

NEW RESEARCH PERSPECTIVES ON FRANCISZKA AND STEFAN THEMERSON'S OEUVRE. THE CASE OF FILM OUTPUT

The artistic achievements of Franciszka and Stefan Themerson are becoming increasingly popular as a research subject in Poland. The oeuvre of the authors of the *Drobiazg melodyjny* [Musical Moment] has inspired an extensive academic and popular-science literature. This includes a biography,¹ a post-conference monograph,² several monographic issues of journals,³ exhibition catalogues,⁴ chapters in books,⁵

- 1 See A. Prodeus, *Themersonowie. Szkice biograficzne*, 2nd revised edition, Warszawa 2010 (*passim*). The work should not be treated as an example of a scientific biography, but rather as a book popularising knowledge about the Themersons' life and work. The endnotes and bibliography include mainly source literature, which suggests that the author did not access the materials in the London archive.
- 2 Świat według Themersonów. Szkice do portretu, ed. Z. Majchrowski, Gdańsk 1994 (*passim*).
- 3 See *Ha!art* 26 (2007), *Gościniec Sztuki. Magazyn Artystyczno-Literacki*, 2010, no. 2/15 (*passim*); *Gościniec Sztuki. Magazyn Artystyczno-Literacki*, 2011, no. 2/17 (*passim*); *Literatura na Świecie* 2013, no. 9-10 (*passim*).
- 4 See *Stefan i Franciszka Themerson. Poszukiwania wizualne. Visual Researches*, ed. U. Czartoryska, Łódź 1981 (*passim*), *Themersonowie i awangarda. The Themersons and the Avant-Garde*, ed. P. Polit, Łódź 2013 (*passim*); *Dwie wystawy. Themersonowie na papierze. O potrzebie tworzenia widzeń*, ed. M. Sady, N. Wadley, Płock 2013 (*passim*).
- 5 See, for example, J. Franczak, "Mise en scène. Stefan Themerson - Wykład profesora Mmaa", in: idem, *Poszukiwanie realności. Światopogląd polskiej prozy modernistycznej*, Kraków 2007, pp. 457-531; A. Karpowicz, 1. "Rękodzieło. Technika Stefana Themersona - 'wklej'", in: eadem, *Kolaż. Awangardowy gest kreacji. Themerson, Buczkowski, Białoszewski*, Warszawa 2007, pp. 80-135.

numerous articles in literary, cultural and artistic publications, and two books on Stefan Themerson's writing.⁶ Yet despite this, the Themersons remain artists who have not been studied in depth and many research topics connected with them have not been investigated at all. This is partly due to the wide variety of the couple's interests and their extensive artistic output, and partly because the major part of their archive remained in London until the end of 2014.⁷

In this paper⁸ we examine the new research perspectives which have opened up with the relocation of the Themerson archive to Poland. The presence of the archive in Poland enables the analysis of previously unknown or under-researched areas of their life and work.

To examine these new research perspectives, we should first take a brief look at the Themersons' papers. A full description of their extensive archive transported to the National Library of Poland - 209 boxes of materials weighing a total of three and a half tonnes⁹ - is

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- 6 See E. Krasnowska [i.e. Kraskowska], *Twórczość Stefana Themersona – dwujęzyczność a literatura*, Wrocław [etc.] 1989; A. Pruszyński, *Dobre maniery Stefana Themersona*, Gdańsk 2004.
 - 7 After the Themersons' death in 1988, the papers they left was put in the charge of Franciszka's niece, Jasia Reichardt. She deposited the archive material in her house in Belsize Park Gardens, where she started to organise it and make it available to researchers. Around ten years later she decided to hand part of the archive over to the University of Silesia in Katowice, where, on the strength of the then Vice-Chancellor's decision, *The Themerson Archive in Poland* was set up (today known as *The Stefan and Franciszka Themerson Collection*). However, the vast majority of the collection remained in London until the closing months of 2014, when almost the complete archive (excluding a selection of Franciszka's artistic works) was bought by to the National Library of Poland. Since a key part of this diverse collection is made up of manuscripts, it was put in the charge of the Department of Manuscripts, which stores the most precious collections in the library, including the personal archives of other writers, artists and intellectuals whose accomplishments are particularly important for Polish culture, including Zbigniew Herbert, Czesław Miłosz, Agnieszka Osiecka, Jerzy Turowicz, Aleksander Janta-Połczyński and Leszek Kołakowski.
 - 8 This paper is based on two speeches given by the author during the fifth Themersons' Festival SkArPa, organised in Płock on May 22-24, 2015: a talk on the archive of the Themersons given in the Museum of Mazovian Jews and a plenary speech about new research perspectives on the Themersons' output delivered to the international conference *Common Room: the push and the pull of violence*, which accompanied the festival and was organised by the State School of Higher Professional Education in Płock.
 - 9 The size of the archive relocated to Poland reveals not only the Themersons' meticulousness in collecting documents concerning their life and work, but also the diligence of its guardian. Jasia Reichardt took care of the collection for over twenty years, adding materials popularising knowledge about both artists as well as records showing her involvement in the process of popularisation.

beyond the scope of this paper. However, we can identify several distinct groups of related items in the archive.

The first group comprises materials dealing strictly with Stefan Themerson's work. These are typescripts and manuscripts of his novels, essayistic texts, poetic works, translations of literary texts by other writers, notebooks, diaries, drawings and press cuttings collected by the writer – including a pre-war album with press cuttings on the topic of Polish experimental cinema, called by Jasia Reichardt the “holy of holies”, reflecting Stefan Themerson's sentimental attachment to it.¹⁰

The second, relatively small group of materials consists of items connected with Franciszka Themerson's work. They include inter alia archive materials illustrating her cooperation with the theatre director Michael Meschke and teaching materials that she developed during a spell at the Wimbledon School of Art and the Bath Academy of Art at Corsham.

The next group consists of objects relating to joint work by the couple. Among the numerous interesting items in this group, particularly important is an album in the form of a concertina-fold booklet created in the early 1930s containing a typescript and illustrations for a children's book entitled *Żółte, zielone, czerwone, niebieskie, niezwykle przygody* [Yellow, Green, Red, Blue, Extraordinary Adventures]. This was not published during the Themersons' lifetimes and was discovered only after their death. It has relatively recently served as a basis for two editions.¹¹ Equally important are items documenting the activities of Gaberbocchus Press, founded and run by the Themersons in the years 1948-1979, and materials concerning the intellectual and literary salon *Common Room*, hosted by them in 1957-1959. The latter materials include a guest book and a book of minutes.

10 See J. Reichardt, “Książka, czyli album wycinków z prasy”, *Gościńiec Sztuki. Magazyn Artystyczno-Literacki* Płock 2011, no 2/17, pp. 15-26.

11 See F. & S. Themerson, *Żółte, zielone, czerwone, niebieskie, niezwykle przygody*, Fundacja Festina Lente, Warszawa 2013 and F. & S. Themerson, *Żółte, zielone, czerwone, niebieskie, niezwykle przygody*, Correspondance des Arts, Łódź 2013.

Among the remaining archive materials are personal documents (passports, diplomas, cheque books, receipts, medical documents) and other items shedding light on the Themersons' lives (hotel receipts, aeroplane and boat tickets, maps, guidebooks to places where they travelled, and so on). The archive also contains an impressive collection of correspondence; the Themersons corresponded with at least 1,000 people. The collection includes the letters that Franciszka and Stefan wrote to each other between the early 1940s¹² and mid-1970s. There is also a separate collection of Jasia Reichardt's letters relating to the London archive.

Finally, the archive contains boxes with manuscripts by other writers, including those published by Gaberbocchus Press, as well as picture materials (photographs, posters, postcards), audio and audio-visual documents (gramophone records, films, cassettes and VHS videotapes), museum pieces (a typewriter, a pipe, a pair of glasses, a cigarette case, Stefan's cameras, decorations, works by other artists and such like) and finally an extensive collection of books – around sixty boxes – containing many works signed by the authors for the Themersons.

This huge amount of material represents a rich source of information about the Themersons. It is of great interest to researchers trying to reinterpret their artistic output, revisit former findings, analyse topics identified in existing studies and explore issues previously not investigated.

The prose manuscripts and typescripts, poetic works and copies of books with handwritten alterations by Stefan – used as the basis for later editions of his works published by Gaberbocchus Press – enable research into Stefan's literary style and how it developed over time. Over many years, the writer used three different languages: Polish, French and English (the archive material confirms that he started learning English only after his arrival in the United Kingdom in the

12 Their wartime letters formed the basis for the following book: F. & S. Themerson, *Un-posted Letters. Correspondence, Diaries, Drawings, Documents 1940–1942*, ed. J. Reichardt, with a coda by N. Wadley, Gaberbocchus & De Harmonie, Amsterdam 2013 (*passim*).

first half of the 1940s). Stefan's manuscripts and typescripts can serve as material for analyses of his writing process using the approach of "genetic criticism"¹³ or simply as the basis for academic editions of his works. They are highly useful material for any researcher interested in collating different variants of a text. The texts can also inspire specialists in modern languages to analyse the problem of Themerson's translations, as the archive includes his translations of Sławomir Mrożek, Adolf Rudnicki, Maria Dąbrowska, Eliza Orzeszkowa and others.

The activities of Gaberbocchus Press also merit investigation. The publishing house has been described in the literature many times, but a more thorough study would be possible by carefully analysing the archive material. Historians of commercial design might be interested in the more than 20 boxes of graphic designs and printing materials relating to the books published by Gaberbocchus Press. Researchers analysing the work of publishing houses could make use of the financial documentation relating to Gaberbocchus Press. Specialists in literature would be interested not just in Stefan's own works but in the manuscripts of the other authors whose works were published in cooperation with the Themersons.

Another area worthy of exploration is undoubtedly hitherto unknown aspects of the Themersons' biographies. No biography of the Themersons based on a thorough analysis of source materials exists at present. Potential biographers will be interested in all the materials in the archive, especially the personal documents, documentation relating to trips they made to France, Italy, Belgium, Denmark, Switzerland, Sweden, Spain, Yugoslavia and Poland, and of course their extensive correspondence. Careful analysis of their letters would allow the reconstruction of specific biographical facts and a precise analysis of the Themersons' contacts with Polish and other artists and intellectuals. The more than 1,000 people they corresponded with include figures such as Sławomir Mrożek, Aleksander and Ola Wat, Jan

13 For more information on this research methodology, which has been developing over the past thirty or more years, see, for example, P.-M. de Biasi, *Genetyka tekstów*, transl. F. Kwiatek, M. Prussak, Warszawa 2015 (*passim*).

Brzękowski, Józef Wittlin, Antoni Słonimski and Janina Konarska-Słonimska, Maria and Jerzy Kuncewiczowie, Czesław Miłosz, Tadeusz Kotarbiński, Witold Lutosławski, Andrzej Wajda, Ewa Kuryluk, Tomasz Pobóg-Malinowski, Gaston Bachelard, Henri Chopin, Michael Horovitz, Italo Calvino and Raymond Queneau¹⁴. The archive also contains a variety of other materials which allow a multidimensional analysis of the Themersons' lives.¹⁵

The areas outlined above are just a few of the research avenues available. We now turn our attention to potential research based on one particular collection which we have so far not mentioned but which constitutes a distinct group, namely materials relating to the Themersons' film work. The archive materials broaden our knowledge of this aspect of the Themersons' work and provide a basis for future investigations of the field.

What, then, do we know about the Themersons' film output? Why is it considered by many to be as interesting a Stefan's literary work? In the 1930s, the Themersons were forerunners of Polish experimental cinema. Their achievements in this field cannot be overestimated, especially given that in inter-war Poland the avant-garde was a very weak trend in cinematography, particularly compared to France or Germany.¹⁶

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- 14 Naturally the correspondence which survives in the archive is not only representatives of the artistic and intellectual world. Equally interesting and important from a biographical perspective is the Themersons' correspondence with private individuals. Endearingly honest and straightforward letters to Franciszka from two patients – a boy and a woman – of the Institute of Rheumatology in Warsaw (today the National Institute of Geriatrics, Rheumatology and Rehabilitation) may serve as an example. Franciszka met them during her stay in Poland and treatment in the hospital in 1971.
 - 15 The author of this paper, who considers himself a music lover, feels obliged to draw attention to a collection of about eighty albums on analogue records that survive in the archive. These would undoubtedly be of interest to any "Themersonologist" with an interest in musicology. The collection includes mainly classical records of music by composers as diverse as Bach (played by Wanda Landowska, for example) and Villa-Lobos. However, it also features light music, including albums by Polish artists such as Marek Grechuta's *Szalona Lokomotywa* [The Crazy Locomotive] (Pronit SX 1496) from 1977 and Tomasz Stańko and Edward Vesala Quartet's *Live at Remont* (Helicon HR 1002) from 1978.
 - 16 See M. Giżycki, *Awangarda wobec kina. Film w kręgu polskiej awangardy artystycznej dwudziestolecia międzywojennego*, Warszawa 1996 (*passim*).

We know that the Themersons' entire film output consisted of seven short films: five produced in Poland and two produced in the United Kingdom during World War II for the Film Unit of the Ministry of Information and Documentation of the Polish Government in London. Of these seven films, only the last three survive.¹⁷ The surviving films can be analysed, as they have been many times before,¹⁸ and those that are lost can be investigated by referring to the pre-war press, which has also served as a source of information more than once in similar studies. We know that from 1935 the Themersons were among the founders of the Film Authors Cooperative, the aim of which was to produce ambitious cinema. The cooperative had its own organ, the journal "f.a.", edited by the Themersons. The only two issues appeared in 1937, the first devoted to English avant-garde film and the second to French avant-garde film.¹⁹ We also know Stefan's views on film, as they can be reconstructed on the basis of his few articles about cinema appearing in the press,²⁰ in particular the essay entitled *O potrze-*

17 The seven films are *Apteka* [Pharmacy] (1930), *Europa* (1931–1932), *Drobiazg melodyjny* [Musical Moment] (1933), *Zwarcie* [Short Circuit] (1935), *Przygoda człowieka poczciwego* [The Adventure of a Good Citizen] (1937), *Calling Mr. Smith* (1943), and *The Eye and the Ear* (1944–45).

18 See, for example, texts devoted to the films: *Przygoda człowieka poczciwego* [The Adventure of a Good Citizen] and *The Eye and the Ear*: A. Taszycka, "Przygoda człowieka poczciwego" Franciszki i Stefana Themersonów a 'Ferdynand' Witolda Gombrowicza. Próba analizy porównawczej, *Ha!art* 2007, no. 26, p. 2–7; eadem, "Surfukcja 'Przygody człowieka poczciwego' Franciszki i Stefana Themersonów", *Kwartalnik Filmowy* 2007, no 57–58, pp. 14–22; eadem, Świat na wspak. "Przygoda człowieka poczciwego" Franciszki i Stefana Themersonów jako film-walizka", *Kwartalnik Filmowy* 2010, no 70, pp. 15–25; B. Śnieci-kowska, "The Eye and the Ear (Oko i ucho)", in: eadem, *Słowo – obraz – dźwięk. Literatura i sztuki wizualne w koncepcjach polskiej awangardy 1918–1939*, Kraków 2005, pp. 373–396.

19 The source literature gives two conflicting dates for the foundation of the Film Authors Cooperative (SAF); some researchers claim it was 1935, others 1937 – the latter probably due to the publication date of the first issue of "f.a.". The archive materials indicate the correct date as 1935, however. In correspondence with Marcin Giżycki (who raised this question in one of his letters) Themerson confirms that SAF was set up in 1935 (see letter from M. Giżycki to F. and S. Themerson, Warsaw, June 21, 1983, typescript; letter from S. Themerson to M. Giżycki, July 19, 1983, carbon copy of typescript, Department of Manuscripts in the National Library of Poland, Themerson Archive [DM NLP TA]). As the archive is currently being rearranged and catalogued in line with Polish practice, most of the items in the collection that are mentioned in this paper still lack call numbers.

20 See, for example, p. Themerson, "Dialog tendencyjny", *Wiadomości Literackie* 1933, no. 17 (488), p. 16; "Przyszłość kina". Ankieta filmowa 'Kuriera Polskiego'. Rozmowa ze Stefanem Themersonem", *Kurier Polski* 1933, no 250, p. 5.

bie tworzenia widzeń [The Urge to Create Visions]. This was appeared in the second issue of “f.a.” and, almost fifty years later, in an extended version as a book of the same title²¹. Current findings concerning the Themersons’ film output essentially come down to these facts and the problems taken up in detailed analyses closely related to them.

What the manuscripts in the archive reveal is that the Themersons’ genius did not end with the production of seven films. Between the second half of the 1930s and the end of 1950s they were planning to make at least five more films, which were ultimately never produced²². When they left for France in 1938, they were considering a film production about Paris, and in 1944 in the United Kingdom they were working on an anti-war picture *Dziecko Europy* [The Child of Europe] presenting the impact of war atrocities on the psychological development of children in occupied countries²³. In the same year they were also working on the film *Fortepian Chopina* [Chopin’s Piano], an impressionistic piece presenting the relationship between pictures and sound, featuring Chopin’s piano music and compositions by Karol

- 21 See S. Themerson, *The Urge to Create Visions*, Amsterdam 1983 (*passim*); Polish edition: idem, *O potrzebie tworzenia widzeń*, transl. M. Sady, Warszawa 2008. Stefan’s essay was analysed in detail by Wiesław Godzic; see W. Godzic, “Stefan Themerson jako teoretyk kina”, in: *Polska kultura filmowa do 1939 roku*, ed. Jolanta Lemann-Zajicek, Łódź 2003, pp. 146–169.
- 22 We do not include here the unfinished film *Polski gotyk drewniany* [Polish Wooden Gothic], which the Themersons started working on around 1936. This is because there are very few mentions of this film in studies by Polish “Themersonologists”. The first person to write about it was probably Ryszard W. Kluszczyński, who gave the title *Polski Gotyk* [Polish Gothic] and the year 1937 as the beginning date of its production; see R.W. Kluszczyński, “Kino jako sztuka totalna. Twórczość filmowa Franciszki & Stefana Themersonów”, in: *Świat według Themersonów. Szkice do portretu...*, op. cit., p. 29. Kluszczyński only mentions it in one sentence and it is unlikely that much more will be written about it in the future. No manuscripts relating to the project have been preserved. All that exists is photocopies of the study for the film, including those that Stefan pasted into the album with press cuttings on Polish experimental cinema mentioned further above – the “holy of holies”; *Book of Cuttings*, DM NLP TA, call rps akc. 19521, pp. 50–52.
- 23 From the carbon copy of a typescript with a concise description and estimate of expenditures for *Dziecko Europy* [The Child of Europe] it can be deduced that the Themersons intended to work with Hanna Segal (née Poznańska) and were also considering consulting other child psychologists (e.g. Anna Freud, daughter of Sigmund Freud). Additionally, Julian Huxley is mentioned as a potential author of the preface or commentary to the film.

Szymanowski (to some extent reminiscent of the concept for *The Eye and the Ear*). It was probably also in the 1940s that the idea of a film inspired by Dante's *Divine Comedy* was born. The final project, *Claiming the Moon*, was a film inspired by a humorous paragraph published in The Times on March 7, 1959 under the same title, referring to the discussion by American politicians about the possibility of designating territorial borders in outer space.

Archive materials proving the existence of the above-mentioned projects include typescripts and handwritten notes by the Themersons, draft screenplays and shooting scripts, and drawings. Furthermore, at least one of these films is mentioned in various materials relating to the film *The Eye and the Ear*. For example, in a letter from Eugeniusz Cękański, the head of the Film Unit of the Ministry of Information and Documentation of the Polish Government in London, to Franciszka Themerson about the author's fee for *The Eye and the Ear*, Cękański writes that the Ministry had consented to the production of *Dziecko Europy* [The Child of Europe] and the contract would be signed after a screenplay was supplied²⁴.

Materials in the archive concerning the films that were not made are scarce, but represent an important starting point for further research. They are of interest to both "Themersonologists" and cinema historians, including those with an interest in counterfactual film studies²⁵. At present knowledge of the Themersons' unrealised projects is not widespread because they are not mentioned in any key publication on the Themersons' film output.²⁶ The author of this pa-

24 See letter from Eugeniusz Cękański to F. Themerson, London, January 13, 1944, typescript, DM NLP TA.

25 The potential interest for counterfactual film studies is demonstrated, for example, by a recently published book by Tadeusz Lubelski, who uses archive materials and artists' accounts as a basis for describing and reviewing unrealised projects by such directors as Aleksander Ford, Andrzej Wajda, Wojciech Jerzy Has and Janusz Morgenstern; see T. Lubelski, *Historia niebyła kina PRL*, Kraków 2012 (*passim*).

26 See, for example, J. Lehmann, "Filmowa twórczość Franciszki i Stefana Themersonów", in: *Z dziejów awangardy filmowej. Materiały z sesji „Awangarda filmowa lat dwudziestych”, Sosnowiec, 10-12 marca 1975 roku*, eds. A. Helman, K. Lubelski, W. Banaszkiewicz, Katowice 1976, pp. 121-132; M. Giżycki, "Kino niezależne Franciszki i Stefana Themersonów", in: idem, *Awangarda wobec kina...*, op. cit., pp. 41-75.

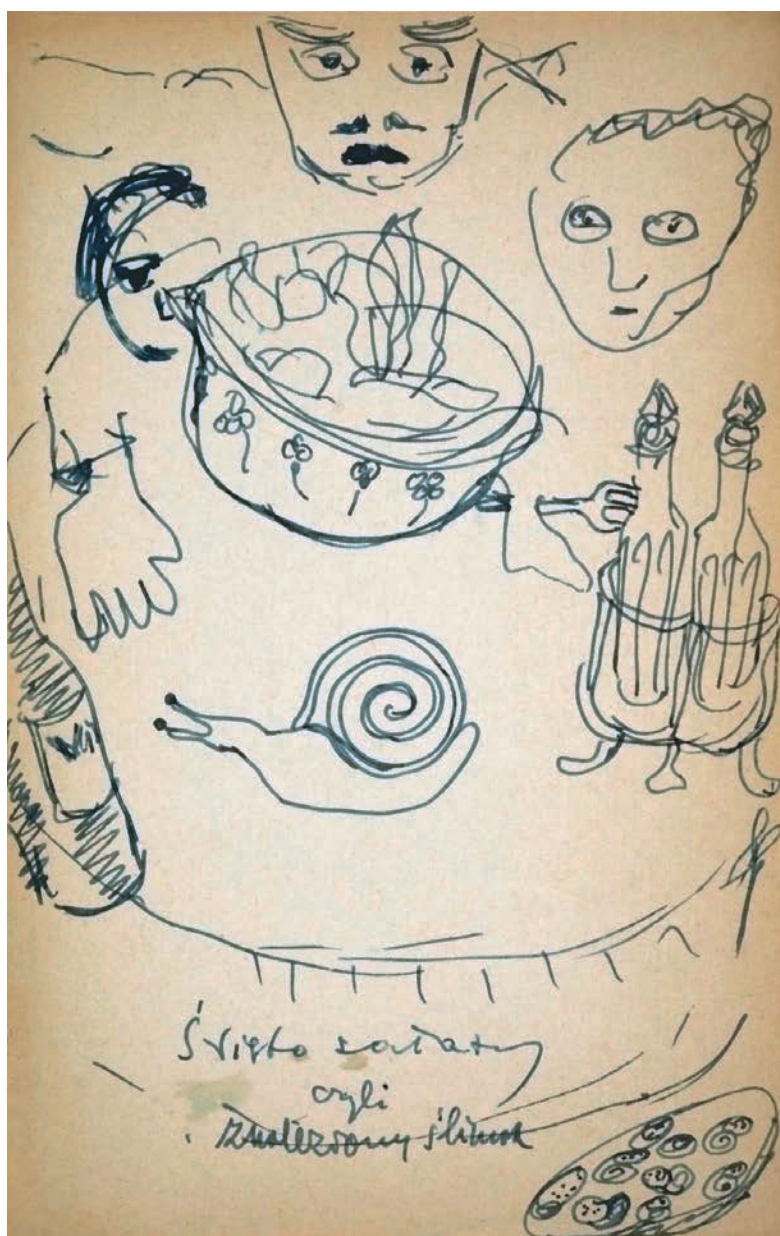


FIG.1. One of the sketches for the unreleased Themersons' film about Paris (ca. 1938-1939)

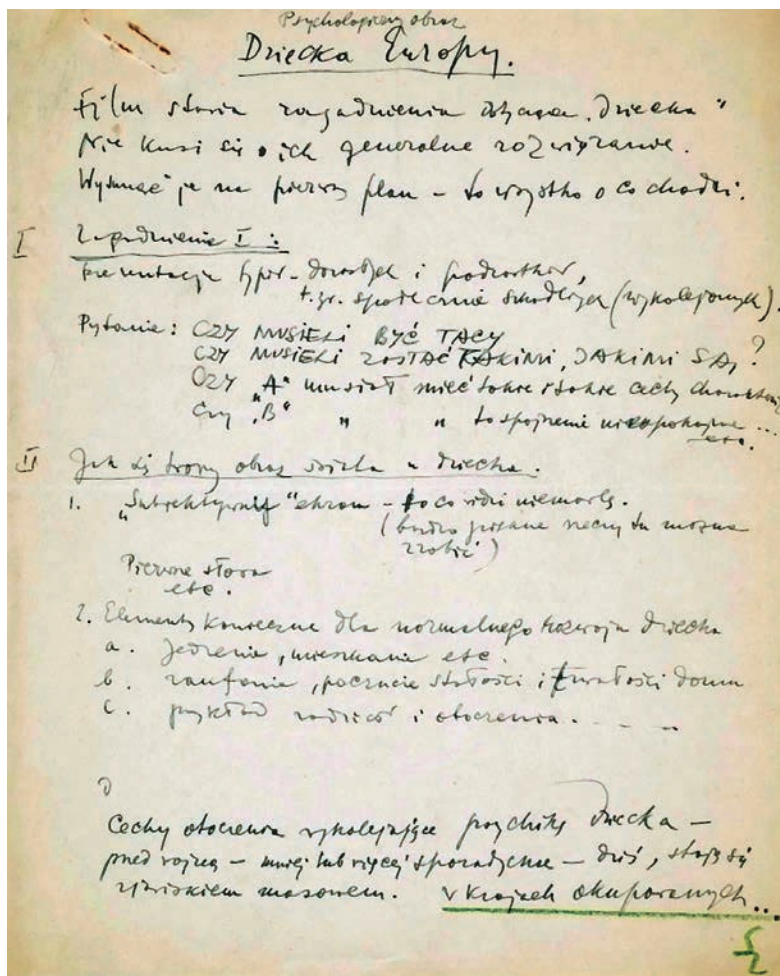


FIG. 2. Notes for a script of the unreleased film *Dziecko Europy* [The Child of Europe] (1944)




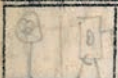
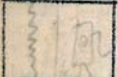
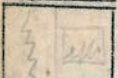



DRAFT SCRIPT		
picture	sound	commentary
	the mixed photographs of nature chases	mixed natural sounds
	the screen divides itself in two parts on them appear an eye & an ear	fade out /sounds in background/
	the ear changes into the microphone	We can catch it's sounds by means of the microphone...
	the eye changes into the camera	... and it's shape by means of the camera.
	the micro changes into the sound-track	We fix it's sounds...
	the camera changes into the film-picture	... and it's shape.
	the picture moves /i.e. gun shooting/ & parallel movement in sound-track	We can register the events -
	the right part of the screen - black on the left: the violin played on	- but we can also create. We can create the musical tones which were not in the nature before...
	on the right part fantastique shape appears	and we may create the visual sensations which are nowhere but on the screen
	violin sounds	
	fade out	

FIG. 3. An extract from a shooting script of the unreleased film
Fortepian Chopina [Chopin's Piano] (1944)

per, for example, was not aware of their existence when he was writing an article about the Themersons' work in films which appeared in a book on communication by Polish people during World War II.²⁷

Apart from materials confirming the existence of film projects that were never realised, the archive contains manuscripts concerning two films which were made: *Calling Mr. Smith* and *The Eye and the Ear*. This includes shooting scripts, storyboards, various written versions of audio commentaries used in the films, notebooks with technical notes and estimated expenditures and payments for production costs. A large part of these materials consist of correspondence with people involved in the shooting, such as letters from Ronald Biggs, the conductor of the 20-person orchestra that recorded the soundtrack to *The Eye and the Ear*, and a letter from Bruce Graeme, the author of the dialogue from *Calling Mr. Smith* and the text of the audio commentary for *The Eye and the Ear*. The documents which survive allow us to reconstruct the creative process, including modifications made to the artistic concepts. For example, handwritten calculations of film expenditures include the working titles of *Calling Mr. Smith* – namely *Poland in Figures* and *Kulturträgers*. The documents also clarify the historical context and describe some episodes from the lives of the Themersons. For example, there are demands from an official dealing with the financial matters of the liquidated Ministry of Information and Documentation for the return of a copy of *The Eye and the Ear* to which, according to said official, the Themersons were not entitled²⁸. The archive materials also, of course, make it possible to check facts appearing in the existing literature on film.²⁹

27 See J. Lachowski, "Wojenne losy polskiego kina (na przykładzie emigracyjnej twórczości Franciszki i Stefana Themersonów)", in: *Komunikowanie się Polaków w okresie II wojny światowej*, eds. K. Stępnik, M. Rajewski, Lublin 2011, pp. 221-231; a DVD with the film *Calling Mr. Smith* accompanies the book.

28 See letters from W. Detko to S. Themerson: London, August 14, 1945, typescript; London, September 4, 1945, typescript; London, September 21, 1945, typescript; letters from S. Themerson to W. Detko: London, August 30, 1945, carbon copy of typescript; London, October 5, 1945, carbon copy of typescript, DM NLP TA.

29 For example, the issue of British censors' interference in the film *Calling Mr. Smith* described by Stanisław Ozimek – see S. Ozimek, *Film polski w wojennej potrzebie*, Warszawa 1974, p. 83 – and later repeatedly mentioned in the literature on the Themersons' film

Wycieczka

Wzrostki do filmu "Calling Mr. Smith" (prerobiony tytuł: "Polandia
Figures"
"Kulturträgers")

Za okres od 16. II - 30. VI. 43.

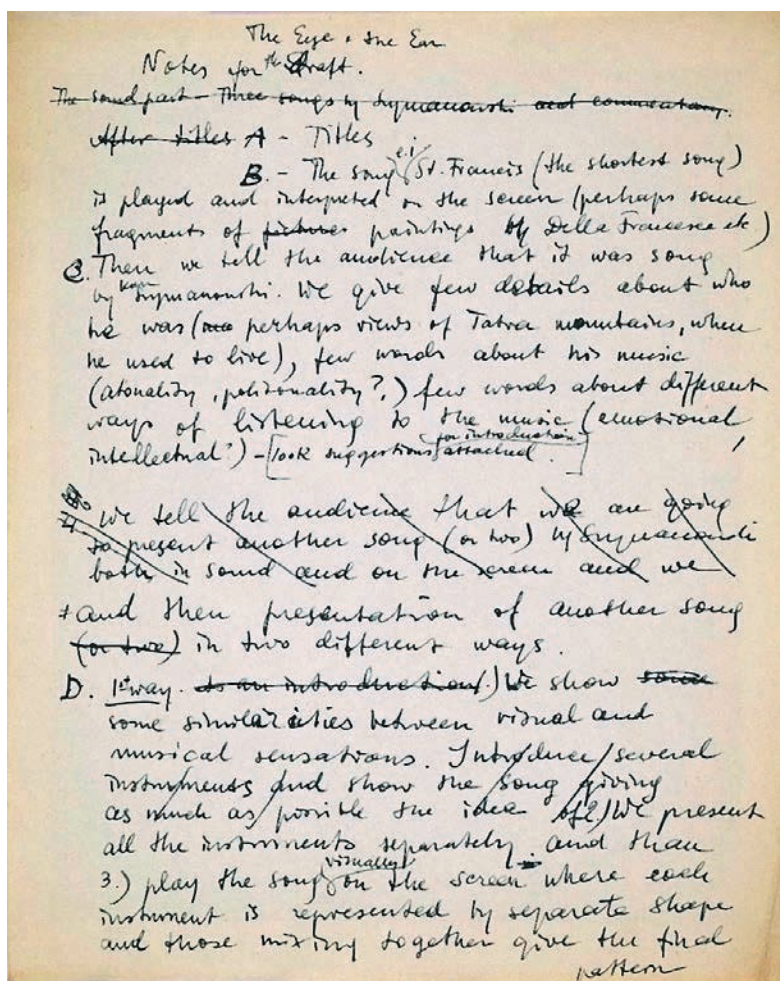
Nr. kolej.		
1. 20.5.	Przerobienie negatywów do "Zufang"	- 1. 11
2. 1.6.	" " " "	- 1. 11
3. 24.5.	Klej	- 0. 9 1/2
4. 1.6.	papierowy do maszynki itp.	- 15. 3
5. 2.6.	wykonanie rysunku	2. 10. -
6.	papierowy kolorowe	- 2. 8 1/2
7. 25. III.	przerobienie do "Zufang"	- 0. 7
8. 30. III.	" " "	- 0. 9
9. 1. IV.	2 przerobienie do "Polska" kolor, i "Kulturträgers"	- 7. 8
10. 6. IV.	Komplet filmu do "Zufang"	- 4. -
11. 6. IV.	przerobienie "Black & White" (przerobienie)	- 1. 9
12. 6. IV.	przerobienie kolorowego filmu do przerobienia	- 2. 1
13. 7. IV.	12 kolor. zlatanych do "Zufang"	- 10. -
14. 14. IV.	nowy tytuł (wymiana)	- 8. 7 1/2
15. 14. IV.	3 przerobienie przerobienia	- 5. 3
16. 6. V.	przerobienie do "Zufang"	- 1. 6
17. 12. V.	licznik	3. 15. 0
18. 12. V.	stabilizator	- 10. -
19. 12. V.	kolorowienie, śruby etc.	- 3. 6.
20. 22. V.	przerobienie neg. do "Zufang"	- 1. 6.
21. 24. V.	przerobienie kolorowego	- 3. 6.
22. 26. V.	przerobienie neg. do "Zufang"	- 1. 6.
23. 28. V.	" " " "	- 1. 2 1/2
24. 1. VI.	przerobienie lamp	- 4. -
25. 4. VI.	reprodukcje	1. 2. -
26. 4. VI.	przerobienie do "Zufang"	- 1. 4
27. 6. VI.	" " "	- 1. 4
28. 17. VI.	Facsimile Book	- 15. -
29. 7. VI.	reprodukcje do "Kulturträgers"	6. 10
30. 21. VI.	do "Kulturträgers"	4. 6
31. 28. VI.	11 przerobienie do "Kulturträgers" i "Zufang"	1. 6. 6
		16. 12. 6

31. 28. VI. przerobienie "Zufang"
"Kulturträgers" 1. 6. 6.

FIG. 4. Handwritten calculations of film expenditures, which enable us to see the working titles of *Calling Mr. Smith* - namely *Poland in Figures* and *Kulturträgers* (1943)

KOMENTARZ	MUZIKA	OBRAZ	1
ciśza	ciśza	Wykresy strukturalnego kierunku rozwoju	
repression starvation death	Pierwsze takt Toccata Bacha Allegro Presto	złoty pol neu- ryles: organic architekton Chrysm swoistyka - - pisanie kobie tym dricka	
	Toccata w tym rytmie takt	muzyka na obrazie cumony narys:	
	ciśza	i w nim obraz:	
		stop it!	
		Rys I	
Mr. Soundso cannot look at the atrocity-pictures.		Rys II	
Mr. Soundso does not believe He can thinks it to not to be possible		Rys III	
Why?		Rys IV	
Because he believes Germans to be cultural people.		złoty rozumie	
(2 ironies): "Cultural people!" "Dear Mr. Soundso, you like so much old Bach, and old Goethe, but would you like to meet in narrow street these new cultural people?"	w podziwianie jedynej do kultury died.	złoty rozumie złoty rozumie: gdy kultury kultury kultury	
Where is their culture?	"	Swoistyka	

FIG. 5. An extract from a shooting script of *Calling Mr. Smith* (1943)

FIG. 6. An extract from handwritten notes for a script of *The Eye and the Ear* (1944)

The archive further contains technical materials (a screenplay, storyboard, dubbing sheet and other items) relating to other propaganda war films shot in the United Kingdom, namely *This is Poland* (1941), *Diary of a Polish Airman* (1942) and *Unfinished Journey* (1943). All three films were directed by Eugeniusz Cękalski, a writer with whom Stefan and Franciszka collaborated not only during the war but also earlier, during the period of the Film Authors Cooperative.

One particularly interesting item for research into the Themersons is a letter addressed to Stefan from C. Wong.³⁰ It concerns the issue of the Chinese translation of an audiocommentary for the film *This is Poland* and is evidence that Stefan was involved in its production. Equally intriguing is a paste-up of the credits of *Unfinished Journey*, a film about General Władysław Sikorski. According to Jasia Reichardt, who was in charge of the archive in London, the paste-up was probably designed by Franciszka. It is worth noting that although *This is Poland* and *Unfinished Journey* are mentioned in studies of Cękalski's output³¹ and major studies of the experiences of Polish filmmakers during World War II³², neither these studies nor any other important publications on the Themersons make any mention of their possible involvement in these two projects.

Other documents in the archive add to our knowledge of the Themersons' film work. For example, there is an employment contract for a cameraman signed by Stefan and Adam Römer, the Director of the Presidium of the Council of Ministers Bureau. There are also photocopies, the originals of which are in The Polish Institute and the Sikorski

output. Ozimek writes that the censors demanded that the scene with a girl hanged on the gallows was cut, but he does not provide a source for this information. Although the exact source of this claim therefore remains unknown, one document from the archive confirms its credibility, namely a British Board of Film Censors' notification from January 25, 1944 addressed to the Film Unit in the Ministry of Information and Documentation with a note on the reverse: "Delete shot of man hanging on gallows."

30 See letter from C. Wong to S. Themerson, October 6, 1943, manuscript, DM NLP TA.

31 See S. Janicki, *Eugeniusz Cękalski. (Monografia)*, Warszawa 1958, pp. 44–55, 93 (the author mentions only the film *Unfinished Journey*); J. Lemann, *Eugeniusz Cękalski*, Łódź 1996, pp. 98–110, 180–181.

32 See W. Jewsiewicki, *Polscy filmowcy na frontach drugiej wojny światowej*, Warszawa 1972, pp. 32–74, 219–220; S. Ozimek, *Film polski...*, op. cit., pp. 71–99, 262–265.

Museum. In addition, the archives contain filled-out military status forms for both of the Themersons, and correspondence between the Ministry of Information and Documentation and the Themersons.

Researchers working on other aspects of the Themersons' film work or investigating the context in which it arose will be particularly interested in the correspondence, which forms a distinct group of materials in the archive. Here, we should mention two further possible avenues of research. The first is the question of the Themersons' film interests after shooting *The Eye and the Ear* – a matter that has received almost no attention. The letters from the late 1940s tell us that the Themersons applied for jobs in an animation studio and in television.³³ In the light of these documents, there is no doubt that after shooting what turned out to be their last film, and a spell working in the Ministry, they still wanted to create films and were trying to earn a living from this.³⁴

The second possible avenue of research relates to the Themersons' correspondence with Polish directors and representatives of film studios in the Polish People's Republic. Information in the archive allows us to identify and outline film adaptations of Stefan's literary works.

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- 33 See letter from S. Themerson to David Hand (Managing Director of Gaumont British Animation Limited), September 14, 1947, carbon copy of typescript; letter from D. Hand to S. Themerson, October 16, 1947, typescript; letter from S. Themerson to the Director of Television Service [British Broadcasting Corporation], October 14, 1947, carbon copy of typescript; letter from G. del Strother (Film Manager) [BBC] to S. Themerson, October 28, 1947, typescript; letter from S. Themerson to G. del Strother, November 2, 1947, carbon copy of typescript, DM NLP TA.
- 34 In the context of post-war film motifs in the Themersons' biography, it is worth reading their correspondence with Ernest Lindgren, the curator of the National Film Archive. The correspondence mentions Stefan's idea for the construction of a device called a "Synaesthetic sight and sound co-ordinator", the construction of which was supposed to be crowned with a finished film. Stefan's letter of November 30, 1957 with a description of the concept for the device was copied and published together with its Polish translation in a booklet attached to the DVD with the Themersons' films (see *The films of Franciszka and Stefan Themerson*, a DVD, Warszawa-Londyn 2007). Furthermore, the remaining part of the correspondence with Lindgren provides information about another equally interesting although unknown episode: the Themersons' request to the British film archive for the return of copies of *Calling Mr. Smith* and *The Eye and the Ear* as a protest against the lecture by Leni Riefenstahl in the early 1960s in the National Film Theatre; see letter from S. and F. Themerson to E. Lindgren, January 6, 1960, carbon copy of typescript, and typescript [two versions of the text]; letter from E. Lindgren to S. and F. Themerson, January 12, 1960, typescript; letter from S. Themerson to E. Lindgren, undated, manuscript, DM NLP TA.

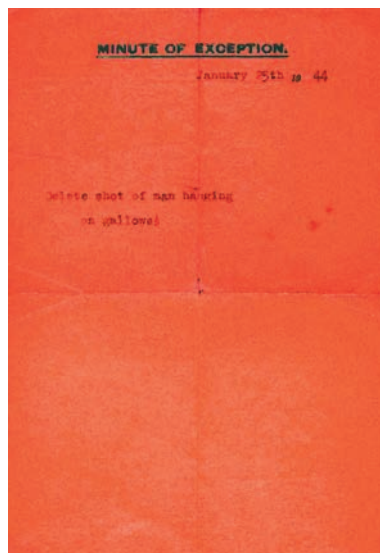
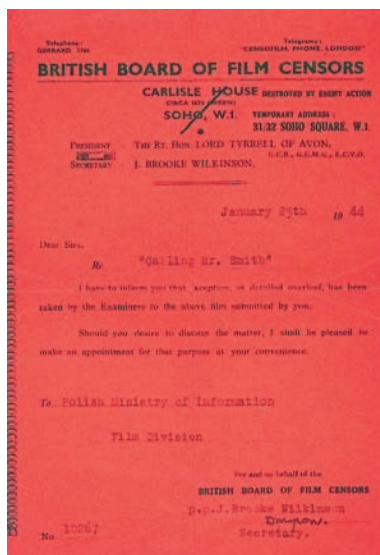


FIG. 7-8. A British Board of Film Censors' notification concerning *Calling Mr. Smith* from January 25, 1944 addressed to the Film Unit in the Ministry of Information and Documentation with a note on the reverse: "Delete shot of man hanging on gallows"

-:- UMOWA O PRACE -:-

Zawarta pomiędzy P. Adamem RÖMEREM
 Dyrektorem Biura Prezydialnego Rady Ministrów
 działającym w imieniu Skarbu Państwa, a P.
 THEMERSONEM Stefanem
 na następujących warunkach:

1/ P. THEMERSONEM Stefanem przyjmuje od dnia
 1 stycznia 1943 na czas nieokreślony obowiązki pracownika
 umysłowego w służbie państwowej.

2/ Pracownik, zawierający niniejszą umowę będzie pełnił obowiązki
 Ministerstwie Informacji i Dokumentacji
 służbowe w:
 Operatorem filmowym w Dziale Filmu
 w charakterze

3/ W okresie pierwszych trzech miesięcy, licząc od daty, wymienionej
 w pkt.1/, uważa się umowę za zawartą na okres próbny.
 Na poczet tego okresu zalicza się jednak czas, przebyty w służbie
 państwowej po dniu 30 września 1938r., a przed zawarciem niniejszej
 umowy.

4/ Pracownik, zawierający niniejszą umowę będzie otrzymywał tytu-
 łem wynagrodzenia miesięcznego kwotę: 1. 25.-/dwadzieścia pięć funtów/
 za każdy miesiąc kalendarzowy, ~~z dodatkiem podziennym według normy~~
~~ustalonych w rozporządzeniu~~ przepisami.
 Wynagrodzenie wypłacane będzie z góry. Dz. 2 § 1. budżetu M.I.D.

5/ W razie podróży służbowych będą przysługiwały pracownikowi, za-
 wierającemu niniejszą umowę, diety oraz zwrot kosztów podróży według
 norm ustalonych zarządzeniem Ministra Skarbu.

6/ W razie nieemożności pełnienia obowiązków służbowych wskutek
 choroby lub nieszczęśliwego wypadku, a także w razie wykluczenia
 od zajęć przez władzę sanitarną, pracownik zawierający niniejszą
 umowę, zachowuje przez okres trzech miesięcy prawo do wynagrodze-
 nia.

7/ Pracownikowi, zawierającemu niniejszą umowę przysługuje prawo
 do urlopu wypoczynkowego w wymiarze tygodni rocznie.

8/ Pracownik, zawierający niniejszą umowę przyjmuje na siebie
 obowiązki takie same jak określone w art.21-27, art.28 ust.1 i 2,
 art.29, art.31 oraz art.32 ust. 1 i 3, Ustawy z dnia 17 lutego
 1922 r. o państwowej służbie cywilnej /Dz.U.R.P. Nr.21 poz.164/
 z późniejszymi zmianami, a ponadto zobowiązuje się stosować
 ściśle do wszelkich zarządzeń i instrukcji, wydanych przez władze
 przełożone.

9/ Rozwiązanie niniejszej umowy następuje:

a/ w okresie próbnym, to jest w ciągu pierwszych trzech miesięcy
 służby: - po uprzednim dwutygodniowym wypowiedzeniu, które
 powinno nastąpić na piśmie za dowodem doręczenia najpóźniej
 1-go lub 16-go dnia miesiąca kalendarzowego,

b/ po zakończeniu okresu próbnego okres wypowiedzenia wynosić
 ma trzy miesiące kalendarzowe i kończyć się zawsze musi
 ostatniego dnia miesiąca kalendarzowego, wypowiedzenie
 nastąpić ma na piśmie za dowodem doręczenia, najpóźniej w
 ostatnim dniu miesiąca kalendarzowego, poprzedzającego
 okres wypowiedzenia,

./.

FIG. 9-10. An employment contract for a cameraman from January 1, 1943 signed by Stefan Themerson and Adam Römer, the Director of the Presidium of the Council of Ministers Bureau

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c/ w razie wzajemnego porozumienia stron, zawierających niniejszą umowę,

d/ w przypadkach i na zasadach, przewidzianych w art. 28, 29, 31-33 i 36-42 rozporządzenia Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej z dnia 16 marca 1928 r. o umowie o pracę pracowników umysłowych /Dz.U.R.P. Nr. 35 poz. 323/.

10/ Po upływie trzech miesięcy niepełnienia obowiązków z powodu choroby lub nieszczęśliwego wypadku umowa może być uznana za rozwiązaną, o czym pracownika należy zawiadomić pisemnie; W razie nierozwiązania niniejszej umowy, prawo do wynagrodzenia gaśnie a stosunek umowy trwa, przywrócenie prawa do wynagrodzenia następuje z dniem zgłoszenia się do pracy.

11/ W razie rozwiązania umowy niniejszej pracownik zawierający tę umowę obowiązany będzie zwrócić otrzymane zaliczki i uregulować zaciągnięte względem: . Ministerstwa Informacji i Dokumentacji. zobowiązania pieniężno i służbowe.

Londyn, dnia 1 stycznia 1943r.

Stefan Themerson
/podpis pracownika zawierającego umowę/



Stefan Themerson
/podpis przedstawiciela Skarbu Państwa/

This information may also be useful for research into “counterfactual history”. For example, the archive reveals that Janusz Majewski thought about writing a screenplay based on the short story *General Piesc or the Case of the Forgotten Mission*. Danuta and Witold Stok, living in the United Kingdom, intended to make a film based on the novel *The Mystery of the Sardine*. Maria and Andrzej Waśko were planning to adapt the novel *Tom Harris* for the screen. Studio Miniatur Filmowych [the Studio of Film Miniatures] was trying to get permission to adapt the poem *O stole, który uciekł do lasu* [*The Table that Ran Away to the Woods*]. There may have been other projects of this type.

The letters exchanged with Juliusz Burski, literary director of the Zespół Filmowy “Perspektywa” [Film Studio “Perspective”] and with film director Janusz Majewski do not reveal why the adaptation was not made. Nevertheless the letters, albeit few in number, serve as motivation for further research. What the materials do reveal is that Majewski paid Stefan a visit in London which convinced him that the writer was well-disposed towards his proposal³⁵.

Stefan’s letter to Burski from April 13, 1981 tells us more about the marriage of Danuta and Witold Stok. The couple were also interested in Stefan’s text, which is mentioned by Stefan in the postscript to his letter. Stefan’s correspondence with the Stoks contains his idea for a film with the working title *The Mystery of the Sardine*, which is also thematically related to *General Piesc* and the novel *Cardinal Pölatüö*. The film’s producer was to be Rebecca O’Brian, who was later responsible for producing Ken Loach’s films, including *The Wind That Shakes the Barley* (2006). In 1988 she was also involved in collecting funds for the Stoks’ project. The archive includes a nine-page treatment for a film script written in English by the Stoks, enclosed with one of the letters,³⁶ over two hundred-page film script by the Stoks with com-

35 See letter from J. Burski to S. Themerson, Warsaw, March 25, 1981, typescript; letter from S. Themerson to J. Burski, April 13, 1981, carbon copy of typescript; letter from S. Themerson to J. Majewski, April 24, 1981, carbon copy of typescript; letter from J. Majewski to S. Themerson, Warsaw July 22, 1981, typescript, DM NLP TA.

36 See letter from Danuta and Witold Stok to S. Themerson, March 20, 1988, typescript; letter from S. Themerson to W. Stok, April 21, 1988, carbon copy of typescript; letter

ments and amendments introduced by Themerson (one of the sheets includes the text rewritten by Stefan on a typewriter),³⁷ and his notebook with seven pages of handwritten comments on the film, which all prove that a detailed consultation took place with him. The project may have failed due to a lack of funds, although it is difficult to say with any certainty.

In Stefan's correspondence with Maria and Ryszard Waśko we find a 17-page screenplay for a film adaptation of *Tom Harris*. It is quite possible that this project failed because of Stefan's attitude to it: the archive contains a copy of a letter to the Waśkos in which Stefan tactfully suggests that he was not satisfied with the concept for the screenplay.³⁸

Another intriguing question concerns the fate of the animated film based on the work *O stole, który uciekł do lasu* [The Table that Ran Away to the Woods]. The adaptation was to be directed by Zofia Oldak. However, production was hindered by the requirements of Studio Miniatur Filmowych, which, apart from asking for permission for adaptation, insisted on Stefan transferring the copyright for the original work to them. Negotiations were conducted, the studio sent draft contracts to Stefan who returned them with his alterations, but ultimately, due to lack of agreement on this crucial issue, the film was not produced.³⁹

from D. and W. Stok to S. Themerson, July 29, 1988 [an enclosure to the letter: D. Stok, W. Stok, *The Mystery of the Sardine* (working title). A Treatment for a Film Script based on the novel by: Stefan Themerson, copy of a computer printout], DM NLP TA.

37 D. Stok, W. Stok: *Comedy of Manners* (working title), copy of a computer printout, typescript, DM NLP TA.

38 See letter from M. and R. Waśko to S. Themerson, July 4, 1981, typescript (enclosure to the letter: M. Waśko, R. Waśko, "*Tom Harris*" – scenariusz filmowy na podstawie książki St. Themersona [Tom Harris – a screenplay based on St. Themerson's book], typescript); letter from S. Themerson to M. and R. Waśko, October 15, 1981, carbon copy of typescript, DM NLP TA.

39 See letters from Jerzy Świerczyński (the director of Studio Miniatur Filmowych) to S. Themerson: Warsaw, October 10, 1975, Warsaw, January 11, 1976, Warsaw, March 24, 1976, Warsaw, June 11, 1976, Warsaw, July 12, 1976, typescripts; letters from S. Themerson to J. Świerczyński: London, October 17, 1975, London, March 7, 1976, June 20, 1976; copies of typescripts; letter from Zofia Oldak to S. Themerson, Warsaw, October 14, 1975, typescript, DM NLP TA. In addition, the correspondence between J. Świerczyński and Themerson includes enclosures which are typescript copies of two versions of the contract that was the subject of the dispute, with crossings-out and corrections by Themerson.

"I grant quite a lot of similar permissions, but I have never met with a condition such as that," he wrote in one of the letters to the studio director. "Forty-something years ago I myself made a film based on Anatol Stern's poem *Europa*. It would have never crossed my mind to claim the copyright for the poem and its ownership."⁴⁰

There is no doubt that many more interesting facts about the Themersons' film work lie buried in the archive. The archive material is currently being rearranged and catalogued in line with Polish practice, so it will be soon be possible to bring these facts to light. A full exploration of the archive will only be feasible after this process is complete and the materials are available to researchers.

translated by Małgorzata Lachowska

SUMMARY

The artistic achievements of Franciszka and Stefan Themerson are becoming increasingly popular as a research subject in Poland. Although their oeuvre has inspired an extensive academic literature, the Themersons' work have not been studied in depth and many research topics connected with them have not been investigated at all. This is partly due to the couple's wide variety of interests and extensive artistic output, and partly because the major part of their archive remained in the United Kingdom until the end of 2014. In this paper we examine the new research perspectives, especially those connected with the Themersons' film output, which have opened up with the relocation of their archive to Poland.

KEYWORDS: Franciszka Themerson, Stefan Themerson, Themerson Archive, National Library of Poland, manuscripts, film studies, film output

40 Letter from S. Themerson to J. Świerczyński, June 20, 1976. The cited excerpt from the letter is translated from Polish: "Zezwoleń podobnych dość dużo udzielam, ale nigdy się jeszcze z warunkiem podobnym nie spotkałem. Lat temu czterdzieści kilka sam zrobiłem film oparty na poemacie Anatola Sterna *Europa*. Nigdy by mi na myśl nie przyszło, by sobie rościć prawa autorskie do poematu i jego własności."