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Marionettes or Gods?: After the Actor in the Objects of Tadeusz Kantor and Cricot2 (Paper)

This paper examines the use of props, costumes and other materials in the happenings, performances and theatrical events of the Polish director Tadeusz Kantor and the work of his contemporaries, such as Maria Jarema and Jonas Stern, and the work of Cricot2. It traces the development of the Kantorian actor in relation to the stage object and follows the antagonistic and evocative relation between performing objects through his main performances *The Dead Class*, *Wielopole Wielopole* and *Let the Artists Die!*, to the continuing practices of the company, after Kantor's death, from *Today is My Birthday* to more recent work such as *Maniacs or Their Master's Voice* and *Past! Past!*—and that's the way with all stories. The theoretical dimension of the paper follows Martin Heidegger's thinking of the hand and materials, the grace of the puppet from Kleist to Edward Gordon Craig and the transformative aspects of Kantor's thinking of theatre space and the 'reality of the lowest rank'. If, for Kleist, a state of grace returns through either an infinite or empty consciousness—a state likened to a marionette or a god—then is the work of the performing object an instance of being approaching the infinite, as something encounters nothing? Is the actor's task one of becoming an object? The paper ends with a consideration of developments in object-oriented ontology and aspects of Eugene Thacker's *After Life*, compares this thinking with the radical practices of Kantor and Cricot2 during the 20th century and on into the 21st.

Dr Daniel Watt is a Senior Lecturer in English and Drama at Loughborough University. His research interests include fragmentary writing, ethics and literature and philosophical and literary influences on theatre and performance in the 20th century. He is co-investigator in the AHRC funded research Object Theatre Network and is currently working on a book, *The Consciousness of Objects*, with Rodopi Press.