

SCORING FOR CONVERSATION

Aaron Finbloom

Concordia University

aaron.finbloom@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the prospects of using verbal notation to score live conversation. It defines a practice of conversation scoring that lies in-between two poles of structured conversations 1) where the content is entirely scripted, and 2) in which a conversation is structured primarily based on an initial set of static conditions (ex. location, time, roles, etc). By working in this middle-ground, conversation scores push conversation to new pedagogical, formal, and methodological limits, while retaining critical elements of conversation such as: spontaneous interruptibility, investment in a subject matter, and a non-linear yet quasi-coherent thought pathway or topic. This paper will discuss notable examples of event-scores both as a means of distinguishing this practice from other verbal notational practices, and for the purposes of elucidating key notational methods which have influenced this practice. The bulk of the paper will then go on to discuss various types of conversational semantic (and para-semantic) directives and end by discussing mechanisms for sequencing these directives. It is my hope that by expanding scoring into a live conversational field, that the practice of conversation itself can be expanded by adopting notational methodologies and aesthetic components that allows us to conceive of conversation as not entirely bound by its content, but defined by its dynamic movements and performative parameters.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the Fall of 2015, I began to re-shape my current artistic practice in the direction of scoring for conversations. This development took place alongside my adviser Sandeep Bhagwati at Concordia University as we undertook an independent study called “Scoring Conversation” aimed at “translating” contemporary avant-garde music scores into conversation pieces. The description of this independent study reads:

“A score is traditionally understood as a visual method of transcribing music; however, in the past 80 years artists have begun to explore alternative methods of scoring that complicate dominant

paradigms in western musical notation. These alternative scorings re-think and re-map the relationship between what is played and notations that direct what is played. This course will look at these contemporary scoring techniques and theoretical disruptions to traditional scoring and begin to experiment with how to apply these techniques to conversation (i.e. semantic dialogue). The following are some questions that will be explored: Can one score a conversation that is both structured and spontaneous? How can the practice of conversation be expanded and diversified through scoring? Is some fundamental quality of conversation (authenticity, spontaneity, depth) lost when a conversation is scored?”¹

The practice quickly began to envelop a variety pedagogical fields and performative methodologies as I began experimenting with conversation scoring at residency programs, social occasions, workshops and university courses. Soon, it soon became clear that unique notation methodology was beginning to develop that responded to the nature of conversation – emergent, spontaneous, situative, non-linear, non-predetermined. It is the aim of this paper to describe these notational practices as they correspond to the emergent quality of conversation.

2. CONVERSATION

It is precisely these conversational qualities articulated above that presents the greatest creative challenges to the practice of scoring for conversation. In order to more precisely explicate conversation’s emergent qualities, I draw on the Russian linguist Lev Yakubinsky’s account of interruptibility:

“One might say that to a certain extent mutual interruption is characteristic of dialogue in general. Our participation in dialogue is determined by our expectation of being interrupted, by our awareness that an interlocutor is preparing to respond, by our fear that we might not be able to say all that we want to say.” [1]

The possibility of being interrupted and the awareness of a rejoinder being formed simultaneous to one’s

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¹ The documentation of this independent study is not published but is available upon request.

utterance, implies that a conversation cannot be entirely predetermined or planned, and suggests that conversation is improvisational. The practice of scoring for conversation, as I define it, must carve a delicate balance between elements that are overly scripted, which close down a conversation and do not allow conversational content to spontaneously emerge, and an opposing problem of scores which create external conditions for conversation to occur but do not directly prescribe conversational content in the moment it is occurring. It is in the creative play of this middle-ground that conversation scoring lies – this middle-ground which shares territory with the concept of “structured improvisation” and Bhagwati’s term “comprovisation”, defined as, “musical creation predicated on an aesthetically relevant interlocking of context-independent and contingent performance elements” [2]. Outside of the practice of conversation scoring, the vast manifold of conversational aspects – content, mood, tone, rate and duration of interruption, etc – are mostly contingent upon the given performance and various unplanned contextual conditions; however in conversation scores, some of these elements are aesthetically, or “consciously” [2], set-in-place, thereby creating a field of deterministic and indeterministic elements specific to each conversation score.

3. AIMS

As one expands scoring practices to include conversational elements, the question of intention or aim frequently arises. While I cannot speak towards the aim of all artists who score for conversation, I can speak towards some aims that I associate with this practice:

1) To develop a bilateral relationship between conversational content and context. For example, a given instruction that shapes the context of discourse (i.e. only speak in questions) will uniquely structure the content of what occurs. Likewise a conversation about ethics might call for a theatrical situation to help inform its content. Both content and context can condition each other and each score creates a structure that allows for a unique opening of these dual directional causal pathways.

2) To allow for marginalized methodological elements (ex. materiality, embodiment, nonsense) to begin to inform conversational practices. One example of this is within the culture of philosophical or intellectual conversation which assumes behaviors such as: mellow intonations (not too loud), somewhat passive bodily movement (sitting in chairs, standing at lecterns), non-excessive emotional intimacy, sentences which make sense, etc. By bringing in these margins not only are more people able to engage in a given practice (persons who might feel isolated from the conversation practice’s center), and not only is the conversational content itself expanded through a methodological widening, but additionally, the aims and consequences of a particular practice can be deepened, re-framed, or revitalized.

3) To create an aesthetic container for a conversation to form which has a particular style, character and feeling. In each score there is a unique combination of

the conversational content and the assortment of methodological cues (gestures, instructions for speech, movements, etc). At some moments of a conversation the mood may be serious and somber while people discuss morality, at other moments it can become playful and lively while discussing politics. The entirety of a given score aims for an integration or cohesion of both aesthetic content and conversational content (where this can include not only the conversation topic, but emotional, gestural or embodied factors). An ideal conversation score will create conversational pathways and methodological turns that form a cohesive aesthetic afforded by the activation of the piece’s structure and rule-set in conjunction with the immersive decisions formed by the players.

4. IN-BETWEEN SCRIPTS AND SCORES

There is a rich history of using word-based notation to score events which touch upon the notation methodologies I am exploring; however, some of these notation methods fail to score *within* a conversation and merely create the conditions for a conversation’s emergence. One can look at some classic Fluxus pieces such as George Brecht’s *Drip Music (1962)*, or Alison Knowles’s *Proposition #4 Child Art Piece (1962)*, wherein notation is used to define parameters for an emergent event. Let’s take Friedman’s *Restaurant Event (1964)* as an example.

“Dress as badly as possible. Wear surplus clothes, tattered shoes and an old hat. Go to an elegant restaurant. Behave with dignity and exquisite decorum. Request a fine table. Tip the maitre d’ well, and take a seat. Order a glass of water. Tip the waiters, the busboy and staff lavishly, then leave.” [3]

This score facilitates sets of actions, many of which implicate conversation (one example of which could be a discussion that occurs between the poorly dressed individual and the restaurant staff). The score creates conditions that surround these conversations, frames them, and supplies them with possible content; however, the score’s notational content, does not direct the particular moments of conversation. In the practice of scoring for conversation, I am invested in departing from this tradition of event scores, by creating more specific parameters for conversational content that works on conversation while it is happening.

There are also traditions of utilizing scripts to facilitate scripted or scored conversation which have the opposite problem of organizing semantic content which becomes too tightly bound to its instructions. A traditional theatrical script will indicate which words must be spoken and in what order. Each script differs in the para-semantic content that is organized around the speech, i.e. a given sentence can be spoken with various tones, moods, settings, and bodily and gestural variations. In fact, even a field such a Conversation Analysis, which has created transcription methodologies to account for these para-semantic cues [4], there is still room for some

improvisation; there is always some degree of contingency if these transcriptions were to be performed. However, in all these examples, participants performing these scripts are not free to determine the conversational content. As defined above, for a conversation to be a conversation, for it be interruptive and therefore somewhat spontaneous, one must not know *what* one is going to say, not merely not know *how* one is going to say it. In this sense, deterministic scores that prescribe the precise content of what to say, and when it must be said, foreclose the potential for a conversation to emerge.

Some event-scores do in-fact utilize notation that more directly speaks to the emergent content developed in particular moments of the score's performance, and these scores have been quite influential to the practice of scoring conversation. Some of these works structure their pieces with more detailed instructions alongside more specified sequencing, as seen in works such as Cornelius Cardew's *The Great Learning (1968-71)* or George Maciunas's *In Memoriam to Adriano Olivetti (1962)*, and Robert Ashley's *The Entrance (1965-6)* [5]. Seth Kim-Cohen's *How to Write A Text About How to Write a Text Score (And Why) (2009)* [5] is a clear example of a semantic score, and although it is written for monologue, is perhaps the best example of a neo-conversation score that I have found. The most influential event-scores for my practice of scoring conversation have been John White's *Newspaper-Reading Machine (1971)*, for its exegetical and textual components, and Douglass Barrett's *A Few Silences (2008)* for its innovative use of participant scoring within the event-score. Both of these pieces were originally written for groups of performers, making them more conducive to conversation, and were "translated" into Conversation Scores by Sandeep Bhagwati and myself in the Fall of 2015 [6].

5. SEMANTIC DIRECTIVES

The practice of scoring conversation utilizes a vast range of verbal instructions which will be discussed at length below. These instructions will hereby be called "semantic directives," which I define as the prescriptive use of language aimed at instructing participants in the meaningful use of words.

- 1: Read aloud a passage from Plato's Phaedrus
- 2: Take turns: Person A says sentences beginning with "If I were Socrates I would _____" while improvising the endings. Person B says sentences beginning with "If I were Phaedrus I would _____" while improvising the endings.
- 3: Present contrasting opinions argumentatively
- 4: Only ask questions
- 5: Discuss

Figure 1. Conversation Score Sample #1.

Figure 1 represents a sample conversation score which progresses from highly scripted to minimally scripted elements. Either ends of the score display the limits of conversation scoring discussed above. Round 1

utilizes pre-set conversation content, lines read verbatim similar to a traditional theatre script. In Round 5 the instructives merely indicates that conversation should occur, and the content is conditioned by the implicit setting and the prior rounds leading up to this one. The rounds in-between present three possible midpoints between these poles. Round 4 is a section that leaves open the content and style and gives only a single directive that asks for an interrogative mood via a grammatical directive. Round 3 presents 1) a slightly more prescriptive directive that instructs mood through a direct indication to change mood ("be argumentative") 2) asks for a particular topic to be discussed (politics), and also 3) includes a more structural directive (present contrasting opinions). Round 2 directs the participant to use sentence stems which provides a partially scripted sentence that the participant utters and then fills in with their own improvised content.

These specific directives in the order that they occur in this score help to facilitate a coherent movement of conversational content, mood and form. David Kennedy describes this coherence as a coordination and holding together of multiplicitous perspectives through which meaning comes to be shared alongside a growing complexity and entanglement of the very perspectives that supply this meaning [7, p.210]. This coherence is made possible by conversational investment, by a collective feeling that "something is at stake" in the conversation. The proper placement of semantic directives in the right time, can create responsiveness and help to transfer the content (thematic or emotional) from one round to the next and establish greater coherence and investment. For example, imagine if Rounds 1 and 5 were replaced. This would create an entire conversational thematic buildup that would then be abruptly altered by a passage of scripted text. Rounds 2-3 are attempts to dive into the rising investment by prodding issues that may be at the heart of the interlocutors involved. Quasi-open rounds like #4 are essential as they allow issues which may have strayed from the interests of those involved (via the in-depth directives and the specific direction of the conversation) to be brought back into the discussion.

6. DIRECTIVE GRAMMARS

John Lely in *Word Events*, devotes much attention to the varied grammars that event-scores can utilize calling attention to context, register, process, tense, mode, mood, voice and circumstance, stressing the importance of this work because, "grammatical choices can create very different perspectives on the world; for instance, through a change in one element of grammar, a description of activity can be transformed into a command" [5, p.3]. As I discuss various conversation scoring elements I will touch on some of these distinctions brought forward by Lely focusing on an analysis of key grammatical functions particular to conversation score usage.²

² Lely devotes a small section titled "verbal processes" which perhaps comes to the closest to my usage of the term semantic directives for conversation; however very little is said towards this practice in this section [7, p. 21].

Conversational practices outside of the scope of scored conversation utilize directives both implicitly and explicitly and create categorical distinctions separating one type of directive from another. Matthew Lippman, one of the founding practitioners of Philosophy For Children (P4C), a practice of structured facilitation to create philosophical dialogue with children, utilizes mental directives such as “reflect” and “imagine” to bring a meta-awareness to the process of thinking and thereby aid the practice of philosophical dialogue [8]. A drama therapy practice might utilize more active, ludic and emotionally-oriented directives which aid patient expression. Conversational practices that foster authentic connection such as Circling [9] use semantic directives that embrace focusing on inner-feelings and what is felt in the moment rather than more topical or information-based conversation topics.

- | |
|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1: Only use sentences beginning with “I feel” 2: Only ask questions 3: Pick a question and discuss 4: Uncover underlying assumptions |
|---|

Figure 2. Conversation Score Sample #2.

Figure 2 presents a sample conversation score arranged to reflect some varied conversational practices each of which shapes the conversational direction giving it a certain focus, mood, and structure. Round 1 receives inspiration from practices of non-violent communication, therapeutic and authentic relating practices, but also has roots that lie within the linguistic device of personal pronouns. Unlike most words, “I” is a deictic term; its meaning is contextually grounded, as each time someone speaks “I” it denotes a different entity. Emile Benveniste points out that it is this conversational exchange of “I”s that grounds dialogue itself within an interlocking reciprocity of identity markers [10]. As the “I” switches from each interlocutor the unique emotional realms of each also begins to transfer as well, providing fodder for emotional connectivity and an excellent beginning of a conversation score if the intention is to form connection.

The practice of only asking questions derives from a few different cultural sources. The Question Game is featured in Tom Stoppard’s *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* (1990); however my usage of questioning in this manner is not an agonistic back-and-forth aimed at determining a winner and loser. Constant questioning opens up a field of curiosity which does not close-down in an answer, but rather is re-opened and re-engaged again and again through further questions. Careful listening allows for these questions to build upon prior questions. By scoring the question round after the exchanges of I-statements, this allows for an initial intimacy to provide the fodder for an expansive inquisitive exploration of relational content that emerges from this opening round.

Round 3 utilizes a directive taken from a wide variety of pedagogical practices (from salons, to debate to teams, to classrooms) and functions predominantly as an open directive whose content is determined by the rounds

immediately preceding and following. It is important to note how vital open moments such as this can be in the construction of conversation scores as they allow for breath, reflection and spacing. Quite often in the practice of scoring for conversation, too many directives can leave performers awash in a sea of instructions without the ability to speak “freely”. Open directives create an opportunity to explore the terrain opened by more rigorous structures of the preceding rounds.

Finally Round 4 asks for a deeper investigation, using techniques borrowed from P4C. Other examples of P4C techniques include, “pointing out the necessary implications of a statement,” “identifying a contradiction,” and “restating a point as a logical proposition” [7, p.148]. Since P4C is largely a rationally focused practice and helps develop subtle depths within an already-established topic, it helps to utilize these techniques once a conversation already has gathering ground and contains a central topic of discussion.

7. PARA-SEMANTIC DIRECTIVES

In addition to directives that instruct conversationalists in semantic content, various para-semantic directives can greatly enhance the potential range and depth of a conversation score. Many of these para-semantic directives play with structural factors regarding time, spacing, frequency and number of players.

The gap between utterances is one of the most sensitive aspects of a conversation to score via para-semantic directives as it contains the mechanism by which conversationalists listen and respond. Dmitri Nikulin, in *Dialectic and Dialogue* speaks of this interruptive gap as, “a pause taken by the speaker in order to allow the other to act and react against the original and provocative action, thought, or utterance” [11, p. 98]. The conversation gap between utterances is far from empty, but rather it both signals and gives time for the conversational responses which build a conversation via a back-and-forth procedure. By adjusting the length of this pause, the frequency of pauses, their affective quality, mood or tone, one can begin to design the degree of responsiveness within a conversation.

- | |
|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1: Allow long gaps of silence between utterances 2: Two persons discuss a topic brought up from the prior round while all other participants interrupt with one-sentence questions or clarification 3: One person give a monologue 4: Two persons give simultaneous monologues 5: Write |
|---|

Figure 3. Conversation Score Sample #3.

Figure 3 provides a sample conversation score that displays some common para-semantic directives that I use in designing conversation scores. Round 1 utilizes a technique borrowed from Quaker Meetings of providing long gaps of silence between speech to allow for a greater reflective period of inward analysis. By providing this in

the opening of the score, players begin with an emotional attunement and quiet contemplative togetherness.

Round 2 divides participants, by giving only two players a chance for unrestricted conversation, while the rest of the players can give only brief interruptions in the form of either questions or clarification. Given that conversation is predominantly a monophonic action (i.e. conversation is a series of back-and-forth monophonic rejoinders, and only rarely and briefly does conversation erupt into polyphonic, simultaneous utterances), conversations with many participants can easily leave someone out, or else take a long time to allow everyone the opportunity for expression. In which case, breaking-up conversation into smaller groupings can be a vital directive in conversation scores, as this technique allows conversations to move more deeply with greater rapidity. The particular advantages afforded by the directives of this round is that all given participants *can* speak (it is not an abrupt shift of entirely active to passive); rather there are two main speakers (mostly uninhibited in their speech) while the rest of the participants play at giving quick rejoinders.

Although monologue has elements that are antithetical to conversation in that, “it does not expect an answer and thus does not presuppose the other to respond and ask questions” [11, p.82], it can still be a useful antipode to conversational interruptibility if used strategically. Monologue is the defining conversational attitude of academic lectures, conferences and speeches. By polarizing the role of speaker and listener, monologue creates the capacity for vast hierarchical displacement, but also for uninterrupted utterances and a kind of calm that is provided by knowing one is safe from the somewhat anxiety-producing conversational fact of interruption. Monologue provides a temporary, yet perhaps necessary, facade in the face of interruptibility’s reminder that we are never stable solid entities, that the dialogic intersubjective state is actually the ontological grounds of our very subjectivity [7, p. 81-6], [11, p.103-5].

An opposing extreme of singular monologues is the difficult-to-attain, polyphonic simultaneity of dual monologues. This practice of continuously speaking *while* another is speaking is found in brief moments in both Linda Griffith’s *Age of Arousal* (2004) and Glenn Gould’s *Solitude Trilogy* (1967-77), but departs from these examples as my utilization of this practice asks for simultaneous speaking and listening which eradicates the temporal divide that separates these two activities. A hard-to-achieve radical togetherness is formed in this activity; however resistance usually occurs and much skill is required to work out the nuanced tempos and dynamics of voice that make this achievable. By placing this polyphonic round after a singular monologue, it allows for another player to seamlessly come into this round, by adding to the threads of the preceding monologue.

Writing, in Round 5 of Fig. 3, creates another kind of conversational polyphony, as each participant can express thoughts simultaneously but without significantly influencing one another. This silent quality of writing has long been considered one of writing’s greatest assets and

makes writing’s distributability radically different from that of speech [12, 13]. While writing falls on the outskirts of a conversational practice as it is predominantly non-verbal and non-interruptive, it nonetheless can be strategically inserted into conversation practices to provide dynamic gaps in audible expressive content, to pause the conversational competition for attention and voice, and to force conversation into a period of isolated individuated expression around a given topic, which can then later be integrated into the verbal conversation.

8. GAME MECHANISMS

A vast array of event-scores and avant-garde music compositions utilize gaming mechanisms (such as timings, cards, turn order, etc) to sequence rounds and actions. From Cage’s chance encounters with the *I Ching*, to George Macianus’s *In Memoriam to Adriano Olivetti* (1962) which utilizes found tapes from adding machines to determine the ordering of actions for a series of rounds, to Michael Parson’s *Walk* (1969) which uses randomly assigned numbers to determine walkers speed and frequency of pauses [5], these mechanisms can create a greater degree of interactivity in scores by resisting linearity and making the sequencing techniques necessitate player interaction. This is particularly important for conversation scores, as conversation’s emergent quality necessitates nonlinearity (in “organic” conversation one doesn’t know beforehand in which order semantic content will be uttered and arranged). Prior to this section, I have discussed how particular semantic directives help to achieve this nonlinear quality in conversation by creating openness and spontaneity *within* a particular round or moment of conversing; however, this nonlinearity can also occur in the structuring of the rounds themselves, the way in which one directive is chosen, and the method by which the score moves from one directive to another.



Figure 4. Example of an individual card hand from *Oscillations of One-to-Many* (2017) by Hannah Kaya and Aaron Finbloom.

What does determines the transition from one semantic directive to the next? One option is that rounds can be timed, and timers can be used to indicate when switching should occur. In some instances this can aid a conversation by forcing it to advance to the next stage even when one doesn't feel ready to advance, thereby moving a conversation away from its felt necessity and uncovering challenging, uncomfortable and unanticipated moments. Another option, which has proven to be quite fruitful, is to explore inherent mechanisms within a round that could be utilized for switching. In my piece *Deictic Dialectics* (2016) each rounds implicates different players in different roles. The responsibility to switch rounds is either felt out by one of the players as they consider when the round needs to advance (perhaps when the conversation is in need of movement) or they feel into a directed approximate timing. In these cases the round switches can be more fluid which allows the conversation to stay within a topic and not get excessively sidetracked by an abrupt transition. This has been further enhanced by initiating the switch via a directive for bodily movement, which signals a new scene or platform for dialogue and can allow a conversation to remain verbal, while peripherally and simultaneously identifying an embodied cue.



Figure 5. Example of a pooled card hand from *Oscillations of One-to-Many* (2017) by Hannah Kaya and Aaron Finbloom.

Many event-scores and conversation scores also utilize cue cards to display the directives, which makes the interactive transitions of rounds even more rule-based and formulaic. Some examples of this include Ellen Burr's *Ink Bops* (2017) or John Zorn's *Cobra* (1984). In each card-based gaming piece, the rules governing the use of the cards and the mechanisms of card sequencing differ from round to round and even from card to card. In some conversation pieces players can have a hand of cards, each representing a conversation cue to be activated only by the card holder, but potentially on either herself, another interlocutor or the entire group (see

Figure 4). Another option is to create a pooled hand, whereby all the players share an open hand and any player can, at a given time, play any card from this hand (see Figure 5). In the former, card choices are activated by one player's individual discretion which then alters the dynamic system; in the later, all players have the capacity to play a given card at any time which allows for a more collaborative conversational modality. A number of mechanisms can also be deployed for determining how cards can be distributed, chosen, discarded, etc. For example in some pieces, cards can be used twice before being discarded, in others cards are never discarded and can be used any number of times. In addition some pieces provide players with the opportunity to generate their own cards thereby giving participants the opportunity to design directives unique to the conversation that is occurring.

9. TECHNOLOGY

The above examples and theoretical implications of conversation scoring are presented in a somewhat preliminary manner given that the practice of conversation scoring is still within an embryonic phase of development. As such, the research that this paper provides is intended to lead towards the eventual development and realization of scores made for conversation. Up until the present, the actual number of implemented conversation scores are few, and their main method of presentation derives from their Fluxus background – on sheets of paper giving instructions – or from game pieces like *Cobra* – with cue cards giving instructions to performers. I anticipate that the next stages of conversation scoring development will most likely follow from implementing diverse digital and computational technologies.

One advantage of developing scores with greater technological implementation is the increased ability to reduce extraneous physical elements involved in the performance of the scores. As of now most scores demand for someone to physically turn a page, hold up a card, or write down a new instruction, all of which create theatrical assumptions that these movements themselves carry meanings. By displaying the scores on a screen or with headphones this would allow for directions to shift seamlessly without an added action imparting its own non-intended performative meaning. Additionally technological innovations such as headphones or projected instructions create the potential for a greater range of performative movements, as both reduce a conversationalist's necessity to stay in a single place to see an instruction or to be burdened by holding cards or sheets of paper. Furthermore by giving individually microphones to interlocutors and supplying audience members with headsets, this can create the potential for the audience to choose which conversationalist they are listening to, giving added interactivity to a score's performance.

Another major advantage afforded by involving technology lies in the ability to play with imbricating textuality into the conversational pieces. One piece that I

created which plays with this potential, *Memory Pharmacy* (2014), was inspired by a passage on the origins of writing at the end of Plato's *Phaedrus*. The process of creating this piece began as I replaced Plato's interlocutor's lines of agreement with a semantic directive asking, "what do you think?" The textual passage was then read aloud by participants, however, when they reached these moments in the text, the semantic directives would pull the readers out of the text and prompt them to conduct a spontaneous conversation about the passage. After either reaching a discursive conclusion or achieving boredom, the interlocutors would then return to reading the text aloud. I then took audio recordings of these conversations and transcribed them to create a new text that included both original Platonic passages and the interlocutor's responses. I repeated this procedure a number of times until I obtained an extensive supply of responses, after which I then attempted to combine these responses into a unified text. I found this task of unification difficult, if not near impossible, for each time this procedure was enacted, different conversational choices were chosen. For example, sometimes a passage was agreed with, other times a repetition was asked for, or in other instances an interlocutor emphatically disagreed with Socrates. I soon realized that if I wanted to create an amalgamated text that honored these conversational divergences, that I would have to take advantage of software used for designing such works of electronic literature – Twine.

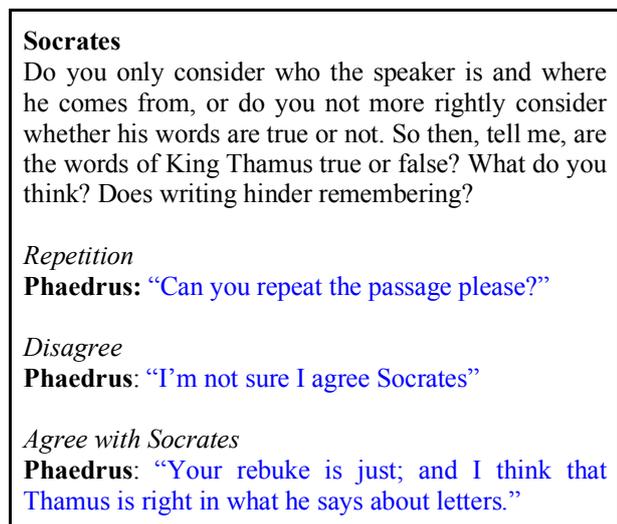


Figure 6. Segment from *Memory Pharmacy* which depicts conversational choices.

I used Twine to combine the conversational transcriptions and represent divergent dialogical pathways by making an interactive conversation game whereby interlocutors would read aloud the text while choosing which conversation pathway they wanted to embark upon. In Figure 6 we can see an example of how one moment of these multiplicitous conversational pathways were codified using Twine. The bolded text indicates the speaker. The italics tell the reader the type of option a given conversational pathway opens. The blue lines must be spoken aloud but also clicked on, upon

which a new conversational passage is opened. Twine creates an interactive textual interface that allows for polyvocality and non-linearity by not forcing authorial decisions such as which conversational pathway deserves greater attention, focus or dominance; rather, users are given the agency to chose a given conversational path. However, somewhat problematically, Twine forecloses the potential for users to generate new conversational pathways, and creates a conversation that is mainly the re-reading and re-enacting of previously constructed utterances. I attempted to remedy this by using open-ended directives within the piece to create opportunities for the conversation to generate new possibilities (see Figure 7) and to step outside of the pre-programmatic text. Integrating semantic directives into the interactive story-telling platform allowed users to create new conversational content and thereby created the potential for a spontaneous dialogue to form alongside a textual interface. *Memory Pharmacy's* use of technology afforded the opportunity to play on the edge of a spontaneous, live, oral dialogue alongside visual, textual, static transcriptions. The digital interface allowed for the creation of a dialogic game which integrated transcriptions with conversation, writing with speaking and non-linear pathways with pre-determined directionality. This complicated dance between these elements would have not have been possible without the digital interface utilized.

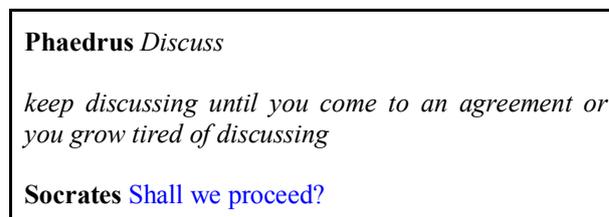


Figure 7. Segment from *Memory Pharmacy* which depicts departure from the text.

I anticipate that the next stages of scoring for conversation will be set on various technological platforms that help expand the potential of this alternative notational process and further integrate and intertwine oral and written discourses. Writing affords one the ability to see, dissect and rearrange ideas more easily than oral discourses; however it also detracts from the speed of utterance possible with spoken discourse, as well as the wider range of bodily arrangements that one can perform while speaking. I am most excited about the potential to integrate text-to-speech technologies into conversational performances, which would allow for participants to write via speech – to utilize the benefits of writing without detracting from the embodied fluidity of speech. Moreover, were an oral conversation to be quickly translated to a textual medium, it could then be analyzed using data analysis tools and AI. One could search for patterns within the conversation and generate directives based on these patterns. For example, one could set parameters for how many questions need to be asked during a particular round and then utilize analysis of the conversation already produced to then determine

the next directive that would appear on the screen. Conversational scoring such as this is likely to push this nascent practice's potential to create new conversational situations, and find new ways of dynamically investing conversational content.

10. CONCLUSIONS

My hope is that this article has shed some light on the beginnings of a conversation scoring practice alongside offering considerations of notational methodologies of such a practice. As far as my research disclosed, this practice of creating conversation scores (which neither creates completely scripted content nor merely creates exterior conditions for conversations to exist) is an innovative practice and in this sense I believe conversation scoring to be an emerging field of composition. The focus on this paper has been in looking at conversation scores that 1) feature directives and sequencing which help to foster an emergent and quasi-spontaneous conversational arc and which 2) aim towards an aesthetic coherence of content, mood and form. Therefore, this paper presents a rather narrow conversational scoring focus, and the variety of notational techniques for conversation scoring remains quite open and in development. There are many semantic and para-semantic fields that I have not discussed, including: gestural directives, props, roleplay, location, durational pieces, etc. There are also a great many notational systems that I did not discuss which include graphic or imagistic notation for spatial arrangement, gestural notation, or even, as seen in some Conversation Analysis practices, notations for eye gazing [14]. It is my hopes that in the forthcoming years of development and dissemination, that this practice will receive more attention, that more artists will devise conversation scores, and that a wider variety of writing regarding its techniques will become available.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my adviser Sandeep Bhagwati for all the time, support, feedback and creative input that he has put towards this developing practice. I would like to thank Hannah Kaya, Bronwen Moen and Emma Lee Iverson for all their continued and invaluable contribution as conversation score participants and for their creative collaboration.

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