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Theatre in ruins: street and theatre at the end of Fordism

1973 was an inauspicious year for France's economy and a surprisingly sunny one for its street performers. After the spring crash in the global property market but before the autumn oil embargo, Jean Digne, director of the Théâtre du Centre in Aix-en-Provence, and Charles Nugue, director of the city's cultural centre, organized a festival: *Aix, ville ouverte aux saltimbanques* (Aix, city open to street performers). The event brought tumblers, jugglers, fire-spinners, magicians, and busking musicians – the familiar denizens of 'the street' – together with visual artists and theatre troupes seeking to experiment with alternative modes of expanding and engaging with their publics. The festival ran for three subsequent summers and, in retrospect, assumed the status of a 'foundational moment' for contemporary French street theatre.¹

It is historical coincidence that this foundational moment was so neatly bookended by two key episodes in the collapse of the Fordist compromise and the end of post-World War II economic growth. The spring property crash did not directly cause the summer street theatre festival any more than the summer street theatre festival caused the autumn oil embargo. But the deindustrialization, economic crisis, and urban change that ensued provide more than mere context for the development of French street theatre; they furnished contemporary street theatre with its material and symbolic conditions of possibility. The move away from high modernist urban projects after 1973 signalled a

return to what David Wiles has called a 'traditionalist public space' in which small-scale street performance could thrive.² France's new urban policy of the 1970s explicitly encouraged the 'reanimation' of public space, in a marked departure from the uniform tower blocks skewered by the likes of Henri Lefebvre, the Situationist International, and Jean-Luc Godard. From the 1980s onward, as deindustrialization accelerated and intensified, street theatre companies joined other artists in appropriating disused factories as studio, construction, and rehearsal spaces. Some of these sites later became officially sanctioned and well-funded centres of artistic creation, especially as formerly industrial cities and towns sought to use cultural projects to reinvent themselves to suit new economic circumstances.

During this period, French street theatre developed to include not only a loosely affiliated collection of aesthetic practices, but also a formalized set of professional institutions, publications, and events. These included Lieux Publics, a national centre for the creation of street arts founded by Michel Crespin and Fabien Jannelle in 1983; *Goliath*, a trade magazine for and directory of street theatre practitioners (first published 1985); prominent festivals at Aurillac (from 1986) and Chalon-sur-Saône (from 1987); and HorsLesMurs, a national resource centre for street arts, created in 1993. Throughout the 1990s there emerged, often in former industrial spaces, a network of *fabriques*, centres of street theatre creation that host companies in residence as they develop new work; these sites include Les Abattoirs in Chalon-sur-Saône (1991), Le Fourneau in Brest (1994), Le Moulin Fondu in Noisy-le-Sec (1996), and l'Atelier 231 in Sotteville-lès-Rouen (1998).³ The names of these centres, and their collective designation as *fabriques*, recall their previous occupations while underscoring their continued status as sites of production: street theatre is *made* here, not simply disseminated.

In the introduction to this book I proposed that, in contemporary France, street theatre is working memory's privileged artistic form. In this chapter I explain why. It is not merely because, as outlined above, street theatre developed and professionalized amidst economic crisis, the new urban policy of the 1970s, and deindustrialization. This historical coincidence is necessary but not sufficient to explain French street theatre's function as working memory. Rather, street theatre is working memory's privileged artistic form because of how it engages space and time, its fraught relationship with Fordist-Taylorist modernity, and its ambivalence towards a mythologized, premodern urban ideal. These traits are *legible* in the prevailing origin stories that continue to govern French street theatre's production and reception, and *perceptible* in some of French street theatre's longest-running

and most iconic performances. Therefore this chapter brings together street theatre historiography and performance analysis. In doing so, it shows how street theatre's engagement with real and imagined pasts shapes persistent assumptions about its political efficacy and its relationship to theatre in purpose-built spaces. French street theatre's origin stories trace the form to the protests of May 1968 or link it to a premodern carnivalesque; in both cases, street theatre is supposed to transcend the atomization of bodies in space and time by eliminating the distinction between performer and spectator. I find this claim to be anti-theatrical, and also inadequate in its reductive account of street theatre's political, spatial, and temporal work. Ultimately, this investigation reveals that street performers might do more complex historiographic work in the theatrical event than these dominant origin stories would suggest.⁴

Street theatre's negative space

Contemporary French street theatre emerged concomitantly with what François Hartog calls a 'memorial wave' in the 1970s and 1980s.⁵ French historians and film-makers released works that reckoned with the legacy of Vichy and Nazi collaboration.⁶ The editors of immigrant magazine *Sans Frontière* (founded in 1979) created a regular feature, 'Mémoire Immigré,' dedicated to narratives of working-class immigrant lives, personal testimonies, and family histories.⁷ Labour historians drew on oral histories of factory workers to write 'history from below.' Memoirs of rural and peasant life became national best-sellers, and in some cases their authors became television celebrities.⁸ The proliferation and consumption of memory work responded to the imminent disappearance or radical transformation of the documented experiences: the aging and natural death of Holocaust survivors, a shift in the immigrant experience from temporary working arrangement to permanent family resettlement, the deindustrialization of urban areas, and the industrialization of agriculture.⁹ Memorial work, the forging of a link between present and past, kept the recent past present before it could slip away.

The figure of the *saltimbanque*, so prominent in the name of the 1973 Aix-en-Provence festival and in the discourse of street theatre throughout the 1970s, operates somewhat differently. Though above I have conformed to current usage and translated *saltimbanque* simply

as 'street performer,' the image of the *saltimbanque* corresponds more precisely to the Italian *saltimbanco* or English mountebank: the early modern medicine man who peddled panaceas in the marketplace from atop a trestle stage, often accompanied by musicians or *commedia* actors.¹⁰ The street performers at the 1973 Aix-en-Provence festival did not dispense medical advice, but they did (or were supposed to) embody a pre-industrial mode of urban sociality. As Jean Digne writes, 'the city in its incubator shell had not lived up to its potential since the Middle Ages.'¹¹ The celebration of the *saltimbanque* by proponents of the emergent form of street theatre does not preserve a repertoire in the process of disappearing (as was the case with much memory work of the 1970s) so much as it facilitates the *re*-emergence of a repertoire supposedly long since vanished. By resurrecting the *saltimbanque* as their 'figurehead,' street theatre practitioners bracketed French modernization.¹² The relationship to space and time embodied by the *saltimbanque* evoked both the pre-industrial past and more recent crises in Fordist modernity, including, crucially, the festive energies of May 1968.

Kristin Ross has called May 1968 the 'confirming afterthought' of France's postwar modernization.¹³ During the postwar decades, France sought a 'third way' between American-style capitalism and Soviet-style socialism, neither of which was particularly attractive. But ultimately it became a consumer society in the model of the United States: mass production facilitated mass consumption, and a combination of job security and rising wages (both hard-won by unions) formed the basis of a compromise between labour and capital. But this compromise did nothing to resolve the problem of worker alienation. Inside the factory, the rhythms of the Fordist assembly line dominated the production process. Throughout the *Trente Glorieuses*, France's thirty continuous years of postwar economic growth, the general trend was towards deskilling labour. For many, automation and mechanization eliminated backbreaking work and complete physical exhaustion. But these were replaced by equally draining mental fatigue and repetitive tasks. Thus striking workers in May 1968 replaced conventional *quantitative* demands (pertaining to working hours, vacation time, rate of pay) with *qualitative* demands for a 'humanization of work.'¹⁴ These qualitative demands were not necessarily revolutionary or fundamentally anti-capitalist – though many were – but they rejected the tight regulation, close surveillance, and mechanical repetitiveness of Fordist-Taylorist factory production. Inside worker-occupied factories, strike committees organized music, dances, games, film screenings, and theatrical performances. Arts and festive practices undermined the rhythms and spatio-temporal compartmentalization of the Fordist factory.

The spectre of May 1968 looms large in French street theatre historiography; it is largely from 1968 that the discourse of street theatre inherits its persistent rhetoric of border crossing (see the Introduction). For Ross, May 1968 was a 'crisis in functionalism,' during which students and workers challenged the confines of their designated spaces and social roles.¹⁵ The same was true of the theatre. Post-World War II cultural decentralization efforts had produced numerous 'popular' or 'people's' theatre buildings in working-class areas, but rather than nurturing new working-class audiences, these theatres tended to attract existing bourgeois audiences who were willing to make a pilgrimage to see noted directors' productions of Shakespeare, Molière, and Brecht. Faced with empty auditoria during May 1968, theatre-makers took to the streets or arranged with strike committees to perform in occupied factories.¹⁶ The goal was not merely to find missing audiences, but also to join workers and students in challenging the compartmentalization of intellectual/creative and manual/productive labour. Philippe Ivernel explains:

More than the occupation of the Odeon, the major phenomenon [for theatre in 1968] is without doubt the desertion and closure of the auditoria. Real life is elsewhere, in the street, in the factories, in the occupied universities, everywhere the collective reappropriation of spaces of life and work is underway. This reappropriation, it must be stressed, does not promote new enclosures. If real life is somewhere, properly speaking, it is in the transgression of borders that in times of normalcy (that is to say, of normativity) partition different social spaces, isolate different activities: the economic, the cultural, the political.¹⁷

In May 1968 theatre endeavours to get closer to something called real life, not through mimetic fidelity but through physical proximity. This real life is at once *somewhere* – in the streets, in occupied factories and universities – and in the act of crossing to those somewheres from somewhere else.

Street theatre scholarship depicts this act of crossing not merely as a taking to the streets but as a *retaking of* the streets. As Emmanuel Wallon writes, 'since the end of the 1960s, theatre, music, dance, puppetry, circus, visual art, cinema and video, without forgetting pyrotechnics, have newly taken hold of public space, from which the authorities and their police, the academies, and other institutions had driven them after the age of fairgrounds.'¹⁸ In this prevalent version of events, the late 1960s marked both a rupture (suggested by *newly*) and a return to a poorly periodized golden age of street performance (the vaguely Bakhtinian 'age of fairgrounds'). Philippe Chaudoir has suggested that street theatre practitioners and scholars claim a connection to medieval

performance practice in order to establish contemporary street theatre's artistic legitimacy.¹⁹ But street theatre practitioners do not, and cannot, trace direct acts of transfer in the way that Shakespearean actors like Kean once did; histories of French street theatre rely on the gap between the mythologized *distant* past (the age of fairgrounds) and the mythologized *recent* past (May 1968). This break, the negative space of French street theatre historiography, allows street theatre practitioners to situate themselves as both traditional and radical, as legitimate claimants to the street and as sufficiently illegitimate to launch anti-institutional critiques.

As the 1973 Aix-en-Provence festival suggests, street theatre's boundary crossing is both spatial and temporal; it marks an attempt to access, if not other spaces and times, then other relationships *to* space and time, prior to the spatio-temporal abstractions and regimentations of modernity, and often described in shorthand as *festival*. The space-time of festival promises to bring the street back to life. A long-time concern of Henri Lefebvre's, festival, conceived as the ludic *use-value* of urban space (as distinct from its *exchange-value*), became an explicit goal of France's new urban policy in the 1970s.²⁰ Whether they are conscripts or volunteers, contemporary street theatre practitioners 'reanimate' the street (to borrow from Chaudoir) after periods of modern urban death characterized by the *grands projets* of Haussmannian demolition or postwar concrete utopias.²¹ For Chaudoir, a scholar primarily interested in the sociology of public space, contemporary street theatre is the aesthetic component of an attempted return to the fundamentals of vibrant urban (or more accurately, village) life.

In France the oft-cited model for this reanimation is Rousseau. Chaudoir claims that street theatre 'seeks to renew a more Rousseauist tradition of festival; a paradox, when one considers that for Rousseau the festival is a specific characteristic of village sociability and is precisely opposed to urban spectacularity.'²² Rousseau's anti-urban sentiment and his anti-theatrical prejudice sustain each other, and both resurface in the discourse surrounding contemporary French street theatre. Wallon writes that

Jean le Rond d'Alembert was surely right to encourage the citizens of Geneva to construct theatres, buildings dedicated to representation, machines for effecting the symbolic break between actors and spectators, devices for separating poem from reality, rather than to content themselves, as Jean-Jacques Rousseau implored them to do, with the spectacle of a happy people dancing around a tree of liberty. These institutions of fiction, in which the seat occupied signals social rank, prospered again once the bourgeoisie had deposed the aristocracy.²³

The imagery here distinguishes between unnatural separation, effected by ‘machines’ and ‘devices,’ and natural unity, the wholeness and wholesomeness of a community dancing around a tree. This distinction persists in street theatre historiography. If 1968 marked a rupture and a return, then in this particular version of the narrative the return was to a ‘natural’ state, free from artifice, prior to the political ascendance of the bourgeoisie. The negative space excluded by street theatre history is the space of theatre itself, at least the kind of theatre based on mimesis and representation and patronized by the bourgeoisie in which, to borrow from Nicholas Ridout, ‘one group of people spend leisure time sitting in the dark to watch others spend their working time under lights pretending to be other people.’²⁴

In a move repeated by too many writers on street theatre (or for that matter on theatre generally), Wallon conflates the absence of physical boundaries between actor and spectator with the absence of any distinction between their roles. If actor and spectator occupy the same space, the logic goes, then they are in communion. And in a fallacious reversal of that logic, any division of that space makes communion impossible. The separation anxiety pervading street theatre discourse serves a purpose, rewriting theatre history to make all street theatre appear politically radical in comparison to the theatre of purpose-built spaces.

According to Wallon, the possibility of communion between actor and spectator ended with the removal of stage seating: ‘After the last banquettes were removed from the stage following the petition of Voltaire, this aesthetic of the “fourth wall” reigned supreme [*regna sans partage*]. The curtain materialises it. From its rise, the performance unfolds as if no one were attending it.’²⁵ There are two historical slippages at work here. First, although the removal of stage seating in the eighteenth century created a stricter physical divide between actors and spectators and facilitated greater illusionism, the fourth wall is a product of late nineteenth-century Naturalism.²⁶ Second, by ascribing the removal of stage seating to Voltaire, Wallon ignores the material reasoning behind the practice and its discontinuation. Voltaire (along with Diderot) did openly condemn the practice of stage seating, but theatres continued to sell banquette tickets for years, against the philosophers’ strenuous objections. Stage seats were occupied and paid for handsomely by the wealthy and/or aristocratic, whose funds the theatres could not afford to refuse. The Comédie-Française finally removed its stage seating on 23 April 1759 after the Comte de Lauraguais offered the theatre a generous subsidy to compensate for lost revenue.²⁷ The presence of spectators on the eighteenth-century stage does not indicate a carnivalesque levelling of high and low, but is instead, much like the auditorium seats that

Wallon deplures, a signal of social rank. From their onstage banquettes aristocratic spectators could make themselves into objects of admiration and fascination and exhibit their wealth with ostentatious clothing. The self-styled libertines among them could also more easily slip backstage to pursue liaisons with actresses.²⁸

Wallon's two historical slippages function together to equate physical separation between actor and spectator with economic class distinction; by conflating the physical separation between actor and spectator with Naturalist fourth-wall aesthetics, he is also able to position post-1968 street theatre as radical compared to a 'reformer' like Brecht. This version of street theatre's history erects a wall in the eighteenth century in order to break it down in 1968: 'Against the closure of representation, [the '68ers] proclaim the rupture of the fourth wall and an opening into the fresh air.'²⁹ The erosion of class distinction here is as simple as breaking through a wall that does not exist.

Contemporary French street theatre is then marked by legacies of anti-functionalism (inherited from May 1968) and anti-theatricality (inherited from Rousseau). The intermingling of these legacies is legible in Sylvie Clidière's definition of street arts for France's National Federation of Street Arts. As noted in the Introduction, she allows for the possibility of street theatre in the wings of a purpose-built proscenium stage. By this definition, street theatre may occur in predesignated spaces of theatrical labour, so long as that labour is nonrepresentational; the problem is less the exterior shell of the theatre building and more the role-play that occurs in one particular part of it. Street theatre, for Clidière, occurs '*hors lieux pré-affectés*.'³⁰ Although this translates roughly to 'outside preassigned or predesignated places,' the French verb *affecter* creates a semantic association between the rejection of functionalism and the rejection of theatricality. *Affecter* means to designate for a certain usage (especially in the case of requisitioned buildings, earmarked sums of money, or military personnel) and to affect in the more familiar English senses, first of feigning, simulating, or exaggerating, and second of acting upon, moving, or afflicting. To perform *hors lieux pré-affectés* is to perform outside of predesignated, purpose-built spaces, with the additional connotation of performing outside those spaces given over to affectation. Functionalist use of space thus becomes conflated with fakery. As a result, street theatre acquires a veneer of authenticity and truthfulness simply by leaving the stage.

Here again, the association between the physical separation between actor and spectator (theatre space) and the separation of actor and role (the mimetic gap) is inherited from Rousseau. But at the heart of Rousseau's anti-theatrical prejudice is a kind of functionalism that runs

counter to the political project of much contemporary street theatre. Rousseau opposes the actor to the orator, who ‘represents only himself; he fills only his own role, speaks only in his own name, says, or ought to say, only what he thinks; the man and the role being the same, he is *in his place*; he is in the situation of any citizen *who fulfills the function of his estate*.’³¹ The core problem for Rousseau is not just the physical divide between actor and spectator but the divergence between actor and role, between utterance and meaning or effect: a divergence or friction that threatens a version of democracy in which each citizen is in his or her proper place, performing his or her proper function and remaining true to it. Rousseau’s problem, as Juliane Rebentisch points out, is with irony: ‘[T]he picture Rousseau paints of the actor coincides with the figure of the ironist. For the actor is a master less of dissimulation than of dissimulation marked as such [...] irony not only separates the man from his role, leaving the status of the man behind the roles undetermined. The indeterminacy of the man behind the roles in irony also affects the roles themselves.’³² Rousseau does not claim that the hapless audiences of Geneva will mistake the actor for the role; he does not ‘accuse [the actor] of being a deceiver but of cultivating by profession the talent of deceiving.’³³ For Rousseau, deception entertains the theatre spectator within the relatively safe confines of the theatre building, but threatens the workings of functionalist democracy (a place for everyone, and everyone in their place) when it infects the broader public sphere. In other words, it is all good fun until it leaves the theatre.

The foundational myths of contemporary French street theatre are at odds. This is not simply because one origin story dates the practice to a premodern period while the other dates it to May 1968; these origin stories work in tandem, presenting that May as rupture from urban-industrial modernity and a return to the lost village festivity of a loosely defined ‘before’ – a break from the destructive myth of linear progress.³⁴ The issue is rather that the anti-functionalism of May 1968, based on the dismantling of distinctions between different social roles and different spheres of activity, is fundamentally incompatible with Rousseauian anti-theatricality, despite Rousseau’s apparent interest in wholeness and unity. Contemporary French street theatre is not the triumph of Rousseauian village festivity; there can be no unproblematic return to, or reanimation of, a pre-industrial, ante-urban utopia. Even if street theatre ‘brings back’ a traditionalist public space, it pulls the space of the (mythologized) past forward into the present through the filter of industrial modernity.

The long-running street theatre productions analysed below, *2CV Théâtre* (Théâtre de l’Unité, 1977–97) and *Bivouac* (Générik Vapeur,

1988–), demonstrate two different ways in which this might occur. Founded by Jacques Livchine, Hervée de Lafond, and Claude Acquart in 1972, the Théâtre de l'Unité is France's oldest continuously operating street theatre company. For *2CV Théâtre*, the company transformed a Citroën 2CV into a two-seater proscenium theatre, parked it in a public square, and sold tickets to the show inside. Caty Avram and Pierre Berthelot founded Générrik Vapeur in 1983; commentators now refer to it alongside Théâtre de l'Unité and other troupes (e.g. Royal de Luxe, Ilotopie, Délices Dada, Transe Express) as one of France's 'historic' street theatre companies.³⁵ In *Bivouac*, still part of the company's touring repertoire, performers caked in blue make-up toss, push, and roll empty oil drums through the streets, accompanied by a metal band that plays from atop a truck. Both *2CV Théâtre* and *Bivouac* have become emblematic of their respective companies thanks to their lengthy stays in the repertoire and the vast geographic extent of their tours. They have also become emblematic of contemporary French street theatre more generally because of *2CV Théâtre's* parodic treatment of the rituals and codes surrounding the institutions of the French stage and *Bivouac's* boisterous spirit of transgression. More importantly for the current study, these productions reveal that French street theatre's fraught relationship to Fordist-Taylorist modernity surfaces not only in historiography, but also in performance. At key moments in the emergence of contemporary street theatre, these productions take up the products and by-products of French industrialization and establish complex links to real and imagined pasts.

Complex nostalgia: *2CV Théâtre*

The 2CV theatre is painted to resemble the marble of a grand theatrical edifice, with veins of brown and green splintering across the vehicle's cream-coloured body. Heavy, natty red curtains hanging in the interior convey an atmosphere of faded elegance. A tiny chandelier dangles from the upholstered ceiling above two auditorium seats. These face the rear of the vehicle and the theatre's gilded proscenium arch, which frames a panel painted to resemble the drape of the theatre's curtains. The stage itself consists of a wooden board and curved apron installed across the width of the car's interior. For each performance of *2CV Théâtre*, Théâtre de l'Unité parked the 2CV in a public square and partially cordoned it off with a rope. A Republican guardsman (*garde républicain*) patrolled this

dividing line, occasionally drawing his sword in salute.³⁶ A duty fireman (Livchine) carried out his inspections to ensure that the 2CV theatre was safe for public use. A cantankerous usherette (Lafond) hawked the two, five-franc tickets to the eight-minute performance inside the car. The two paying spectators saw a fourth actor perform *L'Odysée des mulots du lac* (*The Odyssey of the Lake Field Mice*), a children's fable penned by Lafond, with substantial borrowing from Proust.³⁷ For the majority of spectators, however, *2CV Théâtre* was a free outdoor performance consisting of the largely improvised banter and physical comedy among the fireman, the usherette, and the mute guardsman, which continued outside the car throughout the show-within-a-show.

2CV Théâtre is an important case study for this chapter because of the symbolic clout it holds in narratives of street theatre's contemporary development in France, and because of French street theatre's fraught relationship with the period of Fordist-Taylorist modernity that produced the 2CV as material object and cultural icon. Counter to the prevalent origin narratives discussed above, performance analysis of *2CV Théâtre* suggests that we must resist both pitting a populist street theatre against an elitist, institutional indoor theatre and oversimplifying the former's nostalgia for vaguely premodern spaces and modes of sociability.

2CV Théâtre was originally a *spectacle d'annonce* (literally, an 'announcement show,' a kind of theatrical teaser) for the play *Dernier Bal* (*Last Dance*), written by Livchine about the closure of his father's factory.³⁸ *2CV Théâtre* responded to a double need. First, it was an attempt to attract audiences to a struggling show. Théâtre de l'Unité had recently experienced what Livchine remembers as 'traumatizing failures' during its production of Gogol's *The Government Inspector*.³⁹ Actors in that production had stood outside the theatre in costume in an unsuccessful attempt to lure audiences. When it became clear that *Dernier Bal* might not fare much better, the company adopted an even more proactive approach. Second, *2CV Théâtre* functioned as a boost to company morale through a combination of wish-fulfilment and healthy self-deprecation; rather than play to empty houses, the company would create a house that, with its two-seat capacity, was always full. 'This company that wants to be popular and has no audience' would transform the 2CV 'into a popular theatre for an elite public.'⁴⁰ *2CV Théâtre* is not working against the idea of institutional popular or people's theatres; rather, it was originally an attempt to reinvigorate the public for just such endeavours. *2CV Théâtre* began as what Christopher Balme would call an 'articulation': a discursive joint between a theatrical institution and a potential public.⁴¹ Like the poster or playbill, the

spectacle d'annonce is designed to create a public for performance, but it operates outside the spatial boundaries of the theatre building and the temporal boundaries of the main theatrical event. Ultimately, *2CV Théâtre* overshadowed and outlasted the play it was created to promote. By 1980, when Théâtre de l'Unité brought *2CV Théâtre* to the Avignon Festival, all mentions of *Dernier Bal* had disappeared from the press coverage.⁴² *2CV Théâtre* may have failed as articulation, but it triumphed as a theatrical event in its own right.

2CV Théâtre begins with a procession through town to the eventual performance space.⁴³ Footage of a 1981 performance in the aptly named commune of Joyeuse shows the actors moving slowly, solemnly, and silently through an open-air market, attracting smiles and stares. The guardsman skewers a few vegetables with his sword. The usherette holds aloft an impractically tiny red parasol. *2CV Théâtre* has already begun, although these initial moments are intelligible as a traditional preshow parade, a less boisterous version of the medieval and early modern practice of 'crying the play.'⁴⁴ The procession establishes the ritual, but also serves the pragmatic purpose of attracting additional spectators (originally the task of the entire performance). Innocent passers-by follow the troupe to the parked *2CV*, where the in-the-know audience awaits.⁴⁵ The *2CV* is partially cordoned off by a low-slung rope that physically separates performers from spectators, while orienting the spectators to the 'front' of the performance space (the right-hand side of the vehicle).⁴⁶

The Republican guardsman officiously patrols the borders of the company's performance space, solemnly marching around the *2CV*, turning in sharp right angles, and occasionally drawing his sword to perform a salute. France's Republican Guard, part of the National Gendarmerie, protects the residences of the president and prime minister and the Senate and National Assembly, but its most visible function is as ceremonial guard during official state visits. The guardsmen are conspicuously present at Paris museums and theatres during visits by the president or foreign dignitaries. The Republican Guard is itself a symbol of France, tasked with defending other national symbols. The gestures, mannerisms, dress uniform, and cultural connotations of the Republican guardsman in *2CV Théâtre* separate the performance space from the space of the everyday, marking it as significant and even linking it to state power. The guardsman also operates in tandem with the cordon separating performers from spectators, and prefiguratively elevates the status of those elect spectators who will eventually purchase tickets, cross the cordon, and enter the car. Crucially, however, the guardsman's turns are just a bit *too* sharp, his salutes *too* broad, his manner *too* ceremonious to be taken seriously. Even for an innocent

passer-by, there is no mistaking this guardsman – the fake symbol – for the real symbol, just as there is no mistaking the car's impressive paint job for actual marble.

In her role as the usherette, Lafond does most of the speaking. She introduces the actor who will perform *L'Odysée des mulots du lac* inside the 2CV. The actor, dressed in a tuxedo, waves and bows before disappearing into the trunk of the car to prepare. The usherette then demonstrates the functioning of the two wooden theatre seats, which have not yet been placed inside the vehicle. She describes them as 'two authentic seats from the Comédie-Française, 1936 versions.'⁴⁷ With her foot she repeatedly pushes down one of the folding seats and lets it snap back up, explaining the resulting clack as 'a typical sound, a sound of theatre seats, not of 2CV seats.' The usherette's speech oscillates between authentication and irony; she reassures the assembled spectators that they see before them 'a veritable theatre, in the grand French tradition ... where one hears almost nothing, where one sees almost nothing.' Of course, one might level similar accusations at the street: although the cordon around the 2CV helps to establish sight-lines, most spectators must adjust their positions and crane their necks for a better view, and in a (positive) review of a 1980 performance J. Leclair complains that much of the dialogue is lost due to 'undesirable ambient noises,' such as cars, motorcycles, and nearby drumming.⁴⁸ The 'veritable theatre' is both the faux-marble automobile and the street itself. The duty fireman then installs the seats inside the 2CV and, at the request of the usherette, lowers the fire curtain. The usherette remarks that, with the fire curtain securely in place, 'either the actor will roast, or the spectators will.' The theatre might be a death trap, but the physical barrier between actor and spectator ensures that only a portion of the group would perish.

The usherette advertises the exclusivity of the theatrical experience even as she continues to refer to it as 'popular theatre.' After preparing and distributing the tickets, she readies the two paying customers to enter the 2CV theatre by adorning them with necessary accessories, selecting from a small stash of beaded necklaces, clutches, and cravats. Lafond puts these on the ticketholders herself, patting them gently and brushing real or imagined lint off their clothes while maintaining her distinctly unfriendly professional demeanour. The ticketholders then climb into the 2CV through the front passenger door. Before closing the door behind them, Lafond crows to the crowd that the performance is sold out. The lucky ticketholders, she explains, will now experience 'eight minutes, forty-five seconds of Culture.' Lafond's tone and brusque demeanour capitalize the 'C.'

For their five francs, ticketholders witness *L'Odysée des mulots du lac*. The painted front panel rises jerkily to reveal the actor sitting behind the stage. With a warm smile, speaking as if to children, the actor recounts the fable of the field mice. In this fable, a group of field mice are frightened away from their idyllic home on the shores of a lake by the arrival of a large cat. On one especially hot summer day, six young mice dare to venture into the water while the cat is snoozing. Seeing no response from the cat, the other mice join in, exclaiming joyfully that, because 'it's natural' for a cat to avoid the water, they may swim in safety. Finally the cat, having been awake the entire time, dives into the water and massacres the mice. The actor concludes, 'Go and tell this story throughout the world, so that the odyssey of the field mice of the lake remains forever inscribed in all memories. The moral: never say that nothing bad can come of tenderness, and do not say, "it's natural," for nothing is immutable.' The mice of the fable fall victim to the cat's talent for deception, its ability to put up a front and behave in a way counter to its intentions, and also to their own confidence in a natural order in which each creature remains in its proper place. The mice fail to understand how theatre works and thus pay dearly for their naïveté.

Livchine calls *L'Odysée* 'laboratory theatre.' The actor visualizes Lafond's fable using a classic demonstration of the surface tension of water. On the wooden stage in front of the performer a saucer of water represents the fable's lake setting. The actor uses a hand mill to grind black pepper flakes onto the surface of the water; these flakes play the mice. At the fable's climax, to represent the cat jumping into the lake, the performer releases a single drop of liquid soap into the saucer, which breaks the water's surface tension and sends the pepper flakes scattering to the edges of the dish.

Most who witness *2CV Théâtre* never see *L'Odysée des mulots du lac*. Instead, they are treated to the physical comedy and verbal sparring of the duty fireman and the usherette as they attempt to locate the Republican guardsman, who has gone missing in the process of getting the ticketholders inside the *2CV*. This portion of the performance was entirely improvised, although it is likely that certain patterns emerged over the course of twenty years. Livchine and Lafond were never told in advance where the guardsman would reappear; it was up to the audience to point him out. Sometimes he would seem to materialize next to a statue or on a rooftop, and at least once he enlisted a young woman to appear with him in a window. The 1981 footage shows him apparently (but comically) trapped on a tiny, third-storey balcony. Children and adults in the audience laugh uproariously as the guardsman attempts to lower himself over the edge to safety, his ungainly efforts contrasting

with his earlier pomp and professionalism. The usherette hurls condemnations at the guardsman. The duty fireman frantically locates a public telephone and 'calls' the authorities to report the incident. The atmosphere outside the 2CV is more madcap and slapstick than that inside the vehicle, although it is likely that the laughter of the outdoor audience would have been audible inside the car. The ticketholders experience an aspect of the performance not available to the non-paying audience, but ticketholders would be aware that they were missing something also. At the conclusion of *L'Odysée des mulots du lac* the guardsman at last rejoins the duty fireman and the usherette, and the three release the ticketholders from the confines of the 2CV. The usherette urges the assembled audience to step back, shouting 'The mob is coming out!' The two ticketholders emerge from the vehicle into the crowd, the performers bow, and the show is over.

2CV Théâtre illustrates how street theatre might ironically proliferate boundaries between actor and spectator rather than eliminate them. The Unité performers over-identify with the elevated status of institutional French theatre for comic effect. In her review of the 1980 performance at the Avignon Festival, Nicole Collet observes that the performers' pompous antics make even the city's imposing Palais des Papes appear ridiculous: 'By pushing to the extreme the problem of elitism, the Théâtre de l'Unité works homeopathically.'⁴⁹ Collet, writing for the leftist newspaper *L'Humanité*, suggests that *2CV Théâtre* might cure institutional theatre of its elitism by playing it to the hilt. This critique of theatrical institutions operates *theatrically*: the Unité performers do not conflate economic class distinctions with the physical separation of actor and spectator or with the mimetic gap between actor and role. They are gleefully guilty of dissimulation marked as such, what Rebentisch would call irony and what Rousseau would call acting; they have not taken to the streets to escape theatricality so much as they have taken theatricality to the streets. This affectionate parody of French theatre institutions is particularly complex, because the performers dissimulating and marking their dissimulation are playing characters that, although affiliated with the theatre, normally operate outside the frame of dissimulation. Three of the four characters (usherette, duty fireman, Republican guardsman) are support staff of theatrical institutions; they also (in the case of the fireman and the guardsman) link theatrical institutions to other institutions with their own sets of codes. These three characters are played by actors who are intelligible as other than themselves. This is less apparent in the case of Lafond, who is fulfilling the function of an usherette as well as playing one, but she has clearly adopted a surly performance persona. As a character she puts spectators in their proper place; as a dissimulator

she threatens the stability and properness of such places. Only inside the 2CV theatre is irony dispensed with in favour of sincerity. The 'actor' here is a storyteller, recounting a fable. Although the delivery is heightened and enunciated, with an expressiveness not usually reserved for everyday speech, the actor is not pretending to be anyone else. The only things standing in for other things are the objects of the laboratory theatre: the pepper flakes, liquid soap, and saucer of water. In the case of *2CV Théâtre* the mimetic gap between performer and role applies more to the support staff outside the ostensible space of representation than to the actor-storyteller within it.

This does not mean, however, that the theatre interior becomes a space of truth and immediacy while the street outside is condemned as a space of deception. Inside the vehicle, objects do still stand in for other things, and even the moral of the recounted fable warns listeners not to take anything as natural and unchangeable or to assume that kind eyes presage kind deeds. The actor warns his or her audience not to take anything at face value. More importantly, the space created by *2CV Théâtre*, including both the car's interior and the surrounding area, is not as simple as a theatre interior set apart from the public exterior of the street. The cordon separating most of the assembled audience from the 2CV divides performers and spectators while joining them together in one performance space, the precise contours of which become more amorphous towards the back of the crowd. But this space is also intelligible at various moments as backstage space *and* front of house. *2CV Théâtre* does not dispense with the physical separation of actor and spectator; it does not attempt to break from performers' space into audience space and in so doing create a larger rupture between performance space and the world outside; instead, *2CV Théâtre* plays on and off of such distinctions. Benjamin Wihstutz refers to the 'dual differentiation' between actors and spectators and between theatre space and the everyday as 'the topology of theatre.'⁵⁰ As an area of mathematics, *topology* refers to the study of those properties of geometric objects that remain unchanged even when the objects are stretched, compressed, or otherwise distorted; these properties include 'categories such as inside and outside, open and closed.'⁵¹ Wihstutz borrows the mathematical concept of topology to argue that, even if 'the divided space of performance can similarly be stretched, compressed, bent, or contorted,' the distinct groups of performers and spectators cannot 'be cut into two completely distinct halves or merged into a single one.'⁵² *2CV Théâtre* does not disavow the dual differentiation between performer and spectator and between theatrical space and the everyday; rather, it multiplies these differentiations to form a manifold theatre topology.

The tension between populism and elitism, openness and enclosure, is complicated by the intelligibility of the 2CV as a mass-produced, affordable convertible. Against the enclosed environment of the daily commute, the 2CV promised a refreshing breeze. The car's canvas roll-top roof allowed it to carry unwieldy cargo and offer the liberating open-air drive of a more expensive luxury convertible. Citroën's 1963 promotional brochure for the 2CV depicts both possibilities: the 2CV pictured has room for a grandfather clock, a bicycle, beach toys, and an improbable number of smiling white people. The 2CV, the ad copy claims, is 'a car that liberates you ... you have air, you breathe ... the 2CV does not enclose you: it's a true convertible. It's the only one to offer this advantage at no extra cost.'⁵³ Like the post-World War II experiments in theatrical decentralization, 2CV advertisements from France's Thirty Glorious Years of postwar economic growth promised mass accessibility to an elite experience. *2CV Théâtre* played on the repertoires of the theatre industry *and* the automotive industry for comic and political effect, offering limited access to a popular theatre in a popular car. But the intermingling of theatrical and automotive repertoires also troubled any neat association between populism and openness or between elitism and enclosure; after all, the elite experience that the 2CV promised to make widely available was not shelter, but fresh air.

Ultimately, the history of the 2CV is a history of post-World War II French capitalism.⁵⁴ The car was an instrument of rural modernization and symbol of mass production. Citroën vice-president Pierre-Jules Boulanger intended the 2CV to modernize the French countryside, where even during the 1930s and 1940s many farmers continued to rely on horses and carts.⁵⁵ With the lightweight seats of the 2CV removed, a farmer had room to haul hay, large wheels of cheese, crates of wine, or two sheep. The suspension was famously designed to cushion a basket of eggs sitting in the passenger seat as the car traversed uneven country terrain. The 2CV promised convenience and practicality for rural dwellers and freedom for city folk on holiday. By the 1960s Citroën was marketing the 2CV as a means by which to access an unspoiled version of the very countryside to which Citroën had introduced the automobile.⁵⁶ The same removable seats that could make room for sheep could also serve as picnic chairs. Sales declined in the late 1960s due to increased competition from Renault and foreign manufacturers, but following the oil and economic crisis of 1973, the 2CV regained its popularity. It was cheaper and more ecologically sound than many other models on the market and soon developed a cultural association with students, environmentalists, and even the anti-nuclear movement. The 2CV offered a pragmatic individual or family response to the immediate effects of crisis

(as a cheap car with reasonable fuel mileage) while serving as a material artefact of the confident economic growth and casual mass production that that crisis had brought to a standstill. It was a symbol and product of French postwar modernization that also promised to shelter its users from the deleterious effects of the very processes that created it.

Thus by 1977, when *2CV Théâtre* debuted, Citroën's 2CV was already a complex object of nostalgia.⁵⁷ It embodied a cultural longing for the confident dynamism of the postwar Fordist compromise, and for the stability of an agrarian France simultaneously invented by modernity and dismantled by modernization. The Citroën 2CV and contemporary street theatre, then, are both shaped by discourses of rupture and return, progress and nostalgia, liberation and stability, populism and elitism, and openness and enclosure, and they do not map neatly onto each other either in alignment or tidy opposition. *2CV Théâtre* makes perceptible the messiness of this map and the creases and folds in the historiography of French street theatre. The historiography discussed in the previous section conflates physical separation between actor and spectator with a series of other divisions: the mimetic gap between actor and role, the Naturalist fourth wall, power differentials between performers and their audiences, and even socioeconomic class distinctions writ large. The effect of such conflation is to posit street theatre as inherently radical and yet traditional, as a rupture from modernity and a return to mythologized premodern forms of sociability. Already, in the late 1970s, *2CV Théâtre* demonstrates an alternative model of street theatre's spatial and temporal work. It proliferates boundaries between actor and spectator (and within a group of spectators), affectionately parodying French institutional theatre even as it rejects the simplistic political dichotomy between theatre indoors and out. The performance's intermingling of theatrical and automotive repertoires facilitates a reflective stance toward the past and the desire to return to it. *2CV Théâtre* suggests that street theatre does not remember premodern forms of sociability so much as it interrogates the desire to remember them; it does not break with Fordist-Taylorist modernity so much as it attempts to make sense of the aftermath.

Industrial waste: *Bivouac*

Like *Unité's 2CV Théâtre*, *Générik Vapeur's Bivouac* (1988) began as a 'prelude' to another show, *Café Gazoil* (1988), but remained in the

company's repertoire as a standalone performance long after the disappearance of the main event.⁵⁸ Générík Vapeur performed *Café Gazoil* for three years but thirty years later continues to tour *Bivouac*. Staged in derelict factories or other disused buildings slated for demolition, *Café Gazoil* offered audiences a nightmarish vision of a post-apocalyptic society oriented around the worship of metal and oil. The show drew numerous comparisons to the *Mad Max* universe (*Mad Max*, 1979; *Mad Max: Road Warrior*, 1981; *Mad Max: Beyond Thunderdome*, 1985) for its thematic preoccupation with oil and its visual and sonic aesthetics: the performers, smeared in engine grease or coated in ochre dust, clad in hodge-podge combinations of black leather, fake animal hides, aviator goggles and chains, corralled hundreds of empty oil drums around the cavernous space, all to the live accompaniment of Marseille metal band Leda Atomica.⁵⁹ The programme listing for the 1989 Aurillac Festival performance reads:

Metallic epic, industrial western. Capture of the last herd of barrels (200 heads, monochrome and loud) by the 'can boys' [English in original, a play on cowboys], cowherds for tinned goods [*boîtes de conserve*] – of the *Métal Hurlant* persuasion. The barrels roll, pile up, and clang together to the rock'n metal of Leda Atomica. Chaos and burlesque, absurdity and rock'n'shock, all about a strange civilization devoted to machines and engines: our own.⁶⁰

Science fiction anthology magazine *Métal Hurlant* (*Screaming Metal*, published 1975–87) was renowned for visually striking comics that influenced the production designs of films such as *Star Wars* (1977), *Mad Max* (1979), *Alien* (1979), and *Blade Runner* (1982). The comparison would have supported the rest of the programme's description in preparing audiences for the fantastical commingling of multiple temporal and genre reference points. (It was not uncommon to see in the pages of *Métal Hurlant* a cyborg saddling up a pterodactyl for a ride across an alien desert.) *Café Gazoil* made derelict factories resonate once again with the deafening soundscape of heavy industry, but the labour it depicted evoked that *other* vanishing bastion of (white) working-class masculinity, the ranch. For all its aggression and noise, *Café Gazoil* had the atmosphere of a boisterous children's game: the performers (mostly, but not exclusively, white men) played at cowboys with the detritus of industrial society. As the Aurillac programme makes clear, the fruitless herding and cajoling of oil drums appeared absurd, but this civilization still so slavishly devoted to the trappings of industry was, in fact, 'our own.'

In its original incarnation, *Bivouac* prefigured the madcap fossil fuel Western of *Café Gazoil*; the 1989 Aurillac Festival programme describes

the prelude simply as, 'Capture of barrels by a tribe of "can boys."⁶¹ *Bivouac* effectively presented *Café Gazoil* in microcosm and outdoors: Générík Vapeur performers pushed, rolled, dragged, and tossed empty oil drums through the streets, while the musicians of Leda Atomica rocked out atop a monstrous truck laden with speakers and adorned with nonsensically placed ducts. The troupe led spectators on a winding route through town to a pyramid of eighty-six metal barrels, which the performers toppled in an explosion of music and noise. Even without the benefit of the Aurillac programme, *Bivouac* would have been intelligible as a chaotic, playful fusion of the agricultural and the industrial. The can boys were assisted in their shepherding duties by a metal 'sheepdog' built out of an open barrel, cans, and scraps and mounted on four wheels. Performers pulled the metal dog sculpture down the street on a chain and fed it by tossing flares into its belly. Light and smoke escaped through slits carved into the sides of its barrel body; it appeared both as working animal and as mobile furnace. Other barrels were carved to resemble sheep. Long after *Bivouac*'s decoupling from *Café Gazoil*, the dog remains, and the ranching imagery persists. Sonia Sarfati describes a 2001 performance of *Bivouac* in Montreal as a 'transhumance' in which 'shepherds guided by an incandescent metal dog lead a flock of metallic barrels to the rhythm of ... industrial percussion.' Sarfati sees the corralled barrels as 'metallic flesh produced by an animalised industrial world.'⁶² An anonymous write-up of a 2011 performance in Rouen refers to the barrels as sheep 'in a period of transhumance.'⁶³ *Transhumance*, a recurring image in reviews of *Bivouac* and in interviews with Avram and Berthelot, refers to the seasonal relocation of a herd to a new pasture.⁶⁴ Thus *Bivouac* produces an uncanny hybrid of agricultural and industrial imagery to conjure a sense of displacement, migration, and forced relocation, inextricably linked to changes in work and labour.

Bivouac begins with the appearance of eighteen performers wearing light grey suits and caked in heavy blue pigment. The make-up has dried to a bright cerulean on the performers' exposed skin but remains a wet, dark cobalt in their hair. The gloppy substance glues their coiffures into sticky mohawks and other punk formations. Most of the performers have paired their suit jackets with short trousers that extend just past the knee; their lower legs are smeared with the same shocking blue. They wear heavy duty work gloves (in a matching blue or a stark white) to protect their hands from the edges of the metal barrels that they will lift, roll, and toss during their procession. Their wing-collar shirts and cravats are white, though over the course of the performance their make-up will stain their collars and lapels. The make-up tends to crack

and smudge during the physically demanding show, revealing patches of the performers' skin tones.

One can never be sure exactly how the blue people will arrive. Sometimes the audience assembles at one location at an appointed time, only to be herded to a second location where the blue people stand silently atop their barrels, all facing the same direction. Sometimes the crowd gathers in a square or along a marked parade route, and the performers explode onto the scene at the same time as the truck that will carry the accompanying rock musicians along the designated path. The performance might begin in eerie stillness or frenetic movement, in near silence or deafening noise.

Noise triumphs once the procession begins. From atop their truck, which at a slow pace follows the blue performers through the streets, the musicians play aggressive rock on electric guitar, bass, and drums. When vocalists are used, they do not sing discernible lyrics; they carry megaphones rather than microphones and alternately belt vowel sounds in a heavy vibrato or chant rhythmic monosyllables: 'HA – ha ha HA – ha ha HA.' The chants generate a sonic effect somewhere between forced laughter and martial arts training session. In the early years of *Bivouac* the music was predominantly punk and metal, sometimes provided by Leda Atomica. As the show entered its second decade it began to incorporate elements of techno. The heavily amplified music competes with the grinding, banging, and scraping of the metal barrels.

The procession itself consists of periods of travel interspersed with images or stunts. Performers drag and scrape their barrels along the asphalt, widening their eyes and sticking their tongues out at spectators. They lift the barrels over their heads and flip them end over end or slam them back to the ground. In the early years of the show the movement was mostly individual and improvised, but Avram and Berthelot have gradually incorporated more group choreography. In unison the performers stand behind their barrels and rock them back and forth, edge to edge, to produce a rhythmic metallic sound, mirroring the walking motion of their barrels with their own swaying bodies. They crawl down the street, clambering over and under each other, only to rush back to retrieve their barrels, pausing momentarily to stand atop them and point in the direction of travel. In some iterations performers run part of the route as a race: they line up and, on the signal, push their barrels down the street as quickly as they can. They push the upright barrels from the bottom, running while bent double, creating a sickening grinding noise of metal on asphalt. At the finish line all racers collapse, exaggerating their exhaustion, in a pile of barrels and bodies, only to jump to their feet again to continue on their way. In other iterations the performers

line up a dozen or more of the barrels on their sides and send performers rolling across them, surfing down the street on their stomachs, arms outstretched. At one point, the performers stop for a picnic of raw greens (and, in some versions, raw eggs and bright blue beverages), shared wordlessly with spectators. Some onlookers have round lettuce politely handed to them. Others must be brave enough to bite off a chunk from a head of cabbage still gripped in a performer's mouth. Throughout the procession the performers light flares and throw smoke bombs to the ground, sending up rust-red plumes that contrast starkly with their blue skin and evoke clouds of desert dust. The omnipresent metal sheepdog, pulled along on its chain, continues to spark and smoke, flares burning in its belly.

Who are the blue beings of *Bivouac*? During the first three years of *Bivouac*'s existence, when the show was still a prelude to *Café Gazoil*, the company experimented with the costumes and make-up, at times retaining the ochre hues, black leather, and apocalyptic rust-punk aesthetic of *Café Gazoil*, but eventually settling on the blue pigment and grey suits that have since become iconic. Explaining the decision, Avram claims that the blue make-up is a 'universal' colour that evokes the sea, sky, and horizon.⁶⁵ She insists that the make-up resists any specific racial referent. Still, taken together, the performers' make-up, suits, gloves, and boutonnieres bear striking similarity to tropes of blackface minstrelsy. *Bivouac* might not be blackface, but it is blueface: the simultaneous construction and parody of an Other against which a group might define itself as an isomorphic 'us.' This Other is the object of both allure and disgust.⁶⁶ Both affects surface in the dynamic between *Bivouac*'s actors and audience; the blue visitors' antics attract the fascination of the crowd even as they repel the audience to a safe distance (lest spectators be hit by tumbling barrels).

Avram describes the blue beings as an archaic 'nomadic horde' and recalls the descriptions of woad-dyed 'barbarian' warriors from accounts of Roman conquest.⁶⁷ But the vague nomadism of the performance also derives from a more recent historical source. For both *Café Gazoil* and *Bivouac*, Avram and Berthelot drew inspiration from the Zanoobia scandal, which in the late 1980s became a symbol of Western governments' gross negligence in the disposal of industrial waste. The 10,800 barrels of toxic chemical waste aboard the cargo ship Zanoobia originated in the Italian port of Carrara in February 1987. Jelly Wax, a Milan-based company, was hired to destroy the waste but instead shipped it to Djibouti, just one example of what environmental groups and the press identified as an increasing tendency in the 1980s for wealthy nations to dump the poisonous by-products of their industry

in the Global South.⁶⁸ Djibouti refused to accept the shipment, at which point the waste was sent to Venezuela. The Venezuelan port permitted the cargo to be unloaded, but the government ordered the waste to be reloaded and expelled from the country after the death of a child who had been playing near an open drum of the hazardous material. The waste then wound up in Syria, where it was transferred to the Zanoobia. The Zanoobia, dubbed the 'ship of poison' and even a 'leper ship,' sailed for four months without destination.⁶⁹ Turned away by Greece, it eventually returned to Carrara, the waste's point of origin. Between Greece and Carrara a crew member died. Six of the eighteen crew members would later be hospitalized after handling leaking barrels. From Carrara, the Zanoobia travelled just seven hours to what became its final destination, Genoa. The freighter moored outside the port on 26 April 1988 and was finally permitted to dock and unload on 29 May, more than a year after the waste first left Italy. Avram calls the Zanoobia a 'floating rubbish tip, a ship of fools' turned away from every port.⁷⁰

Every performance of *Bivouac* alludes to the Zanoobia, in the only sequence that involves a recognizable word. Somewhere along the professional route, the performers stop their individual antics and assemble behind their barrels. They rock the barrels from edge to edge as first one blue being, then another and another, takes up the rhythmic chant: 'Za-noo-bee-ah. Za-noo-bee-ah.' The eighteen performers stand in for the ship's eighteen crew. As Sara Vidal writes, 'In ten years [at Vidal's time of writing] the flight of the *Bivouac* mutants pushing their enigmatic barrels from city to city has never found safe harbour. In ten years the desperate wandering of the ship Zanoobia and its crew has never ceased.'⁷¹ Thirty years after *Bivouac*'s premiere, it is unlikely that most spectators would be familiar with the Zanoobia debacle. An audience member might understandably mistake the performers' chant for a sequence of nonsense syllables or interpret it as an invented alien language. But even in the absence of the show's most specific historical reference point, the blue pigment and dirty barrels coalesce in performance to link *Bivouac*'s complex interplay of otherness and itinerancy to the human and environmental devastation of toxic heavy industry. The blue make-up refers simultaneously to sea and sky, as Avram notes, *and* to the chemicals that pollute them. The performers simultaneously evoke an archaic 'nomadic horde' *and* the atrocities committed by Western governments and multinational corporations against the conveniently Othered. As in *Café Gazoil*, the strange society on display is ultimately 'our own,' even if it appears as a collection of, to use Vidal's word, 'mutants.' *Bivouac* stages in urban space the semiotic and affective

confluence of industrial and societal cast-offs: heavy industry produces waste, and global capitalism produces people *as* waste.

Bivouac culminates in a public square with two triumphant acts of destruction. In the first, an automobile painted to resemble a police car is crushed in a giant mousetrap. A mousetrap is a stationary device; it captures and kills only those unfortunate creatures that stray where they do not belong. Here it is the police vehicle, ostensibly a tool in the enforcement of public order, which is shown to have transgressed by entering the public square. In the second destructive act, the *Bivouac* performers topple a massive pyramid of eighty-six metal barrels. Sometimes they crash into the barrels with a car; in other iterations a performer kicks over the pyramid from above while suspended from a crane. The wall collapses, the barrels tumble to the ground, and the performers disperse. The show is over.

The precise political connotations of *Bivouac* have understandably varied over decades of touring. In a 2011 interview, Avram reminds that the show premiered prior to the reunification of Germany: in early performances, the destruction of a massive barrier in the middle of a public square would have been intelligible as the dismantling in effigy of the Berlin Wall.⁷² Sylvie Clidière and Susan Haedicke also observe the visual similarity between *Bivouac*'s barrel pyramid and Christo's 1962 installation *Iron Curtain*, a protest against the then recently constructed Berlin Wall, for which the artist blocked a narrow Paris street with eighty-nine empty oil drums.⁷³ Since the fall of the Berlin Wall, and since the plight of the Zanoobia has faded from cultural memory, *Bivouac*'s initial political reference points have ceded to more diffuse evocations of the placeless or relocated, including, as Avram notes, homeless people, undocumented migrants, and refugees.⁷⁴ These connotations prevent the performance from becoming an uncritical celebration of border crossing. After all, for all its preoccupation with nomadism, the production is called *Bivouac*: these odd blue beings seek shelter. Even in its literal collapsing of walls, the performance is not simply and neatly about the eradication of boundaries. The *Bivouac* beings traverse space and time, yes, but in search of safe harbour or greener pastures.

Générik Vapeur has also made temporary adjustments to the performance to suit particular sites. The route for a 1993 performance in Clermont-Ferrand took spectators on a tour of that city's monuments, including statues of Vercingetorix (82–46 BCE), who united the Gauls against Rome during Caesar's wars; Pope Urban II (c.1035–99), who ordered the First Crusade; and General Louis Desaix (1768–1800), who led a division of Napoleon Bonaparte's expeditionary force in Egypt.⁷⁵ These monuments furnished the performance with historical

reference points from centuries of conflict and conquest, making the 'archaic horde' of *Bivouac* locally intelligible and adding additional layers of meaning to the performance's generalized atmosphere of invasion and nomadism. During a 1990 performance in Krakow, Poland, the company tossed worthless currency (blue slips of paper) into the air and tried to exchange their plastic boutonnieres for real bouquets from a flower market.⁷⁶ This performance evoked the influx of Western capital into Eastern Europe following the break-up of the Communist bloc, and it emphasized the fictional equivalences on which capitalism is based. Company members still painted themselves blue and hurled metal barrels down the street, but in this instance it was perhaps more significant that they were Western Europeans in suits who swarmed a marketplace and tried comically to rip off local tradespeople.

Bivouac harks back to pre-industrial forms of labour – nomadic pastoralism, transhumance – and, through its subversive spatial practices and aggressive soundscape, to a pre-industrial form of protest: the charivari. Charivari, described by Natalie Zemon Davis as 'a noisy, masked demonstration to humiliate some wrongdoer in the community,' was simultaneously a form of subversion and a means of maintaining the status quo through the informal regulation of social norms.⁷⁷ From the late Middle Ages and even into the eighteenth century, young unmarried men, affiliated with the local youth-abbey, would gather before the home of the offending person or persons, usually someone who had entered into a second marriage, but occasionally an adulterer, an abuser, a married couple who had failed to produce offspring, or someone who had taken a much younger spouse.⁷⁸ The masked youths banged pots, pans, and tambourines and shook rattles and bells until the disgraced perpetrator paid a fine. Charivaris began in rural areas; as they infiltrated the cities in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries they retained their ties to domestic disputes but also began to challenge political authority, occasionally relocating from offenders' private homes to the public sites of local power. These demonstrations did not radically overturn the existing order, but rather threatened with disgrace those officials who abused their position. The performers of *Bivouac* have swapped masks for blue paint, and pots and pans for metal barrels, but through their festive and noisy display they subject symbols of authority to mockery (monuments in Clermont-Ferrand, money itself in Krakow) or destruction in effigy (the fake police car, the wall). As the preceding analysis makes clear, *Bivouac* does not target a single offender; instead it conjures a range of issues depending on time and place, from the irresponsible disposal of toxic waste to the despicable treatment of refugees. But, like the charivari, *Bivouac* shifts ambivalently 'between the mockery of

authority and its endorsement, the appeal to tradition and the threat of rebellion.⁷⁹ It is a festive acting out, a condemnation of one authority that appeals to another: the judgement of the community.

Sara Vidal refers to the charivari tradition as an example of political potency that *Bivouac* fails to achieve. She observes that *Bivouac*'s spectators are not an impromptu gathering but a crowd assembled behind barriers for the express purpose of witnessing the performance, and that an 'armada' of municipal street sweepers follow some distance behind the performers to 'efface all trace of disorder and charivari. The city waits, smiling, for it to pass and resumes its activities as if nothing had taken place.'⁸⁰ Charivaris were always ephemeral and, as Zemon Davis and Thompson make clear, in some way responsible for maintaining the status quo; the goal was not to overturn the social order but to punish those who did not adhere to it, even if those offenders occupied positions of power. But Vidal implies that spatial and temporal containment preclude street theatre's political efficacy, which in this formulation would rely on the unannounced interruption of everyday activity and refusal to collaborate with municipal authorities. Street theatre, here, must spill over its circumscribed limits in order to make political change. I am tempted to ask somewhat cynically if it is counter-revolutionary to protect spectators from flying objects: would *Bivouac* be more radical if its audiences were crushed beneath tumbling barrels? To her credit, Vidal stops short of such absurdity. But her concerns reveal once again the preoccupation of street theatre discourse with the transgression of boundaries and the conflation of that transgression with political change.

Philosopher Denis Guénoun shares Vidal's concerns and extends them to street theatre more generally. For Guénoun, the street theatre festival shares with the factory occupation the task of reclaiming not merely a given space, but the purpose of space itself. Factory occupations and street protests diverted spaces from their workaday uses but restored to them their 'essential vocation,' namely a foundational sociality in which the public might constitute itself as a public.⁸¹ Guénoun writes of factory occupations and union marches in the past imperfect, as events that *used* to occur, because he fears that these particular modes of being together, these affirmations in shared space and time of people's 'being-people,' are on the retreat. This suspicion leads him to another: 'Is not the new way of occupying the streets by making theatre there an effect of this retreat? Do we know yet how to deliver our spaces, not as fiction, in the circumscribed time of leisure, but in reality?'⁸² Guénoun anxiously subscribes to a replacement narrative that relies on a distinction between uncontained, real, authentic protest (what we used to do) and circumscribed, fake, fictional protest (what we are left with).

Implicit in this replacement narrative is the common suspicion, most famously expressed by J. L. Austin, that theatre lacks performative force. For Austin, theatrical utterances, being mere citations without the contextual framework required of felicitous performatives, remain hollow and etiolated.⁸³ In similar fashion, Guénoun's replacement narrative posits contemporary street theatre as a mere citation of the 'properly' political factory occupations that swept France in 1936 and 1968. Whereas Rousseauian anti-theatricality claims that theatre does *too much* (undermining a functionalist model of democracy), Austinian anti-theatricality claims that theatre does not do enough, or at least does not do it properly. (These two apparently opposing anti-theatricalities collapse into each other when Austin goes on to claim that theatrical language is parasitic, which implies it might weaken the performative force of non-theatrical language.) But critiques of Austin's anti-theatricality from Jacques Derrida, Andrew Parker and Eve Sedgwick, and Diana Taylor invite reconsideration of the relationship between theatrical performance and political performative.⁸⁴ If, as Derrida contends, all language and thus all performative speech is inherently citational, and if, as Taylor argues, performatives 'masquerade' as statements of fact in fundamentally theatrical ways, then contemporary street theatre's echoing of the past might *do* more than Guénoun suggests and *be* more than a cheap knock-off of an older, better protest.

Scholars and practitioners of street theatre invested in the form's political clout have suggested, borrowing a Boalian formulation, that street theatre might constitute a 'rehearsal' for revolution.⁸⁵ Even Guénoun acknowledges that one might 'reverse' the replacement narrative by asserting that through street theatre we 'rehearse' for the 'great festival' to come, through which we will 'relearn how to change our cities, for real.'⁸⁶ Crucially, Guénoun ascribes to the future revolution the character of festival, which ameliorates the false dichotomy of play and politics even as it evokes yet again street theatre's apparent resurrection of a festive, pre-industrial past. This reversal of the replacement narrative, however, sidesteps the question of the performative force of the theatrical event itself, and, as Guénoun admits, it might simply replace melancholy with messianism. When we claim street theatre (or theatre of any kind) as a rehearsal for future revolution, we inevitably encounter the problem of perpetual deferral: performers and spectators prepare their sensory apparatuses interminably for the Rupture (or Rapture) that will never arrive.⁸⁷

Bivouac neither prepares the way for the great Revolution to come nor attempts to rekindle a dead revolutionary flame. Rather, like *2CV Théâtre*, *Bivouac* attempts to make sense of the aftermath of

Fordist-Taylorist modernity. But in *Bivouac* that aftermath assumes the form of a continually unfolding catastrophe. Heavy industry is not, in fact, over, though its geography has shifted. In some cases companies have relocated production to the Global South to exploit cheaper labour and weaker regulations. In other cases, industrial production remains in the Global North, but local law or corporate preference transfers the burden of waste disposal to poorer nations. One country's aftermath is another's ongoing disaster. In *Bivouac*, toxic waste, the by-product of completed industrial processes, returns to haunt the cities and towns that expelled it, herded through the streets by performers who stand in for those bodies deemed disposable.

Thus *2CV Théâtre* and *Bivouac* both stage failed escapes from the deleterious effects of modernization. In *Bivouac*, even more clearly than in *2CV Théâtre*, there is no recourse to the pre-industrial past, which appears in this performance as perverted and irrevocably polluted. *2CV Théâtre* and *Bivouac* acknowledge the allure of unspoilt authenticity while pointing to the impossibility of accessing it: after all, that vision of the past is an invention of the urban-industrial modernity from which it promises escape.

Out of ruins

Three main threads have run through this chapter: street theatre's *temporal* work, its invocation of industrial and pre-industrial pasts; street theatre's *spatial* work, its apparent transgression of boundaries and its distinctiveness compared to purpose-built stages; and street theatre's *political* work, or the persistent question of its efficacy. Street theatre has been assumed to be politically traditionalist by virtue of its alleged nostalgia for premodern labour and sociality and politically radical merely by virtue of its border-crossing. Neither assumption is accurate. Contemporary street theatre is not a populist form inherently opposed to the elitism of enclosed proscenium theatres. It does not eliminate the distinction between actor and spectator simply by crossing from one space to another. It is not an inherently radical, emancipatory form of spatial transgression that emerged *ex nihilo* from the rupture of May 1968, nor is it a return to the wholesome authenticity of the Rousseauian bucolic. Street theatre is neither inherently progressive nor inherently traditionalist. It is not immediate, even if it claims to be. At a particular historical moment characterized, post-1973, by cyclical crisis, street

theatre is the collective embodiment in public space of complex, reflective nostalgia that makes perceptible in performance its own gaps and discontinuities.

Contemporary street theatre emerges from ruins. It emerges from the perceived failure of the prevailing modes of producing and disseminating popular or political theatre. It emerges from the dead public spaces of high modernist urban planning. And it emerges from the literal ruins of industrial production, the derelict factories that come to provide workspace, raw materials, and aesthetic inspiration. Contemporary street theatre might emerge from ruins, but the processes that produced those ruins are not yet over. In subsequent case studies I take up the question of how street theatre makes historical sense of the ongoing situations of deindustrialization and redevelopment. In Corbigny, Villeurbanne, and Nantes, street theatre events and institutions order the past and imagine a future. That future is not necessarily the Revolution but rather the completion of a situation and its retrospective transformation into an event.

Notes

- 1 See, for instance, Anne Gonon, *In Vivo: Les figures du spectateur des arts de la rue* (Montpellier: Editions L'Entretemps, 2011), 26, and Floriane Gaber, *Comment ça commença: Les arts de la rue dans le contexte des années 70* (Paris: Editions ici et là, 2009), 204–8.
- 2 David Wiles, *A Short History of Western Performance Space* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 127. Wiles is writing of the English context here, specifically London's Covent Garden, but in this case his insights also apply to France. London's Covent Garden was redeveloped in 1973; the Centre Beaubourg (now Centre Pompidou) opened in Paris in 1977. The piazza in front of the Centre Beaubourg is explicitly designed for use by buskers and street entertainers. This example, though, illustrates some of the conundrums of designing traditionalist space: the city made room for the Centre Beaubourg and its piazza by razing the historic marketplace of Les Halles.
- 3 For a more detailed overview of French street theatre's professionalization in the 1980s and 1990s, see Gonon, *In Vivo*, 29–44.
- 4 Portions of this chapter first appeared in David Calder, '2CV Théâtre: Transgression, Nostalgia, and the Negative Space of French Street Theatre,' *Theatre Journal* 69.1 (2017): 1–20.
- 5 François Hartog, *Régimes d'historicité: Présentisme et expériences du temps* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 2012 [2003]), 142.
- 6 *Ibid.* Hartog offers as examples the films *Le Chagrin et la Pitié* (dir. Marcel Ophuls, released 1971) and *Shoah* (dir. Claude Lanzmann, 1985), and

- historical studies by Robert Paxton (*La France de Vichy*, 1972), Pierre Vidal-Naquet (*Les Assassins de la mémoire*, 1987), and Henry Rousso (*Le Syndrome de Vichy*, 1987).
- 7 Daniel A. Gordon, 'From Militancy to History: *Sans Frontière* and Immigrant Memory at the Dawn of the 1980s,' in Emile Chabal (ed.), *France Since the 1970s: History, Politics and Memory in an Age of Uncertainty* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 115–28.
 - 8 Sarah Farmer, 'Memoirs of French Peasant Life: Progress and Nostalgia in Postwar France,' *French History* 25.3 (2011): 362–79.
 - 9 Beyond French borders, too, the aging of Holocaust survivors in the 1980s is cited as a major impetus for the proliferation of oral history and the development of memory studies in the academy. See Astrid Erll, 'Cultural Memory Studies: An Introduction,' in Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning (eds), *A Companion to Cultural Memory Studies* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010), 1–15.
 - 10 The event was a mixture of theatrical performance and pharmaceutical sales demonstration. 'Mountebanks often staged plays in the commedia dell'arte style to follow their vending of medicines: crowds gathered to see the play, and the purchase of medicines funded the enterprise. [...] Mountebank theatre was a theatre of the body, for it paraded the grotesque nature of ageing and disease, and offered in return for money the dream of a physical cure.' Wiles, *A Short History of Western Performance Space*, 118.
 - 11 Jean Digne, preface to Gaber, *Comment ça commença*, 7.
 - 12 Floriane Gaber refers to the *saltimbanque* as the 'figure-phare' of the 'nascent discipline' of street theatre. Gaber, *Comment ça commença*, 12.
 - 13 Kristin Ross, *May '68 and its Afterlives* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 3–4.
 - 14 Nick Parsons, *French Industrial Relations in the New World Economy* (New York: Routledge, 2005). See in particular 11, 75, 94–5, 157.
 - 15 Ross, *May '68 and its Afterlives*, 25.
 - 16 They went in search of what Francis Jeanson, at a meeting of theatre practitioners in Villeurbanne, called the 'non-public.' The Villeurbanne declaration is reprinted in Marie-Ange Rauch, *Le théâtre en France en 1968: crise d'une histoire, histoire d'une histoire* (Paris: Editions de l'Amandier, 2008), 490.
 - 17 Philippe Ivernel, 'Ouverture historique: 1936 et 1968,' in Jonny Ebstein and Philippe Ivernel (eds), *Le théâtre d'intervention depuis 1968* (Lausanne: Editions L'Age d'Homme, 1983), 22.
 - 18 Emmanuel Wallon, 'Place au public,' preface to Gonon, *In Vivo*, 7.
 - 19 Philippe Chadoir, *Discours et figures de l'espace public à travers les 'arts de la rue': La ville en scènes* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2000).
 - 20 See Jean-Pierre Garnier and Denis Goldschmidt, *La comédie urbaine* (Paris: Maspero, 1978) and Eleonore Kofman and Elizabeth Lebas, 'Lost in Transposition – Time, Space and the City,' introduction to Henri Lefebvre, *Writings on Cities*, trans. and ed. Eleonore Kofman and Elizabeth Lebas (London: Blackwell, 1996), 35. For Henri Lefebvre's treatment of *festival* as use-value, see Henri Lefebvre, 'Right to the City,' in *Writings on Cities*, 66.

- 21 Chaudoir, *Discours et figures de l'espace public à travers les 'arts de la rue'*, 21. Haussmann's razing of the Boulevard du Crime features prominently in prehistories of contemporary French street theatre as a moment when street performers were banished from public space. Post-World War II urban reconstruction forms a more immediate backdrop for the experiments of street performers during and after May 1968.
- 22 Ibid., 23.
- 23 Wallon, 'Place au public,' 9.
- 24 Nicholas Ridout, *Stage Fright, Animals, and Other Theatrical Problems* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 6.
- 25 Wallon, 'Place au public,' 8–9.
- 26 Jean Jullien coined the term in passing in his 1892 *Le théâtre vivant* (*The Living Theatre*). Wallon is not alone in his anachronism; Paul Friedland refers to the breach of a fourth wall in Revolutionary France. See Paul Friedland, *Political Actors: Representative Bodies and Theatricality in the Age of the French Revolution* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002). By contrast, Dan Rebellato argues persuasively for the fourth wall's historical specificity, even linking the invisibility of the fourth wall to the Haussmannian reconstruction of Paris (namely, that the demolition of buildings left neighbouring structures with entire walls missing, thus allowing passers-by to peer into bourgeois interiors). See Dan Rebellato, 'I'm Looking Through You: Second Thoughts on the Fourth Wall,' paper presented to Alternative Victorians and Their Predecessors: New Directions in Nineteenth-Century Theatre and Performance Research, University of Warwick, 14 May 2016, available at www.danrebellato.co.uk/news/2016/5/14/im-looking-through-you.
- 27 See Marvin Carlson, *Voltaire and the Theatre of the Eighteenth Century* (Santa Barbara: Greenwood Press, 1998), 113–16.
- 28 On the relationship between the eighteenth-century French stage and aristocratic libertinism (*la vie galante*), see Lenard R. Berlanstein, 'Women and Power in Eighteenth-Century France: Actresses at the Comédie-Française,' *Feminist Studies* 20.3 (1994): 475–506.
- 29 Wallon, 'Place au public,' 9.
- 30 Clidière, 'Définition.'
- 31 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Politics and the Arts: Letter to M. D'Alembert on the Theatre*, trans. Allan Bloom (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1960), 80–1 (emphasis added).
- 32 Juliane Rebenitsch, 'Rousseau's Heterotopology of the Theatre,' in Erika Fischer-Lichte and Benjamin Wihstutz (eds), *Performance and the Politics of Space: Theatre and Topology* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 145–6.
- 33 Rousseau, *Politics and the Arts*, 80.
- 34 As Bruno Latour writes: 'The idea of an identical repetition of the past and that of a radical rupture with any past are two symmetrical results of a single conception of time'; see his *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 76.

- 35 Julie Bordenave, 'Utopie ou divertissement poétique?' *stradda* 6 (2007): 4; Christiane Dampne, 'Transe Express: Mission transmission,' *stradda* 26 (2012): 43; Fred Kahn, 'Le théâtre de rue comme transport en commun,' *stradda* 29 (2013): 38.
- 36 Christian Blanc, Philippe Sturbelle, Christian Roy, and Dominique Trichet each played the guardsman at some point over the production's twenty-year tour.
- 37 Over the course of 2CV *Théâtre's* twenty-year run, Michel Valmer, Emile Salvador, Isabelle Caubère, Françoise Boyer, and Jocelyne Ricci all filled the role of the fourth actor.
- 38 Livchine's father, a Citroën subcontractor, manufactured wheel nuts for the 2CV.
- 39 Jacques Livchine, personal communication with the author, 11 August 2015. Théâtre de l'Unité did not begin its institutional life as a street theatre company; it produced the kind of work that it made sense to produce based on its goals and available resources. This is true of many companies of the 1970s and 1980s and today: that hybrid practice is more common than disciplinary purity.
- 40 Ibid.
- 41 Christopher B. Balme, 'Reciprocal Articulations: From Playbills to Blogs,' in *The Theatrical Public Sphere* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 47–73.
- 42 Nicole Collet, 'La 2 CV est dans la rue,' *L'Humanité*, 7 August 1980; J. Leclair, 'Théâtre de rue: des avantages, mais un inconvénient, le bruit,' *Le Dauphine*, 21 July 1980; 'Théâtre dans la rue,' *La Marseillaise*, 25 July 1980; Jean-Pierre Thibaudat, 'La rue en rut: Trois spectacles de l'Unité et Cie égaient le macadam,' *Libération*, 29 July 1980.
- 43 The performance description that follows is a composite based on numerous sources, including though not limited to personal communications with Jacques Livchine. All quotations of dialogue come from television news reports containing partial video footage of performances. The archives holding these features have digitized them. See 'Théâtre de l'Unité: La 2CV Théâtre,' TF1 (1981), digitized by HorsLesMurs, available at <http://rueetcirque.fr/app/photopro.sk/hlm/detail?docid=301062>; and 'Théâtre de l'Unité, La 2CV Théâtre,' JT FR3 Franche Comté (24 May 1978), digitized by En Scènes, Institut National de l'Audiovisuel, available at <http://fresques.ina.fr/en-scenes/fiche-media/Scenes00622/theatre-de-l-unite-la-2cv-theatre.html>.
- 44 Tiffany Stern, *Documents of Performance in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 37.
- 45 Théâtre de l'Unité does advertise its performances, including 2CV *Théâtre*. The audience is always a mixture of the informed and the innocent – neither experience should be taken as superior to the other. (By calling certain unsuspecting spectators *innocent* I risk implying that informed audience members are somehow guilty or tainted. I ask that readers interpret this

- word choice not as an endorsement of Rousseauian anti-theatricality, but as a celebration of impurity.)
- 46 This is common practice at France's major street theatre festivals in Aurillac and Chalon-sur-Saône. As crowds gather before a scheduled show, striped emergency tape or even aluminium construction barriers are used to ensure that the performers will have sufficient space on their arrival and to alert spectators to the show's sightlines.
- 47 The year 1936 would be intelligible to French audiences as the year of the leftist Popular Front and (prior to 1968) France's largest wave of factory occupations. Theatre, musical, and variety performers toured occupied factories throughout France to entertain striking workers.
- 48 Leclair, 'Théâtre de Rue.'
- 49 Collet, 'La 2 CV est dans la rue.'
- 50 Benjamin Wihstutz, 'Introduction,' in *Performance and the Politics of Space: Theatre and Topology* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 4.
- 51 Ibid.
- 52 Ibid.
- 53 Citroën, '1,000,000 connaisseurs,' brochure (1963), Conservatoire Citroën, Aulnay-sous-Bois.
- 54 In France (as in the United States) automobiles more generally became a symbol of postwar economic prosperity, social mobility, and progress, even as they brought with them the horrors of the crash and the commute. See Kristin Ross, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995).
- 55 Although the car was initially scheduled to debut at the 1939 Paris auto show, the declaration of war cancelled the festivities. Boulanger and Citroën president Pierre Michelin delayed production and guarded the 2CV plans closely, fearing military application by the Nazis.
- 56 In his 1973 polemic 'The Social Ideology of the Motorcar,' André Gorz condemns the automobile's circular logic: 'Everyone wants to escape from [the city], to live in the country. Why this reversal? For only one reason. The car has made the big city uninhabitable. It has made it stinking, noisy, suffocating, dusty, so congested that nobody wants to go out in the evening anymore. Thus, since cars have killed the city, we need faster cars to escape on superhighways to suburbs that are even farther away. What an impeccable circular argument: give us more cars so that we can escape the destruction caused by cars.' Gorz also dismisses the car as a luxury good, impossible to democratize, and that loses its value once everyone has one. See 'The Social Ideology of the Motorcar,' *Le Sauvage*, September–October 1973, available at <http://rts.gn.apc.org/socid.htm>.
- 57 Svetlana Boym and Elizabeth E. Guffey (among others) have done much to salvage the concept of nostalgia. Boym distinguishes between restorative nostalgia, the stuff of nationalist myth-making, and what she calls reflective nostalgia, which pairs the desire to return to the past with an interrogation of that desire. See Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York:

- Basic Books, 2001), 41–56. Guffey describes the emergence of nostalgia for modernity in Elizabeth E. Guffey, *Retro: The Culture of Revival* (London: Reaktion Books, 2006), 12–22.
- 58 Sylvie Clidière, ‘Générik Vapeur ou l’art du déplacement,’ *Rue de La Folie 3* (1999): 39–41.
- 59 Reviewer Mathieu Benedicte called the performance’s style ‘Mad Max of the French.’ Mathieu Benedicte, ‘A Aurillac, la magie du théâtre de rue,’ *Le Monde* 30 August 1989. See also Bim Mason, *Street Theatre and Other Outdoor Performance* (London: Routledge, 1992), 162. The comparisons have persisted into the twenty-first century: see Hélène Michelet, ‘Furies en folie!,’ *L’Humanité* 12 June 2009.
- 60 *Eclat*, Festival Européen de théâtre de rue d’Aurillac, 23–7 August 1989, programme, 6.
- 61 Ibid.
- 62 Sonia Sarfati, ‘Bivouac de bruit et de lueurs,’ *La Presse* (Montréal), 20 July 2001.
- 63 ‘Désordre poétique,’ *Paris Normandie*, 27 September 2011.
- 64 Transhumance normally refers to movement between fixed seasonal pastures, particularly between highland and lowland. It is often used interchangeably with nomadic pastoralism, which entails continuous migration and is thus far more precarious.
- 65 Avram refers to sea and sky in M. B., ‘C’est rock’n’choc,’ *Paris Normandie*, 7 October 2011, 35. She describes the colour as universal and links it to the horizon in Clidière, ‘Générik Vapeur ou l’art du déplacement.’
- 66 I am drawing here on both Eric Lott, *Love & Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013) and Douglas A. Jones, Jr., ‘Black Politics but Not Black People: Rethinking the Social and “Racial” History of Early Minstrelsy,’ *TDR: The Drama Review* 57.2 (2013): 21–37. Lott draws on psychoanalytic theories of desire to account for how and why America’s white working class apparently celebrated black culture while constituting itself as the ‘white working class’ in opposition to that culture. In this account, the white working class (particularly the white working-class man) looks on the racial Other with both envy and repulsion. In contrast, Jones contends that the ‘blackness’ constructed by white minstrel performers had little to do with actual black people. It was instead a third race, neither black nor white, that allowed white minstrels to differentiate themselves both from white elites and from actual African Americans. My goal here is not to minimize the differences between Lott and Jones. Nor would I claim that the history of blackface in France is identical to that of blackface in the United States. But I believe that these two processes – the commingling of desire and repulsion, and the invention of a racial identity – come together provocatively in the performance of *Bivouac*.
- 67 Clidière, ‘Générik Vapeur ou l’art du déplacement.’
- 68 Jeff Kunerth, ‘Third World Becoming a Dump,’ *Orlando Sentinel* 21 June 1989, available at <http://articles.orlandosentinel.com/1989-06-21/>

- news/8906210137_1_toxic-waste-tons-of-toxic-hazardous; 'Toxic waste comes home to roast,' *New Scientist* 9 June 1988.
- 69 Associated Press, 'Ship Prepares to Unload Toxic Wastes Refused by Four Countries,' 29 May 1988, available at www.apnewsarchive.com/1988/Ship-Prepares-To-Unload-Toxic-Wastes-Refused-by-Four-Countries/id-5014842f545243750598b05e5aedb138; Andy Crump, 'Hazardous Waste,' in *Dictionary of Environment and Development: People, Places, Ideas and Organizations* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1991), 122.
- 70 Clidière, 'Générik Vapeur ou l'art du déplacement.'
- 71 Sara Vidal, *Bivouac: Générik Vapeur*. Paris: Sens & Tonka, 2000, 56.
- 72 M. B., 'C'est rock'n'choc,' *Paris Normandie*, 7 October 2011, 35.
- 73 Clidière, 'Générik Vapeur ou l'art du déplacement'; Susan Haedicke, *Contemporary Street Arts in Europe*, 30.
- 74 Sylvie Clidière, 'Générik Vapeur ou l'art du déplacement.'
- 75 Vidal, *Bivouac*, 96.
- 76 *Ibid.*, 112–13.
- 77 Natalie Zemon Davis, 'The Reasons of Misrule: Youth Groups and Charivaris in Sixteenth-Century France,' *Past & Present* 50.1 (1971): 42.
- 78 Elements of charivari persist after the eighteenth century. E. P. Thompson traces how their most socially conservative aspects continue throughout the nineteenth century and even cross the Atlantic to inform the rituals of the Ku Klux Klan. See E. P. Thompson, 'Rough Music Reconsidered,' *Folklore* 103.1 (1992): 3–26.
- 79 Thompson, 'Rough Music Reconsidered,' 7.
- 80 Vidal, *Bivouac*, 109.
- 81 Denis Guénoun, 'Scènes des rues,' in Claire David (ed.), *Aurillac aux limites: théâtre de rue* (Arles: Actes Sud, 2005), 26.
- 82 *Ibid.*, 27.
- 83 J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, second edition (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975), 22.
- 84 See Jacques Derrida, 'Signature Event Context,' in *Limited Inc* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1988 [1972]), 1–24; Andrew Parker and Eve Sedgwick, 'Introduction to Performativity and Performance,' in Henry Bial (ed.), *The Performance Studies Reader* (London: Routledge, 2007), 200–7; Diana Taylor, 'Bush's Happy Performative,' *TDR: The Drama Review* 47.3 (2003): 5–8.
- 85 See, for instance, Haedicke, *Contemporary Street Arts in Europe*, 47. Boal proposes theatre of the oppressed as a rehearsal for the revolution in Augusto Boal, *Theatre of the Oppressed* (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1993).
- 86 Guénoun, 'Scènes des rues,' 27.
- 87 I draw here on Grant Kester's critique of avant-garde shock aesthetics. See Grant Kester, *The One and the Many: Contemporary Collaborative Art in a Global Context* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 46–54.