

# **Letting Tattered Clothing Sing: Tadeusz Kantor's *Anatomy Lesson***

Martin Leach

## Translation of *Partytura*

### *Lekcja anatomii wedle Rembrandta* partytura Happeningu

(Happening realizowany kilkakrotnie: w Kunsthalle w Norymberdze (1968), w Galerii Foksal w Warszawie (1969), w Dourdan pod Paryżem (wrzesień 1971), w Henri Onstad Kunstsenter w Oslo (październik 1971). Trwał ok. 1 godziny.)

wystarczy zrobić tylko pierwszy krok,  
odważyć się coś oddzielić,  
aby odkryć nagle nowy wewnętrzny świat:  
podszewka!  
górną warstwę!  
odcinam,  
środkową!  
a oto dolną!  
oddzielam jedną warstwę od drugiej,  
teraz natrafiamy na cienki pokład waty,  
który w tym miejscu przechodzi w wyraźne  
zgrubienia,  
uwaga!  
wewnętrzna kieszeń!  
zapięta!  
odcinam,  
proszę zwrócić uwagę na te interesujące  
szczegóły:  
guziki!  
dziurki!  
haftki!  
zatrzaski!  
agrafki!  
klamerki!  
które w ten cały organizm usiłują  
wprowadzić porządek,  
pozapinać,  
usztynić,  
nadać sylwetkę i formę,  
stworzyć styl.  
I oto jesteśmy już na antypodach ubioru!  
kieszenie!  
mnóstwo kieszeni!  
nie dajmy się zmylić konwencjonalnym  
i nic nieznaczącym pozorom,  
popatrzmy na nie z boku,  
pod innym kątem

### *Anatomy Lesson According to Rembrandt* score of the Happening

(The Happening was realised several times: in the Kunsthalle in Nuremberg (1968), in the Foksal Gallery in Warsaw (1969), in Dourdan near Paris (September 1971), and in Henri Onstad Art Centre in Oslo (October 1971). Duration about 1 hour.)

it is enough just to take the first step,  
to dare to separate something,  
in order to discover abruptly a new interior  
world:  
linings!  
the outer layer!  
I sever,  
the middle!  
and here is the bottom one!  
I separate layers one from another,  
now we meet the thin cotton padding,  
which passes here to a distinct swelling,  
attention!  
internal pocket!  
buttoned-up!  
I cut,  
please take note of these interesting details:  
buttons!  
button-holes!  
hooks and eyes!  
press-studs!  
safety pins!  
clasps!  
each of which tries to introduce order in this  
whole organism,  
to fasten up,  
to stiffen,  
to confer a profile and a form,  
to create a style.  
And already we are in the antipodes of  
clothing!  
pockets!  
lots of pockets!  
let us not be tricked by conventional  
or insignificant outward appearance,  
let us look without prejudice,  
from different angles,

albo od środka,  
w żalonym stanie utraconej pozycji,  
kiedy zwisają, kiedy nie możemy już w nie  
wsadzić rąk,  
zastanówmy się co właściwie oznaczają  
te szczególne schowki,  
intymne i dwuznaczne zaułki,  
spoufalone i totumfackie,  
przewrotne i anonimowe,  
nie obawiamy się śmiałych określeń:  
to są po prostu zwyczajne t o r b y !  
nie miejmy złudzeń!  
wsadza się w nie wszystko, lub prawie  
wszystko!  
obgryzione ołówki  
szczoteczki do zębów  
resztki tytoniu  
pogniecione papierosy  
zapałki  
kulki chleba  
banknoty  
paszporty  
zdjęcia rodzinne  
zdjęcia kochanek  
zdjęcia dzieci  
zdjęcia pornograficzne  
bilety do kina  
bilety tramwajowe  
bilety do metra  
tabletki aspiryny  
prezerwatywy  
witaminy  
chustki do nosa  
papierowy serwetki  
papiery urzędowe  
rachunki kelnerów  
ukradzione łyżeczki  
urwane guziki  
scyzoryki  
noże  
I pistolety  
oto jest interesująca treść i zawartość  
tych intymnych schowków  
i ukrytych melin,  
oto prawdziwa,  
nie sfalszowana strona  
indywidualności,  
zapomniane resztki,

or from the inside,  
in the piteous state of dislocation  
when they hang down, when we are now  
unable to insert our hands,  
we puzzle over what these special  
compartments actually mean,  
these intimate and ambiguous dead ends,  
familiar and confiding,  
perverse and anonymous,  
let us not fear bold expressions:  
these are quite simply ordinary b a g s !  
let us not be under any illusions!  
one inserts into them everything, or else  
nearly everything!  
gnawed pencils  
toothbrushes  
leftover tobacco  
crumpled cigarettes  
matches  
crumbs of bread  
banknotes  
passports  
pictures of family  
pictures of a lover  
pictures of children  
pornographic pictures  
cinema tickets  
tram tickets  
metro tickets  
aspirin tablets  
condoms  
vitamin tablets  
handkerchiefs  
paper napkins  
official papers  
waiters' bills  
stolen teaspoons  
loose buttons  
penknives  
knives  
and guns  
this is the interesting contents and stuffing  
of  
these intimate hiding places  
and secret repositories,  
this is the genuine,  
authentic side of  
individuality,  
the forgotten leftovers,

wstydlive odpadki,  
zmięte i pogniecione  
k i e s z e n i e !  
śmieszne organy  
ludzkiego  
instynktu  
przechowywania  
i pamięci!

**koniec z tzw. partycypacją!**

Sources: Tadeusz Kantor, *Pisma*, ed. by Krzysztof Pleśniarowicz, 3 vols (Wrocław and Kraków: Ossolineum and Cricoteka, 2004-2005), 1 (2004), p. 356 (for details of performances); Kantor, *Ambalże* (Warsaw: Galeria Foksal, 1976), p. 26 (for title, main text and layout); *Tadeusz Kantor: Z Archiwum Galerii Foksal*, ed. by Małgorzata Jurkiewicz, Joanna Mytkowska, and Andrzej Przywara (Warsaw: Fundacja Galerii Foksal, 1998), p. 187 (for graffiti in photograph of final installation).

the shameful litter,  
these wrinkled and crushed  
p o c k e t s !  
ridiculous organs of  
human  
instincts  
given for preservation  
and memory!

**the so-called participation is over!**

The final line is a translation of the graffiti scrawled on the gallery wall next to the final installation of mounted clothing (see photographs in *Tadeusz Kantor: Z Archiwum Galerii Foksal*, p. 197).

Artists often use oblique strategies to explore the nature of human being and Tadeusz Kantor was no exception. A consistent foundation of his aesthetic was a twofold preoccupation with what he referred to as *realność najniższej rangi* (the reality of the lowest rank) and *przedmiot biedny* (the poor object). This aesthetic prioritised a poor, lowly, and degraded reality at the margins of existence: a form of being that dwells in the liminal zero-zone between existence and non-existence. This essay offers a new interpretation of Tadeusz Kantor's happening, the *Anatomy Lesson According to Rembrandt*, and situates it with respect to this aesthetic preoccupation, which, it will argue, arose out of Kantor's exposure to a particular kind of reality whilst a witness to aspects of the Nazi 'Final Solution'. This early, key experience in occupied Kraków will be shown to relate to Kantor's reading of the work of the Jewish graphic artist and short-story writer Bruno Schulz, whose own aesthetic strategies of inverting dominant ontological hierarchies can be seen to inform Kantor's own artistic practice. Implicit in this strategy is a critique of representational ontology as prioritizing a substantialist concept of being over the more dynamic and mutable concepts of becoming and seeming, a reading of reality that Schulz championed. In his performative staging of Rembrandt's painting, Kantor can be seen to challenge conventional ontological hierarchies in a way that both echoes Schulz's metaphysics and prefigures a sense of the immanence of life as elaborated in the work of Gilles Deleuze.

Kantor first performed his *Anatomy Lesson* in Nuremberg in 1968;<sup>1</sup> Rembrandt produced his painting in 1632, at a time when the culture of attending the public dissection of corpses in anatomy theatres had become a mark of civic respectability.<sup>2</sup> Kantor had lived through the Second World War in the Polish city of Kraków and his *Anatomy Lesson* was performed when so-called *realny socjalizm* (real socialism)<sup>3</sup> was coming to dominate Polish cultural and political institutions, during an epoch that

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<sup>1</sup> This happening was realised several times, as stated in the translated passage. As well as the sources cited above, fragments of the Polish text have been published in *Grammatica 3* (1969). There is an English translation by Charles S. Kraszewski in his unpublished manuscript 'Collected Theatrical Works and Happenings' in the Cricoteka archival collection (pp. 437-40), and, more recently, an English translation was published in the book accompanying the 2005 exhibition in Vienna and Warsaw: *The Impossible Theater: Performativity in the Works of Pawel Althamer, Tadeusz Kantor, Katarzyna Kozyra, Robert Kusmirowski and Artur Zmijewski*, ed. by Hanna Wróblewska, Jarosław Suchan, and Sabine Folie (Nürnberg: Verlag für Moderne Kunst Nürnberg, 2006), p. 109. The happening was filmed; edited fragments can be seen in the film *Kantor ist da: Die Künstler und seine Welt* (Kantor is Here: The Artist and His World), directed by Dietrich Mahlow (1969), which is available on a DVD included with *Sztuka jest przestępstwem: Tadeusz Kantor a Niemcy i Szwajcaria. Wspomnienia – Dokumenty – Eseje – Filmy DVD* (Kraków and Nuremberg: Cricoteka and Verlag für Moderne Kunst Nürnberg, 2007) and also in the collection of DVDs *The Theatre of Tadeusz Kantor* available from Andrzej Białko (abialko@op.pl). I am grateful for the assistance of Elżbieta Kaproń, Tomasz Macios, and Professor Krzysztof Pleśniarowicz in making this translation of Kantor's *partytura*.

<sup>2</sup> See Jonathan Sawday, *The Body Emblazoned: Dissection and the Human Body in Renaissance Culture* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 150.

<sup>3</sup> 'Real socialism' came into widespread use in the 1970s. The term designated the predominantly bureaucratic (rather than idealistic) forms of socialism practised in Poland and other Soviet satellite states in particular.

Theodor Adorno had recently defined as marked by the question of how to live 'after Auschwitz'.<sup>4</sup> The corpse that is the subject of Doctor Nicolaes Tulp's dissection in Rembrandt's painting was a thief from Leiden (ironically Amsterdam's rival in the staging of civic anatomies) named Adriaen Adriaenszoon, who had been executed on 31 January 1632 for stealing a coat; in Kantor's *Anatomy* it is the clothing that is dissected rather than the human being.<sup>5</sup>

In his 1926 poem 'Sailing to Byzantium' W. B. Yeats, railing against the approach of old age, wrote that 'An aged man is but a paltry thing, | A tattered coat upon a stick, unless | Soul clap its hands and sing, and louder sing, | For every tatter in its mortal dress'.<sup>6</sup> This notion of the soul animating the tatters of mortal clothing invokes the spectre of Plato's formulation of the soul's separate identity from, and superiority to, the body.<sup>7</sup> However, as Martin Heidegger has argued in his 1940 essay 'The Age of the World Picture': 'It is in the metaphysics of Descartes that, for the first time, the being is defined as the objectness of representation, and truth as the certainty of representation'.<sup>8</sup> Although René Descartes' famous conceptions of subjectivity were not available until his publications of 1637 and 1641, the philosopher was living in Holland and studying anatomy whilst formulating his philosophical position and was in Amsterdam at the time when Rembrandt was working on his painting.<sup>9</sup> During this time (1629–1633) Descartes was working on texts that included his *Treatise on Man*, a vision of mechanical beings 'composed as we are, of a soul and a body', which he planned to describe separately. Unfortunately his plan to include a description of the soul and 'finally [...] show you how these two natures would have to be joined and united to constitute men and resemble us',<sup>10</sup> was abandoned at this time. This vision of the world and the figures described in it was nothing less than a recasting of the idea of nature as a mechanistic and

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<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Adorno's 'The Meaning of Working through the Past' (1959), 'Education After Auschwitz' (1967), and 'Lecture Fourteen, "The Liquidation of the Self"' (1965), in Theodor W. Adorno, *Can One Live after Auschwitz? A Philosophical Reader*, ed. by Rodney Livingstone (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), pp. 3-18, 19-33, and 427-36, respectively.

<sup>5</sup> See Sawday, *The Body Emblazoned*, p. 150.

<sup>6</sup> William Butler Yeats, *The Collected Poems of W.B. Yeats* (London: Macmillan, 1967), p. 217.

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, *Phaedo*, 82d-83b, trans. by G. M. A. Grube, in *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. by John M. Cooper (Indianapolis & Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997), pp. 49-100 (pp. 72-73).

<sup>8</sup> Martin Heidegger, 'The Age of the World Picture', trans. by Julian Young in Martin Heidegger, *Off the Beaten Track*, ed. and trans. by Julian Young and Kenneth Haynes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 157–99 (p. 66).

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, John Cottingham *Descartes* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), p. 11, Stephen Gaukroger *Descartes: An Intellectual Biography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), p. 227 and p. 270, and Sawday *The Body Emblazoned*, pp. 146–158.

<sup>10</sup> Descartes in: Thomas Steele Hall *René Descartes: Treatise of Man* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1972) p. 1, and John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff and Dugald Murdoch (eds.) *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes, Volume I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 99.

rationally knowable system. It was a world in which the subject as rational, knowing soul was conspicuous by its absence, an implicit separation of mind from body that would inform his position in the *Discourse on Method* (1637) and the *Meditations on First Philosophy* (1641). As Jonathan Sawday has observed, the spirit of 'Cartesian man' was abroad before Descartes explicitly formulated it, exemplified in certain 'metaphysical' poetry, such as John Donne's 'The Ecstasy', composed before 1614, which was in wide circulation before its publication in 1633:<sup>11</sup> 'It was in the anatomy theatres of Leiden and Amsterdam that Cartesian man was born, in the person of a grotesquely twitching criminal corpse, at the behest of the medical and juridical authorities of the city'.<sup>12</sup> Following William Schupbach's influential reading, which sees 'the duality of man's metaphysical status [...] given visible form in the composition of Rembrandt's painting',<sup>13</sup> Sawday argues for the 'Cartesian nature of Rembrandt's image' as a 'portrayal of the domination of intellect over the aberrant will of the executed felon', a product of the problem of the relationship between the will and the intellect that Descartes had been working on in his *Rules for the Direction of the Mind* written shortly before his move to Holland, in 1628 or earlier.<sup>14</sup> Rembrandt's *Anatomy* may therefore be seen as contemporaneous with the intellectual milieu that gave birth to the Cartesian subject, a conception that installed the recipient of this 'certainty of representation' – an incorporeal, sovereign, rational self – within the mechanical anatomy of the body: *in* it but not *of* it. By re-staging Rembrandt's painting, *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr Tulp*, in 1968 and in Nuremberg, the site where the world learned the full extent of the irrational certainty of the 'rationality' of Auschwitz, Kantor appears to be articulating a very different and more subversive idea of life from the one represented by the sense of subjectivity implicit in the original painting. In doing so there appears to be a tacit critique of the idea of Enlightenment rational progress that resonates with Adorno and Max Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Kantor's *Anatomy* seems to celebrate life not as the disembodied and sovereign subject of the Cartesian *cogito* – itself an echo of the Platonic dualism body and soul – nor as an object of representation, but as life that seems to be distributed and immanent within the poor matter of its clothing and possessions.

Instead of a reverential homage to Rembrandt's solemn anatomy, Kantor's intention might at first appear satirical. The original painting has been interpreted as a celebration of the triumph of Dr Tulp's rational intellect over the dead thief's

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<sup>11</sup> See Sawday *The Body Emblazoned*, p. 296 ff. 18, and Theodore Redpath *The Songs and Sonnets of John Donne* (London: Methuen, 1956), p. 3.

<sup>12</sup> Sawday *The Body Emblazoned*, p. 158.

<sup>13</sup> William Schupbach *The Paradox of Rembrandt's 'Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Tulp'* (London: Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine, 1982), p. 44.

<sup>14</sup> See Sawday, *The Body Emblazoned*, p. 153.

mechanical corpse.<sup>15</sup> Kantor, however, in his work seems to be celebrating the ephemeral contents of the pockets of the clothing that wraps the body lying on his dissecting table. Rembrandt's painting would seem to have a high purpose, while Kantor's happening would appear to revel in the low and the trivial. Such an appearance was one of several strategies of evasion used by Polish artists during the censorship of the socialist period. As I will show, however, this 'low' quality is part of Kantor's artistic purpose, and arose from the idea of the 'reality of the lowest rank', or 'poor reality'.

Kantor's happening was performed on four occasions between 1968 and 1971. Each time he made use of found participants with which he composed his tableau according to the formal scheme of Rembrandt's painting. He snipped with scissors at his model's clothing, opening up the lining and paying particular attention to the contents of the 'wrinkled and crushed | pockets', 'these intimate hiding places', these 'ridiculous organs of | human instincts | [...] for preservation and memory'. Thus anatomised, the torn clothing and the 'forgotten leftovers' and 'shameful litter' liberated from the pockets were glued and stapled to canvas to create an emballage: an artwork-assemblage or many-layered collage of tattered clothing and personal belongings that was in effect a 'still life' or *nature mort*.<sup>16</sup>

In staging his happening according to Rembrandt, Kantor appears to set the consequences of the Enlightenment project of positive, rational progress through scientific enquiry in stark juxtaposition to one of the iconic images of the origins of its dream. The corpse in Rembrandt's painting becomes, in Kantor's performance, an anonymous body whose clothing and belongings are coolly and methodically removed and processed, becoming in the end a 'painting' themselves. Kantor's written *partytura* or 'score' for the happening clearly suggests that the seemingly trivial objects harvested from the model's pockets are 'the genuine, | authentic side of | individuality'. In Kantor's anatomy the objects, in becoming a still-life, are seemingly more valued than the forgotten model. However, greater value is assigned to these objects precisely because of their reference to 'authentic individuality', whereas in Rembrandt's painting the bodily parts dissected – the flexor muscles of the forearm – are valued because of the general points they can make about the intricacy of

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<sup>15</sup> See Sawday, *The Body Emblazoned*, p. 153.

<sup>16</sup> Emballage or 'wrapping', from the French verb *emballer* (to wrap), was an element of Kantor's artistic practice that involved the 'wrapping' of people and everyday objects. As well as apparently protecting its contents, the wrapping served both to conceal and at the same time to reveal their presence. In so doing, the emballage also drew attention to itself as a representative of poor, marginal reality, occupying a liminal place between its contents and the observer. In essence, Kantor's *Anatomy Lesson According to Rembrandt* is an anatomy of clothing foregrounded as an emballage of the human being; the resulting exhibition of the clothing glued to the canvas is, in effect, an exhibition of this dissected 'wrapping' or emballage. See Kantor's 'Manifest Ambalazy' in Tadeusz Kantor, *Pisma*, ed. by Krzysztof Pleśniarowicz, 3 vols (Wrocław and Kraków: Ossolineum and Cricoteka, 2004-2005), I, pp. 300-04, and 'The Emballage Manifesto' in Michał Kobialka, *Further on, Nothing: Tadeusz Kantor's Theatre* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), pp. 154-58. See also Kobialka's discussion of the specificity of this idea in Kantor's work in *Further on, Nothing*, pp. 70-74.

anatomical mechanisms: the corpse's individuality is not of interest. It is the demonstration of the power of rational knowledge that is of importance.

Rembrandt's painting has been viewed as a dramatisation of the historical moment of separation of the human soul from its bodily machine, and a celebration of the triumph of the rational intellect over the substance of nature. This victory, which heralded the coming of Enlightenment science, was to liberate Western Philosophy from the post-Aristotelian confusions of Scholastic thought. As Sawday has argued, this Cartesian rationalisation was of a new, thinking subject, freed of its entanglement with troublesome matter, a new 'us' able to gaze clearly and distinctly, to use Descartes' words, on the material of God's creation, understand its workings, and in so doing put it to rational use.<sup>17</sup> However, the new Cartesian system in a sense merely internalised an ancient schism between Being as *ousia* (substance), and the concepts of becoming and appearance. In Martin Heidegger's account in his 1935 lecture course *Introduction to Metaphysics*, for the ancient Greeks the apparent opposition between Parmenides' conception of Being as changelessness and Heraclitus' conception of Being as becoming was understood in a unitary way,<sup>18</sup> just as appearance was understood to share in the essence of Being, to be an aspect of it ('appearing belongs to Being [...] Being has its essence together *with* appearing').<sup>19</sup> In contrast to this unity, the gaze of the new Cartesian rational subject itself tacitly embodies the schism by conceiving of the world as one in which the subject can only know the objective world via potentially unreliable sensory representations. In this system, however, the subject that succeeds in installing itself as sovereign wields the power to establish what Michel Foucault has characterised as a 'biological-type caesura within a population' that allows the population to be represented 'as a mixture of races, or to be more accurate, [...] to subdivide the species it controls, into the subspecies known, precisely as races'.<sup>20</sup> Paradoxically the fragmentation of the world understood in terms of representational ontology renders potentially vulnerable all those subject to what Foucault has termed 'biopower'.

As Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer argued influentially in 1944 in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, one of the possible destinations of the hyper-rationalised use of science is Auschwitz.<sup>21</sup> There, the sovereign, rational intellect turned human beings into parts of a machine in which they themselves were anatomised and rendered into their inanimate components: skin, hair, and gold teeth, to be processed alongside the variety of their personal belongings by the *Sonderkommando*, special

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<sup>17</sup> See Sawday, *The Body Emblazoned*, p. 151.

<sup>18</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. by Gregory Fried and Richard Polt (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 103.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 108; emphasis in the original.

<sup>20</sup> Michel Foucault, '*Society Must Be Defended*': *Lectures at the Collège De France, 1975-1976*, trans. by David Macey, ed. by Arnold I. Davidson (London: Penguin Books, 2004), p. 254.

<sup>21</sup> Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*, ed. by Gunzelin Schmid Noerr, trans. by Edmund Jephcott (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002).

groups who sorted through the mounds of bodies and clothing outside the gas chambers in order to harvest 'useful' commodities prior to the bodies' incineration in the crematoria. It is not only those bodies that are decomposed in that image of commodification, but also the 'humanity' of every survivor and the various category of 'worker' in the factory of the camps. The Auschwitz survivor Primo Levi has written about the testimony of Miklos Nyiszli, a Hungarian physician 'one of the very few survivors of the last Special Squad in Auschwitz'.<sup>22</sup> One episode that Nyiszli recounted Levi found particularly significant:

So, Nyiszli tells how during a 'work' pause he attended a soccer game between the SS and the SK (*Sonderkommandos*), that is to say, between a group representing the SS on guard at the crematorium and a group representing the Special Squad. Other men of the SS and the rest of the squad are present at the game; they take sides, bet, applaud, urge the players on as if, rather than at the gates of hell, the game were taking place on the village green.<sup>23</sup>

In his book, *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*, the contemporary Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben reflects that: 'This match might strike someone as a brief pause of humanity in the middle of an infinite horror. I, like the witnesses, instead view this match, this moment of normalcy, as the true horror of the camp. [...]

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<sup>22</sup> Primo Levi *The Drowned and the Saved*, trans. by Raymond Rosenthal (London: Abacus, 1989), p. 37. According to Levi, Nyiszli, a renowned pathologist 'whose services Mengele [...] had secured' was 'supposed to devote himself in particular to the study of twins [...] Alongside this particular task of his, to which, it should be said in passing, it does not appear he strenuously objected, Nyiszli was also the attending physician of the squad, with which he lived in close contact' (Ibid., p. 37). Nyiszli's reminiscences were originally published in New York in 1960 and republished as Miklos Nyiszli *Auschwitz: A Doctor's Eyewitness Account*, trans. Tibère Kremer and Richard Seaver (New York: Arcade Publishing 1993). The soccer match episode occurs in chapter IX (Nyiszli 1993, p. 68). Levi recounts that:

An extreme case of collaboration is represented by the *Sonderkommandos* of Auschwitz and the other extermination camps. Here one hesitates to speak of privilege: whoever belonged to this group was privileged only to the extent that—but at what cost—he had enough to eat for a few months, certainly not because he could be envied. With this duly vague definition, 'Special Squad', the SS referred to the group of prisoners who were entrusted with the running of the crematoria. It was their task to maintain order among the new arrivals (often completely unaware of the destiny awaiting them) who must be sent into the gas chambers; to extract the corpses from the chambers, pull gold teeth from jaws, cut the women's hair, sort and classify clothes, shoes, and the contents of the luggage; transport the bodies to the crematoria and oversee the operation of the ovens; extract and eliminate the ashes.

(Ibid., p. 34)

In order to ensure that they would not be able to speak of what they had seen, Levi reports, these groups were allowed to operate for only a few months before they were themselves exterminated. '[A]s its initiation the next squad burnt the corpses of its predecessors.' In all, twelve squads operated during the life of Auschwitz (ibid.).

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 38.

[T]hat match is never over'.<sup>24</sup> The implication is that it is the very unseen negativity at the heart of this simulacrum of normalcy that constitutes the hidden idea of humanity: a fragile thing of which the failure to acknowledge the awful, bare emptiness of its negation is itself a sort of crime. I shall later locate this idea in Kantor's happening.

Kantor received the news in April 1942 that his estranged father, Marian Kantor, had been shot in one of the quarries in Auschwitz.<sup>25</sup> Although Kantor was never there, he was nonetheless a witness to part of the machine of extermination. In November of that year Kantor, along with his mother and his sister's family, was resettled to an apartment building on Węgierska Street in the Podgórze district of Kraków.<sup>26</sup> The building stood within the original boundaries of Kraków's Jewish ghetto, which had been established in 1941 by the Germans when they evicted the Jews from Kazimierz, the 'Galician Jerusalem': the historical centre of economic and intellectual life for Polish Jews since the fourteenth-century.<sup>27</sup> The Galician suburb of Podgórze, situated just across the Vistula river from Kazimierz, was a rundown former merchants' residential area. The ghetto was intended to be an incubator of contagious diseases, such as typhoid, which the Germans hoped would accomplish the extermination of the population of Kraków's Jews.<sup>28</sup> It was enclosed within three-metre high walls, which parodied Jewish tombstones.<sup>29</sup> Following reductions in the ghetto's size, Kantor and his family came to be resettled next to the ghetto boundary in March 1942.<sup>30</sup> That June, the SS assumed authority over the ghetto and in the first few days massacred approximately six hundred Jews in Plac Zgody, the main square, and in the surrounding streets; seven thousand more were sent to the gas chambers.<sup>31</sup> Further large-scale massacres and deportations to the death camps

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<sup>24</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive: Homo Sacer III*, trans. by Daniel Heller-Roazen (New York: Zone Books, 2002), p. 26.

<sup>25</sup> Various dates have been reported for this event; however, Krzysztof Pleśniarowicz gives the date as 4 April 1942, according to Marian Kantor's nephew, Józef Zdzisław Kantor. See Pleśniarowicz's two books *Kantor: Artysta końca wieku* (Kantor. Artist of the Turn of the Century) (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskie, 1997), p. 12, and *The Dead Memory Machine: Tadeusz Kantor's Theatre of Death*, trans. by William Brandt (Aberystwyth: Black Mountain Press, 2004) p. 14. See also Zdzisław Kantor, *Marian Kantor-Mirski (1884–1942)* (Kraków and Tychy: Teatr Mały and Cricoteka, 2004), p. 26.

<sup>26</sup> See Pleśniarowicz 2004, p. 35 and Chrobak, J., Kulka, E. & Tomaszewski, T. (Eds.), „Powrót Odysa" i Podziemny Teatr Niezależny Tadeusza Kantora w latach 1942-1944 cz. I [“The Return of Odysseus" and the Clandestine Independent Theatre of Tadeusz Kantor in the Years 1942-1944, part 1], (Kraków: Cricoteka., 2004), pp. 38–39.

<sup>27</sup> Anna Jodłowiec-Dziedzic, *The Holocaust of Cracow Jews 1939-1945*, trans. by Małgorzata Walczak (Kraków: The Historical Museum of the City of Cracow, 2004), p 3.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> See *Tadeusz Kantor: Wędrówka* (Tadeusz Kantor: A Journey), ed. by Józef Chrobak, Lech Stangret, and Marek Świca (Kraków: Cricoteka, 2000), p. 27; Pleśniarowicz, *Kantor. Artysta końca wieku*, p. 41, and *The Dead Memory Machine*, p. 35.

<sup>31</sup> Jodłowiec-Dziedzic, *The Holocaust of Cracow Jews 1939-1945*, p. 11.

occurred in October of that year. The ghetto was finally 'liquidated' in March 1943 and its entire Jewish population was either killed there or transported to the death camps.<sup>32</sup>

Kantor's living situation at that time brought him into close proximity with the doomed Jewish population of the ghetto. His officially registered work during 1942-43 was in the stage-workshops for the Juliusz Słowacki Theatre which, following the removal of Jews to Podgórze, had been relocated to the Izaak Synagogue, in the heart of Kazimierz.<sup>33</sup> In order to get to and from his place of work, Kantor would have had to pass over the only open bridge between Podgórze and Kazimierz, the Piłsudski Bridge. This necessitated his passing along Limanowski Street, where the reduction of the ghetto had divided the street along its middle with a barbed-wire fence, which formed the new ghetto boundary.<sup>34</sup> Anyone walking or travelling by tram along this street must have been profoundly aware of the figures on the other side of that fence, already marked by degradation and death. As Kantor articulated it in his twelfth Milano Lesson: 'World War II. | Genocide, | Concentration Camps, | Crematories, | Human Beasts, | Death, | Tortures, | Human kind turned into mud, soap and ashes, | Debasing, | The time of contempt...'<sup>35</sup>

Kantor's daily confrontation with an erased or virtually erased humanity became a source for his artistic theory and practice at this time. It was probably during this period, when Kantor was working on what was to be the final underground production for his Clandestine Independent Theatre (*The Return of Odysseus* by Stanisław Wyspiański, 1944) that he first formulated his idea of 'poor reality' or 'reality of the lowest rank'. Denied their own cultural practice by the occupying forces, many young Polish intellectuals turned to the work of the inter-war avant-garde, one of whose key figures was the Jewish writer and graphic artist, Bruno Schulz. Born in the provincial Galician town of Drohobycz (now in the Ukraine), Schulz had achieved fame in the 1930s with the publication of two volumes of his short stories, *Cinnamon Shops* (1934) and *Sanatorium Under the Sign of the Hourglass* (1937). Schulz was shot in his home-town by a Gestapo officer in November 1942 and so neither his writing nor his graphic work bears any direct reflection of the reality under German

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> See *Tadeusz Kantor: Wędrownica*, p. 28; Pleśniarowicz, *Kantor. Artysta Końca wieku*, p. 42, and *The Dead Memory Machine*, p. 35.

<sup>34</sup> I am grateful to Pani Anna Pióro, the curator of the Apteka pod Orłem museum, for her help in understanding the changing topographical reality of the Podgórze ghetto and for granting me access to historical maps and photographs of the ghetto. I am also grateful to the late Mike Staner, a survivor of the Podgórze ghetto who lived at 12 Węgierska Street whilst it was still within the ghetto, and who described to me at length the situation of the reality at that time.

<sup>35</sup> Tadeusz Kantor, *A Journey through Other Spaces: Essays and Manifestos, 1944-1990*, ed. by Michal Kobialka (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), p. 259. See also the first Milano Lesson, p. 211.

occupation.<sup>36</sup> However, Kantor was reading Schulz's fictions avidly at this time.<sup>37</sup> The connections with what the critic Artur Sandauer was to later term the 'degraded reality' in Schulz's fictions, and the reality both of his own existence as a Pole under German occupation and as a witness to the condition of the Jewish population in the ghetto are stark.<sup>38</sup> After the war Schulz's work was not available in Poland until 1964, when Polish cultural identity remained suppressed, though this time under the various manifestations of 'real socialism'.

As Czesław Prokopczyk has noted, the notion of 'degraded', 'bankrupt', or 'marginal' reality in Schulz centres on the Polish word *tandeta*. The meaning of this word, he says:

may be understood, to put it simply and visually, as the lowest layer, or the lowest, though for some intriguing reasons favourite, subspecies of the ordinary in the world of Schulz's fiction. It is the layer of shoddy and cheap products, of trumpery and lack of taste, of 'depraved' human characters, or possibly even of crippled and deformed beings.<sup>39</sup>

In Schulz's fictional universe this degraded reality takes many forms, but in general it seems to derive from the deeply felt paucity of provincial life, the sense that what passed for reality in the town of Drohobycz was somehow a second-rate imitation of the reality of a Kraków or a Warsaw. Reality in Schulz's fiction is said to be 'as thin as paper and betrays with all its cracks its imitative character'.<sup>40</sup> It 'exists in a state of constant fermentation, germination, hidden life' and 'takes on certain shapes merely for the sake of appearance, as a joke or form of play'.<sup>41</sup> It is as if, because provincial reality has no substance, it occupies itself with 'the assuming and consuming of numberless masks. This migration of forms is the essence of life'.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> See Jerzy Ficowski *Regions of the Great Heresy: Bruno Schulz, a Biographical Portrait*, trans. Theodosia S. Robertson (New York: W. W. Norton, 2002), pp. 137-38, for an account of the circumstances of Schulz's death.

<sup>37</sup> See Kantor's comments in Krzysztof Miklaszewski, *Encounters with Tadeusz Kantor*, trans. by G. M. Hyde (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 32-33 and 37; Pleśniarowicz, *The Dead Memory Machine*, p. 27.

<sup>38</sup> Artur Sandauer, 'Rzeczywistość zdegradowana (rzecz o Brunonie Schulzu)' (The Degraded Reality (On Bruno Schulz)), in Bruno Schulz, *Sklepy cynamonowe. Sanatorium pod Klepsydrą* (Kraków and Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1985), pp. 5-33.

<sup>39</sup> Czesław Z. Prokopczyk, 'The Mythical and the Ordinary in Bruno Schulz', in *Bruno Schulz: New Documents and Interpretations*, ed. by Czesław Z. Prokopczyk (New York: Peter Lang, 1999), pp. 175-209 (p. 206).

<sup>40</sup> Bruno Schulz, *The Fictions of Bruno Schulz: The Street of Crocodiles and Sanatorium under the Sign of the Hourglass*, trans. by Celina Wieniewska (London: Picador, 1988), p. 73.

<sup>41</sup> Jerzy Ficowski, *Letters and Drawings of Bruno Schulz with Selected Prose*, trans. by William Arendt with Victoria Nelson (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), p. 113.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

It is not hard to see how this presentation of reality might have spoken to Kantor in his situation at this time. The German occupation made explicit and all-too-concrete a ranking of humanity that had existed in a less structured way before the war. However, under occupation Germans assumed the highest rank, Poles became their inferiors, whilst Jews occupied the lowest rank of all: according to Hitler and the SS they were beneath even the lowest rank of humanity.<sup>43</sup> As Agamben has noted:

The truth – which is difficult for the victims to face, but which we must have the courage not to cover with sacrificial veils – is that the Jews were exterminated not in a mad and giant holocaust but exactly as Hitler had announced, ‘as lice’, which is to say, as bare life. The dimension in which the extermination took place is neither religion nor law, but biopolitics.<sup>44</sup>

Such a pressure of reality clearly produces ‘degradation’ at many levels. However, it was not merely as a description of the ‘bankruptcy of reality’, of ‘that city of cheap human material’ that Schulz’s metaphysical prose would have been attractive to Kantor.<sup>45</sup> More than merely black humour, ‘degraded’ reality somehow offers a certain hope in Schulz’s depictions in that it takes on a celebratory quality and assumes a playful self-sufficiency. Thus, in his ‘Treatise on Tailor’s Dummies, or The Second Book of Genesis’, Jakob, the narrator’s father declares that:

Matter has been given infinite fertility, inexhaustible vitality, and, at the same time, a seductive power of temptation which invites us to create as well. In the depth of matter, indistinct smiles are shaped, tensions build up, attempts at form appear. The whole of matter pulsates with infinite possibilities that send dull shivers through it. [...] It entices us with a thousand sweet, soft, round shapes which it blindly dreams up within itself. [...] We are simply entranced and enchanted by the cheapness, shabbiness and inferiority of material.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> See Norman Davies, *God’s Playground: A History of Poland, Volume I, 1795 to the Present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), pp. 445-46. From this simple tripartite hierarchy developed a complex web of resistance, of corruption and collaboration, of heroism and cowardice. Some Jews worked for the Gestapo to police Jews under the auspices of the *Judenrat* (Jewish Council). Some Poles collaborated in order to police each other and any Jews attempting to evade confinement in the ghetto, or any Poles who helped to hide them. Kantor’s somewhat semitic features, together with his living next to the Jewish ghetto would obviously not have helped his situation in that reality. According to the Nüremberg regulations Kantor was officially classed as *Nichtdeutsch* or non-German (therefore not *Juden* or Jew and not required to wear the yellow star). Nevertheless, he was frequently stopped and ‘checked’ on the way to and from his home next to the Podgórze ghetto; that is, stopped by Germans patrols or their Polish collaborators and forced to drop his trousers to prove he was not circumcised. I am grateful to the late Mike Staner for describing to me the environment of ‘checking’ around this time, both by Germans and by gangs of certain categories of collaborators. I am also grateful to Krzysztof Pleśniarowicz who told me that Kantor had made it clear on several occasions both publicly and privately that he had been a victim of such checking.

<sup>44</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. by Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 114.

<sup>45</sup> Bruno Schulz, *The Fictions of Bruno Schulz*, p. 76.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 39 and 41.

In his 1968 commentary on the contents of his model's pockets, Kantor expressed this Schulzian sense of enchantment.

The reality of occupied Kraków was one where the metamorphosis of animate to inanimate body was a casual fact of daily life, where mounds of clothing or belongings indicated the recently departed presence of a human life just as much as its corpse.<sup>47</sup> In such a degraded reality, where the already lowered quality of life could be reduced further still, to dead matter, it is not surprising that Kantor would be drawn to Schulz's brand of quasi-panpsychism, to this exotic version of the Aristotelian conception of hylomorphism: of form and matter (a conception that perhaps also anticipates later ideas such as Gilles Deleuze's vitalist concept of immanence).<sup>48</sup> The cheapness of life somehow heightens the awareness of the awful bare emptiness of its potential negation but it somehow also becomes a cause of celebration and a form of resistance to the forces of degradation and negation.

In his article '*Cinnamon Shops* by Bruno Schulz: The Apology of Tandeta', Andreas Schönle argues that it is 'the privileged position of tandeta that [...] it mediates between form and matter'.<sup>49</sup> In its imitation of form, *tandeta* 'fakes a definite appearance, without, however, merging completely with it'.<sup>50</sup> The faking 'a definite appearance' would appear to be a deliberate paradox designed to call into question the conventional ranking of 'appearance' as ontologically inferior to authentic, substantial being. In his book *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, Giorgio Agamben uses an obscure figure from Roman law to articulate a similar paradox of negativity at the heart of human being that seems to echo the celebration of *tandeta*. The figure of *homo sacer* (sacred man) is one who through being banished from the law occupies a liminal state of being, of 'bare life', that is, the life of one 'who *may be killed and yet not sacrificed*'.<sup>51</sup> Drawing on the work of Carl Schmitt in *Political Theology* and his discussion of the 'state of exception', Agamben develops this idea to cite the bare life of *homo sacer* as emblematic of the condition of human being as a being existing essentially in a liminal zone between biological existence and political life: between nature and culture.<sup>52</sup> This is a Heideggerian concept of human being as a continually becoming-appearance, of an existential performance as

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<sup>47</sup> Davis, *God's Playground*, p. 455.

<sup>48</sup> See Gilles Deleuze, 'Immanence: A Life', in *Pure Immanence: Essays on a Life*, trans. by Anne Boyman (New York: Zone Books, 2001), pp. 25-33; Giorgio Agamben, 'Absolute Immanence', in his *Potentialities: Collected Essays in Philosophy*, trans. by Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1999), pp. 220-39.

<sup>49</sup> Andreas Schönle, '*Cinnamon Shops* by Bruno Schulz: The Apology of Tandeta', *The Polish Review*, 36 (1991), 127-44 (p. 131).

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, p. 8; emphasis in the original.

<sup>52</sup> See Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, trans. by George Schwab (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

opposed to an essentialist substance.<sup>53</sup> If bare life is part of this existentialist essence of human being then it is in the self-recognition of it as such – the human-as-abstract-being – that affords recognition of the ‘genuine, | authentic side of | individuality’. What is discarded or forgotten is therefore salvaged and redeemed in a way that also echoes Walter Benjamin’s conception of messianic time in his 1940 essay ‘On the Concept of History’.<sup>54</sup>

The celebration of *tandeta* in Schulz’s fictions can therefore be seen as a re-appropriation of degradation (or in Kantor’s terms ‘reality of the lowest rank’) for creative purposes.<sup>55</sup> This is shown in Kantor’s happening, as the separation of layer from layer of clothing leads to the abrupt discovery of ‘new interior worlds’, which open up to reveal the almost non-Euclidean space of the ‘antipodes of clothing’: ‘pockets! | lots of pockets!’ As Kantor delves into this interior world of his model’s clothing, the cotton padding spills out of the lining. Unravelling and proliferating seemingly out of proportion to the confined space of its origins, this padding seems to echo the ‘fluffiness and porosity’ of matter celebrated by the father in Schulz’s

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<sup>53</sup> Agamben’s concept of *la nuda vita* (bare life) also resonates with Walter Benjamin’s concept of *der bloße Leben* (mere life) in the discussion of sovereignty in his 1921 essay ‘Critique of Violence’: ‘Mythic violence is bloody power over mere life for its own sake; divine violence is pure power over all life for the sake of the living. The first demands sacrifice, the second accepts it’. See Walter Benjamin, ‘Critique of Violence’, trans. by Edmund Jephcott, in Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writings, Volume 1: 1913–1926*, ed. by Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2004), pp. 236–52 (p. 250). My argument here is that Kantor’s work invokes an idea of bare life in the sense of a subversive celebration of the immanent, virtual, and liminal, rather than as an object of abstract sacrifice. See Leland de la Durantaye, *Giorgio Agamben: A Critical Introduction* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), p. 203).

<sup>54</sup> Walter Benjamin, ‘On the Concept of History’, in *Selected Writings: Volume 4, 1938–1940*, ed. by Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings, trans. by Edmund Jephcott et al. (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006), pp. 389–400.

<sup>55</sup> Of course, such a move finds resonances in the post-Second World War movements in the avant-garde, such as *informel*, minimalism, and Arte Povera, as well as happenings, which Kantor encountered in his travels in Europe and the United States and which are refracted through his artistic practice (see Kobińska, *Further On, Nothing*, p. 78). Also, as Piotr Piotrowski has observed, avant-garde experimentation in the visual arts was not confined to the West but flourished in various ways in the satellite states of the Eastern bloc (see Piotrowski, *In the Shadow of Yalta: Art and the Avant-Garde in Eastern Europe, 1945–1989*, trans. by Anna Brzyski (London: Reaktion Books, 2009) pp. 9–10). Indeed, although a quality of *tandeta* can be discerned in the work of many artists such as, for example, Joseph Beuys and Christian Boltanski, the Schulzian reading of Kantor’s happening would be very different from the way Happenings are often seen as orgiastic or as developing out of abstract expressionism, or *informel*, where Kantor’s appropriation of that form had darker resonances (see Edward Krasiński, and Magdalena Kardasz, ‘A Happening is a work of art, and not a brawl’, trans. by Jadwiga Piątkowska and Maciej Głogoczowski, in *Tadeusz Kantor: Niemożliwe/Impossible*, ed. by Jarosław Suchan (Kraków: Bunkier Sztuki, 2000), pp. 235–38; Jarosław Suchan, ‘Kantor as Artist and as Material’, in *Tadeusz Kantor. Interior of Imagination*, ed. by Jarosław Suchan and Marek Świca (Warsaw and Kraków: Zachęta National Gallery of Art and Cricoteka, 2005), pp. 52–63 (pp. 57–58)). And, although Beuys’ presence in his own work might also be seen as similar to Kantor in terms of philosophical or spiritual inclination, his metaphysical concerns are more shamanistic, overtly mystical and rooted in German Romanticism and his politics more overtly engaged. Kantor’s metaphysical concerns are – following Schulz – perhaps more ironic about transforming ordinary lowly material into something deeply meaningful.

'Treatise'.<sup>56</sup> Similarly, the objects that Kantor harvests from this model's pockets, whilst initially innocuous, seem gradually to change and proliferate in the *partytura* as the catalogue of items progresses. From the innocent and trivial 'gnawed pencils' and 'toothbrushes', the list proceeds to more personal objects in the form of photographs. However, these consist not only of the normal and expected pictures of 'family' and 'children' but progress to the more illicit pictures of a 'lover' and pornography. As Kantor continues to unpack the pockets he discovers 'condoms', 'stolen teaspoons', and finally the escalating violence of 'penknives', 'knives', and 'guns'. There is therefore a sense, as with Schulzian matter, that the inanimate objects associated with the anonymous and forgotten model have a subversive life and humanity of their own; that, as the father in Schulz's 'Treatise' expounds, 'There is no dead matter [...] lifelessness is only a disguise behind which hide unknown forms of life'.<sup>57</sup> There is also a sense in which the objects come to refer back to the subject of human individuality, not of the anonymous model alone but paradoxically, of the individuality of everyone. Kantor's harvesting of objects may recall the harvesting of useful commodities by the *Sonderkommandos* from the dead victims of the gas chambers. However, through his performative manipulation of the clothing and objects associated with his model, Kantor can be understood to be accessing Schulz's subversive conception of form and matter so that these items take on, as it were, a life of their own. In this dance of becoming and seeming, rather than obediently remaining in their category of 'conventional | or insignificant outward appearance', these items are liberated from the state of utter abjection that would otherwise seem to be the fate of Adriaen Adriaenszoon, the subject of Tulp's anatomy, or the dead victims of Podgórze or Auschwitz.

Kantor wrote elsewhere that 'The human form is shaped on the border area of a live, suffering organism and | a mechanism | functioning automatically and absurdly'.<sup>58</sup> In this conception, Kantor encapsulates the paradoxical fragility of the bare life of human being, suspended between the mechanism of Cartesian matter and the pre-Cartesian animating principle of Aristotelian form, between *zoē* and *bios*, between nature and culture, between the apparent oppositions between Being and becoming, and between Being and seeming. In doing so, both here and implicitly in what might now be seen as his revision of Rembrandt's *Anatomy*, Kantor has reconfigured the separate, fragmented, and incorporeal nature of Cartesian *res cogitans* in a manner that has allowed a sense of human soul to return via the illegal, poor side-door of *tandeta*, in a way that prefigures a Deleuzian conception of immanence. Where Rembrandt's Dr Tulp found soulless, mechanical material in Adriaenszoon's dissected forearm and hand, Kantor found a form of humanity and soul in the dissected clothing and contents of his model's pockets. In response to the

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<sup>56</sup> Schulz, *The Fictions of Bruno Schulz*, p. 41.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40.

<sup>58</sup> 'Postać ludzka kształtuje się na pograniczu | żywego, cierpiącego organizmu i | mechanizmu | funkcjonującego automatycznie i absurdalnie' (Kantor, *Pisma*, I, pp. 111-12; my translation).

unseen negativity at the heart of the football match that Agamben says is never over, and to the potential threat of the awful, bare emptiness of the negation of human life, Kantor's *Anatomy Lesson* was a public celebration of humanity and soul within the 'reality of the lowest rank'.

Acknowledging the dangers implicit in the Cartesian *cogito*, this gesture by Kantor invokes a more vitalist sense of life, one that is virtual and distributed within matter itself: a sense of life that speaks and sings itself through the clothing and possessions that remain after the human body has been discarded. This Deleuzian sense of immanence hovers on the borderline between being and not-being, suggesting a sense of the self of bare human life being 'held out into the nothing', as the Heideggerian conception characterises it.<sup>59</sup> Echoing Heidegger's 'nothing of being', Deleuze suggested in the last text published before his death that 'the immanent that is in nothing is itself a life',<sup>60</sup> the 'life of the individual fades away in favor of the singular life immanent to a man who no longer has a name, though he can be mistaken for no other'.<sup>61</sup> In his version of Rembrandt's *Anatomy Lesson*, Tadeusz Kantor, rather than celebrating the rational, sovereign, *disembodied* subject of the Cartesian *cogito* celebrates the liminal, immanent, bare life of *tandeta*. Where, in Rembrandt's painting, the coat stolen by his subject is forgotten, Kantor's response is to let the tattered clothing sing for itself.

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<sup>59</sup> Martin Heidegger, 'What Is Metaphysics?', trans. by David Farrell Krell, in *Pathmarks* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 82-96 (p. 93).

<sup>60</sup> See Agamben, 'Absolute Immanence', p. 220.

<sup>61</sup> Deleuze, 'Immanence: A Life', p. 28 and 29.