



PERFORMANCE
PHILOSOPHY

BREAK UP VARIATIONS: AN ANNOTATED SCORE

GENERATIVE CONSTRAINTS

Break Up Variations as a project performs ideas about romantic break-ups as well as political and ecological ruptures. Each multi-scalar variation of the project articulates relation and defies equivalence through emphasising difference. The creativity of division emerges between each variation. Thinking ecologically, Break Up Variations asks questions about consensus, nonalignment, community-led conflict resolution, and dissolution as ways of building solidarity at times of crisis.

This annotated score documents and rethinks the performance of Break Up Variations by Generative Constraints Committee at the International Federation for Theatre Research in Belgrade 2018, itself a variation of a performance presented at 'Dissolution or Division: Conscious Uncouplings and Collaborative Collapse' in London 2017.

Break Up Variations: An Annotated Score flags the importance of positioning practice research separately from either research or practice. The break up makes an exit from fixed disciplinary subjectivities. The two columns are separate registers that continue on each page. The left is the score; the right is the annotation. Spoken text is indented while stage action is in bold.

Scene One (Three Minutes)

1 walks up, puts on a poncho and then a t-shirt, and unwraps an ice lolly. 2 walks up and repeats. 1 and 2 place the lollies in each other's t-shirt pockets. 3, 4, and 5 walk up and repeat. Committee forms and holds a huddle.

4 breaks away from the huddle and plays a video of two albatrosses courting. Committee negotiates this exit and watches 4 leave.



Committee watches the courtship. 4 returns and rejoins the huddle.



Notes on Scene One

1. Strategies for collectivity include: whispering, huddling, sharing, wiping, replacing, sweating, holding, chanting. These are most visible with the following geometry: line, semi-circle, circle, square.
2. Following Caroline Levine's call to broaden the definition of form to include social arrangements as having immediate methodological implications—can we think of the break up as a form of relation? can we think of brokenness as a form of variation and a strategy for survival?—form moves beyond the arrangement of elements to 'patterns of recognition and difference' (2015, 3).
3. Albatrosses' complex visual and vocal dances are considered some of the most developed mating displays in any long-lived animal.
4. Synonyms: throng, flock, herd, swarm, press, pack, assemblage, gaggle. 'A huddle of barns and outbuildings.'
5. 'This is the dense erotics of arrangement, the whole of the text working like the whole of the body working like the whole of the orchestra—a miraculously autoexpansive, invaginative, erotogenic zone. The sexual urge of the text, like [Duke] Ellington's music, like Ellington's sound of love, develops out of successive contributions, out of the asymmetrical differences of individual players, pictures, metaphors that are also sounds and bodies—particular erotogenic zones' (Moten 2003, 30).

Scene Two (Four Minutes)

Notes on Scene Two

Video ends. 1 and 2 break away from the huddle; 3, 4, and 5 remain.

Image of ice sheets crossfading into image of committee.



2 whispers into 1's ear; 1 repeats, speaking loudly to the audience.

Yes. I made up my mind and I'm not sure if it is the right thing to do but I am definitely doing it and even though I might regret it I'm definitely doing it. I'm breaking up with you. It's over. I have loved you so much and now I hate you so much. Or it's not that I hate you it's that I don't care about you anymore because there are so many things to hate. When you're happy I feel annoyed and when you're sad I want to be somewhere else. Our break up isn't any worse than any of what our relationship made better. Everything is totally equal and completely cancelled out. We're all on the same playing field in really different sports and my game is slightly different to yours but you aren't even playing a game you're just mowing a lawn.

1 and 2 switch positions.

Everything I invented to get myself ahead is exactly what those I got ahead of use to erase me. And then we'll all be happy, because erasure is perfectly between. As long as I'm right after, and right before, and right now, the whole world is a part of our lives, and

1. To see the relation between research and break up: a series of formal differentiations or collapses, with political weight. I am interested in the ways in which language shapes the communicative capacities or aesthetics of the break up, and how the body gestures in relation to that: the break up of the iceberg, the stiffness of the body that feels itself under question, the muteness of the body that is being displaced. The break up also makes me think about leaks—about the things that are left with multiple identities once a rupture happens, about the processes that complicate rather than demarcate a settling.
2. What did it look like? How did the ice melt? What happened to the plastic? What changed in the space? What if the albatrosses were present? What flew in and out of the room? What landed in the performance? What is being broken, and is the break up ontological (in the Anthropocene)?
3. How is the committee constituted, through performance, in relation to the audience? What is the pattern and dance of audience acknowledgement and non-acknowledgment, inclusion and exclusion?

we're having a chance to get all worked up about every dimension of pain, and how we lost each other, and how we went looking, and every single sentence is something, something that I wish could be spoken by no one, but someone has to say it, now I am saying it, and I have to love that by saying it you have to hear it, because then it isn't mine anymore, and what we have is the fact and the fantasy of a total era all around us. We cry as we come.

1 and 2 return and rejoin huddle. Committee negotiates proximity.

Scene Three (Two Minutes)

3, 4, and 5 break away from huddle. Repeat directions from above.

Joining the EU is like a marathon. When you run a marathon you are not competing against anyone else but yourself.

You can see—the EU is here to support you. With this strategy, we provide you with the perspective and the instruments you need. This will by no means be an easy ride. Far-reaching and unpopular reforms might be required. Tough choices will have to be made, and will have to be made *now*. This will require the work and input of all of you — not only the political leadership, but the opposition, academia, civil society, media, and business.

Notes on Scene Three

1. We encounter this in performance: the notion that ambiguity (aesthetic, formal, narrative) necessarily means a relinquishing of control; that ambiguity stands for a lack of intent; that ambiguity refers to authorial leaks. We instead think of ambiguity as a place of held dissonance, and the result of a plural authorial process (holding process in suspension). We think of plurality here in Hannah Arendt's work, meaning politics: 'our plural existence.'
2. Before this scene begins, we wait for longer than is comfortable and listen to the rumbling of traffic outside the window, and our own breathing.
3. Before the relationship has even been formalised, the language already sounds like a break up. Where's the honeymoon period?

Scene Four (Three Minutes)

Notes on Scene Four

Committee stands apart, looking away and facing outwards.

- 1: She said: 'getting lost is about letting the unfamiliar appear', as if | leak
- 2: Replace: loss
- 3: Replace: double truth
- 4: Replace: hope
- 5: Replace: (compelled to) dance
- 1: Replace: noise
- 2: I have made a pledge | leak but also, I know you shared these damaged landscapes
- 3: Replace: bodies
- 4: Replace: ruins
- 5: Replace: conflicts
- 1: Replace: waters
- 2: Replace: politics
- 3: Other avenues for collective illiberal democracy include:
- 4: Crucial moments
- 5: Duty of representation
- 1: Sisterhood
- 2: Dissolution
- 3: Forgery
- 4: Other tools include:
- 5: Hinging
- 1: Teetering
- 2: Edging
- 3: Splitting
- 4: Continuing
- 5: I know sometimes life can be a struggle 1:
Replace: leak
- 2: I know sometimes life can be a leak

- 1. When we say it's over we know exactly what it means (sing your song or read it like a sad poem).
- 2. 'Subscendence' is Timothy Morton's idea for a system in which the whole is less than the sum of its parts. Not that the whole is less real but that the parts are ontologically more than the whole. There is a radical equality to existence, but a not an equal claim to existence. Morton is not saying that the HIV virus is equal to a person infected with it, but that each exists equally and not in service of some more important teleology. Subscendence is holism as heterogeneous collectivity, not a whole that consumes its parts.
- 3. Could the constitutive break up speak to a unit of language that is less strong and stable than it appears? States, for example, leak. This does not mean that states are weak. States are weak for thinking that leaking is not an ecological mode of existence. In a sly reference to the sign works of Mladen Stilić, ideological speech is being interrogated for its constant rupture with specificity. As any fan of action movies knows, walls are best for breaking through.
- 4. The broadcasting of questions without answers. The affirmation that hearing is taking place, and understanding. More than that, that feelings are being heard. The sense that sentiments continue until the leak is stopped, which correlates sentiments with leaking and crystallises (for me) in an image of leaking tears. The crying will stop when the leak stops. (I'd like to link sentiments to pop songs—the sentimental but ultimately useless—the sentimental as empty gesture on the one hand, as commodity on the other.)

Scene Five (Three Minutes)

Notes on Scene Five

Image of ice sheets inverted.



Committee swaps numbers & applies fake blood to faces and exposed flesh. Stands together, forming a semi-circle, looking and facing inwards. Drops pages of script while speaking.

during the implementation period *what should I?*
a registration system – an essential preparation
for the new regime

so many things seem filled with the intent to be
lost existing structures resolution mechanisms
is no disaster

there should be a clear

CONSIDER VALUE WHOLLY STOP

BENEFIT EXISTING RESIDENTS BETTER STOP

– IT IS NOW MORE IMPORTANT THAN EVER THAT WE
HAVE THE RIGHT: STRONG AND COMPETITIVE
STOP

double lock: a guarantee

how should I?

this will not go on forever lose something door
keys

that if our collective endeavours

farther, faster, places, names

and look! my last what
should I?

STOP IMPLEMENTATION

PERIOD WHICH WE EXPECT TO BE AT LEAST TWO
YEARS STOP / MAY ALSO WISH TO TIGHTEN

/ IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD / THE

DEFINITION OF A FAMILY / IMPLEMENTATION

PERIOD / FROM ITS CURRENT MEANING

1.



2. D: 'Weaver birds that had taken refuge in a nearby tree fell to the ground. Car alarms went off. The few unbroken windows around the block shattered' (Okorafor 2014, 167).
3. B: 'The cinema was still on fire and in the scarlet light of the flames that occasionally shot up, three groups were seen hanging about the pavement, still as statues, watching the fire with a look of disgust' (Krasznahorkai trans. Szirtes 2016, 218).
4. The more playful, 'irrational,' less translatable, less semantic and informational aspects of the language, serve to emphasise and celebrate the vocal interplay which, as Adriana Cavarero suggests, constitutes a 'reciprocal invocation' of embodied uniqueness, or, to put it another way, a means of social bonding (2005, 170).
5. During rehearsal, this section had to be constantly stopped due to intense fits of laughter. The horror of legislating a break up is rendered bureaucratically. Could the laughter speak to the need for comedy in the current political situation, specifically the UK leaving the EU? Or has the current situation become too comedic itself, voiding the notion of citizenship into satire?

the vision

a continent I miss them

NOT FOR A RELATIONSHIP

THAT ENDED BUT ENVISAGE THAT NOW,

SATISFACTORILY: WE WISH TO IMPOSE AS SOON

AS, IN ANY CASE

FREE MOVEMENT WILL END

two rivers, a continent, the joking voice

IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD

MOVEMENT LAW

WILL NO LONGER APPLY **IMPLEMENTATION**

PERIOD AND THE EXTENDED FAMILY MEMBER,

PROVIDE VALID RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN

IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD WE PROPOSE

REASONABLE, BUT SPECIFIC, THRESHOLDS

STOP ENSURE THAT THEY SUPPORT THEMSELVES

IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD STOP

REDUCING THE OPPORTUNITY FOR WORKERS

SETTLE IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD

STOP *it wasn't a disaster*

not for a relationship that ended but

not for a relationship that ended but

a registration system — an essential

preparation for the new **IMPLEMENTATION**

PERIOD IMPLEMENTATION regime

SETTLED PERIOD IMPLEMENTATION

PERIOD STOP

Committee is silent for 30 seconds.

6. In a talk at the Neue Slowenische Kunst National Pavilion at the Venice Biennale 2017, Slavoj Žižek suggested that while it would be tempting to see the NSK as a postmodern joke of a state, the NSK is a real state whereas states attached to land have become jokes. In this scene, an attempt to make bureaucracy into poetry speaks back to the political work of Generative Constraints as a whole. What are the ways that our artistic practice can pay attention to the world?

7. In *Le Rire*, Henri Bergson writes of the social function of laughter as a correction to misbehaviour, such as the unwillingness to adjust one's trajectory despite the approach of an obstacle. This scene asks whether triggering article 50 is a joke or not. The laughter in the rehearsal room is in a way the inability to keep a straight face while doing this work of paying attention.

Scene Six (Two Minutes)

Notes on Scene Six

A song plays. Full sugar fun, vocoder synth-pop with a funky two-step beat.

Committee speaks/sings together.

We intend to heartbreak all | true blue
citizens | real life is a dying dream | let's walk
away, true citizens

But when we leave, we fade to grey | leaking
colours for this change | after exit, after me
and you | there's no more dancing to this
change

We are extended family no more | they said:
limit the distance | relationships need valid
proof | they said: re-define distance

Look for the rainbow, citizens | we're dancing
in the market | labour, study, dream to earn |
graduating in the market

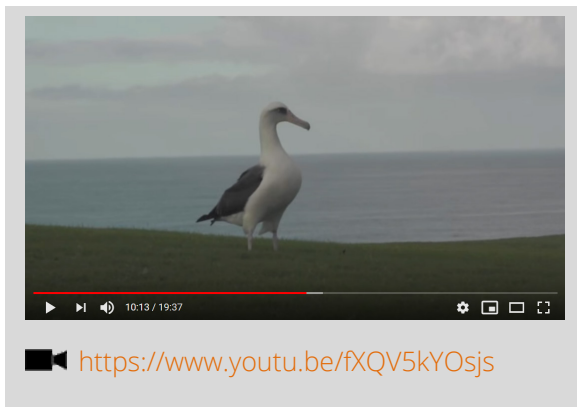
Goodbye is not the end of income | our love
will self- suffice | if you think you're good
enough, dance with us | you'll always be
someone's self-suffice

They said: your dream will never work | but
we're making this opportunity | no more
dependents, never settle down | time won't
change this opportunity

1. This scene is haunted by karaoke...
2. i feel /
in unison, sometimes
3. Play with the lack of specificity of the pronouns in love songs, with their potential for capacity and expansiveness (totality) — they might include everyone, they might be about everything! They absolutely *do not* and *are not*, and we know that, but the songs themselves don't seem to know that—they operate on the basis that no-one has discovered their truths, that they are exclusive, cold, cruel tools of Capitalism, that they are shiny sugary commodities designed to keep us desperate.
4. Jérôme Bel explains his use of pop songs as an attempt to find a commons between performers and spectators within the social situation of performance. Pop music, specifically the kind that is at risk of encouraging dance, follows the laughter of the previous scene. Perhaps the laughter was the beginning of the party. This is not accelerationism, and Generative Constraints is not advocating for the market to completely consume all forms of government. This is rather the pleasure of the possibility of beginning again, in the sense of Gertrude Stein, to see the break up as a way forward.

Scene Seven (Two Minutes)

Video of a solo albatross, its return to land.



Committee carefully wipes blood off each other, removes costumes, and tidies up stage. Picks up and holds onto performance detritus, scripts, wipes, ponchos, etc. Stands close together as 1 speaks.

What we've got in common is this break up. That is our relationship, that we are broken up. We will be broken up forever and that is the most romantic thing there is. We'll never always be together. We'll always be always apart.

Committee watches video until it ends. Holds silence.



Notes on Scene Seven

1. There is a fragment of time just before the end of the scene, in which we all wait for something; we are together in waiting, before the fabric falls apart.
2. as if there's more danger in the | idea of flight than in staying | home, as if laying back where | you stay precludes flying, as if | the symposium were theirs alone (Moten 2014, 63).
3. Charles Baudelaire's collection of poems *Les Fleurs du Mal* contains a poem entitled 'L'Albatros' (O large white migratory bird! O burden!) about men on ships who catch albatrosses for sport. In the final stanza, he goes on to compare poets to the birds — exiled from the skies and then weighed down by their giant wings, till death.
4. About entangled ways of life: 'third nature, [that is], what manages to live despite capitalism. To even notice third nature, we must evade assumptions that the future is that singular direction ahead. Like virtual particles in a quantum field, multiple futures pop in and out of possibility; third nature emerges within such temporal polyphony' (Lowenhaupt Tsing 2015, viii).
5. We come back to naturalism. This is theatre in some way, but it is skewed. The realism is performed outward with the audience, just as political speech is so often rendered in the fine brush strokes of fake news mimetic representation. Yet this is hopeful because it is sad.
6. The stage is cleaned at the end. The trace of this performance is the fact of it having been cleaned up. Bundled plastics, laundered T-shirts, laundered guilt. There is no such thing as leaving no trace. Lots of love.

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Biography

Generative Constraints is a committee that practises open-ended collaborative research into art, politics, and theory. We experiment with processes and structures of criticism, performance, poetics, and writing. Our activities include organising conferences and public dialogues, teaching, making original creative works, as well as digital publishing and exhibition curation.

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