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**Common Room: from WORDS to WORLDS.**

**Płock, 20-21.10.2017**

The name of the annual **Common Room** conferences organised by the State University of Applied Sciences in Płock, Poland refers to the literary salon held in London by Stefan and Franciszka Themerson, an extraordinary couple of Polish-born artists and intellectuals, during the years 1957-1959. It hosted numerous scientists, academics, artists and literary figures and was the site of unique lectures, presentations, artistic evenings, concerts and discussions. It is the intention of the organizer to recreate the truly interdisciplinary spirit of what the Themersons defined as a “friendly meeting place and a forum for the exchange of ideas.”

This year’s fifth edition of the Common Room conference is devoted to WORDS that can be perceived as both seductively fascinating and overly threatening. The agency and potency of words allows authors to actualize their creative, artistic intentions by constructing immersive, fictional worlds, exploring the potential of language to express what seems to be inexpressible or inconceivable as well as making us aware of the implications of the constraints inherent in interpersonal communication. However, what raises understandable suspicion is employing WORDS as the tools of social or political manipulation to exert influence or propagate ideologies. The two contradictory perceptions of WORDS permeate Stefan Themerson’s oeuvre – driven by his sensitivity to the sounds, rhythms and rhymes behind words, he displayed overt resentment towards demagoguery:

“POETRY as well as POLITICS may be morally *vicious,*and intellectually *dishonest*.”

Themerson’s intention was to get back to the heart or the root of words entangled in networks of associations, propaganda techniques, ubiquitous advertising messages or intellectual literary strategies. To that end, he created Semantic Poetry whose aim was to rekindle our awareness of the world around us and make us see it almost anew. He unmasked and demystified words by skinning them of „every associational aureola” imposed by conventions or traditions and referring to their original meanings „supplied by the common dictionary.”

Drawing our inspiration from the Themersons’ works, we invite contributions from all researchers interested in exploring the phenomenon of a broadly understood relationship between WORDS and WORLDS. **The papers may address the following as well as related topics:**

* the creative and/or destructive power of words,
* the seductive power of words,
* inadequacy of language and words,
* conveying ideologies through words,
* the relationship between words and particular discursive worldviews,
* cultural semantics,
* words as a tool of power and oppression/ the subversive potential of words
* conventionalization of meanings/ new words and neologisms
* words versus silence/ logorrhea in contemporary culture,
* inexpressibility in (post)modernism,
* language games and experiments in poetry, prose, drama and other cultural texts,
* “language” poetry and prose,
* language and words in the Themersons’ oeuvre,
* the role of linguistics in the theory of literature,
* significance of words in cinematic works, theatrical performances, music and comic books,
* text in the visual arts: paintings, graphics, installation art, video art, etc.,
* using words to exert influence in advertising, marketing, social media, traditional media and/or political messages,
* truth/ post-truth/ lie(s),
* the ethics and aesthetics of words,
* the role of words and language in interpersonal communication, building social relations, education, psychology, psychotherapy, religion, philosophy,
* words from the point of view of a linguist or a translator.

Since it is our goal to run the conference in the spirit of the Themersonian Common Room, which was so interdisciplinary and versatile that it escaped facile categorization, we cordially invite not only specialists in philology, literature studies, cultural studies, linguistics and translation studies but also representatives of other academic disciplines such as sociology, pedagogy, psychology, philosophy, history, ethnography, arts studies, etc. to join the discussion.

The conference is part of the annual Themersons Festival (the festival’s website: [www.themerson.pl](http://www.themerson.pl/)), commemorating and celebrating the creative output of Stefan, who was born in Płock, and his wife Franciszka. All delegates will be able to participate in the numerous events of the festival including workshops, concerts, exhibitions, theatrical performances and film screenings. **All the key information concerning Płock, the Themersons Festival, this year’s Common Room Conference and its previous editions as well as useful travel and accommodation tips can be found on our website:** <http://www.pwszplock.pl/konferencje/common-room-en>

The conference schedule will consist of plenary lectures and 20-minute presentations of individual papers. The conference languages will be Polish and English. We welcome submissions for papers in English or Polish from experienced researchers as well as graduate students, PhD candidates or anyone with a keen interest in the theme of the conference. **Abstracts in English or Polish (max. 250 words) along with the title of the proposed paper, keywords and short information about the author should be submitted online by 25.09.2017 using the registration form at:** <http://www.pwszplock.pl/konferencje/common-room-en> The website can also be used to contact the Conference Organising Committee and send your enquiries. You can also contact us directly at: [j.ligor@pwszplock.pl](mailto:j.ligor@pwszplock.pl)

Notifications of acceptance will be sent in the quickest possible time and the approved participants will be notified by 30.09.2017 at the latest. **It is intended that all the papers presented at this conference will be eligible for publication.** Information on our previous publications can be found on our website.

**The conference fee is as follows**:

- **early registration (until 05.08.2017):** **200 PLN (50 euros)** for the speakers presenting their papers and **60 PLN (15 euros)** for the non-speakers. **The fee must be paid by 05.08.2017.**

- **regular registration (after 05.08.2017):** **280 PLN (70 euros)** for the speakers presenting their papers and **80 PLN (20 euros)** for the non-speakers. **The deadline for paying the fee is 03.10.2017.**

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Please make sure that your name and the name of the conference: *“Common Room*” are included in the transfer description section. Should you require an invoice, please fill in the “Invoicing address” section in the Registration Form.