váchal 1990, 310

Původní naivita kramářské písně, podrtzená sepětím poetiky slovesné a výtvarné (pravopis a tvarosloví spolu s lidově naivními dřevoryty), má u Váchala funkci aktualizace satirickou....Váchalova původní kramářská skládání, ale i jeho knižní experimenty vypovídají, že jde o „pamětihodné události aktuálně prožívané, mnohdy přímo o jeho známé, přátele, či naopak soky.

Váchal 1993, 18

...jak se v noci probouzel a s hrůzou přihlížel, jak cosi z něj stahuje peřinu...

Váchal 1993, 36

Plášť modrý v zelený se změnil a jedovaté světlo se lilo z hořícího Tyrkysu. Zelená barva Smilstva se vařila a měnila se v barvu mědi. Ve vrbině viděl jsem kozla necudnosti plného, s podivným orgánem pohlavním, na jehož hřbetě hověla si milostnice. Slyšel jsem zpívajícího umělce, pějící hymny dnu lásky...

Váchal 1995, 202

...že nelze mi navázati na směry (mluvilo se asi o tom přivésti do spolku Kubištu), kterým nechci nijak rozuměti, aniž chci uzavírati kompromisy.

Váchal, Deníky, 227

Žaludek ale hladov, není chléb - piju kořalku a omámený usínám, celou noc s divokými sny.

Váchal, Malíř na frontě, 12

Autor této knihy prohlašuje předem, že podobných citů byl tehdy dalek, neboť v oné době mořila ho jediné starost o papír na novou knihu a sehnati padesát korun dalo mu mnoho námahy; též proto, že pisatel těchto řádků je člověk, žijící pouze své práci, od níž nevyrušilo by ho ani zemětřesení, natož vypuknuvší válka, rozpoutavší se dokonce někde na jihu, a kterou očekával přec již od roku 1912.

Váchal, Váchalův Havran, 67

...prosazují se v posledním dvacetiletí snahy o nápravu.

Váchal, Váchalův Havran, 67

...zpočátku nezávisle na sobě, s cílem navrátit knize důstojnost, ušlechtilost a harmonii. Znovu ožívají středověké ideály psaných a bohatých ilustracemi a iluminacemi zdobených kodexů. Opět mezi tvůrci knih a čtenářským publikem probleskuje sílící ohýnek zájmu o krásnou knihu.

Váchal, Váchalův Havran, 69

...šablonovitosti, bezduché střízlivosti přecházející až v nucenou křeč a ošklivost.

Váchal, Váchalův Havran, 71-72

Váchal od počátku využívá a uplatňuje znalosti řemesla při tvorbě osobitých knižních vazeb, návrhů, volbě materiálu a řezání vlastního písma. Značnou pozornost věnuje uspořádání a vzájemným poměrům typografických a ilustračních prvků v knize, textu a ilustraci jako celku, i zvolené a provedené technice tisku.

Váchal, Váchalův Havran, 75

Ilustrace pak nepřevládá, nezatlačuje text do pozadí. Naopak! Je vyvážená s textovou stránkou a její linie má příbuzné znaky s liniemi písma.

Váchal, Vidění sedmera

Knih je hmatatelným důkazem, jak mnoho Váchal toužil stát se umělcem.

ÚDAJE PRO KNIHOVNICKOU DATABÁZI

Název práce	Visions, Pophecies, Madnesses: The Textual and Pictorial Approaches of William Blake and Josef Váchal
Autor práce	Josef Dvořák
Obor	Učitelství anglického jazyka pro základní školy
Rok obhajoby	2007
Vedoucí práce	Mgr. Olga Roebuck, M. Litt.
Anotace	Práce je rozdělena do tří částí, z nichž každá nabízí paralelní srovnání Williama Blakea a Josefa Váchala. Jsou zkoumány možné podobnosti historických, hospodářských i uměleckých vlivů z konkrétních období životů obou umělců. Další specifické podněty ovlivňující jejich tvorbu jsou využity pro analýzu koncepce knižních děl Blakea i Váchala. Pozornost je především soustředěna na unikátní spojení textové a výtvarné složky v jejich dílech. Tato analýza je výstupem pro potvrzení možné podobnosti obou autorů.
Klíčová slova	William Blake, Josef Váchal, Illuminated Books, Beautiful Book, textual and pictorial arts, Romanticism, Gothic, Baroque, Art Nouveau, William Morris