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Recuperation: alternative pasts, sustainable futures

It is 2015, and I am standing in a garden. I approach the metal plant with caution. Its roots and vines, a dense thicket of pipes, curve and curl across 12 square metres of grass. Scrap metal flowers, larger than human heads, their petals open, rise above the elegant arabesque (see figure 5.1). Stepping towards the structure I trigger its self-defence mechanism: a kind of sonic warfare. The quiet of the garden is broken by a low hum, insect-like, but unmistakably electronic. I draw nearer, and the drone becomes a whine. I slow my approach but continue, tentatively extending feet and hands to test the structure's range. The plant now emits beeps and whistles, atonal arpeggios, flurries of sonic, electronic activity. I move closer still and the sound intensifies, rising in pitch, quickening in tempo, and darkening in tone. I withdraw. The noise calms and subsides to nothing, leaving only the ambient sounds of the cloistered garden. Leaves rustle in the breeze. From beyond the garden walls I hear the faint sound of music and milling crowds: the buzz of the annual street theatre festival at Chalon-sur-Saône. As part of that festival, multimedia artist Fabrice Giraud and arts collective Zo Prod have installed this interactive sculpture, *Le murmure des plantes 2.0* (*The whisper of plants 2.0*, first created in 2013), in the Jardin de l'Arquebuse.

Giraud's installation is not the first industrial vegetation to spring up at a French street theatre festival. Whereas *Le murmure des plantes 2.0* consists of a single, physically immobile sculpture, Compagnie Fer



Figure 5.1 Fabrice Giraud, *Le murmure des plantes 2.0*, 2015.

à Coudre's *Ecllosion floraferrique* (*Floraferrous spawning*, first created in 2010) invites the spectator to explore an environment full of numerous mechanical plants, several of which move in response to human presence.¹ With their metallic bodies curved into sensuous, organic structures, the sculptures of *Ecllosion floraferrique* are close cousins of Hector Guimard's Art Nouveau designs for the Paris Métro, and like those designs they signal a fantastical, ornamental transformation of common elements of public space. The components of *Ecllosion floraferrique* include street lamps, a bench, a fountain, and flowers, all of which fuse industrial materials and vegetal forms. Oil blossoms (*les fleurs d'huile*) grow on spindly tendrils from the dregs of an apparent spill, the offending barrels still overturned nearby. At the end of each shoot sits a single, partially lidded eye, surrounded by golden petals and leaves. The flowers appear to look around them, as if searching for the cause of the pollution from which they have sprung. Braided metal creeping vines (*les lianes de métal*) wind around the branches of trees; their balloon-sized, pustular buds glow orange and cast eerie shadows as dusk darkens. If evening temperatures drop, visitors might gather around the fire blossoms (*les fleurs de feu*), mammoth metal flowers, reminiscent of pterodactyls' wings, emerging from a fire pit. An array of pipes (*les tuyaux*) gives the impression that the area's subterranean infrastructure has sprouted above the soil, extending, rhizomatically, of its own accord. Sounds emanating from the pipes, together with occasional puffs of

steam, suggest that the activity continues, unseen, somewhere beneath the grass. The fountain (*la fontaine*) resembles a mechanical mangrove tree, its roots a thick tangle of cables and rope spilling out of a basin of glowing green water. The water is drawn up and expelled into an elaborate network of metal pistils, which pivot and bend on mechanical arms to pour the water onto the lower tiers. The fountain's largest tier, a luminous gold, has the look of a Tiffany ceiling lamp, with rust-red veins in place of floral patterns.

The environment seems alive and alien, and other sculptures heighten this effect by responding to visitors' weight or movement. In front of the street lamps (*les lampadaires*) visitors cross a platform that acts as a balance scale; the drooping floral lamps lift their heads to follow passers-by as they move from one end of the platform to the other. The imposing carnivorous plants (*les plantes carnivores*), with nails for thorns, remain still until spectators stray too near, at which point their leaf blades turn to loom like monstrous heads over the unsuspecting interlopers. Sitting on the lovers' bench (*le banc des amoureux*) causes two reticulated metal spines on either side of the bench to arc inward, forming the shape of a heart. The seat itself shares the curvature of human lips or a waxed moustache, and the surrounding metalwork suggests male and female genitalia. (The sculptures have inherited Art Nouveau's ornamentation, and also its languid eroticism. As one reporter delicately notes, 'less prudish souls will recognise, embedded in [the bench's] backrest, forms evocative of the pleasure of games for two.')2 The speed and quality of the sculptures' movement depend on how visitors interact with them. When spectators tread lightly, the towering metal stems of the lamps and the bench bend toward them gently, as if curious; less careful spectators cause the sculptures to jerk aggressively.

In this concluding chapter I approach these two installations, Giraud's *Le murmure des plantes 2.0* and Fer à Coudre's *Écllosion floraferrique*, because they exemplify contemporary French street theatre's production of postindustrial space.³ Neither is attached to a specific urban or regional redevelopment project, but through their aesthetics, their work on space and time, and the mode of spectatorship they foster, they create the complex 'after but not over' of the postindustrial. Both projects are interactive scenographies that shape salvaged industrial materials into vegetal forms. Both invite spectatorial participation even as they produce a double temporality that complicates the call to action. In this discussion, I pick out once more the threads braided together at the end of the first chapter: street theatre's invocation of industrial and pre-industrial pasts (its temporal work), its play on the boundaries between performer and spectator (its spatial work), and the questions of agency

and efficacy (its political work). If, as I argued in Chapter 1, Théâtre de l'Unité's *2CV Théâtre* and Générrik Vapeur's *Bivouac* staged failed escapes from the harmful effects of industrialization and modernization, then the attempts of *Le murmure des plantes 2.0* and *Ecllosion floraferrique* appear to be more successful: alternative pasts that have spawned more sustainable futures. But the success is not (entirely) ours to claim.

Act now, because it's too late

Press coverage, interviews, and artists' statements for both installations make much of their interactive character. In a 2010 interview, Manuel Charnay, co-founder of Fer à Coudre, explains that, without the spectator, *Ecllosion floraferrique* 'remains inanimate'; the interviewer thus claims that the installation 'render[s] the public an actor.'⁴ In her 2012 review of the installation, journalist Ariane Servain describes a walk amongst the sculptures of *Ecllosion floraferrique* as a 'stroll during which the Rambler is himself [an] actor.'⁵ According to the artistic prospectus for the project, the spectator 'becomes the indispensable actor to bring this mysterious world to life.'⁶ And, in our 2017 conversation, Fer à Coudre co-founder Hugo Dubus simply stated that, without the actions of the spectator, nothing happens.⁷ The same language of animation and participation used by reviewers and artists to describe *Ecllosion floraferrique* also appears in Giraud's statements on *Le murmure des plantes 2.0*: 'The slightest movement gives life to the material. [...] The walker-spectator becomes an actor of the installation. An experience in which movement is essential and in which nothing happens if there is no interaction.'⁸ So far, so familiar: such claims to spectatorial activity echo the rhetoric of participation that has long pervaded political theatre, immersive theatre, relational or 'social' practice, and minimalist and installation art.⁹ More significant than the mere existence of the claim is the situation from which the invitation is made and the circumstances under which one might accept. Who – and *what* – is acting, how, *when*, and to what end? In what follows I establish, first, the complex interplay of human and non-human agency that emerges from encounters with these installations, and second, the double temporality that makes the installations so exemplary of the production of postindustrial space.

In its initial incarnation, the participatory aesthetic of *Ecllosion floraferrique* was intelligible as part of a localized conservation effort. Fer à

Coudre first installed *Ecllosion floraferrique* in the Murs à pêches (Peach Walls), an area of the founders' native Montreuil most famous as an orchard that thrived from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries. The *espalier* technique, by which trees are trained to grow against walls, protected the plants from early spring frosts; peach varieties that would normally survive only in southern climes flourished in Montreuil.¹⁰ By 1870, at the orchard's peak, 600 labyrinthine kilometres of peach walls were producing over fifteen million peaches annually. In subsequent years, the extension of the railway and the ensuing industrialization of Montreuil led to the orchard's decline, and over the course of the twentieth century City Hall permitted an auto garage, junkyards, and other polluting enterprises to occupy and transform parcels of the orchard's green space. At the time of writing only 37 hectares of orchard remain, and the Ministry of Ecology protects just over eight of those. Many of the remaining walls (17 kilometres of the original 600) are in disrepair. Nevertheless, the fruit persists.

Granted use of 800 square metres within the Murs à pêches (including the building formerly occupied by the auto garage), Fer à Coudre co-founders Charnay, Dubus, and Sophie Belotte were impressed by the resilience of the area's plant life. They decided, in Dubus's words, to 'recount, via the realisation of iron structures, the regeneration of this earth fertilised by industrial waste.'¹¹ The debut of *Ecllosion floraferrique*, Fer à Coudre's first creation, coincided with the 2010 Festival Murs à pêches, an annual event that promotes the maintenance and preservation of the site by encouraging its appropriation by locals as public green space. As I have demonstrated in the preceding case studies, preservation efforts tend to expand symbolic ownership of a site; this holds true for green space as well as for buildings. The Festival Murs à pêches established the area as one worth using and therefore one worth salvaging. The participation invited by *Ecllosion floraferrique* reinforced the festival's advocacy of environmental conservation for the purpose of human enjoyment (or its strategic use of human enjoyment as motivation for environmental conservation). By her walking, jumping, or sitting, the spectator causes the sculptures to move; her actions have impact. The sculptures do not move without the spectator's intervention. Thus the spectator's actions appear not only consequential, but also necessary. As Charnay explains, 'in order to get things moving, it is necessary to get involved in [*s'impliquer dans*] the movement. A message that the individual can connect to their own life. In order for things to move, one must activate the gears.'¹² According to this formulation, the spectator is supposed to translate simple physical actions and their effects into ecological activism.

Ultimately, however, encounters with *Ecllosion floraferrique* (and with *Le murmure des plantes 2.0*) suggest a more complex, distributed model of human and non-human agency. For one, some of the sculptures appear to defend themselves against human interference. The imposing carnivorous plants give the impression that they might devour those who venture too close. Even the more innocuous lamps seem poised to protect their territory as they track the movements of passers-by. Although the metal plant of *Le murmure des plantes 2.0* does not itself move, it does respond defensively to the actions of spectators. The artistic prospectus for the installation describes the responsive soundscape as a 'self-defence mechanism against a potential enemy.'¹³ While human action is entirely necessary to the installation, it is also treated as dangerous threat – and the sculptures pose threats of their own.

The presence of the artists further troubles the relationship between human subject and art object. Dubus recalls that the initial months of *Ecllosion floraferrique* proved to be a stress test of the sculptures, which kept breaking under the strain of repeated (and encouraged) tapping, drumming, and climbing by spectators.¹⁴ Dubus and the other Fer à Coudre artists had to insert themselves into the encounter as caretakers of the garden so that they could mend their creations when necessary. They did not draw focus from the sculptures. They were not playing characters or delivering lines, though they did improvise material when addressed by spectators. They appeared as support staff to the animate matter of the metallic plants. Giraud appears alongside *Le murmure des plantes 2.0* as well, though his role is less clear. When I visited the installation in 2015, Giraud was seated on the grass several metres from the sculpture, and he might or might not have been operating a piece of sound equipment inside a metal case. He did not conceal his labour; he sat on the grass for all to see. But his specific actions remained a mystery. That I did not approach him to see what, exactly, he was *doing* was the result of years of behavioural conditioning (only some of which occurred at the theatre). 'I mustn't bother him,' I thought. 'He's *working*.' How he was working, I could not tell. He appeared to me as still as the sculpture itself, and as busy. The artistic prospectus and official website for the project offer clues to Giraud's activity, but more significant to my analysis here is the uncertainty, even undecidability of human activity in the moment of the encounter. I did not know who or what was producing the otherworldly soundscape. Was Giraud doing all of the work: monitoring my movements, creating a track in real time, and playing it through the speakers hidden amongst the metal root system? Was he amplifying, distorting, and looping sounds produced by my interaction with the sculpture? Or was he simply making sure that no

one absconded with pieces of his project? I knew only that I was engaged in some form of three-way interaction connecting me, the spectator, to artist and performing object.

If street theatre claims a space as public, or somehow reanimates public space (see Chapter 1), these installations raise questions about who (or what) constitutes that public and who (or what) does the work of reanimation. To accept the conceit of these projects is to accept that the role of human agents, be they visitors or the artists themselves, remains uncertain and fragmentary. Agency is distributed. At most, human agents form part of what Jane Bennett would call an 'ontologically heterogeneous public': an assemblage of differently empowered actants, human and non-human, that affect their environment and each other, consciously or otherwise.¹⁵ Human visitors act *with* these installations rather than *on* them: the matter is not inert.

For Charnay, *Eclosion floraferrique* in its original setting evoked and reconciled the agricultural and industrial pasts of the Murs à pêches.¹⁶ This fusion of the agricultural and the industrial appears a more successful reconciliation than that depicted by Générrik Vapeur in *Bivouac* (Chapter 1). In that performance, the blue-painted performers' strenuous efforts to herd oil drums as though they were sheep seemed a fruitless endeavour, comic and pathetic even in its aggression. As I argued in Chapter 1, *Bivouac* staged the impossibility of a return to a distant agrarian past as refuge from a more recent industrial past. In *Eclosion floraferrique*, the union of agricultural and industrial pasts is a fertile one, but the merger does not seem to be the product of human design. In the Murs à pêches, especially, the visual aesthetics of hearty plant life atop crumbling walls create both agential and temporal confusion: the peach walls appear less as an intentionally planted orchard in need of maintenance and more as an overgrown ruin, reclaimed by flora in the absence of human intervention.

I have argued throughout this book that street theatre produces postindustrial space. Here, the postindustrial is not the product of confident human redevelopment but the otherworldly outcome of the evolution of plants. Charnay might see the participatory *Eclosion floraferrique* as a call to action, but that action occurs as a response to metallic flora that have already acted, seemingly, on their own. Spectatorial participation would thus constitute interference in an ongoing process of mechano-vegetal evolution. Both installations share the fictional premise that the mechanical plants have sprouted of their own accord. According to Dubus, it should be apparent to spectators of *Eclosion floraferrique* that the vegetation has taken possession of industrial space and industrial materials, rather than the reverse.¹⁷ The same holds true for *Le murmure*

des plantes 2.0: the artistic prospectus proposes that the plant is ‘using ferrous material to find a new form, like a parasite.’¹⁸ Fer à Coudre and Giraud constructed their respective sculptures from recuperated materials, but the sculptures give the impression that plants have done the recuperating: they have recuperated scrap metal, chemicals, and other remnants of human activity (transitive recuperation), and they have recuperated from human-inflicted pollution (the intransitive recuperation of healing).¹⁹ They have not only adapted *to* their environment; they have adapted their environment to them.

When did this adaptation happen, or when will it have happened? The conceit of the installations indicates their double temporality. The installations conjure a distant future after the disappearance of humans from the earth. As Dubus explained in our 2017 conversation (switching, unprompted, to the future perfect), ‘All the pollution we will have left, we will have given birth to new plants that are on the frontiers of robotics.’²⁰ On an early crowd-funding page for *Le murmure des plantes*, Giraud suggests that his project is a vision of a future form that nature might take in order to reclaim its rights.²¹ Humans will have died; plants will have somehow adapted and survived, bending our industrial residues to their will. Yet the encounter with the installations necessarily unfolds in the present moment and consists of interaction between machines and humans who are definitively not yet dead. The encounter thus also suggests an alternative past. Something must have happened already to explain the existence of this flora in the present. The artistic prospectus for *Ecllosion floraferrique* describes that alternative past as one in which ‘the earth was not polluted, but fertilized by industry.’²² In early iterations of *Ecllosion floraferrique*, the Fer à Coudre artists improvised stories to that effect, inventing a factory that had once stood on the site of the installation and explaining to spectators that these mysterious organic structures had grown from its ruins. If working memory conjugates experience in the two tenses of present perfect continuous and future perfect (see Introduction), encounters with these installations, too, occur in doubled time.

By situating spectators in a distant future, the installations might offer the same comforts as the afterlife or post-apocalyptic cinema: the fantasy, first, that all will continue, and second, that we will be around to witness what happens after we have ended. But the necessity of the alternative past dispels such illusions. Without an alternative past, the strange evolution of these plants could not, will not have happened. And the past that must be ‘alternative’ – the past that must be or have been made otherwise in order for this future to occur or have occurred – is our present moment. The future’s past is now.

Ecllosion floraferrique and *Le murmure des plantes 2.0* issue calls to action from a set of spatial and temporal coordinates in which it is already too late. This is ‘enlightened doomsaying’: to borrow from Jean-Pierre Dupuy, a ‘ruse’ that ‘invites us to make an imaginative leap, to place ourselves by an act of mental projection in the moment following a future catastrophe and then, looking back toward the present time, to see catastrophe as our *fate* – only a fate that we may yet choose to avoid.’²³ For Dupuy, ‘to believe in fate is to prevent it from happening.’²⁴ (This is why he views both theological thinking and post-apocalyptic cinema as offering more than comforting fantasy.) The spectator of *Ecllosion floraferrique* and *Le murmure des plantes 2.0* does not necessarily hope to avoid the future projected by the installations; after all, the environment is a fantastical one in which flora thrive and humans experience sensory pleasure. But the alternative past is so fanciful and demonstrably false – industry *has* polluted the earth – that the projected future remains an obvious fiction. We must act with, and we must act now: not before it’s too late, but because, in the doubled time of these installations, it already is.

Working memory, again

I have argued in this book that working memory operates performatively and theatrically. It operates *performatively* through the circulating discourse of redevelopment proposals, communications campaigns, news reports, and promotional materials, which establish horizons of expectation and frameworks for interpretation; and through the embodied performances of (in this case) street theatre practitioners: their gestures, movements, and multisensory aesthetics.²⁵ The artists discussed in this book do not ‘play’ industrial workers; they are not historical re-enactors in so strict a sense. Neither are they surrogates: the industrial workers they have apparently re- or dis-placed are, as Stéphane Bonnard reminds us in the epigraph to this book, ‘still here.’ Nonetheless, in their occupation of industrial spaces – spaces that resonate once again with the buzz, whine, clank, and clamour of machinery – these artists embody the accumulation of labour, the simultaneous persistence and transformation of repertoires, the emergence of the ostensibly or actually new from the recombination of extant behaviours and tropes. Their performances entail the recuperation of industrial products, by-products, and spaces, but also of bodies, gestures, symbols, practices, and techniques.

I argue that working memory operates *theatrically* because of the modes of spatial and temporal perception required to produce the postindustrial. Theatrical space is characterized by the interplay of actuality and virtuality, the real and imagined, the present and the projected. The case studies in the preceding chapters have demonstrated how converted industrial sites must – for a time, at least – remain intelligible as what they once were while becoming intelligible as something else. The 2CV theatre (Chapter 1) illustrates this on the smallest of scales: the vehicle must be recognizable as both 2CV and theatre for the performance to work. This is how all sited performances function, but that function is also fundamental to a process like redevelopment. The local television news report on the conversion of Corbigny's Photosacs factory (Chapter 2) proposed that the building was once again a 'site of production,' but that the nature of that production had changed, as if the factory had simply transitioned from manufacturing camera cases to manufacturing art. The Carré de Soie shopping centre (Chapter 3) failed as a flagship project for the redevelopment of Greater Lyon's eastern belt because it created the impression that the Altarea developers were ignoring the area's history and installing generic, suburban retail outlets. Defenders of Nantes' Machines de l'île project (Chapter 4) maintained that the fantastical mechanical animals emerged from the 'same universe' as the ships once launched from the island's shores, a connection sustained by the persistence of industrial techniques, the presence of workers' bodies, and the material traces of naval construction. The dual intelligibility of these converted sites – their fundamentally theatrical spatial doubleness – is made possible in part by the discourse circulating around street theatre institutions, which creates and recreates a public, and by the embodied repertoires and aesthetics of street theatre events, which make sense to, for, and with an audience.

Discursive and embodied connections between a site's past and present make the repurposing intelligible, perhaps even – if one accepts the validity of the connection – justifiable, but this does not mean that the site's past life is recalled in sharp detail. In the act of commemoration, specific industries might become subsumed within the generic 'industrial.' The labour of Photosacs employees bore little resemblance to the mining and metallurgy occurring elsewhere in the Nièvre, though it is these other forms of work that are evoked by the images, sounds, and gestures of Metalvoice's performances. Despite the new neighbourhood's name, the factories in what is now the Carré de Soie had more in common with the chemical industry than with the silk weaving of northern Lyon. Although former shipyard workers in Nantes

remember camaraderie and creative input as well the physical hardship of their employment, press reports and redevelopment literature on the Ile de Nantes project present La Machine's collaborative-yet-independent labour organization as a radical departure from industries past. Working memory plays tricks. One of my tasks here has been to determine what those tricks are, how they operate, and what (or whose) purpose they serve. This might be the task of street theatre, too: the performances of Théâtre de l'Unité and Générïk Vapeur mount compelling challenges to simple nostalgia, instead interrogating the desire to return to a pre-industrial past, and the imaginary archaeology of KomplexKapharnaüm stages the assembly, distortion, or even wholesale invention of local memory. Street theatre – and theatre more generally – can *do* historiography.

Postindustrial space is also reconnected space. In Corbigny, Greater Lyon, and Nantes, public officials and their private partners have worked to reconfigure their towns' internal spatial dynamics and to reorient those towns within trans-local networks. The conversion of Photosacs into La Transverse, together with the repurposing of the Saint-Leonard Abbey as an arts and community centre, has established Corbigny as a rural cultural attraction and linked the town to others within new chains of production and consumption. The Carré de Soie project has created a new density of activity stretching across the border between Villeurbanne and Vaulx-en-Verin in an attempt to remake the area as a coherent eastern hub for the Greater Lyon agglomeration. This project is a key component of Greater Lyon's broader urban strategy, which positions the metropolitan area as the central node of a transnational European network. In Nantes, the Ile de Nantes redevelopment is shifting the city's economic and cultural centre of gravity from north of the Loire to the river itself. As in Lyon, the ultimate goal is to bypass Paris and establish the city as a European metropolis in its own right: for Nantes, this entails reframing the city as the continent's key Atlantic gateway. The production of postindustrial space, then, entails not only the repurposing of individual factory sites (the micro), but also the reimagination and reworking of spatial scales and networks (the macro). Both of these processes are theatrical insofar as they require the coexistence of a space that *is* and a space that *was*, a space that *is* and a space that *might be*, or a space that is tangibly there and other spaces that are not. This is the kind of spatial perception demanded of a theatre audience, who are able to perceive the material reality of the stage, the conjured space of the fiction (what Marvin Carlson calls 'iconic space'), *and* those sites not represented onstage but otherwise alluded to (what Carlson calls

'indexical space').²⁶ Theatrical space is able to make vast geographic networks coherent and intelligible.²⁷

The spatial networks created during street theatre events do not, however, necessarily align with the networks of redevelopment or, more broadly, of globalized late capitalism. Metalvoice, for instance, used *Virée(s) vers l'est* to link Corbigny to other, more obviously industrial towns in the Nièvre, and to the more distant locales to which industry has relocated. With *Bivouac*, Générrik Vapeur facilitated the imagination of a globalized network of industrial waste disposal precisely in order to critique that network and the power dynamics that produce some human beings *as* waste. When I claim that processes such as deindustrialization and redevelopment require a theatrical approach to space, I do not mean to suggest that street theatre companies caught up in those processes share the goals of developers, or that they are unwitting pawns incapable of deviating from the master strategies of municipal governments and their corporate allies. Municipal governments in France do encourage street theatre production as part of their redevelopment strategies. But my purpose in this book has not been to accuse street theatre companies of complicity. (Too often, scholars wield the word 'complicit' as a hatchet; wholesale dismissal of 'complicit' artists or companies then becomes proof of the scholar's own ideological purity.) Rather, I have attempted to demonstrate how, even as street theatre institutions participate in the processes of deindustrialization and redevelopment, street theatre events make those processes intelligible. To make a process intelligible is a necessary precondition of its smooth unfolding, but also of critique.

The transformation of space takes (and makes) time. Theatrical events punctuate the *longue durée* of redevelopment. The first iterations of the street theatre festival in Corbigny – after the relocation of Metalvoice to the town, but before the completion of the Photosacs factory conversion – laid the groundwork for the eventual opening of La Transverse. The opening of each new section of the Sentier Pédestre Périphérique provided an opportunity for residents of the Carré de Soie to take stock of the ongoing transformation (or invention) of their neighbourhood. Inaugural events for the Great Elephant, the Marine Worlds Carousel, and (eventually) the other Machines de l'île instil confidence in an urban and cultural project that, at the time of writing, has already stretched over a decade, while seasonal festivals beneath the Naves bind the project to the more familiar rhythms of the calendar. Street theatre festivals do now what they have always done: keep the cyclical time of the year. When street theatre keeps that time as part of a redevelopment project, it makes the ongoing process of redevelopment intelligible as an event.

In their performances, the street theatre companies discussed in this book have engaged in temporal play that has established a set of complex (if provisional) links between past and present. *2CV Théâtre* and *Bivouac* staged encounters with the residual products and by-products of industrial modernity in shows of complex, critical nostalgia. The inauguration of *La Transverse* linked local history to planetary movement via the performers' own family backgrounds. The archaeological excavations of *PlayRec* and the *Sentier Pédestre Périphérique* unearthed – not for the first time – real or fabricated artefacts of real or fabricated pasts, staging the interpretation, invention, distortion, and repurposing of the past in and for the present moment. The *Machines de l'île* project flattens history, creating a sense of simultaneity even as its proponents insist on the inheritance over time of industrial repertoires. *Le murmure des plantes 2.0* and *Ecllosion floraferrique* situate their spectators in both a distant future and a present moment resulting from an alternative past. All of these performances operate via continuities and discontinuities, and via the repurposing of materials, objects, bodies, sounds, gestures, stories, images, or names. By bringing back something from the past, and by the very nature of their event-ness, these performances project an ending: soon, something will have happened.

I insist that working memory operates theatrically and performatively, not because it is pleasing to see one's own disciplinary specialism at the heart of all phenomena (though that is enjoyable and perhaps inevitable), but because working memory relies on a complex interplay of continuity and rupture, persistence and ephemerality. Theatre and performance scholarship has tended to emphasize one or the other, but the debate ultimately demonstrates how practices can disappear and linger at the same time.²⁸ These are the strange logics necessary to the production of postindustrial space.

Postscript: at the time of writing

I did not consciously decide to begin each of the five chapters of this book with dates. I confess I noticed them there – 1973, 2011 and 1961, 2012, 1987 and 2007, 2015 – embarrassingly late in the process of revising the manuscript. Perhaps this is the distinction that I drew in Chapter 2 between foreshadowing ('I have a plan') and reincorporation ('why yes, that was my plan all along'). Returning to these openings now, I interpret them as attempts to account for the changes still

occurring in the areas under consideration: the Carré de Soie and Ile de Nantes described in this book, for instance, are not quite the sites one would find on a return visit. The work continues. Contemporary, ongoing processes such as urban redevelopment outpace our efforts to analyse them in writing, especially when one writes as slowly as I do. Thus the dates at the start of each chapter serve as reminders that this is a book of history, however recent that history might be. They locate the reader and myself, offering us both a set of coordinates so that we might understand our place (and time) in an unfolding situation. In that sense, they are logical introductions to the street theatre projects explored in the book.

To produce postindustrial space is to posit an endpoint at which the past will be laid to rest, but that endpoint is illusory: the same production process ensures that the past remains present. This is the ‘after but not over’ of the postindustrial and of this postscript. A postscript implies that the script is finished and yet somehow incomplete. The text is over, but on it goes. Now I, too, grasp at an ending, a full stop, a clean break between this project and what comes next. Still the process unfolds. I pick up dangling threads, and I keep them for later. There is always more work where that came from.

Notes

- 1 *Floraferrique* is a neologism that combines ‘floral’ with ‘iron,’ hence its rough translation as ‘floraferrous.’ The original French has the advantage of evoking *féérique*: ‘fairy-like,’ and also the designation for certain fantastical spectacles of the nineteenth century.
- 2 E. B., ‘Ecllosion floraferrique: quand l’industrie féconde la terre,’ *Journal de Saône-et-Loire* 19 July 2012: 11. The seat calls to mind Salvador Dali’s *Lips Sofa* (1936–37), inspired by Mae West and itself a response to Art Nouveau. See Elizabeth E. Guffey, *Retro: The Culture of Revival* (London: Reaktion Books, 2006), 37–9.
- 3 Installation art has become a regular feature of French street theatre festivals such as those in Chalon-sur-Saône and Aurillac. The prevalence of installation has contributed to the preferential use of the term street *arts* over street *theatre*. But, as I noted in the introduction, I retain the term ‘street theatre’ to bring to the fore the peculiar spatiality and temporality of these public arts projects. I treat the encounter with the installation as a theatrical event. I am hardly alone in insisting on the theatricality of installation. The durational situation of the encounter between art object and onlooker has been the subject of critical debate at least since Michael Fried penned his notorious 1967 essay ‘Art and Objecthood.’ See Michael Fried, ‘Art and Objecthood,’ in *Art and Objecthood: Essays and Reviews* (Chicago: University of Chicago

- Press, 1998), 148–72. Fried, of course, hurled the words theatre and theatricality at minimalist art as though they were scathing epithets. His essay (now an easy punching bag) is over-cited, and I already regret bringing it up. Claire Bishop and Shannon Jackson have done the more important work of bringing together the genealogies and critical frameworks of the visual and performing arts. See Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London: Verso, 2012); and Shannon Jackson, ‘When “Everything Counts”: Experimental Performance and Performance Historiography,’ in Charlotte M. Canning and Thomas Postlewait (eds), *Representing the Past: Essays in Performance Historiography* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2010), 240–60. In the case of *Eclosion floraferrique* and *Le murmure des plantes 2.0*, I can also claim to follow the lead of the artists themselves, who refer to their projects as ‘scenographies’ and even ‘shows.’
- 4 Anne Locqueneaux, ‘Amélie et Manuel relèvent le défi,’ *Tous Montreuil* no. 39 (20 July – 13 September 2010).
 - 5 Ariane Servain, ‘Une nuit à floraferrie,’ *Tous Montreuil* no. 82 (25 September – 8 October 2012).
 - 6 Compagnie Fer à Coudre, ‘Eclosion floraferrique,’ artistic prospectus, 3.
 - 7 Hugo Dubus, interview with the author, 18 October 2017.
 - 8 Zo Prod, *The Whisper of Plants*, web, www.zoprod.com/en/creations/archives/the-whisper-of-plants/ (last accessed 30 August 2018). Curiously, this text appears on the English-language version of Zo Prod’s official website and not on the French version. The French-language crowd-funding page for the project, however, does claim that the spectator becomes an actor. See Fabrice Giraud, *Le murmure des plantes*, web, <https://fr.ulule.com/murmure/> (created December 2012, last accessed November 2017).
 - 9 The nature of that participation varies from one practice to the next, and the politics of participation are (of course) contested. See Bishop, *Artificial Hells*; Claire Bishop, ed., *Participation* (London: Whitechapel Gallery, 2006); Grant Kester, *The One and the Many: Contemporary Collaborative Art in a Global Context* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011); Jacques Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator* (London: Verso, 2011); and Gareth White, *Audience Participation in Theatre: Aesthetics of the Invitation* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).
 - 10 The horticultural innovation caught the attention of Louis XIV, who reserved the peaches of Montreuil for consumption at his court. The peaches’ royal reputation continued into the nineteenth century, when they became popular with Emperor Napoleon III and with Russian nobility.
 - 11 Servain, ‘Une nuit à floraferrie.’
 - 12 Locqueneaux, ‘Amélie et Manuel relèvent le défi.’
 - 13 Zo Prod, ‘Le murmure des plantes 2.0,’ artistic prospectus, 3.
 - 14 Hugo Dubus, interview with the author, 18 October 2017.
 - 15 Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 108.

- 16 Locqueneaux, 'Amélie et Manuel relèvent le défi.'
- 17 Hugo Dubus, interview with the author, 18 October 2017.
- 18 Zo Prod, 'Le murmure des plantes 2.0,' artistic prospectus, 3.
- 19 Recuperation is a key art-making technique and ethical practice for Fer à Coudre and the Zo Prod collective. Both organizations have offered workshops in salvaging and sculpting with found material.
- 20 Hugo Dubus, interview with the author, 18 October 2017.
- 21 Giraud, *Le murmure des plantes*, web.
- 22 Compagnie Fer à Coudre, 'Ecllosion floraferrique,' artistic prospectus, 2.
- 23 Jean-Pierre Dupuy, *The Mark of the Sacred*, trans. M. B. Debevoise (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013 [2008]), 32–3.
- 24 *Ibid.*, 32.
- 25 By grouping street theatre performances with circulating discourse as part of the performative operations of working memory, I do not mean to use *performative* as the adjectival form of *performance*. Rather, I am claiming that, in performance, the street theatre practitioners discussed in this book performatively construct particular relationships or links between past and present uses of space and between different modes of labour.
- 26 Marvin Carlson, 'Space and Theatre History,' in Charlotte M. Canning and Thomas Postlewait (eds), *Representing the Past: Essays in Performance Historiography* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2010), 195–214. I realize, of course, that I am referring to the physical reality of the 'stage' in a book about street theatre. I am using the space of a purpose-built proscenium theatre as a convenient exemplar of how theatrical space works. During a street theatre performance, the audience is aware of the material reality of the street (whatever form that takes), in addition to the iconic and indexical spaces described by Carlson.
- 27 Edward Ziter, for instance, has demonstrated how Victorian stage melodramas transformed the vastness of the British Empire into easily comprehended theatrical landscapes, making geographically remote locales intelligible as a 'periphery' bound to the 'centre' of London. See Edward Ziter, 'Staging the Geographic Imagination: Imperial Melodrama and the Domestication of the Exotic,' in Elinor Fuchs and Una Chaudhuri (eds), *Land/Scape/Theater* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002), 189–208.
- 28 Peggy Phelan's *Unmarked* remains the most prominent exploration of performance's tendency to vanish. See Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (London: Routledge, 1993). Advocates of performance's tendency to remain include Jacky Bratton, Marvin Carlson, Tracy Davis, Rebecca Schneider, and Diana Taylor (though these scholars hold differing views on what remains, where, and how). See Jacky Bratton, *New Readings in Theatre History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Marvin Carlson, *The Haunted Stage: Theatre as Memory Machine* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001); Tracy Davis, 'Nineteenth-Century Repertoire,' *Nineteenth Century Theatre and Film* 36.2 (2009): 6–28;

Rebecca Schneider, *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment* (London: Routledge, 2011); and Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003).