The following full text is a publisher's version.

For additional information about this publication click this link.
http://hdl.handle.net/2066/208079

Please be advised that this information was generated on 2020-02-28 and may be subject to change.
Organizing the unfinalizable

A critical inquiry into the ‘responsible organization’ of a forensic assertive community treatment practice

Chris Smissaert
Organizing the unfinalizable
A critical inquiry into the ‘responsible organization’ of a forensic assertive community treatment practice

Chris Smisaert
Organizing the unfinalizable
A critical inquiry into the 'responsible organization' of a forensic assertive community treatment practice

Proefschrift

ter verkrijging van de graad van doctor
aan de Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen
op gezag van de rector magnificus prof. dr. J.H.J.M. van Krieken,
volgens besluit van het college van decanen
in het openbaar te verdedigen op vrijdag 1 november 2019
om 12.30 uur precies

by

David Christiaan Smissaert
genomen op 1 november 1977
te Utrecht
Table of contents

Part 1 | Questions
1 How is making people responsible for wicked problems not a relevant critical management studies question? 10
1.1 Revamping CMS with Churchman’s moral outrage 18
1.2 Performativity or the idea of improvement 22
1.3 Reflexivity’s ‘maximum loop’ 27
1.4 Denaturalizing the real, the beautiful and the good 32
1.5 Becoming responsive to the study of wicked problems 35
2 Unfinalizawhat? 38
2.1 Drawing responsibility into the unfinalizable 41
2.2 Scaffolding personal responsibility 45
2.3 Moral prolapse 49
2.4 Close encounters of the third kind 54
2.5 Understanding organized responsibility 60
3 Could a method of inquiry be made answerable? 62
3.1 Almost an idiot, or: to each his own 63
3.2 Othering the ‘mad, bad and sad’ 66
3.3 Collecting data 69
3.4 Data analysis and writing 79
3.5 Toward an answerable inquiry 85

Part 2 | Answers?
4 About a knife, a letter and instant soup 90
4.1 Grid and play in the space of the everyday 90
4.2 Time in touch with the other 98
4.3 Bakhtin’s Golden Ass 105
4.4 Problems of personal responsibility 114
4.5 The gesture of Mrs. N. 119
5 Organizing moral prolapse 122
5.1 An idea of embodied generosity in organization 122
5.2 Bakhtin’s discursive straitjacket 124
5.3 X 135
5.4 Being dis/membered 141
5.5 A bitter carnival of twenty-first century organizing 146
6 Navigating Narrenschiff narratives 150
6.1 Prisoners of the passage being patient 150
6.2 The polyphonic kybernetes 156
6.3 Answerability’s anticipated others 164
6.4 What is to be done? 170
6.5 ‘The court of dispassionate human conscience’ 174
Part 1 | Questions
1 How is making people responsible for wicked problems not a relevant critical management studies question?

When I started working as a managerial clerk at a mental health and addiction care organization situated in a city in the Netherlands, I became interested in a recently formed team of mental health care practitioners who provide what is called assertive community treatment (ACT) to persons with a criminal justice record and/or a history of violent behavior, ‘forensic ACT’ in short. This forensic ACT team is a small part of a large health care organization. The team, established in 2011, was one of the first teams in the Netherlands to combine intensive outreaching mental health care with the criminal justice objective of diminishing recidivism. The team consists of about 12 practitioners to support a shared caseload of around 100 patients, to treat their disorders and addictions with medication and therapy, to help them develop basic life skills to recover and participate in society, and to assist them in accessing the public services they are entitled to but fail to acquire. But, parallel to this care, the team monitors the risk that patients might pose to damage themselves and others around them, and ultimately society at large. The team will intervene, or have others intervene, forcefully, if deemed necessary.

As with most mental health care teams, the forensic ACT team employs a set of eligibility criteria to regulate the in- and outflow of patients. People with (severe) mental illness who have been convicted of a violent offense and/or have recently shown violent or threatening behavior toward either civilians and/or practitioners are eligible for forensic ACT, which sets the team apart from other ACT teams. The typical patient is a ‘frequent flyer’ who has been detained or faced compulsory clinical admission several times and will probably continue to do so (Place et al., 2011). Forensic ACT thus has its members, without the physical means to secure themselves (such as in a clinical setting, e.g., walls and nearby security teams), reach out to patients with a proven history of volatile behavior. Finally, while the mainstay of the team’s everyday work is meeting patients, there is a substantial amount of routine desk work: reporting and fulfilling requirements for procedures such as patient placement schemes. But patient placement can amount to an impossible feat. The ACT model was created in 1970s United States at a time when its integrated approach was a response to a limited and patchy urban infrastructure (Salyers & Tsemberis, 2007). Nowadays, and definitely in the Netherlands, the institutional landscape is quite the opposite and, ironically, forensic ACT teams are now occupied to a significant extent in navigating their patients along not only the plethora of public service providers, but also along their interorganizational networks. The attempts of these networks to cut through the clutter have generated their own Kafkaesque gatekeeping instruments on top of those exerted by their members (see Hodson et al., 2012; Graeber, 2012; for an ethnographic account of these logistic devices, see Draus, 2004). One wonders whether patients, alongside non-patients, may relapse into crises or violent offenses as a consequence of their incapability to stomach the interpretive labor required by the structural violence of monological service provision interfaces.

What continues to fascinate me about this forensic ACT practice is that they operate at the juncture, on the threshold, of two public domains and must somehow be answerable for simultaneously servicing the societal objectives in those two domains: providing care to the patient and providing security to society (etymologically, to secure stems from the Latin se ‘free from’ + cura ‘care’). As such, this is one of those teams that operates from day to day behind weekly newspaper headlines, such as: ‘Severely disturbed person harms or kills...’ Followed by questions infused with moral outrage, such as: How could this have happened? How could this predator be on the loose? Why did the organizations involved fail to take responsibility? The work practices of these practitioners dwell below the public’s radar. Faced with impossible, throbbing problems, they deliberate daily about the sensible thing to do and go on doing it, for people like the ones we read about in the newspapers, for the people around them, and for themselves. Indeed, in the wake of an ongoing deinstitutionalization of mental health care, forensic ACT has become something of a favorite of contemporary political debate on dealing with ‘confused’ (verward, in Dutch, which might translate more precisely into ‘entangled’) persons. Community teams like this are heralded as effective performers, better embedded in community networks and, finally, operating at a lower cost than inpatient arrangements, although academic research on forensic ACT has been scant and patchy. Concurrent with an emergence of hybrid forensic mental health care teams in the Netherlands is the rise in government funding for such programs, legal-political advances such as the coming into force of the Act of Forensic Care in 2019, and urban developments in which, as pointed out by Van der Post (2012), ‘the total absolute number of psychiatric patients coming into contact with the police before an emergency consultation increased more than fourfold’ (p. 46) between 1983 and 2004. In sum, care, such as that provided on the basis of the ACT model, is increasingly applied to criminal justice-involved persons in the United States and since 2007 in the Netherlands as well. As such, hybrid care/security provision has become a panacea for dealing with so-called ‘confused and violent’ persons. But, as critical forensic care scholar McCann already argued in 1998:

There is a real need to investigate the effects of caring for forensic patients in the community. Issues of dangerousness, of treatability and of supervision are difficult enough within the confines of an institution. Without the boundaries that physical containment creates these issues become a daily, if not hourly, dilemma for the professionals involved, many of whom will not have the experience or the training necessary to be able to deal with these issues confidently. With the reality of interprofessional mistrust and inadequate collaboration just around the corner, the
ability to control not only outcomes for patients, but for the professionals involved, has become a priority. (p. 48)

In professions such as nursing that already rank amongst the highest as regards to workplace violence (Jackson et al., 2002; Estryn-Behar et al., 2008), the team practitioners work toward realizing an amalgam of caring for and securing persons at the fringes and yet in the heart of society: an extreme alternative case of organizational ambidexterity, you might say. Understanding what this organizational borderline predicament means to the practitioners involved, as they enter into dialogue with each other about their daily experiences, has received little attention thus far; let alone understanding how their organization itself is related to their stories of responsibility. It is a practice permeated with unfnalizables, as I will argue below: waverling self–other axes, the turbulence of everyday events, and discursive ambiguities on and between each conceivable ‘level.’ In every practical way, not a place for an awkward pen-pusher such as myself, as I would quickly find out, but just the place for me, though, in theory.

In his In Praise of Bureaucracy: Weber – Organization – Ethics, Du Gay (2000) provided an analysis of how traditional public arrangements have been met with increased misgivings and how under the sway of New Public Management a ‘fresh’ entrepreneurial governance took hold of organizing across public sector domains. Accountable for both societal problems themselves (on a micro-scale) and for the cost of tackling them, fragmented responsibilities were reassembled into more individuated units, intended to cut through the bureaucratic clutter. As Du Gay (2000) contended:

Performance management and related techniques function as forms of responsibilization which are held to be both economically desirable and personally ‘empowering.’ This requirement that individuals become more personally exposed to the risks and costs of engaging in a particular activity is held to encourage them to build resources in themselves. (p. 85)

Accompanying this approach is the emergence of hybrid, ‘entrepreneur-like’ teams characterized as ‘clusters of responsibilities’ by Painter-Morland (2007), who was concerned with the ethical purview of this development. The practice of forensic ACT, which serves as the single case study in this thesis, appears as a particularly appropriate example both as an individuated unit and of such a cluster. As team member Uriah (all practitioners’ names are pseudonyms) explained in an interview:

That’s ACT, you know, team members should support each other, that’s how it works. Look, with normal outpatient services, support stops when a practitioner falls ill, but here you remain in business. Patients can still be admitted; decisions can be made quickly; someone’s welfare benefits are arranged, we can arrange a shelter if you’re out of a home, doesn’t matter how difficult, we can arrange something, uh, so that’s the beauty of it. Everything is integrated, that’s the beauty of the system, you know. (interview II, 1 Nov. 2012)

The ‘beauty of the system’ takes on flesh in the intricate everyday. Patients who have had a turbulent past, or those who are still considered to be a risk for other inhabitants or neighbors, may, for example, find it impossible by themselves to sleep anywhere but on the street or at acquaintances’ places until they are kicked out. Some have burnt through all the obvious and less obvious options, leaving the team wondering what to do next. Not having shelter may quickly aggravate their mental and social well-being and safety which, in turn, makes it harder to find and keep shelter. At times, the team comes to an – albeit temporary – conclusion that they cannot do anything in their power to resolve the problem. The example of these patient placement logistics may remind us of the wicked problem: “that class of social system problems which are ill-formulated, where the information is confusing, where there are many clients and decision makers with conflicting values, and where the ramifications in the whole system are thoroughly confusing” (Churchman, 1967, p. 141). It can be a frustrating experience, which may produce a sense of futility or despair. In other situations, it is not so much that all the options are burnt through, but practitioners become entangled in another kind of dilemma, such as the one discussed below. Now this is quite a long excerpt to read, and there will be more excerpts like this one. One reason for this, marking a difference from similar qualitative studies, is that the ‘data’ gathered are mostly recorded dialogues in which I did not participate and over which I had no control to ‘steer’ the responses into manageable soundbites. So, much like joining an ongoing conversation of some strangers, you need to be able to ‘get into’ the story first before we can really understand and participate.

Mary: Mr. E., should we see him today again?
Ed: Yes, for sure. That’s become a whole fuss. Mr. E. cannot go back to his own Housing First [also a pseudonym] apartment and I had the key with me and uh...I had arranged with Housing First that I would return that key, but I hadn’t got around to it. Yesterday Mr. E. called me to ask for his key and I thought: ‘Oh shit. This has become very complicated now, like, What am I supposed to do with this?’ I noticed that it was just TOO complex for me now, and I thought: ‘To hell with this, I’m not doing this properly.’ So, I had Nick bring the keys back to Housing First. And uh... his not-going to make it there, for long ....... ‘Well yeah, I, I, I thought: ‘I actually don’t want to get involved. We are the ones providing mental health care, we got you out of your house already while we shouldn’t have.’

Nick: And Housing First is for housing?
Ed: And Housing First is for housing. And you [Mr. E.] should arrange your housing with them. Because now he hired a lawyer to make that...he is leaving the clinic today, so he has to, we have to arrange a night shelter for him. So that’s going to be tense, and if he handles that ok, then you know that that [Housing First] will open up, but
Nick: But that's just what she's doing. Yes. But well, that's priority number two. Now, there's no other way than to have him stay at the night shelter, although, uh... I don't know... I already know for sure that he'll totally start hitting the bottle there. And if he'd go to his apartment, there's alcohol there too.

Mary: He's in a REALLY bad condition, you know.

Ed: He needs to be seen by us. I am not going alone to him. He totally got under my skin, and uh... trying to make me emotional, yeah, I am not going to do this alone.

Nick: What time is the visit?

Ed: Well yeah, uh... when we have some news for him... (day 7, 19 Oct. 2012)

Ed is caught in a quandary. Mr. E. has been admitted to a clinic to treat his alcohol addiction, and soon he will be released. But he will be unable to return to his Housing First apartment because of transgressing the required conditions. Failing to return Mr. E.'s apartment key to Housing First immediately, he couldn't tell Mr. E. that he had been unable to return it, even though it should not have been his responsibility in the first place. The team point out that it is the legal responsibility of Housing First to take care of housing for Mr. E., and at the same time they know that Housing First is not doing what is required to enable Mr. E. to gain access to a placement at an alternative housing program with the care and support needed to address his addiction. However, if the team presses the matter further, they fear that they themselves will become responsible for Mr. E.'s impossible case. This interorganizational problem seems to run parallel with Ed's own difficulties with Mr. E., emphasizing he cannot alone address and answer this problem.

In a more discursive perspective, the abstract linearity of institutional standards and procedures is on display, portraying the patient as a case that does not fit institutional arrangements. Running through this plotline are fragments of interpersonal appeals: a need to care for another unable to care for himself, to force Xandra to take responsibility, to give Mr. E. the key in spite of the promise not to, to break up the whole arrangement to get Mr. E. the access he needs, to not face up to Mr. E. who got under the skin of Ed. The threshold between the private and the public is crossed as Ed wakes up in the morning and instantly thinks about this predicament; he is becoming personally frustrated with E.'s impossible case. This interorganizational problem seems to run parallel with Ed's own difficulties with Mr. E., emphasizing he cannot alone address and answer this problem.
Part 1 | Questions

How is making people responsible for wicked problems not a relevant CMS question?

Part I, titled “Questions”, introduces forensic assertive community treatment (ACT) which serves as a single case study in this thesis. The forensic ACT team operates on a threshold between providing care to patients and providing security to society. Their practice is infused with theoretical considerations, I intend this thesis as a theoretical study towards critical management thinking, wicked problems and moral outrage, by drawing on the early work of the management science scholar C. West Churchman, putting a critical examination of the CMS’s (critical management studies) assumptions of discursive and corporeal fault lines, and the possibility of moral abdication. Chapter 2 explores the self–other axis, spatiotemporality and discourse with the help of Mikhail Bakhtin and his central concept of unfinalizability. In this theory and societal objectives chapter, we trace Bakhtin’s own evolving moral thought on the relation between responsibility and the unfinalizable. After a brief review of organization and management theory studies which touch upon Bakhtin’s work, unfinalizability in particular, a heuristic approach is suggested to enable us to grasp how responsibility is played out in organizing. Central in this approach is the dynamic between the three ‘unfinalizables’: the self–other axis, spatiotemporality and discourse.

Chapter 3 is a methodology chapter. The case study of a forensic ACT team allows for an in-depth iterative process: slow and wandering, and responsive to promising detours. Part II, titled “Answers?”, describes multiple accounts (Chapters 4–6) of organizational ethics in practice, each exploring one the three questions posed in Chapter 1. Part III, titled “Raveling”, contains a concluding Chapter 7.

While the above is intended as a brief overview, the structure of my thesis may still be confusing. While we started out here with the forensic ACT team, we will now leave this practice and properly return to it only in Part II. Rather than an empirical (ethnographic) study infused with theoretical considerations, I intend this thesis as a theoretical study interlaced with empirical plotlines. In the rest of this chapter I first trace a connection between critical management thinking, wicked problems and moral outrage, by drawing on the early work of the management science scholar C. West Churchman, putting a dent in CMS’s box.
1.1 Revamping CMS with Churchman’s moral outrage

The thinking man’s reply to the challenges to reason has been to construct a debate; whether the debate is an adequate response to the challenge remains to be seen.

The above quotation is from Challenge to Reason (1968) by the late management scientist C. West Churchman, who won an Academy of Management’s Best Book Award for this text. Churchman was fierce in his assessment of both management and management science, and adamant in his call for an ethical management science: a reflective and open science that moves beyond disciplinary and hierarchical boundaries, toward securing improvements in the management of the ‘whole system’ across nations and generations. Challenge to Reason is a broad-ranging critique against instrumental cost-benefit reasoning, purity, fragmentation, the separation between mood and reason, excellence, seriousness, neutrality, logical consistency, univocity, and the likes, thrust forward by a moral outrage about the wrongs of the world and the wrongs of science.

Twenty-five years later, Churchman (1994) reflected on the current state of management science; he concluded on a bitter note that we still know close to nothing, really, about how to manage the whole system or even one organization well. ‘Well’ in a technical sense, but also, and more importantly, in a moral sense. His disenchantedment with the work published in the top-ranking journal Management Science of which he was the founding editor, may remind us a bit of the disappointment of Courpasson (2013) later on. This thesis before you, too, is motivated by a concern for how to organize well in a moral sense (or less evil), stemming from a bewilderment of how people engage in moral work under precarious conditions every working day. I refer in particular to teams of practitioners who are made responsible for providing integrated (semi-)public service packages, in an effort to engage with conundrums deemed so complex and unresolvable that they are known as wicked problems.

Wicked problems, among others, cannot be defined; wicked problems do not end, their solutions are one-shot operations, they do not have ultimate tests, are not true or false but better or worse, and the people responsible for actions aimed at these problems do not have the right to be wrong (Rittel & Webber, 1973). These kinds of problems, such as, on a grand scale, the greenhouse effect and global waste disposal, cannot be captured within one particular (political, technical, organizational, ethical) approach, as they transgress the limits and leeway of each perspective to comprehend and explain what is going on. Instead of the standard response of ‘unraveling’ and compartmentalizing these wicked problems, other approaches seek to tackle a problem as a whole. One such persistent approach has come from the stream of thought known as New Public Management: to assemble teams with the autonomy and capabilities to make them responsible for, and engage with, a problem as a whole – but on a small scale. One assumption here is that small wins add up to larger-scale solutions. Another assumption is that this way of working empowers practitioners to tackle the full brunt of a problem, instead of making do with a fragment of it. Since its rise in the 1980s, New Public Management has received scathing, critical academic scrutiny, yet one of its key components, the downward displacement of exposure to precarious conditions by responsibilization, seems to be alive and kicking in contemporary organizational praxis (Du Gay, 2000). And so, despite our best critical efforts, we find multidisciplinary teams made responsible for taming small-scale wicked problems societally central yet marginal, pivotal yet obfuscated, problems such as those of troubled families and deprived neighborhoods. Problems that burst out through the mediated surface with the moral indignation of public opinion – as if these problems came from nowhere. As Churchman (1967) suggested half a century ago, even with our best efforts we might not be taming the whole problem, just the growl. Who, then, are these people facing unresolvable problems, thrown into dens to tame growls? And, more particular to my own inquiry into the ‘responsible organization’ here: How are they thrown in?

As regards to the role of theory, Churchman, in his 1994 reflection on organization and management theory (OMT), was not alone in making such a critical observation. In fact, two years earlier CMS was ‘officially’ born, with the volume edited by Alvesson and Willmott (1992), although there was already a long polemic tradition between reformists and radicals in OMT, particularly in the UK. And about two decades after Churchman’s 1994 reflections, several key figures in CMS such as Parker and Delbridge reflected on the coming of age of CMS and saw their own niche waning, its ‘non-performance’ creeping back onto itself. Parker (2010), in his review of the Oxford Handbook of Critical Management Studies by Alvesson et al. (2009), stated: “Perhaps this is the fate of critical projects in many disciplines – whether in management, policy studies, law, criminology or wherever. They finally become Oxford Handbooks; and then the game is up, crushed beneath the cultural weight of mediæval stone” (p. 297). That being said, I was prudently advised by my supervisors to embed my study, which draws heavily on the already out of fashion Bakhтин, into some body of OMT: to position myself as a scholar and my doctorate more clearly and focus my theoretical contribution. And what better place to embed oneself in than in CMS, on the margins of OMT: itself a discipline ridiculous at best and pure evil at its worst, according to the late Churchman. No better place to my mind, for hidden amid its ruins glitters a space for a concept fairly untouched, Bakhtin’s unfinalizability; a concept which might prove an end, a purpose, for a CMS throwing itself into the den. In critically inquiring into contemporary organizational praxis entangled in wicked problems, the incorporation of the concept of the unfinalizable may provide new theoretical ground. To do something about the fact that people are thrown into dens to tame growls.

Churchman is cited by very few people in CMS (Córdoba, 2007, being one of the notable exceptions), which might be understandable considering his love for systems thinking and
considering the academic scorn he received, but it is a shame, nevertheless.2 Churchman should be given heed in CMS because his was:

…a lifelong struggle to swim against the stream of prevailing tendencies in the applied disciplines, e.g., their ever-growing specialization and fragmentation in spite of the common lip service paid to the ideas of interdisciplinarity and comprehensiveness; their inherent positivism and reductionism; incrementalism; a merely functionalistic and instrumental understanding of rationality that leaves no room for ethical considerations; and perhaps worst, the uncritical stance of most disciplines with respect to these tendencies and their repercussions on the social practice that they claim to improve. (Ulrich, 1988, p. 344)

His Challenge to Reason and its anger already provided us with all the ravelings that 25 years of CMS seem to have left us with, still. I will try to knit them together anew with a common pattern that many in CMS touch upon, but few really explore: the unresolvable, incomplete, inconsistent, unending or, more precisely, the unfinalizable, which is central to my own multiple accounts of organizational ethics in practice, in Part II. For now, I will connect my take on what Churchman has to say about the challenges to reason with major issues in the CMS debate about itself from around 2000 onward, paving the way for a more thorough treatment of the concept in Chapter 2.

Highly cited CMS papers on CMS itself, which are either review articles or position papers on the status of CMS, include: Fournier and Grey (2000), Thompson et al. (2000), Wray-Bliss (2002), Reed (2005), Clegg et al. (2006), Adler et al. (2007), Dunne et al. (2008), Spicer et al. (2009), Butler and Spoolstra (2014), Delbridge (2014), King and Learmonth (2015), Wickert and Schaefer (2015), Fleming and Banerjee (2016) and Parker and Parker (2017). This is by no means an exhaustive list, and neither is the following list of top ranking (and ‘very good’) journals that have had special issues on CMS or ongoing debates on the status of CMS: Human Relations, Organization Studies, Management Learning, Organization, Journal of Management Studies and British Journal of Management. Of these journals, Human Relations and Organization are the most prolific on talking about CMS itself, and of the above cited papers, two in particular have formed the most cited axis: Fournier and Grey (2000) and Spicer et al. (2009). Since Fournier and Grey, when we reflect on CMS, we talk about non- (or anti-) performativity, reflexivity and denaturalization. Put simply, about doing (things) well, looking back onto yourself and questioning the taken-for-granted. Second, we discern and celebrate the variety of strands within CMS and, since the end of the 1990s, we have often placed two of them at opposing ends of a spectrum: the realist labor process theorists and the postmodernists. Altogether, they suggest us to do right in the world in the face of oppression, violence, deprivation and exclusion. In Challenge to Reason, where Churchman explored the ultimate goals and scope of management science and operations research, Churchman made a similar call to arms. His text reads like a manifesto, a book-length elaboration of the mission statement of the journal Management Science of which Churchman was the first editor-in-chief. His book is divided into three sections, but there is one overarching appeal in the text, which is that the science of management should be targeted at ‘securing improvement in the human condition,’ emphasizing the importance of the verb ‘to secure’; ‘that in the larger system over time the improvement persists’ (Churchman, 1982, p. 19). A noble goal, but one which raises the question of how the management scholar may take any responsibility for this seemingly unattainable goal. As ten Bos (2007) stated:

Only idiots, Ronell (2002, 216) suggests, never dodge any responsibility… [she] reminds us of the necessary limitations that we should bear in mind if we are discussing responsibility. She takes issue with the hubris or arrogance that tends to permeate debates about responsibility. An example would be the claim by some scientists that, in order to cope with environmental disaster and climatic change, we need to take responsibility for nothing less than the entire planet and to manage it as if such were possible. Now, my suggestion is not that these ethicists or scientists—these beautiful souls—are simply idiots. The problem may be worse than that. The veritable idiot, after all, at least knows he is an idiot whereas ‘the stupid subject…does not have this knowledge about himself’ (Ronell, 2002, 218–219). (pp. 146–147)

While Churchman readily admitted his lack of understanding of the human condition, he persisted in conveying that management scientists should ultimately always strive toward a betterment in the human condition as a whole, irresolvable as that may be to understand, and impossible to complete. Below I deploy Churchman’s challenges to reformulate CMS’ three notions of non- (or anti-) performativity, reflexivity and denaturalization, somewhere along the tightrope between stupidity and idiocy.

2 Churchman is a much cited author in the niche critical systems thinking (see e.g., Midgley, 1996, “What is this thing called CST?”). Churchman’s work, which suffered under his alcoholism, was to be undone in a 1981 American Journal of Sociology book review by Alan Sica which characterized it as “undisciplined,” “illogical” and “fraudulent” and laden with mesmerizing sentences such as: “Even morenobious, however, are aging full professors who lard their work with gratuitous or farfetched references in a ‘homespun manner’” (p. 210). Prof. Sica himself was rated as “hilarious, caring, and understanding” by one student reviewer in Ratemyprofessors.com and by another as “Simply hot. Tall black socks with shorts and brown dress shoes. What more could you want in a man.” Three people did not find this a useful comment. http://www.ratemyprofessors.com/ShowRatings.jsp?tid=162553. Retrieved on 2 November 2018.

1.2 Performativity or the idea of improvement

...and the punishment of the greedy shall be because they hold a billion dollars of wealth while 35,000 children die every day of poverty on this earth. (Churchman, 1994, p. 206)

Burning stakes smoldering and punishment delayed until further notice, we have entered a Faustian night where doing things well has become the only good thing. Let us join our reformist and revolutionary CMS choirs who each from their own study room gaze upon the moonrise and ponder one last time: who benefits, and suffers, really, from performing better? In the first section of Challenge to Reason (1968), "Science and Management," Churchman problematized the idea of improvement by asking "How can we design improvement in large systems without understanding the whole system, and if the answer is that we cannot, how is it possible to understand the whole system?" (p. 2). In search of a reasonable idea of the greater good, questions tend to sound better than answers. Churchman reflected on the societal responsibility of the scholar and observed that the age in which a scientist could distance herself from a client’s goals, if ever, has faded. He insisted that both scientists and managers must understand their responsibility in improving not only the techniques of their performance considering given goals, but also in asking whether their given goals are indeed the proper ones. Churchman (1968) explained that most of us do not ask ourselves that, not even in light of our own interest in a better future for our children:

Indeed, we could not be so selfish and inbred as to ignore the fact that many of our policies may be detrimental to another generation matter no how pleasing to ours. A rationalist in his approach to the development of social utilities must incorporate what he estimates to be the requirements of the world’s future inhabitants. (p. 39)

Churchman observed, along with scholars long before him, that society and academic inquiry, instead of tackling the dilemma of improvement in the whole system head on, have been fragmented into sections and disciplines that forego this concern for the larger whole, with each fragment delineating its own criteria on what counts as an improvement and its beneficiaries and, more generally, delineating ‘who’ is (and who is excluded and what does not count as a ‘who’). Instead of an ongoing critical inquiry into what counts as progress as a whole, we mistakenly experience sectoral progress (education, health, science etc.) as progress of the whole, according to Churchman. But he argued that, when one dares to look a little closer, this demarcated progress produces all kinds of deterioration with which we are increasingly unable to cope: be it (nuclear) war, environmental pollution, loss of privacy, intellectual dumbing down by mass education, and the systematic humiliation of those in need of care and welfare assistance. Moreover, Churchman (1968) argued that the academic community is complacent in the sense that it is inclined to put its talents and resources into ‘safe’ kinds of research locked within specific such sectors and seek improvements therein. Churchman (1968) pointed us to the real problem with that:

Our experts tell us that the only feasible way to plan for progress is piecemeal planning. What they fail to tell us is that their own prescription is based on a postulate of planning, namely, that if we improve sector by sector, leaving out considerations of the whole world, or of the whole nation, or of generations to come, our improvements will add up to social progress. The postulate on the face of it appears foolish, and there is certainly no evidence of its truth. It is a mistake to use man’s failure to develop an adequate measure of the utility of the social structure as evidence that such attempts are futile. There is every reason to urge that we vastly enlarge our study of man and his requirements far beyond the present very inadequate status of this research. (p. 60)

In other words, already half a century ago one of the key figures of ‘mainstream’ management science, in particular operations research and planning, tore away the assumption that piecemeal planning, and incremental and delineated change, will add up to improvement for the human condition as a whole. What have we learned from the CMS debate on itself and on the idea of non- (or anti) performativity, since then? The seminal Fournier and Grey (2000) article on this topic, drawing on the work of the philosopher Lyonard, defined the performative intent as such: to develop and celebrate knowledge which contributes to the production of maximum output for minimum input; it involves inscribing knowledge within means—ends calculation. Non-critical management study is governed by the principle of performativity which serves to subordinate knowledge and truth to the production of efficiency. In non-critical management study, performativity is taken as an imperative towards which all knowledge and practice must be geared, and which does not require questioning. In other words, the aim is to contribute to the effectiveness of managerial practice, or to build a better model or understanding thereof. Management is taken as a given, and a desirable given at that, and is not interrogated except in so far as this will contribute to its improved effectiveness. Critical work is not performative in this meaning, even though it may well have some intention to achieve (e.g. to achieve a better world or to end exploitation, etc.) CMS questions the alignment between knowledge, truth and efficiency (a point to which we come back shortly) and is concerned with performativity only in that it seeks to uncover what is being done in its name. (p. 17)

It took me a few readings to get to the gist of their argument: performativity is the imperative of managed means—ends calculation (and as such, I might add, serves as a proper definition of ‘value-based health care’) and CMS, in spite of deploying the same managed means—ends calculation, can still distance itself from the performative
imperative because of its proper purposes. Churchman (1968) noted, more simply, that we all manage our affairs in one way or another. He elaborated on management and the manager herself, describing the latter as “a person who has the responsibility for the choices he has made in the sense that the rest of his fellow men (sic) may judge whether he should be rewarded or punished for his choices; he is the person who justifiably is the object of praise or blame” (pp. 17–18). Churchman (1968) further defined management as “the burden of making choices about system improvement and the responsibility of responding to the choices made in a human environment in which there is bound to be opposition to what the manager has decided” (pp. 18–19). He then observed that we really know very little about management, the behavior of the manager, what makes for a ‘great manager’ (seemingly with a sense for the greater whole and a greater good) nor even when a decision is made, enquiring bemusely whether there might exist something like a ‘decision’ in the first place.

In the somewhat less bemused tone of their OMT article, Fournier and Grey (2000) argued that one goal of CMS is to not improve the effectiveness of the means–ends principle of managerial control. One could argue, along the tone of Churchman, that there is no better way to improve (managerial) control than to show how it fails to do so. Spicer et al. (2009) added that the legitimacy of performative knowledge does not lie in its truth but in its technical value in producing results, in increased technological control. Putting the problem of truth aside, they see some problems with regarding CMS as purely anti-performative (with ‘purely’ as the rhetoric device to contrast with their own, apparently more nuanced, argument): ignoring real societal or human concerns, not asserting what CMS does want, becoming cynical and abdicating responsibility, and ignoring the fact that CMS within itself has a very strong performative intent. Instead of anti-performativity, Spicer et al. (2009) proposed, invoking the work of J.L Austin and Judith Butler, a ‘critical performativity’: one that “involves active and subversive intervention into managerial discourses and practices...achieved through affirmation, care, pragmatism, engagement with potentialities, and a normative orientation” (p. 538). In short, affirmation entails engagement with ambiguity and tensions within organizations; care involves an openness of researchers to have their views radically challenged; pragmatism means making incremental “incisions into particular processes”; potentiality understood as an attempt to create a sense of what could be; and normative as in “directly engaging in the criteria we might use to make ethical judgement” (pp. 550–552).

It remains unclear whether Spicer et al. (2009) do not (wish to?) escape the focus on doing things well (management) instead of doing to right things (management?). But for my purposes here, we shift focus to the pragmatist aspect in particular, which directly touches on the sense of performativity that Fournier and Grey had in mind. Spicer et al. (2009) insisted, drawing on the work of Latour (2004, 2005), that such a pragmatist, incremental approach “rejects attempts to present powerful systems as totally integrated, all powerful, singular entities’ and focus on complex gatherings of ‘a whole range of people, technologies, and institutions,” by “engaging with organizations in a piecemeal way” (pp. 549–550). They provided an example of such an incision, encouraging a genuine listening in an open dialogue. However, they also warned us against the forces that may instrumentalize and close off such an engagement, effectively undercutting the basic assumption of piecemeal incremental incisions themselves. In its vague description, it does not seem to differ much from the incrementalistic approach of which the ‘mainstream’ management study is accused. Others since then have critiqued this aspect of critical performativity, such as Fleming et al. (2016) who questioned the impact of this approach of incisions and micro-eminications. Moreover, Churchman’s idea of the ‘whole system’ does not seem that different from Latour’s ‘complex gatherings.’ Both seem to be looking for a ‘glocal’ kind of science in which boundaries are scrutinized as friction lines instead of taken as given limitations of what is ‘self’ and what is ‘other’ (be it the social, the agent, the actant, and so on). This way of thinking exactly demands us to aspire to an approach that does not shy away from complex gatherings, transgressing public sectors and academic disciplines. Along with Latour, then, Churchman’s critique against incrementalism, against the assumption that small incisions and piecemeal interventions add up to a better whole, may breathe some new life into searches within CMS for this glocal approach, in particular in the critique of what is self and what is other in the practices below the more general question of taking responsibility for the system as a whole.’ Then, a ‘slow science’ (Stengers, 2011) may emerge: an ongoing engagement into whole complex assemblages that opens up their ambiguities, contradictions and tensions in an unanalyzable enterprise, into matters of concern, “with their mode of fabrication and their stabilizing mechanisms clearly visible” (Latour, 2005, p. 150). We will return to this slow science in Chapter 3. The point for now is that when we pursue the problem of improvement for the human condition further, we begin to pursue the problem of what is counted as a ‘who’ and the processes by which one comes to answer another as a matter of concern.

Churchman (1968) concluded his first section by another attack on the fragmentation of science and especially against what might be regarded as “one of the most ridiculous manifestations of the disciplines of modern science, social science”:

Enout evil was done in dividing the physical sciences into various kinds of specialized disciplines. The social scientists above all should have recognized the deficiencies of such an organization of their society and refused to let themselves be organized into the same kind of disciplinary structure that the physicists erected. Of course, they have failed in their attempt to gain disciplinary status and rightfully are regarded with suspicion not only by other scientists on university campuses but:

---

4 In his writing, Churchman (and some other scholars I cite) is primarily concerned with his fellow *men*. Here I have added a (sic); in other occurrences I will not insert a (sic) again, with one exception.
also by politicians, who in principle should be eager to make use of their findings had they any value (pp. 85–86).

Ironically, or not, partitioning itself into special subdisciplines is exactly what happened to CMS as well: moreover, even the use of such an ‘umbrella term’ offends critical management scholars and (sub)disciplines who do not wish to be defined as such, or at all. The above-mentioned CMS scholars writing about CMS thus acknowledge the theoretical diversity within and around the discipline, and most strike a reconciling tone by proposing stimulating debates along these boundaries between them and with society. But they tread carefully, as the risk of fierce polemic and deepening disciplinary rifts is never absent. Alongside the historical development of the political Left in the twentieth century and before, the traditional debate within CMS has been between reformists who seek counter-balancing forces against the excesses of market and profit and proponents of radical change who see the root problem in that system itself (although an all too sharp dividing line between cannot be drawn, either; Adler et al., 2007). In the wake of a similar structure, here, Parker’s (1999) remark “This permanent oscillation between answering the ‘is’ in order to clarify the ‘ought’ seems to me the only way past the impasse that these positions currently occupy” (p. 43), is interesting.

I can only imagine how Churchman received his 1968 Academy of Management book award. Churchman’s argument in a sense scorches the mainstay CMS argument against academic excellence: the critique against the apparatus of excellence as in the systems of citations, tenures, and so on. Consider for example the argument of Butler and Spoelstra (2014), when they concluded that science should be an end in itself. This is an idea to which Churchman would have been sympathetic, were it not for the fact that Butler and Spoelstra’s idea of this good science is quintessentially excellent: interviewing successful CMS professors and publishing in the top tier British Journal of Management. The ‘ordinary man,’ the well-informed public, and the idea of a science by and for everyone from school onward, is absent here, which adds to Churchman’s insight that scientists in no special way qualify to determine what ought to be, in the world (1968, p. 64). Churchman asked whether there can be a science of the ethics of the whole system and suggested that we at least may start by creating an undisenchanted science that does not lie in one sector of society. He imagined an academic community geared not toward ‘standing out’ among themselves, but toward stimulating an unbound public interest to inform itself well on whatever all of its members themselves choose to inquire into, outside the endgame of means–ends calculation. And if the more basic matter of concern of performativity revolves around the process of how one comes to answer another, it is where at least this inquiry will proceed, undisenchanted. But we will have to take on board two other elements: a revised reflexivity and a reshuffled outlook on the matters at hand.

1.3 Reflexivity’s ‘maximum loop’

In the second section of his Challenge to Reason Churchman argued, in his tendency to drill the complexities of (scholarly) life down to some simple dichotomies, that in science there are those who are satisfied and those who are dissatisfied. The satisfied do not sense (or ignore) the agony that the problem under scrutiny might be inextricably part of a larger whole. In fact, these scientists will try to make the problem as small as possible and make the outside ‘all other circumstances equal’ as large as possible. Churchman (1968) depicted the satisfied as the pure scientists: searchers for problems that can reasonably be solved: “Thus the purity of pure science lies in its isolation; it creates a small system that it can work on and expects that various gifts it calls data can be obtained. It is a marvelous creation of the human intellect, sometimes beautiful to behold and understand—but all in all it is not very heroic” (p. 128). To determine the
extent to which an observation has been influenced by unwanted variables, the pure
scientist is forced:

to study those aspects of nature where he recognizes that he can control the variables,
but the studies themselves turn out to be of the most trivial and insignificant sort.
The literature of science becomes filled with reports of experiments that were ‘very
carefully done’ but were of very little or no importance to man in his pursuit of
knowledge of the natural world. (Churchman, 1968, pp. 40–41)

In the other corner are the dissatisfied, who keep on asking questions that irritate
the satisfied (and the dissatisfied no less), such as why they study the topics that they do.
Finding loopholes and making the small problem larger and larger;

They wish to make the problem large enough so the next problem that emerges will
be a better one. They are faithless at heart. Or rather, they put their faith in the non-
obvious rather than the obvious. In a way, their faith is deeply obscure. (Churchman,
1968, p. 116)

Crawling at the rim of the satisfied they are, the impure, gazing deeply into problems that
seem, or may very well be, bottomless: “taking upon themselves the hopeless task of all
those who aspire to do good in the world. It’s a tragic aspiration, really” (Churchman, 1968,
p. 128). But though the winding road toward the unresolvable may prove insufferable,
it might just as well be the most reasonable. Churchman, with philosophers long gone,
scrutinizes the idea that reason is built out of common sense notions. He insisted that it is
wrong to assume that the principles of rational behavior, and likewise rational policy, must
be obvious and clear. As a remedy, self-reflection and denaturalization (appraisal as
he calls it) must be included: the dissatisfied’s weapons of choice. As to self-reflection,
Churchman (1968) explored the idea of understanding oneself as a function of the other,
and vice versa: “For something to be able to look at itself, it must look at itself as though
it were something other” (p. 106). Self-reflection, then, is much more than merely looking
inward, it is looking from without toward oneself. And, something left unspoken in CMS,
that Churchman (1968) added, ‘from without’ must be interpreted, and travelled into, as
an outside that is as wide and diverse as possible: ‘The principle is fantastic. It says that
self-reflection is possible only if one returns to the self after the longest possible journey.
It is exemplified in the great myths of the heroes: Ulysses must go through every deep
experience of human life before he can come to his resting point’ (p. 113).

In contrast, the minimum loop, Churchman contended, has always been a favorite object
of study by philosophers searching in vain for some pure and meaningful proposition
that directly implies itself. Most scientists will ignore this philosophical dead end of the
minimum loop and pursue a career that is ultimately a science of minimum loops, of
x equals x. The maximum loop is an irreversible journey few, understandably, set out
to travel on. But what about CMS scholars, surely the (seemingly) dissatisfied? In their
reflections, they stress the urgency for CMS to broaden its horizon, and to take note of
pressing global concerns such as war, genocide, modern-day slavery and population
placement, and the destruction of the environment. In practice they hardly do. According
to Dunne et al. (2008), both non-CMS and CMS remain mostly silent over these
issues, and even over ethics within the narrower organizational context, demonstrating
a myopia that leads them to ask: “Why is business and management scholarship so
marginal to the central concerns of many people on our planet? Do such scholars have
a responsibility to stop being silent?” (p. 272). These questions for the most part remain
rhetorical in their paper, and Dunne et al. (2008) leave little ambiguity in their final
remarks:

The question that our survey seems to raise hinges on the link between silence and
a lack of response to the troubles of the world, or (in more forthright terms) the
link between complicity and a refusal to acknowledge that the products of our own
labor are implicated in the production of the troubles of others. At the moment,
management academics appear to want to claim power, but not responsibility. (pp.
275–276)

When it comes down to confronting global concerns and atrocities, to the ethics of the
‘whole system,’ CMS scholars are not quite so dissatisfied, it seems.

And what about from within a yet smaller loop: their own research practices? CMS
scholars do not fare much better here, according to themselves. Fournier and Smith
(2012), along with Wray-Bliss (2002), observed that CMS scholars routinely distance
themselves from those they study and speak for them from their own privileged position,
subordinating them in the process. They argued that “critique can only have impact, be
a responsibility to stop being silent?” (p. 272). These questions for the most part remain
rhetorical in their paper, and Dunne et al. (2008) leave little ambiguity in their final
remarks:

The question that our survey seems to raise hinges on the link between silence and
a lack of response to the troubles of the world, or (in more forthright terms) the
link between complicity and a refusal to acknowledge that the products of our own
labor are implicated in the production of the troubles of others. At the moment,
management academics appear to want to claim power, but not responsibility. (pp.
275–276)

When it comes down to confronting global concerns and atrocities, to the ethics of the
‘whole system,’ CMS scholars are not quite so dissatisfied, it seems.

And what about from within a yet smaller loop: their own research practices? CMS
scholars do not fare much better here, according to themselves. Fournier and Smith
(2012), along with Wray-Bliss (2002), observed that CMS scholars routinely distance
themselves from those they study and speak for them from their own privileged position,
subordinating them in the process. They argued that “critique can only have impact, be
a responsibility to stop being silent?” (p. 272). These questions for the most part remain
rhetorical in their paper, and Dunne et al. (2008) leave little ambiguity in their final
remarks:

The question that our survey seems to raise hinges on the link between silence and
a lack of response to the troubles of the world, or (in more forthright terms) the
link between complicity and a refusal to acknowledge that the products of our own
labor are implicated in the production of the troubles of others. At the moment,
management academics appear to want to claim power, but not responsibility. (pp.
275–276)

When it comes down to confronting global concerns and atrocities, to the ethics of the
‘whole system,’ CMS scholars are not quite so dissatisfied, it seems.

And what about from within a yet smaller loop: their own research practices? CMS
scholars do not fare much better here, according to themselves. Fournier and Smith
(2012), along with Wray-Bliss (2002), observed that CMS scholars routinely distance
themselves from those they study and speak for them from their own privileged position,
subordinating them in the process. They argued that “critique can only have impact, be
a responsibility to stop being silent?” (p. 272). These questions for the most part remain
rhetorical in their paper, and Dunne et al. (2008) leave little ambiguity in their final
remarks:

The question that our survey seems to raise hinges on the link between silence and
a lack of response to the troubles of the world, or (in more forthright terms) the
link between complicity and a refusal to acknowledge that the products of our own
labor are implicated in the production of the troubles of others. At the moment,
management academics appear to want to claim power, but not responsibility. (pp.
275–276)

When it comes down to confronting global concerns and atrocities, to the ethics of the
‘whole system,’ CMS scholars are not quite so dissatisfied, it seems.

We all have to make a living and sometimes this is what is most important. Doing
or not doing things is not the only question, what is important is that we recognize
the reasons, conditions and consequences of our action or inaction. (Fournier &
Smith, 2012, p. 472)
But do we, then, at least do that? In a similar analysis, Tatli (2012) demanded that CMS face its own demons and asked why its scholars ignore the elephant in the room: the exclusionary tendencies within CMS itself. An exclusion that is embedded within practices infused with forces of normalization, “not imposed on us as an alien power from above but rather…daily reproduced by us in our everyday embodied reproduction of ‘normal life’” (Wray-Bliss et al., 2002, p. 9). Tatli (2012) added that the approach of personal narratives may fail to emphasize the structural problems of a CMS community, which “replicates the wide ranging symbolic violence in academia by keeping silent about the exclusionary mechanisms which keep the CMS community homogeneous in terms of not only theoretical approaches but also the demographic make-up of its members” (p. 26). She asked, “Well, so much for radical alternatives. How can a community which is characterized by the numerical and hierarchical domination of the privileged segments of society provide alternatives for the disadvantaged and oppressed?” (p. 26). Tatli’s suggested ways out, unfortunately, offer little guidance on how to get there, which may leave the doubtful, impure scientist willing to remain true to herself (whatever that means), again, inevitably without proper shelter.

The CMS scientist aspiring to do good is a tragic figure, scrutinizing everything in each direction, doubting with good reason whether she is really making a positive contribution in the larger scheme of things. Churchman (1968) wondered, as did old philosophers and scholars such as Parker and Parker (2017) in more recent work on agonism (see also ten Bos, 1997), whether a person’s strongest desire is to struggle: finding meaning in tragedy as well as in the comedy of life, in despair as well as joy, and that the truth of progress may depend on a kind of disagreement such that “the ethics of whole systems must depend in part at least on concepts of conflict, struggle, and despair” (Churchman, 1968, p. 62). Yet this, too, can be an intolerable predicament:

No wonder applied scientists avoid the heroic and turn back to the pure. They find far greater security and comfort in isolating themselves from the heroic mood. Perhaps they simply adopt a master–slave attitude, and recognize that they work for some organization that supports them. (Churchman, 1968, p. 129)

King and Learmonth (2015) even wondered whether CMS could ever be practical, and feared that its insights may have rather paralyzing effects. Reading Foucault, they did see potential for disrupting the ways in which we take the world and our own subjectivities (as managers, too) for granted, as well as in an “ability to live with not always knowing what to do” (p. 367), but to stomach it, and persevere. Yet melancholy turns to satire when CMS scholars become managers in such organizations themselves, as they often do, in some role or another. They may endure something like an identity crisis, akin to “a werewolf looking anxiously in the mirror, checking for unusual facial hair” (Parker, 2004), and lament, “why do good people do this?” (Parker, 2004, p. 55). In practice, unfortunately, both Parker and King resolved their untimely critical manager predicament by exiting it, displaying little humor in their final remarks.

Churchman (1968) argued that humor and self-reflection are intimately related, and touched upon the humor of science:

...because I have long felt the essential incompleteness of our modern concept of science. The humanists are right in their claim that science— as it is described by scientists themselves—is a kind of in-human monster. One rather successful young scientist I know likes to differentiate between hard and soft science; presumably, hard science means the inhuman beast who tries to gobble up reality by its monstrously mathematically precise teeth and digest it in its huge programmed belly which can accommodate a million variables. Soft science, I suppose, is soft in the head. Hard science is precise, rigorous, objective; it is also humorless, ugly, and at best amoral. It goes around creating “knowledge about the world,” and it doesn’t care who uses the knowledge, or why. This is not quite accurate, of course. When he’s not hard at work, the hard scientist is usually a very nice fellow, just like the felon. (p. 136)

More to the point, humor is a kind of apperception, which Churchman (1968) defined as “the act of looking at the same thing in two quite different ways” (Churchman, 1968, p. 139). Apperception allows us to look at the world from different moods and this shift in moods is necessary for the applied scientist to both get closer and more precise (more ‘hard and pure’), without succumbing to that desperate modality. She may then shift mood to scrutinize her own study and herself in the process, and “we’ll know we’re getting somewhere when we don’t have to take ourselves so seriously” (Churchman, 1968, p. 142). More obviously, apperception, or denaturalization as we might as well call it in this sense, allows us to touch upon assumptions behind people’s reasonings, allows us the possibility to see things in another way, and not only as the given state of affairs. Churchman (1968) acknowledged that we cannot ascertain whether we can speak of different viewpoints at all, or to what extent they contribute to a ‘complete’ understanding, but “As for completeness, we try as best we can to learn about the different ways that people have looked at their world” (p. 155). Instead of choosing one viewpoint and excluding others, Churchman (1968) suggested we should listen to all of them, because different stories tell us different things separately and tell us another thing when taken together:

It is not necessary for us folk of the tribe to believe wholeheartedly in what model builders say, any more than we need believe in practical men or wise men. But we should listen most carefully to the story that each has to tell. And this brings us back to the theme of the large model. A large planning model is a story—it is one idea of what reality is like and what it could be like. It is a marvelously told story in its way—not dramatic perhaps, but as a mosaic of details it is unsurpassed. One can wander
and with implementation of his precious ideas, looking increasingly impractical and
with the idealist, with the latter running “the risk of becoming disinterested with reality
Challenge to Reason
In the third section of Challenge to Reason, Churchman (1968) skimmed over the ancient
discourse of call center clerks’ use of ‘customer service.’ As Wray-Bliss (2001) argued,
our texts inscribe or encourage particular social relations; a multitude of further
plausible representations; if it takes a discourse of ‘customer service’ to help us
shift from relating to the researched as objects of our study to viewing them as
people to whom we are responsible and accountable, then I would suggest that this
is one positive step toward unsettling the often subordinating authority of ‘expert’
academic texts. (p. 55)

In other words, it is not nearly enough to allow for theoretical and methodological
diversity in CMS as a discipline; even if that by itself seems too much to ask, and besides
the now obvious pitfalls of defining oneself as a discipline. The maximum loop begins, and
ends, with the aspiration of the impure scientist, herself faced with the messy practices in
which she finds herself, to look from without and to take in as many different viewpoints
as she can. And to take them in intensely, before she can start to look back onto herself
and aspire to develop some inconsistent notions of what might secure improvement for
both those practices and ultimately the human condition. Churchman, to be sure, has
some suggestions to this end, in his book’s final section.

1.4 Denaturalizing the real, the beautiful and the good
In the third section of Challenge to Reason, Churchman (1968) skimmed over the ancient
philosophical triptych in a final search of the challenges to reason, to somehow secure
ways to improve the human condition. As regards to the ‘real,’ he contrasted the realist
with the idealist, with the latter running “the risk of becoming disinterested with reality
and with implementation of his precious ideas, looking increasingly impractical and
absurd when compared with the realist that aims to get things done, and on time” (p.
184). But the realist, too, is made absurd:

The realist wants to thump hard, look hard, and “what happens” to him is supposed
to be reality!...Idealism is an absurdly easy philosophy because its opponent is so
ridiculous. Yet the strange situation still continues. Realism in our culture is the
more popular philosophy. People admire the straightforward man of action, just
as in science they admire the individual who does not drift off too vaguely into ill-
defended theories. (Churchman, 1968, p. 186)

Churchman (1968) lamented that “with the belief in the disinterested observer, the
realist philosophy has dominated the social sciences” (p. 195), and has acquired research
technology for itself, far beyond that of the idealist. Regarding aesthetics, Churchman
readily admitted he has no clear idea about what it exactly means, and that in his last
section he would probably squeeze out any excitement that goes with it. Churchman
(1968) picked out one palpable aspect of aesthetics: the irritating,

because irritation itself is a marvelously paradoxical feeling. Irritation arises out of a
feeling of the incompleteness of system design. Of course, in itself, incompleteness
is not a sign of the unaesthetic; indeed, some of the most creative pieces of art and
literature are incomplete. It is some particular kind of incompleteness that makes
large systems so irritatingly unaesthetic. (p. 199)

Clearly agitated himself, Churchman (1968) elaborated on the irritating qualities of large
systems: “for (against) the masses but never by the masses. It never expresses any more
than the single-minded purpose of some mind, the administrator, engineer, entrepreneur,
or politician” (p. 200). This single-mindedness in particular Churchman (1968) targeted:
“akin to the irritating behavior of someone who tries to step in line ahead of those who
have waited longer: His egoistic determination plays havoc with human dignity” (p.
203). This irritation runs rampant because everyone is expected to repeat this single-
mindedness over and over again. Churchman (1968) called this the choleric, or complaint
mood, and stated that its nature, the nature of complaint, itself is irritating beyond
measure. The one that is single-minded is irritating “just because one sees that in his
mind there is no image of an other—an opposite of his purpose” (p. 202). Therefore,
dissatisfied beware, for the complaint itself is single-mindedness on a particular theme,
too, amidst opposing minds. In a final chapter titled “War and Peace,” Churchman (1968)
culminated by spurring out another binary, but now regarding moralists. He described
hard moralists as those concerned with compliance with explicit rules, whereas soft
moralists concern themselves with ‘vague’ codes and virtues. When faced with war, the
soft moralist risks turning introvert and:

gets involved with its own thinking in order to remain ‘objective’...This is an introvert’s
way of getting rid of the outside world. In the spirit of his own thoughtfulness, he
ought to be asking himself whether the direct, hard approach of war isn’t a basic
need, as basic as the need for fairness. (Churchman, 1968, pp. 211, 213)
Churchman (1968) drew on the literary novel as the "one place where men can tell the
stories that we can appreciate. But novel writing is just another example of our social
segregation; no one seems to know how to use novels in the management of our affairs"
(pp. 216–217). Churchman (1968) remained hungry "for more and better stories from
soft morality—not stories that just account for hard morality, but stories that put hard
morality into the system" (p. 217). Where does this leave the shelter-less CMS scholar?
CMS scholarship needs ‘multi-minded’ accounts that animate, excite, anger, ridicule,
self-debase, destabilize, provoke and unhinge; accounts that do not only turn inward but
concern themselves with the hard realities of brute force and oppression, concurrently.

And thus, along a trail of partial agreements, we draw near the end of CMS: geared
toward the messy world out there and in here, tracing and connecting narratives that
do not shy away from ‘hard morality’ as we have already explored above, producing
accounts that are linked "within a wider historical problematic and structural arena"
(Reed, 2005, p. 1637). In inquiries that generate “multivocal texts where an event is given
meaning first in one way, then another” (van Maanen, 2011, p. 52), we find a “refusal to
totalize” (Letiche, 2006, p. 172). In addition, the task at hand is not only to generate radical
the translation between accounts, more specifically, about the translations “between
discourses enacting different worlds where power is at stake...Speaking practically,
these processes of translation are ongoing organizational events unfolding both intra-
as well as inter-organizationally” (p. 14). As King and Learmonth (2015) suggested, these
disconcerting texts should seek to be “disruptive and disturbing to those with whom they
engage. They should offer people different and unsettling ways of seeing the world” (p.
367). A similar argument is offered by Wickert and Schaefer (2015), who insisted that “the
task of CMS researchers should be continuously to point out ambiguities” (p. 122). And,
as Fleming and Banejee (2016) noted, the CMS scholar should not aspire to anything
less than radical alternatives despite the critique of radical being "too far removed from
everyday managerial constraints and thus impractical for engaging with practitioners" (p.
273) in the face of a “general trajectory of neoliberal capitalism [that] looks almost suicidal
in its radicalism” (p. 273). Parker and Parker (2017) insisted on pulling “abstractions into a
particular instance of organizing, presenting a messy and complex example” (p. 18) and
insisted with Gramsci and with Laclau and Mouffe, on a form of critique of hegemony as:

an endless struggle to fix meanings in a certain way...This form of critique would
refuse the inevitability of the present, assuming it to be a temporary hegemony that
can be contested...There are no organizations or practices that are unambiguously
good or bad, no final judgements can be made. (pp. 12–14)

Contrary to the single-minded complainer, the CMS scholar has a responsibility to
concern herself with the right and the wrong in all their ambiguities, evoking toward
this ambiguity a mode of responsiveness from the reader.

1 | How is making people responsible for wicked problems not a relevant CMS question?

1.5 Becoming responsive to the study of wicked problems

It takes a decent amount of undisciplined idiocy to gaze deep into a pit of big problems
and an even amount more to say or do something about them, but well, here we are.
I started this chapter introducing the forensic ACT team under scrutiny, but that focus
wavered in favor of more theoretical thoughts, which will happen recurrently below.
Not much of an organizational ethnography, this study is more concerned with theory.
But the key critical ingredients of its ‘hard morality’ are all here in practice for us to feed
on. Making casual sense of the forensic ACT practice with the given conceptual tools
of performativity, reflexivity and denaturalization will give us yet another study on how
practitioners are pushed to perform better on the basis of managerial key performance
indicators, by an outside scholar reflecting on his own outsidership, shedding little light
on a relatively young yet already bloated research tradition. Instead, I will try to be a
little more irritating, if only because the wickedness of the practice demands it. So again:
how is it that in some contemporary work practices the exposure to precarious situations
is accompanied by a sense of personal responsibility, from a self to another? How do
we actually deploy ourselves and others in those precarious situations by talking about
them first? And how do we seem to not need anyone in particular to make us do this
anyway? These are the kinds of questions that drive us deep into the wicked problems of
forensic ACT practice and contemporary (semi)public sector organizing more generally,
redirecting our moral outrage toward how we make ourselves do this, without providing
any easy ways out.

Twenty-five years of CMS resonate with Churchman’s (1968) Challenge to Reason to such
an extent that it leaves one aspiring scholar to doubt the birthplace of CMS. Again, to
many a CMS scholar such a suggestion may amount to horror; being associated with a
self-professed systems-thinker like Churchman (1968) who simply insisted: “the system is
rational, it explains, it unifies” (pp. 122–123). However, at least in this Challenge to Reason,
he in no substantial way discussed the actual workings of systems or system thinking.
It is the ‘whole system’ that is at stake and, in anything, it is clear from Churchman’s text
that we should interpret this as a system not in the common sense, but rather as a moral
imperative to aspire to move beyond given fragmentations, however difficult. With ten
Bos (2005b): “This is what ethics is all about: to think a possibility that might prove to
be impossible” (p. 36). When we inquire, then, into performativity we should start by
scrutinizing how lines are drawn between and within other and self, and between those
who benefit and those who suffer, or whose existence is obscured, in organizing. And,
second, in that organizational inquiry we should seek out the maximum loop of quotidian
work life, stretching toward the perimeters of space and of time, as our starting point, and
start connecting the dots from there. But not by developing a single-minded or ‘excellent’
stance toward it, regarding everyday life as the derivative of the abstract. Coming to
terms with as many and as much otherness as one can take in, one may develop alternate
accounts that each provide incomplete answers, both in theory and in responding to
those studied and those addressed, avoiding a "sort of (superior) 'realism'...which emerges from the comparison of difference...supposedly more complete or whole than its parts" (Letiche, 2010, p. 265). And in answering, the CMS scholars should do well to develop an awareness of both the finalizing and destabilizing force that their words carry. The challenge is to generate multivocal texts without losing sight of the endless possibilities in which their words may be appropriated and made instrumental for purposes directly opposed to any emancipatory objectives. What we are left with, then, the common thread, is that which is open, incomplete, unresolvable, be it in the self–other axis, in the expanse of the spatiotemporality of work life, and in discourse, itself. In the following I seek to inquire into these unfinalizables themselves, with the help of a self-professed antagonist of systems thinking: Mikhail Bakhtin, and his central concept of unfinalizability.
Part 1 | Questions

2 Unfinalizawhat?5

Ken: He has been refused there. He’s been rejected everywhere...Yes, it’s an uh...too difficult an issue.

Olive: But why was he rejected there?

Ken: They don’t think, they don’t think, they don’t think he’s a patient for long-stay psychiatry. We don’t have to solve it today because he’s not around.

Olive: Well yeah, it doesn’t mean that this can be solved.

Ken: No, I’ll just uh....

Olive: That he’s put in some lodging, something like that.

Ken: For the moment it’s unsolvable. (day 1, 24 Sep. 2012)

The term ‘unfinalizability’ (Незавершённость: nezavershennost’), is an imperfect English translation of once carefully chosen Russian words. I do not speak Russian, so I will be relying extensively on inevitably imperfect translations of the original works written by the literary theorist and moral philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin (1895–1975). The translations are in English, which, as you may well have noticed, is not my mother tongue either.6

Unfinalizability’ we could understand as the impossibility to finalize or as the ability to make something ‘unfinalizable,’ which, in itself, may be translated imperfectly as unfinished, unending, unresolved, incomplete, indeterminate, inconclusive, unachieved, unaccomplished, imperfect, unvollendet, inachevé, unvoltooibaar. And more of such, generously employed by my loved ones to depict this thesis writing process, which for me at times seemed impossible to end, while they in turn stressed my propensity to make it unending. Either way, unfinalizability thus stands for the impossibility to make final, but the broader sense of the term also hints at the inability to fully put to rest, secure, constrain, discipline, normalize, disregard, exonerate, abdicate, appropriate, exclude, isolate, rationalize, compute, clarify, purify, essentialize, unify, validate, define, resolve, determine and exhaust, not only oneself and another, but, more so, all that surrounds us and everything we utter. It holds both a message of optimism and a desperate threat. The hypothesis here is that all meaning, all understanding also of oneself, can never be encapsulated into one perfect system, into a single coherent consciousness. Because there are no such systems: in theory or in practice. To be clear about one thing from the outset, I do not mean infinity when I say unfinalizability. On the contrary; well, not completely to the contrary. Infinity, the writer Jorge Luis Borges once said, is a concept that corrupts and upsets all others. If infinity, then, is the great corruptor, one may wonder if unfinalizability may serve as its resolving anti-hero. But once captivated by the infinite, the unfinalizable itself might draw us toward our undoing altogether. In January 1978, Kurt Gödel, arguably the greatest logician ever, starved himself due to "malnutrition and inanition resulting from personality disturbance," according to his death certificate. As Dawson (1997) noted in his biography, ‘Gödel’s demise was fraught with Pyrrhic irony’ (p. 255). Called Mr. Why as a child by his parents, in his twenties Gödel put an end to the positivist quest that had occupied minds for millennia: to integrate all axioms on which arithmetic rested into a perfect single formal system; a consistent and complete logic in which every proper claim could be proved to be true or false. As Churchman (1968) explained,

Logic is the caretaker of man’s reason. Without logic we are all insane. The hallmark of reason is consistency. The hallmark of consistency is redundancy. If I say, ‘p is true’ then this implies ‘p is true.’ To give up such a straightforward principle of reasoning is to give up all grounds for thinking. A proposition must imply itself—at least—and above all. What’s wrong with this? It merely says that a proposition reflects its own truth, a beautiful way to say the most prosaic thing we know. What can disturb the equanimity of logical perfection? Why, a Cretan can. This Cretan—call him Epimenides—says that all Cretans are liars. More specifically, he says, ‘I am now lying.’ If he is truly referring to his own veracity, he must be truly telling us that he lies, in which case he truly tells us that he is untruthful. If he is falsely referring to his own veracity, he must be falsely telling us that he lies, in which case he untruthfully tells us that he is truthful. Seemingly, we must forbid Epimenides to speak about his own lying. But we will permit him to say that a true proposition implies itself. Can we forbid the one and permit the other? Anyone who has studied the problem knows the tortuous pathways that must be constructed to keep our logic sane: the theory of types, the fundamental inability of arithmetic to prove its own consistency. To some it comes as a distinct shock to realize that even in today’s enlightened world, we still do not fully understand what it means to be consistent. We may not understand the consistency of consistency, or the sanity of being sane. (pp. 108–109)

Gödel managed to translate Epimenides’ paradox into mathematical language which systemically corrupted any systemic consistency from within. As of 1931, it is understood in Gödel’s incompleteness theorem that each and every formal system will, if mature enough, contain claims that are true but cannot be proved, making that system inconsistent and, always, incomplete. For many, this was a hard pill to swallow; and still is. Gödel himself increasingly suffered from paranoid plots which besieged his daily life at Princeton, up to the point that his wife proof-tasted everything due to his
conviction that poisoned food would kill him. Tragedy struck when his life partner had to be hospitalized for a few months herself, leaving Gödel alone amid the humdrum of the everyday. Captivated by obsessive fear that food and refrigerator cooling vapors would get the better of him, he proved utterly unable to take care of himself. And when his wife finally returned, Mr. Why passed away, weighing just 65 pounds (29 kg).

From within the abstract world of the concise and the precise, of the secure and the pure, the sense of a mundane reality permeated with the inconclusive corrodes, infects, ugliness, indecency, irrelevance and immorality: that which refuses to be consistently unfinalizable. We tend to discard via labels such as dirt, danger, deviance, stupidity, of the everyday, it is to start with the principles of the abstract and the perfect: to gaze upon it with Gödel’s eyes. The unfinalizable is of the everyday, and not of systems and high theory. It is a messy concept from the muddy realm of the tangible present. As Simons (1988) so forcefully insisted in her dissertation:

In its imagery, [unfinalizability] suggests a known concrete world which cannot be closed down, rather than an infinite and ultimately unknowable universe. It suggests a meaning-filled moment, an epoch which remains open to another meaning rather than the limitlessness, the boundlessness of infinity. (p. 215)

In this theory chapter, this unfinalizable is placed front and center, as we trace Bakhtin’s own evolving moral thought on the relation between responsibility and the unfinalizable. After we gloss over the OMT studies which touch upon Bakhtin’s work, and his unfinalizability in particular, a heuristic approach is suggested to enable us to grasp how responsibility is played out in organizing. Central in this approach is the dynamic between the three ‘unfinalizable’ that we generated in the previous chapter: the self–other axis, spatiotemporal and discourse.

2.1 Drawing responsibility into the unfinalizable

Since the introductory work of Hazen (1993), Jeffcutt (1994) and Boje (1995), the work of Mikhail Bakhtin has been a source of inspiration to CMS, and OMT more generally, with key concepts such as polyphony, the carnivalesque, the chronotope, and, to a lesser extent, heteroglossia, speech genres, answerability, the dialogic self and the grotesque. Only a few organization studies have touched upon the concept of the unfinalizable explicitly, mostly via the concept of polyphony: polyphony and self (Belova, 2010) and other (Letiche, 2010) in organization, organizational ‘truths’ (Sullivan, 2008) and stories about strategy (Raid, 2011; Barry & Elmes, 1997), leadership (Cunliffe and Erikson, 2011), stakeholders (Brown & Dillard, 2015), organizational communication (Barge & Little, 2002; Hawes, 1999) and organizational change (Jabri, 2004; Jabri et al., 2008). In these studies, we again find that the concept of unfinalizability is applied to self and other and their relationship, to the messy and open ‘event’ of being in which we find ourselves, and to the ambiguity of meaning (making) and representation. Some other studies are methodological in character, focusing on the problems of unfinalized writing (Flory & Durant, 2007; Helin, 2015; Helin & Avenier, 2016; Smisáert & Jalonen, 2018) and the potential of unfinalizability for management learning (Ramsey, 2008; Larsen & Madsen, 2016). Outside OMT, literary theorists Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson, in their seminal work Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosais (1990) upon which the above OMT
scholars recurrently draw, consider unfinalizability one of three key contributions (the other two being dialogue and what they coin ‘prosaics’) of Bakhtin’s conceptual thought. They argued that the concept is found in many different contexts in Bakhtin’s work and designates: “a complex of values central to his thinking: innovation, ‘surprisingness,’ the genuinely new, openness, potentiality, freedom, and creativity” (Morson & Emerson, 1990, p. 37). They explained that Bakhtin, in a lifelong exploration of the possibility of moral responsibility, struggled, alongside many Russian thinkers and writers, with the question of whether the world is an already determined or an open place. Not convinced by a common distinction between objective laws of nature and subjective sense of freedom, and their irreducibility, Morson and Emerson argued that “Bakhtin’s several theories of language, literature, culture, and the self offer visions of the world in which freedom and unfinalizability are real” (p. 38).

Of course, there is a fine line between the observed-to-be and the ought-to-be in both CMS and business ethics research, and science more generally, as we have seen in the previous chapter. And we should not ‘get stuck in one of the most basic philosophical fallacies, i.e. the ‘is-ought’ fallacy’ (Painter-Morland & ten Bos, 2011, pp. 8–9). However, we have seen others, such as Martin Parker, venturing alongside that narrow trail, and so, too, will I. Since, with Bakhtin, only statements void of meaning are value-free. And in the same vein, to observe is to infuse meaning: to live, to breathe, to see is to bestow value, is to bestow an ought-to-be, is to respond, to be responsible, answerable. As ten Bos and Willmott (2002) argued with Vetlesen (1994),

philosophers, in their ethical theories have departed from fatally wrong epistemological assumptions: the moral object is invariably considered as a given that is independent of the moral judgment...that is understood to precede moral action. The basic objection to this sequence is that there is no pre-given object that causes us to be ethical or which arouses morality in us. It is argued, for example, that when we observe that refugees from Kosovo are suffering, we already see them in a particular way, or to invoke a thoroughly Kantian notion, we actively constitute them as suffering. As Vetlesen (1994, p. 159) explains: ... '[t]o see suffering as suffering is already to have established an emotional bond between myself and the person I "see" suffering. It is not that an observation of the refugees triggers moral concern or respect or whatever. It is more that the observation itself is, right from the outset, already thoroughly moral. Not being capable of perceiving the suffering of refugees from Kosovo is a failure of an emotional as well as of a rational/cognitive character. Being capable of perceiving a moral situation, Vetlesen (1994, p. 162) argues, involves an “active receptivity” — that is to say, it involves an emotional-cognitive openness to the world that allows human beings to be attentive, in this case, to the suffering of the other. (p. 787, my emphasis)

It is this ‘active receptivity’ (which I would translate in Dutch as ontvankelijkheid: a combination of openness, receptive, sensitive, accessible, impresurable, open-hearted and open-minded) which drives the unfinalizable into the heart and mind of the observer unable to disentangle the morality of the ‘object,’ the ‘observation’ and the sense of self. Unable, unwilling, to withhold the possibility of self-transformation in the process. It is this already thoroughly moral active receptivity that is Bakhtin’s understanding of what it means to be responsible. Bakhtin’s notion of unfinalizability is meant to be positively immanent to our everyday life. It should, again, not be approached from a mode of thinking that begins with the abstract (of rules, systems), because these modes of thinking, in their abstraction: “lose something essential about language or any other cultural entity: their ‘eventness,’ which means they also lose their unfinalizability” (Morson & Emerson, 1990, p. 39). This eventness of the prosaic, the messiness of the everyday, is very much intertwined with unfinalizability. And if we want to grasp how openness is possible in the world, we should look for unfinalizability ‘in ordinary processes, as Bakhtin puts it, in the very ‘prose of life’...Those processes are open to the future because they are and have been the product of accumulated tiny alterations constituting the daily ‘event of being’” (Morson & Emerson, 1990, p. 40). As such, unfinalizability, and the ethical that comes along with this openness, is not something exceptional or poetic, but rather ordinary and prosaic. This, too, is in line with Bakhtin’s thought on the eventness of the everyday: it draws us in the modality of meaning-filled moments, the modality of the unfinalizable everyday, where memory will always be imperfect, and the extent of knowledge of situational contexts of then and now is always incomplete.

And then it may occur to us again that all these notions – of I and you, of what is abstract and what is real, right, wrong, binary and ambiguous – are unfinalizable. Words. Stories. Words and stories that are, at best, merely inadequate to convey what you sense is ‘really’ going on, and, at worst, the henchmen of death and destruction. Analytical philosopher Galen Strawson (2004) has argued against stories, or narrativity to be specific, in two senses: people do not actually live life like they are living a narrative and neither should we try to live our life as an ongoing story. I agree on both accounts. But if we forget words are unfinalizable, we will come to believe, by living the story of pure logic alone, that moral responsibility is impossible. This is Strawson’s Basic Argument (1994):

(1) Nothing can be causa sui — nothing can be the cause of itself. (2) In order to be truly morally responsible for one’s actions one would have to be causa sui, at least in certain crucial mental respects. (3) Therefore, nothing can be truly morally responsible. (p. 6)

But I am all for narrativity, for stories, and for words. We just have to remind ourselves that these words and stories, too, are unfinalizable; a comfort to the poor storyteller before you. For then we realize that words, narrative or, more generally, discourse is the pervious realm where answerability in all its own tiny alterations comes to life, where it protrudes its way into our entangled lives and needs. This is why Bakhtin became
infatuated with novels as the ‘maximum loop’ to an inquiry into moral responsibility: a study of the human condition by means of philology (Morson, 2010).

My now already repetitive point is this: only when we forget that discourse itself is unfinalizable, do we start to believe in the principle of purity, and take carefully placed words like ‘truly’ in ‘truly morally responsible’ as truthful. But, in light of Gödel’s plight, I urge you not to take a turn for the pure. Because there, indeed, we will not find responsibility; there we will not answer each other. Moral responsibility does not have to be truly pure moral responsibility for it to be moral responsibility; on the contrary, the complete contrary, if you will. Maybe the only beautiful thing logic, ultimately, has proved is the unbearableness of its own consequence. Unfinalizable discourse matters, and a question of this thesis is how it matters for our understanding of responsibility in organizing.

The ways in which moral responsibility as the active receptivity in answering is related to the ‘lived truth’ of the unfinalizable in the swirling triptych of self–other axis, spatiotemporal ‘eventness’ and discourse, is – in a nutshell – Bakhtin’s work. In the rest of this chapter, we follow Bakhtin’s exploration into ethics, guided by Morson and Emerson (1990) who identified an order in Bakhtin’s thinking about unfinalizability: the early ‘architectonics’ of responsibility, the middle and late period of the dialogic word, and the Rabelaisian grotesque embodiment intervallic period. ’ How the three unfinalizables relate to each other differs in these three (I conflate the middle and late) phases of Bakhtin, and so does the sense of what responsibility is about. Each of these phases of Bakhtin provides us with a particular approach to how responsibility is, for lack of a better word, calibrated in organizing: how the moralities are there already from the outset. Via these three pathways we may come to understand how in organizing we become enmeshed into the dynamics between these unfinalizables and come to answer each other in particular ways. For better maybe, possibly, but also for worse, probably, surely.

---

7 The early phase comprised Toward a Philosophy of the Act, Art and Answerability and “Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity.” The Rabelaisian phase consists of his Rabelais and His World and, one might say, in the later added chapter on carnival in his Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics. The intermediate phase comprises his Problems of Dostoevsky’s Art, “Discourse in the Novel,” “Epic and Novel,” “Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel,” “The Bildungsroman and its Significance in the History of Realism” and his later works of “Toward a Methodology for the Human Sciences,” “The Problem of Content, Material and Form in Verbal Creative Art,” “The Problem of the Text in Linguistics, Philology, and the Human Sciences” and “The Problem of Speech Genres.”

2.2 Scaffolding personal responsibility

It is in his early inquiries on the (moral) relationship between self and other that Bakhtin was interested in the positive aspects of how an outsider, in particular an author, may provide a self (a hero) with defining features. As Morson and Emerson (1990) intimated, In his earliest works, he stressed the value of finalization, so long as it is not carried to excess and so long as a person does not assume he can finalize himself... An integral self, a tentative self-definition, requires an other. To know oneself, one needs another’s finalizing outsideness... Finally, ethics requires finalization and outsideness, because ethical action by its very nature consists of a free gift to another from a different integral position. The ethical person seeks not full identity with a sufferer, but “live entering,” a special relation that adds something new and valuable from an outside and temporarily finalizing perspective. In short, these manuscripts contend that without finalization, there would be no art, no self, no responsibility. (p. 91)

The finalizing gaze of the other rescues her from her own inner unboundedness by bestowing her, from the outside, with some finalizing characteristics, and anchors the moral self through the gaze of another. Without explicitly articulating it as such, Bakhtin developed an idea of unfinalizability in this period by contemplating how a person can never coincide with the image that person constructs of herself, as opposed to the image she constructs of another:

The other human being exists for me entirely in the object and his I is only an object for me. I can remember myself, I can to some extent perceive myself through my outer sense, and thus render myself in part an object of my desiring and feeling—that is, I can make myself an object for myself. But in this act of self-objectification I shall never coincide with myself—I-for-myself shall continue to be in the act of this self-objectification, and not in its product, that is, in the act of seeing, feeling, thinking, and not in the object seen or felt. I am incapable of fitting all of myself into an object, for I exceed any object as the active subjectum of it (Bakhtin, 1990, p. 36).

In other words, there is both a surplus of the other to see me as a whole, as an image, which the ‘I’ cannot acquire because she gazes outward from herself. And this in turn points to an inability of the I to finalize a self-image because she keeps exceeding it in being answered by others, thus always remaining an ‘I-in-becoming.’ It is this unfinalizable relationship that prefigures the intersubjective character of any person, always potentially breaking with her own image and with those others have of him, yet simultaneously dependent of the capacity of the other to provide him with an image of self that is in surplus of her own. On the borderline. Preoccupied in this phase by the relation between aesthetics and ethics, Bakhtin argued in favor of the aesthetic act of finalizing an image of another person, since this adds a surplus to the other’s conception of self. However,
Bakhtin strongly argued against ‘aestheticism,’ as a way of living the life of a pretender, fixed on leading one’s own life in terms of finalized images, denying the unfinalizable center of the architectonics of life that is any human being. Bakhtin explained that the ‘I’ cannot, and should not, aestheticize itself. “I am not the hero of my own life” (Bakhtin, 1990, p. 112). Ultimately, in Bakhtin’s view, no person has an ‘alibi’ for being. Such an approach to responsibility makes us aware of the ways in which we tend to construct and hide behind alibis such as our roles as employees, as authors, and so on which prescribe both the scope and nature of the responsibilities and obligations as well as the ways these may be directed toward other roles. Such alibis, also described as frames by Goffman (1974), come between us and around us; they enable us to fragment our answerability and regard others from within particular roles instead of from within the unity of everything and everyone that relates to me from my unique place and moment. Crucially, these alibis make us do something specific: to engage with a generalized yet fragmented image of another by disengaging with the livingness of others from their unique place, and to regard the requirement to answer them as wholly as possible as irrelevant, or irritating, and improper. In other words, the problem with these roles, although very useful in the contemporary life of separated domains (cf. Bakhtin, 1990, p. 1), is that we abstract ourselves from the unity of our dwelling place (our ethos) and lose ourselves in separated domains that prescribe our behavior, our thoughts and our moral responses. To be provided with tasks to fulfill, in this way, we “are simply no longer present in it as individually and answerably active human beings” (Bakhtin, 1993, p.7).

What we, according to Bakhtin, should be answerable for, is how these domains become related in the unity of our answerability. But, instead, we have become divided, specialized and play parts in specialized domains, such as the parent in a household, the employer in a company, the writer in academia and so on. If with Bakhtin we begin to understand responsibility as answerability, we need to grasp the unfinalizables of both the self–other relationship under construction and the unfinalizability of the ‘eventness’ of the ethos as the once–occurring time and place in which one actively undersigns the palpable deed for the other.

From a tradition which Simons (1988) has labeled radical humanism – sounding wonderfully out of fashion in academia today – Bakhtin began with the idea that everyone is thrust into this being-as-event where each moment is once–occurring, and no one can take another’s place in that singular moment and place. We become responsible for what we do and for who we are for ourselves and toward the other when we authorize, undersign, what we do: “It is not the content of an obligation that obligates me, but my signature below it – the fact that at one time I acknowledged or undersigned the given acknowledgment” (Bakhtin, 1993, p. 38). What makes this sound old-fashioned is the impression that the idea of a subject is given, while the idea of an author-subject had already been declared dead a long time ago. But a radical aspect of Bakhtin’s approach to answerability is that the ethical subject only comes with answerability, not before it, and that each one may be right “answerably, not subjectively” (Bakhtin, 1993, p. 46). Likewise, when answerability ceases, so does the subject. But what is this ‘unique place in being,’ this ‘once-occurrent eventness in time and space’ that Bakhtin speaks of? In the end of Toward a Philosophy of the Act, an early work written when he had not yet directed his attention toward literature and in particular toward the novel, Bakhtin (1993) foreshadowed his later work on the relationship between personal responsibility and time and place, here centered around the participating individual:

My active unique place is not just an abstract geometrical center, but constitutes an answerable, emotional-volitional, concrete center of the concrete manifoldness of the world, in which the spatial and temporal moment – the actual unique place and the actual, once-occurrent, historical day and hour of accomplishment – is a necessary but not exhaustive moment of my actual centrality – my centrality for myself. (p. 57)

In this early period, Bakhtin (1993) tied the possibility of ethics around the presence of an individual who acts in the moment as it occurs, where anything is valued against the limited life of ‘mortal man’:

Only the value of mortal man provides the standards for measuring the spatial and temporal orders: space gains body as the possible horizon of mortal man and as his possible environment, and time possesses valutative weight and heaviness as the progression of mortal man’s life...even eternity possesses a valuative meaning only in correlation with a determinate life. (p. 65)

Faced with the transcendental imperatives of Kant, Bakhtin sought to redeem the prosaic of the everyday and firmly place (‘architectonize’) the ethical into the heart of the individual, bound by the events surrounding her. Bakhtin thus sought to develop an understanding of responsibility based on the idea that it is a human being who is the highest value, and not an idea of the ‘good’, whatever content or formula it may have. Not yet drawn into the destabilizing unfinalizability of discourse, this early Bakhtin was clear about what it meant to be responsible: to be answerable, from your own unique place in the event of being, to other persons outside that unique place. What you do from that place affects and helps shape those others, and vice versa. As Michael Gardiner (1996) summed up:

Bakhtin, through this critical appraisal of theoreism, affirms that Being-as-event is the inescapable “value-center” of human life. It is only from this location, within everyday sociality, that I construct meaningful relations with the world at large, transforming the “givenness” of the world into a coherent ‘world-for-me.’ Otherwise, the world remains a world of objective, empty possibility. If I remain in communion with the concrete deed, with immediate experience, then I exist in a relation of “answerability” to the world at large, in the sense that I can accept full responsibility for my actions and thoughts. Because my participation in the world is unique and...
non-recurrent, shared by no other person, no one else can accept responsibility on my behalf. This explains Bakhtin's striking phrase: there is no ‘alibi’ in Being, it implies that we cannot justify our deeds by recourse to an abstraction like the Categorical Imperative, the Unconscious, the Historical Mission of the Proletariat or whatever. This provides us with just such an alibi for evading our responsibility, in which case ‘what we have is not an answerable deed but a technical or instrumental action,’ (Bakhtin, 1993, p. 52) which is justified by an appeal to efficiency rather than morality. (p. 139)

However, what is not yet clear is how one comes to this sense of personal responsibility beyond the particularities of one role or the other. Zooming in on a particular event in the everyday work life of the forensic ACT team, I hope to illustrate in Chapter 4 that Bakhtin's thought in this early phase makes for a particularly suitable framework to understand how personal responsibility emerges from the ‘real-life’ of organizing as a threshold phenomenon. In organization, we dwell in everyday working life, yet we are caught in teleological schemes; we drink our coffee and hold scheduled meetings about projects in tiny office rooms. OMT scholars such as Chia and Holt (2006, 2009) elaborated on this divide and rejoiced in the dwelling mode and its ethos as relationality. As Painter-Morland and ten Bos (2016) argued, the study of this ethos has become a topic of interest precisely because it supplements and strengthens the performativity of organizing:

This ‘goal-directedness’ should be balanced by the kind of Gelassenheit that celebrates care and hesitation alongside efficiency. Taking care requires, above all other things, an acceptance of incompleteness of our knowledge, our insight, and our control...it involves a process that requires engagement, relationality, and openness as conditions for the emergence of new ways to flourish. (p. 561)

But, as I will argue, far from the idea of being able to shift from mode to mode, this threshold itself ‘builds’ our sense of presence in it, as personal responsibility, made tangible in moments of disarmament and anxiety, where ‘network of relationships that people rely on for orientation and impetus break down’ (Painter-Morland & ten Bos, 2016, p. 557). The concept of chronotope (Chronos, time; topos, place) will be explored, as it “provides an indirect and easier access to meaning-making habits, professional and organizational values and identities, from a theoretical, methodological and practical point of view” (Lorino, 2010, p. 25). I will suggest that organization works like a spatiotemporal threshold in which a sense of personal responsibility comes about. I will argue that chronotopic interplay, much like in the literary novel, conditions a sense of responsibility and henceforth prefigures who is (not) answerable and for what (not). Of particular empirical interest are chronotopic motifs, which we can trace, and which may tell us how people are made to answer each other in organization. Specifically, I will introduce Bakhtin's take on how personal responsibility for the first time in literary history was devised in the chronotopic construction in Apuleius’ (2011) The Golden Ass and use it as an analogy of how personal responsibility comes about in organizing. In short: as in The Golden Ass, organizing the chronotope of the goal-oriented adventure is juxtaposed with dwelling in the chronotope of the everyday, thrusting the individual protagonist at the crossroads and alongside an unending road to personal purgatory (see also Kaulingfreks & ten Bos, 2005). So, instead of portraying organization as some bureaucratic entity outside the people it employs and ‘making’ those people align themselves with conventional habits and rules, I understand organization as the experience of an ongoing process of spatiotemporal juxtaposition in between which people become personally answerable. More conceptually, it is not so much the parameter of the abstract infinite which we encounter in the face of the other (cf. Levinas) and in which we would drown, but rather the experience of the partial, and incomplete recognition of the other as self, that leaves us with an awkward sense of personal responsibility.

2.3 Moral prolapse

Several scholars have been quick to draw parallels and crossroads between Bakhtin’s thought and his personal life, and a brief sideward glance at Bakhtin’s life is particularly relevant in his Rabelaisian interval phase. Two aspects come to mind: the Stalinist regime and his osteomyelitis (bone infection). Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin was born into a middle-upper class family in 1895 in Oryol in Southern Russia and enjoyed a safe and sheltered youth, moving around Russia from time to time due to his father’s career; he disappeared and from 1940 to 1945 he lived in Moscow, working on his doctoral dissertation “Rabelais and his World” (RAHW). It was only after Stalin’s death and with Khrushchev’s political reforms and modest liberalization of the arts that Bakhtin’s star began to rise again in

the Soviet Union and, after his death in 1975, in the West via Julia Kristeva and Tzvetan Todorov. Bakhtin’s most cited work, RAHW is unlike the work in his other two phases. A volatile and transgressive text, it was both rejoiced and scorned inside the Soviet Union, and later outside it by scholars such as Richard Berrong (2006) who was critical toward the historical factuality of RAHW and the quality of its argument. In his *Rabelais and Bakhtin* – *Popular Culture in “Gargantua and Pantagruel”*, Berrong (2006) made an interesting opening for our purposes here, when he asked, after critiquing Bakhtin in his first 100 pages, if Bakhtin could really have been such an “unobserver critic, as not to have seen what his own citing of Rabelais’s texts suggests” (p. 105), answering himself, “I don’t believe so. Not at all...By 1936–38, Stalin’s purges of “undesirable” elements among the inhabitants of the Soviet Union, his attempts to create a culturally, ethnically, and intellectually homogeneous society had reached heights that even his ally across the Oder might have admired. This is the historical context of Rabelais and His World...If the Stalinist regime could create a mythical “folk” who incarnated all the qualities that it sought to instill in the Soviet citizenry, so Bakhtin could create his own mythology of a people who exemplified all the principles of revolution. As Clark and Holquist have noted, “While opposing one idealized conception of the folk, Bakhtin’s own counter-image is no less idealized.” If Stalin’s ideologists moved to an ever-greater puritanism and denial of the human body, Bakhtin’s image of the folk, Bakhtin’s own counter-image is no less idealized.”

It is thus not only the writing itself, but also the act of writing, which may be regarded from an ethical purview, in light of the author being answerable for having written in a regime which persecuted him because of what he had written. Understanding RAHW necessitates an awareness of the sociopolitical context it was written in and against, and, deploying its argument in another context, which we will, necessitates a similar awareness. As a matter of fact, how, in organization, we are drawn into the grotesque, exactly by means of sociopolitical context that is evidenced by particular discursive techniques within and beyond organizing, is a primary argument of Chapter 5.

In his “The Grotesque of the Body Electric,” Peter Hitchcock (1998) drew a strong connection between Bakhtin’s personal health and RAHW’s approach to the grotesque. During periods where he suffered from pain and fevers due to his osteomyelitis, Bakhtin was unable to work or to even leave his bed for days or weeks on end, and during a particularly bad fever his right leg had to be amputated, in 1938. Bakhtin’s wife took care of Bakhtin during these periods, and her ever-present care for him might remind us of the other aberrant figure and his wife mentioned earlier in this chapter. As Clark and Holquist (1984) intimates,

> This condition made Bakhtin especially dependent on his wife, but they were very close in other ways as well. He was extremely impractical, and she was his anchor in reality. He was like a child without his wife. He refused to talk on the telephone and rarely answered letters...Her most important function was to attend to all the needs of a man who was very set in his habits, enabling him to think and write. (pp. 51–52)

Without a leg, and with continuing inflammations in other parts of his body, Bakhtin continued to think and write, fueled by his wife with cigarettes and cups of tea, and gave birth to his RAHW. Hitchcock (1998) suggested that Bakhtin’s imagery of the grotesque body “is symptomatic of imagery with a real foundation in his existence...Interestingly, the phantom limb expresses a desire for the complete body that is not, but this is not a thesis, or prosthesis, that neatly fits Bakhtin’s outlook” (p. 89). More importantly, for our chapter in part II later on about the grotesque and risk-taking in organization, is Hitchcock’s (1998) next observation.

> As Russo (1994) astutely points out, the grotesque has a crucial role in the discourse of risk-taking: the error or aberration is a realm of possibility (certainly, this is one way we might understand the pathos and deep irony of Shelley’s “monster,” as a literal embodiment of the risk of creation). As such, grotesque performances are those that challenge the normative by invoking not only the lower bodily stratum, but an array of practices that foreground and oppose the disciplinary zeal of social hierarchies. We know that modes of socialization create aberration and that the body tenaciously fights the surveiller/punir system of domination that Foucault explores. What is less understood, however, is the ambivalence inscribed in opposition by the mode of the excessive in grotesque imagery itself. The revolting body is not necessarily a body of revolt. (p. 90)

Confined in an inflamed physique, under the yolk of an oppressive regime at war, Erdinast-Vulcan (2008) speculated that Bakhtin’s view of the finalizing other “was somewhat less benign in 1943” than his initial view of the early 1920s of an author making the hero whole; finalization now become deadening, and “violent containment” (p. 26). With RAHW, Bakhtin attempted to fully unleash the potential of discursive unfinalizability (and, one might say, in the later added chapter on carnival in his *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*). In RAHW it is unfinalizable discourse, as in Rabelais’ centrifugal *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, which sweeps away the boundaries between self and other in favor of a collective ‘discourse-body’ growth that protrudes the humdrum prosaic in favor of folk laughter and carnival. As Morson and Emerson (1990) contended, unfinalizability was Bakhtin’s main concept to explore discourse on the body, and unfinalizability itself is presented as:
the only supreme value...Everything completed, fixed, or defined is declared to be
dogmatic and repressive: only the destruction of all extant or conceivable norms has
value...In carnival no one is outside, and nothing ever reaches a whole image, which
could only be restrictive. (pp. 91–92)

A main theme of his later RAHW, Bakhtin already conceptually explored the body in earlier
work such as “Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity” (Bakhtin, 1990) with a historical
treatise on the body and a conceptualization of the body as always in-becoming. In
RAHW, Bakhtin further elaborated how “in the grotesque concept of the body a new,
concrete, and realistic historic awareness was born and took form” (Bakhtin, 1984a, p.
367), when the world of the Middle Ages was crumbling, and the Renaissance emerged.
He described how this passage is reflected in the writing of François Rabelais’ Gargantua
and Pantagruel, where a focus on the human body contributed to overthrowing the
medieval picture of the world. Via the idea of the grotesque body, the image of the
human body as collective, ongoing and open is foregrounded as deeply positive, even if
immanent transgression and violence. Indeed, in the canon of this collective
human body as collective, ongoing and open is foregrounded as deeply positive, even if
medieval picture of the world. Via the idea of the grotesque body, the image of the

But near the end of the Renaissance in the passage toward modernity, Bakhtin tells us
that the body once again became an abstract ideal, now an object of one’s own property
which should be kept pure and proper. In the concept of the ‘proper form’ (Bakhtin also
depicted it in different terms like classical and modern), the image of the body is the
polar opposite to that of the grotesque: individualized, private and limited, seen from the
outside as individual. As Kaulingfreks and ten Bos (2002) added, “In the new paradigm,
the body came to be understood as an entity in its own right, or, to be more precise,
as a functional unit separate from other units” (p. 140). What separates the body is an
opaque, impenetrable smooth surface. All the events taking place within it “acquire a
single meaning: death is only death and hence, no signs of duality are left” (Bakhtin,
1984a, pp. 281–322). Crucially, the two canons of the grotesque and the proper form do
exist separately, but they feed off one another, in an oppositional co-existence of a
‘polarized body.’ In this interval phase of Bakhtin, then, what was ambivalent before and
after, is thus polarized into a confrontation of unambiguous rights and wrongs, where
the individual predicament is resolved into a ‘higher/lower’ vocation, and the intimate
prosaic of the everyday is torn apart, leaving only the clinically distant and the sputtering
guffaw. And the path to responsibility, as the ability to answer, forks into a Moebius
ring. From without the grotesque canon, the organization is seen as a bureaucratic,
dehumanizing mechanism, and the only ‘real’ way out here is to sense a moral impulse, a
moral outrage, which, if at all possible, frees the organizational member to risk genuine,
tangible encounters with others outside this distant and regulated realm. Here we enter
Zygmunt Bauman’s world and critique on his work by, for example, ten Bos and Willmott
(2002). From without the canon of the proper form, the organization is regarded as a
pile of throbbing, oozing protuberances. Things not proper are considered improper:
device, defect, defection, dirt and disease eat away at this proper form, violate it, and
should be distanced at least and eradicated at best. In another paper, Kaulingfreks et
al. (2011) pondered,

perhaps the wonder of organisation is that it makes our lives miraculously smooth.
Here, wonder just means the overcoming of difficulties. Indeed, so many products of
our daily life do work miracles and ease our sorrows. Imperfections such as pain and
acne are just there to be overcome and the same holds for all sorts of organisational
imperfections (p. 325)

The main strategy to eradicate such imperfections is by a “closed instrumentality
responsive to reason and command which is its primary datum,” as Ferguson (1997)
elaborated. The proper form, then, is the realm of alignment, calculation and polish,
in which the organization may be understood primarily to be made up of such stuff:
procedures and regulations such as job descriptions and mission statements that
optimize both goal-directedness and its sweeping compliance to it. As Kaulingfreks
and ten Bos (2007) argued,

And to concur with ten Bos (1998),

managerial techniques have never fully succeeded in making organizations tidy, neat
and also dead places where logic and rationality reign supreme. That is, organizations
are still rude and sometimes unhealthy places that are shot through with superstition,
violence, danger and chaos. Management and organization theorists who do not
face this allow their insights, whatever their inhering inventiveness and creativity, to
deteriorate into kitsch, a very important concept in Burrell’s book. Kitsch is, as Milan
Kundera (who is approvingly quoted by Burrell) has pointed out, “the absolute denial
of shit”, it tries to blind you from what is essentially intolerable and unacceptable
about life. (p. 603)

But instead of suggesting that we need an ethics of disfigurement, I will argue that a kind
of ethics from within the grotesque canon is already at play in organizing, oppositionally
interlinked with the ethics of the proper form, and I insist that we need to see how
their interplay exposes those involved. In short, the more proper the procedure, the more grotesque that which lies at the heart of what the procedure cannot grasp, cannot prescribe, leaving a gap: the unclear relation between procedures and desired result, in which “practitioners will always have to rely on their own judgement” (ten Bos, 2003, p. 282), and producing an ambivalence which, following Munro (1998), works as a ‘socializing force’ where a refusal to comply is quickly understood as a challenge to an esprit de corps necessary to do team work in volatile conditions. Organizational members may thus be polished into proper fashion before they are made to protrude out of their own protocols. One common thread in both canons is the denial, the suspension (cf. Giorgio Agamben), of answering each other in the messiness of the everyday, in which the grotesque canon enables risk taking in the face of physical violence, and in the proper canon leads to a recurrent growth in administrative burdens. Both the ongoing discursive interplay set in the sociohistorical context of and in organizing, and the force of the unfinalizable body at the heart of that interplay drive the process of how people may come to answer each other in organizing under pressure. In Chapter 5, I will try to ravel these threads together into the concept of the chiasmus: a rhetorical device that ‘jumps over’ that which it cannot penetrate by circumscribing it. I argue against Merleau-Ponty’s take on (human) flesh as chiasmus, by arguing that the body, our ‘anatomy’ (literally: cutting up) as a constant reminder of the animic bodily force, is only at the heart of the chiasmus, whereas the discursive interplay circumscribing it is the chiasmus proper.

2.4 Close encounters of the third kind

In the 1920s, Bakhtin discovered the potential of the word and the novel (Morson & Emerson, 1990), and this insight profoundly changed his search for and understanding of responsibility. The early Bakhtin was concerned with how an individual may act responsibly. He argued that for anything to have value as an act, a deed, it must ultimately be grounded in the center of a concrete and living person, someone who may sign this responsibility. He argued that for anything to have value as an act, a deed, it must ultimately be grounded in the center of a concrete and living person, someone who may sign this responsibility. The early Bakhtin was concerned with how an individual may act responsibly. He argued that for anything to have value as an act, a deed, it must ultimately be grounded in the center of a concrete and living person, someone who may sign this responsibility.

But instead of sliding into the realm of moral relativism, or the anything-goes nihilism Dostoevsky argued against, Bakhtin located the possibility of the ethical, not so much in the existence of indeterminism (the possibility of free will), but in the linguistic open-endedness and one’s active receptivity to that open-endedness. Bakhtin’s quest from here on was to trace, not so much sociohistorical moral deeds, but rather, via philology, how that linguistic unfinalizability, the receptivity toward it, and its interplay, evolved and manifested itself. In short, how, in literature, characters came to answer each other and came to be unhinged from the definitions others including the author imposed upon them. Moreover,

This open orientation toward the listener and his answer in everyday dialogue and in rhetorical forms has attracted the attention of linguists. But even where this has been the case, linguists have by and large gotten no further than the compositional forms by which the listener is taken into account; they have not sought influence springing from more profound meaning and style. They have taken into consideration only those aspects of style determined by demands for comprehensibility and clarity – that is, precisely those aspects that are deprived of any internal dialogism, that take the listener for a person who passively understands but not for one who actively answers and reacts. The listener and his response are regularly taken into account when it comes to everyday dialogue and rhetoric, but every other sort of discourse as well is oriented toward an understanding that is “responsive” – although this orientation is not particularized in an independent act and is not compositionally marked. Responsive understanding is a fundamental force, one that participates in the formulation of discourse. (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 280)

It is in the works of this phase where Bakhtin’s thought, according to Morson and Emerson (1990), achieves its greatest richness, and colorful concepts like heteroglossia and polyphony are jettisoned into the world of linguistics and beyond. And with a growing awareness of the historic and technical development of the novel and its predecessors, Bakhtin enriched the textual landscapes in his winding road toward the ethical by reformulating these landscapes, literary genres in the commonsensical meaning, and speech genres more broadly: evolving constellations of meanings which both shape and infuse the speakers and addressees as they utter into dialogue with each other, and are shaped themselves as genres and infused by those utterances as they unfold into the eventness of everyday. It is by means of recognizing recurring patterns

in those utterances that we can start to identify them as indicators of particular genres. And Bakhtin, inspired by the idea of ever-evolving dialogue, extended this insight by suggesting that not only utterances, but different genres may and do enter into dialogue with each other themselves, like colliding galaxies swaying into each other’s fields of gravity, impacting all those worlds involved, catapulting them into voids or vortices, unhinging and locking new orbits. These are the voyages of Dostoevsky’s protagonists, who boldly go and voice such moral collusions as they enter into dialogue with each other, and themselves, and the author. In this phase, the unfinalizables of the self—other axis, of spatiotemporality, and of discourse, are locked into a shaky balance. Balance might imply equanimity, but it is a balance on the borderline, as Dostoevsky’s heroes exist on the verge of isolation, futility, self-destruction, and insanity. This is where the unfinalizable in all its tragic thresholds and moral dilemmas might become inexorable, and the promise of equanimity unbearable.

This Bakhtin thus immersed himself in the study of the novel as the quintessential means to explore the ethical, shifting emphasis toward the evenness of the utterance, where the inside-outside divide of the singular subject has faded (but is not swept away such as in the Rabelaisian interval), and polyphonic sounds of discourse have come to populate the inside-outside divide of the singular subject has faded (but is not swept away such as

In the 1929 Dostoevsky book, the ratio of unfinalizability to finalization shifts in favor of the former...The act of finalizing, defining, or accounting for another “causally and genetically” and “secondhand” is described as a fundamental threat to the essence of selfhood, which lies in the ability to render untrue all finalizing definitions...The sin of “theorism” – in Western thought of the past few centuries – is to reduce people to the circumstances that produced them, without seeing their genuine freedom to remake themselves and take responsibility for their action. Now Bakhtin argues that without unfinalizability, there is neither selfhood nor ethical responsibility. (Morson & Emerson, 1990, p. 92)

In this phase, the responsible person does not seek to aestheticize the other, to finalize an image of the other. As is the duty of the novelist to develop open-ended personalities instead of finalized characters, decentering herself as author in this Copernican revolution, a responsible person is one who engages another by engaging the ongoing dialogue of the unmerged voices within that other, including the otherness within the self. Here, unfinalizability refers to the idea that everyone has the potential to render untrue any externalizing and finalizing definition of them, and:

the characters no longer carry on a literary polemic with finalizing secondhand definitions of man (although the author himself sometimes does this for them, in a very subtle ironic-parodic form), but they all do furious battle with such definitions of their personality in the mouths of other people. They all acutely sense their own inner unfinalizability, their capacity to outgrow, as it were, from within and to render untrue any externalizing and finalizing definition of them. As long as a person is alive he lives by the fact that he is not yet finalized, that he has not yet uttered his ultimate word...Dostoevsky’s hero always seeks to destroy that framework of other people’s words about him that might finalize and deaden him...A man never coincides with himself. One cannot apply to him the formula of identity A = A. In Dostoevsky’s artistic thinking, the genuine life of the personality takes place at the point of non-coincidence between a man and himself, at his point of departure beyond the limits of all that he is as a material being, a being that can be spied upon, defined, predicted apart from his own will, “at second hand.” The genuine life of the personality is made available only through a dialogic penetration of that personality, during which it freely and reciprocally reveals itself...The truth about a man in the mouths of others, not directed to him dialogically and therefore a secondhand truth, becomes a lie degrading and deadening him, if it touches upon his “holy of holies,” that is, “the man in man.” (Bakhtin, 1984b, p. 59)

Instead of the ‘pretendership’ and aestheticism in his first phase, but in a way similar, Bakhtin, immersed in the realm of the word, now replaces his early interlocutor Kant in philosophy to find a new one: formalism in linguistics, and the way it foregrounds abstract form and general devices of language. Responsibility in this phase calls on us to undo the monologic principle that underpins this formalist perspective, a principle that gathers “everything capable of meaning in one consciousness and subordinated to a unified accent...whatever does not submit to such a reduction is accidental and unessential” (Bakhtin, 1984b, p. 82). This monologic formalism, totalitarianism in language, seeks to refuse both open-endedness and the receptivity toward it; seeks to withhold the ability to answer. In the same vein, a person cannot be an object itself for a person to study ‘objectively,’ but is a “living addressivity toward itself and toward the other” (Bakhtin, 1984b, p. 251) and outside this dialogic relation the consciousness “does not exist; even for itself” (Bakhtin, 1984b, p. 251).

In this sense it could be said that the person in Dostoevsky is the subject of an address. One cannot talk about him; one can only address oneself to him. Those “depths of the human soul,” whose representation Dostoevsky considered the main task of his realism “in a higher sense,” are revealed only in an intense act of address. It is impossible to master the inner man, to see and understand him by making him into an object of indifferent neutral analysis; it is also impossible to master him by merging with him, by empathizing with him. No, one can approach him and reveal him – or more precisely, force him to reveal himself – only by addressing him dialogically. And to portray the inner man, as Dostoevsky understood it, was possible only by portraying his communion with another. Only in communion, in the
interaction of one person with another, can the “man in man” be revealed, for others as well as for oneself. (Bakhtin, 1984b, pp. 251–252)

The Dostoevskian hero then, without fusing with the author (“if the umbilical cord uniting the hero to his creator is not cut, then what we have is not a work of art but a personal document”, Bakhtin, 1984b, p. 50), has the potential to break the hermetic down. And the way that Dostoevsky brought out this breakdown was by inflicting “moral torture” (Bakhtin, 1984b, p. 54) upon his heroes, dissolving any outward event or plot device into the consciousness of the hero, assimilating it into the thought and the utterances of the hero about himself. The way in which Dostoevsky achieved this was by dialogue, dialogue seemingly on the surface level between the different characters who voice certain felt truths (hero-ideologists), but on a deeper level, dialogue was to be regarded not as a means but as an end in itself. Dialogue is not the threshold to action, it is the action in itself. It is not a means for revealing, for bringing to the surface the already-made character of a person; no, in dialogue a person not only shows himself outwardly, but he becomes for the first time that which he is – and, we repeat, not only for others but for himself as well. To be means to communicate dialogically. When dialogue ends, everything ends. Thus dialogue, by its very essence, cannot and must not come to an end. (Bakhtin, 1984b, p. 252)

This indicates a very particular view that Bakhtin had on language, where the primacy lies in the utterance. Bakhtin saw the utterance as the foundational building block of all language, where words and sentences are secondary, derivative of these utterances and seemingly impersonal and detached from a speaker and a listener, whereas the utterance has both an author...and an addressee. This addressee can be an immediate participant-interlocutor in an everyday dialogue, a differentiated collective of specialists in some particular area of cultural communication, a more or less differentiated public, ethnic group, contemporaries, like-minded people, opponents and enemies, a subordinate, a superior, someone who is lower, higher, familiar, foreign, and so forth. And it can also be an indefinite, unconcretized other (with various kinds of monological utterances of an emotional type). All these varieties and conceptions of the addressee are determined by that area of human activity and everyday life to which the given utterance is related. Both the composition and, particularly, the style of the utterance depend on those to whom the utterance is addressed, how the speaker (or writer) senses and imagines his addressees, and the force of their effect on the utterance... (Bakhtin, 1984b, p. 95)

From Bakhtin’s viewpoint, each of us is immersed in linguistic indeterminacy from the outset, within which we relate to each other via the ability to answer each other. And this ability is a task, an ought-to-respond. Ten Bos (2005a) pointed to a task Giorgio Agamben has called for:

This task implies nothing less than an ongoing commitment to show what all human beings have in common – their linguistic openness to the world – and therefore to show the humanity of all human beings (including those who are excluded). That we can all speak is what ultimately matters much more than the quid about which or from which we are supposed to speak. (Agamben 2000b: 116; 1999a: 66). (p. 26)

Bakhtin, before Agamben, insisted one should not foreclose but embrace open-ended dialogue, and to be actively answerable, endlessly. In the realm of the spoken word, dialogue unfolds not (only) between persons, the word itself is dialogized: an utterance carries within itself the history of its own use and carries the potential of all its different intonations and meanings. Any word is thus already charged, and no ‘neutral’ word exists in the event of being uttered: the word is “internally open-ended, open to the possibility of further meaning, to a future, unfinalizable by its very nature” (Simons, 1988, p. 209). This reminds us of Garfinkel’s early ethnomethodology. In his short but seminal study “‘Good’ organizational reasons for bad clinical records,” Garfinkel (1967) asked why, from a researcher’s perspective, most of the clinical records of an outpatient psychiatric clinic were fragmented and poorly documented, and of seemingly very low quality. Garfinkel’s (1967) final answer lies in how the records make sense not as self-contained descriptions but as sets of “utterances in a conversation with an unknown audience which, because it already knows what might be talked about, is capable of reading hints” (p. 200). Understood in such a sense, the record is in “open anticipation” of a situated readership and presupposes a setting in which it is put to normal medical use. In many ways, Garfinkel’s early ethnomethodological work echoes much of today’s critique and contributions to both institutional theory and strategic management scholarship. Whereas strategic management in the last decade has taken a turn toward situated praxis (Jarzabkowski, 2003, 2004; Whittington, 1996) and discourse (Vaara & Pedersen, 2013; Vaara, 2010), institutional theory has developed into the mainstream analysis of how organizations at the field level behave in structured, legitimate ways, focusing increasingly on how cognitive processes “constitute the legitimate ways of acting socially in particular organizational settings” (Comelissen et al., 2015, p. 11). One of the key concepts in what is now called neo-institutional theory is self-regulation. As Phillips et al. (2000) have argued, what makes institutions particularly distinct is the presence of self-regulating controls, involving “mechanisms that associate nonconformity with increased costs in several different ways” (p. 28). Assuming that self-regulation has to do with mechanisms of compliance to inner projections of what pressures from another onto the self amount to, the focus of interest is that (inner) dialogue. Both in Garfinkel’s medical record case, as in the case of the self-regulating, institutionalized worker, anticipated interlocution, the interlocuting presence of not only a ‘real life’ second but also a third party within the realm of discourse itself makes for a crucial topic. The analytic potential of such an
anticipated (third) interlocutor is to disclose that threshold inhabited by self-regulatory dialogic processes that may otherwise be difficult to observe and to analyze. To do so, a radical linguistic approach is called for, which is not to be found in ethnomethodology or communicative institutionalism, but in the works of this phase of Bakhtin. Moving with Foucault and Agamben toward this linguistic open-endedness and away from “the figurative modes of discourse” in which the (human) sciences have remained captive (White, 1973, p. 24), some sense of redemption may in the end lie in wait for us, as White (1973) argued:

> Once language is freed from the task of “representing” the world of things, the world of things disposes itself before consciousness as precisely what it was all along: a plenum of mere things, no one of which can lay claim to privileged status with respect to any other. Like “sanity” itself, the human sciences, once they are freed from the tyranny which the repressed word exercised over them, have no need to claim the status of “sciences” at all. And man is released to a kingdom in which everything is possible because nothing is excluded from the category of the real. (p. 44)

In Chapter 6 I attempt to make these high and dry musings more palpable by telling a story about my first day of field work at the forensic ACT team, somewhat similar to the structure of Dostoevsky’s Notes from Underground, reflecting and recounting permeated with the anticipated response of the third party. It is when we become caught in these Dostoevskian threshold moments, that our answerability and our propensity to answer to other people is redirected inward toward anticipated interlocution with third parties dialogically organized.

### 2.5 Understanding organized responsibility

In this theory chapter, I have not so much clearly defined Bakhtin’s concept of the unfinalizable, which would be a comical misstep, as elaborate on the sense(s) it makes: in how a moral self relates to other amid the eventness of everyday and the ambiguities of language. I described three phases in Bakhtin’s thought as three modes of moral inquiry, where the interplay of the self–other axis, spatiotemporality and discourse bring about different accounts of what the responsible in organizing might look like. Part II of this thesis offers these as a triptych of one and the same organizational practice. Each chapter is in dialogue with the other chapters, and partially complements as well as refutes them. Each offers its own incomplete answer to the larger question of where to locate ‘the responsible’ in organizational praxis, and what we might think of it. The previous chapter grounded the possibility for these incomplete answers onto three conceptual pillars of the CMS: performativity understood as the problem of the self–other relationship, reflexivity as a spatiotemporal maximum loop to look back onto one’s own moral practice, and denaturalization as the representational unhinging of discourse.

Their interplay in each of Bakhtin’s phases points to the possibilities and consequences of an active receptivity toward the undefinable, unresolvable, in organizing. But before we continue with these chapters, some more words on how to get there seem in order, not in the least to justify, or apologize for, the ways in which this text and its tones might irritate some and exclude others.
3 Could a method of inquiry be made answerable?\(^\text{10}\)

Clarity’s essential, and detail, no fake mysticism, the facts are bad enough. But we’re embarrassed for people who tell too much, and tell it without surprise. How does he know what happened? unless it’s one unshaven man along in a boat changing I to he, and how often do you get a man alone in a boat, in all this... all this...

*The Recognitions. William Gaddis*

A PhD methodology chapter should soothe the academic reader, anxious after being fed loosely connected sets of theoretical ideas and societal objectives, each oozing insights and urgency – or so the aspiring scholar argues. Moreover, delineating a thesis chapter to methods implies that we can draw a line between the content of the matter at hand ‘out there’ and the ways of understanding it. These lines should then be meticulously charted into a periodic table of methodological elements so that it is obvious we are not just muddling our way through alongside the likes of amateurs, activists, forgers, artists, artists, politicians, liars, fools, rogues and clowns. We thus head toward, or in hindsight come to find ourselves at, a research design: the common strategy in the methodologically linear approaches, but arguably also in the more nomadic, post-qualitative work out there too, given the few opportunities to escape commonsensical chronology imposing its consequences on us, and the hesitation to be answerable beyond the parts we think we played. The method section also makes for a fine apology no one asked for: ‘yes, I have been extremely privileged to prod into the lives of others and spend a massive amount of time behind a desk away from other responsibilities, but just look at the deliverance of my own suffering!’ Surviving the ordeals of scholarly procedures and techniques, writer’s block, research and ethics committees, the occasional alcoholism and anxiety attack. I proudly confess that I have come out a different, maybe not a better, but at least a more rigorous and more self-aware, arguably a better, person.’ Now, I could pretend otherwise, but this is pretty much what I set out to do in this chapter. I may have one thing to add anew to what has already been said by so many other scholars concerned with methodology, which is: the quality of academic inquiry should be judged in terms of how well it draws in all those involved to be ready to answer each other for what has been written. Everything else in this chapter should be instrumental to the ‘is and ought’ of this claim, even if it appears not to or fails to do so.

I have introduced this as a critical management study into responsibility in organizing, to which I have attributed three challenges of inquiry: the self–other axis, the spatiotemporality of eventness and the ambiguity of discourse. Or, put simply: if we wish to understand and critique how people in their organizations come to find themselves responsible for difficult problems, it could help if we look at three interrelated issues. The process of how a dilemma at work becomes a personal problem is the first issue. How our sense of time and place is influenced by us being organized and how that makes us take risks in a volatile world is the second issue. The third issue is how ambiguity, instead of opening practitioners up toward each other, redirects their receptivity inward (and alterity outward). I argued that these three link up as the basic elements in three modes of moral inquiry Bakhtin developed throughout his life: the ‘scaffolding’ of the self—other answerability in light of the messiness of everyday; the ‘slipping out of place’ of the moral lines drawn between one answering body and another; and the ‘thresholds’ from within which the ability to answer is redirected inward toward anticipated interlocution with a third party. Far from reaching some kind of integral resolve, these modes may each tell us different, disconcerting things about the moral predicaments of organizing praxis today. Key in the route to this end is a bricolage of organizational discourse studies and ethnography, drawing in particular on the work of Tony Watson and Paul Sullivan. But before we embark, a few methodological alleyways need to be probed, that of the type of researcher idiotic enough to set sail on this maximum loop, and that of the clientele of forensic ACT, the so-called ‘mad, bad and sad.’

3.1 Almost an idiot, or: to each his own\(^\text{11}\)

*The irony of knowing never stops Stupidity, Avital Ronell*

Pushing Churchman’s sense of moral outrage forward into the twenty-first century, science philosopher Isabelle Stengers calls upon us, to resist “the fast, competitive, benchmarked research, which is, seemingly unavoidably, becoming the norm” (Stengers, 2011, p. 2, see also Stengers 2000, and the paper on McUniversity by Parker & Jary, 1995). Stengers (2011) recalled the nineteenth century chemist Liebig, who created a ‘fast chemistry’ scientific practice in which one would be able to acquire a PhD in a matter of four years, learning only standardized protocols, methods and techniques, and nothing of the “traditional crafts and recipes” (p. 7) one would learn during a lifetime. Slow science, by contrast, Stengers (2011) defined ‘as the demanding operation which would reclaim the art of dealing with, and learning from, what scientists too often consider messy, that

---

\(^{10}\) Previous versions of parts of this Chapter 3 combined with Chapter 6 have been published: Smissaert, C., & Jalonen, K. (2018) and Smissaert, C. (2018).

\(^{11}\) ‘To each his own’: A corruption of the saying, ‘To each, his zone.’ Simply referring to the fact that people need their personal space. For example, my friend and I are listening to some guy just blabber on and on about his own little world. We look at each other puzzled and I say, ‘Well, to each his zone.’ Simply due to sounding the same, this has been altered by some to ‘To each his own.’ Similar to the idea of someone’s ‘own little world’. I could just as easily say, ‘Man, he just lives in his own little world.’ It would have the same meaning. #to#each#his#own#zone. by ShiniLa July 02, 2007. 143 likes, 1473 dislikes." https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=To%20Each%20His%20Own. Retrieved 2 February 2019.
is, what escapes general, so-called objective, categories” (p. 10). What is singular in this slow scientific mode of thinking, aiming to produce reliable results, is not so much the production of the ‘objective’, but that it involves what Stengers called “third parties”; third parties which are both the academic colleagues of the scholar who keep on engaging as critically as they can with the production and the research results, and the phenomenon itself as a third party which is ever-changing in our lived experience “overloaded with multiple meanings” (Stengers, 1997, p. 107) and being authorized, and disqualified, as evidence in different situations. In effect, Stengers (2005) likened this slow researcher to the Dostoevsian idiot, “the one who always slows the others down, who resists the consensusal way in which the situation is presented and in which emergencies mobilize thought or action…[to] create a space for hesitation regarding what it means to say ‘good’” (p. 995). Stengers (2005) asks of us to seek ways to slow down and bestow value on the “murmurings of the idiot, the ‘there is something more important’ which is so easy to forget because it cannot be ‘taken into account’” (p. 1001).

As to idiocy, up until the ninth revision of the International Classification of Diseases (WHO, 1977), people whose IQ measured between 0 and 30 were classified as idiots, a term (next to imbeciles and morons) reinvented as such by the paradigm of scientific (and later evidence-based, or fast, if you will) medicine of the late nineteenth century.12

The idiot originated in ancient Greece, not as a fool or an ignorant, but as a private citizen (from idios: one’s own, private) as opposed to citizen holding public office or a professional role. Deleuze and Guattari (1994) marked the idiot as “the private thinker…a very strange type of persona who wants to think, and who thinks for himself,” (p. 62) in the age of Dostoevsky they add to the figure an intense desire to restore “the incomprehensible, the absurd…to him” (p. 63). In “Stupity,” Ronell (2002) devoted a chapter to Dostoevsky’s idiot, Prince Myshkin, a “simpleton…at once uncomprehending and magically perceptive” (p. 174), resonating the boundless good of the figure of Christ. Delineated (“submitted”) by language, the Prince is made ridiculous, which in effect enables his goodness: “ridicule must be risked in the elaboration of the extreme good: the good cannot be restricted to the merely innate but must be public, exposed” (Ronell, 2002, p. 175). Myshkin is thus “a traveling mark of insufficiency, open and exposed, politically anxious and socially improbable” (Ronell, 2002, p. 219). But in doing so, the idiot tends to “signify the absolute destitution of the other: he maintains the inextinguishable appeal of the stranger” (Ronell, 2002, p. 200). Moreover, despite it all, Myshkin..is maintained as the guarantor of unreachable responsibility.

Caressing the murderer in an effort to soothe him, Myshkin displays what it means to be responsible for the other...without “doing”: it is an action without doing, an

Readiness is another quintessentially idiotic quality of the Prince, a “readiness to trust, to respond” (Ronell, 2002, p. 210), a readiness so profound it is akin to a sacrificial readiness, yet denied such grandeur “which is why we are faced with an idiot and not a prophet, or poet, or even philosopher (the gap admittedly is closing)” (Ronell, 2002, p. 211). The Prince is always ready to take, and indeed takes, full responsibility, for everything and everyone, and will say sorry for anything and to anyone. “Because he cannot take responsibility as a conscious, sufficient subject, because he cannot be present to a task the failure of which he stands accused, he is responsible for all. The idiot has to apologize for everything because there is nothing for which he is not responsible” (Ronell, 2002, p. 216). And yet Myshkin is not a complete idiot:

But in order to say that he is sorry, he has had to refer to himself as someone who was almost an idiot, which modifies the accusers’ sentence. The “almost” is what engages the absolute: it is only because he was almost an idiot that he assumes absolute responsibility. If he had been a total idiot, as we now freely say, he would have been home free as concerns the assumption of ethical liability. The rhetorical force that renders him a responsible subject lies within the “almost” – the crevice or opening that allows for consciousness and decision. He was “almost an idiot,” which means there can be no refuge, no ducking out as concerns the reach and breach of ethnicity. It is because he posits himself as having been almost an idiot that he can – he must – take total responsibility. (p. 217)

As Michael (2012) argued in his endeavor to translate Stengers thought into social research method, Stengers’ “figure of the idiot...is particularly helpful...By attending to the nonsensicalness, we become open to a dramatic redefinition of the meaning of the event...the suggestion here is that it might be possible to approach this openness or virtuality through a practice of proactive idiocy” (pp. 170–171). In sum, for a slow science we need almost idiots: ready to think your own thoughts while causing confusion, and to jump into messy practices and continually changing research ‘objects’ while remaining open to surfacing idiosyncrasies and scholarly criticism. I thus need to be a slow learner, risking ridicule in exposing the good and siding with the destitute, taking my time to let the study simmer, instead of dipping it, and myself, into the cataclysmic deep-fryer of academic discipline.

12 Ronell (2002) noted how the work of Stephen Jay Gould exposed the IQ system as “the social rigging of intelligence...based on abusively exploited philosophical presuppositions” (p. 59).
3.2 Othering the ‘mad, bad and sad’

No need to hear your voice, when I can talk about you better than you can speak about yourself. No need to hear your voice. Only tell me about your pain. I want to know your story. And then I will tell it back to you in a new way. Tell it back to you in such a way that it has become mine, my own. Re-writing you, I write myself anew. I am still author, authority. I am still colonizer, the speaking subject, and you are now at the center of my talk. bell hooks, “Marginality as a Site of Resistance” (1990, p. 343; initially found in Wikipedia)

In his paper “Polyphony and its Other,” Letiche (2010) was in search of a text that was polyphonic, allowing for a dialogic between unmerged voices, and claimed to have found it in the work of postcolonial theorist Gayatri Spivak, in particular, her book A Critique of Postcolonial Reason (1999):

The challenge of Spivak’s work is to try to keep all these conflicting voices alive in the text, interacting and in relation to one another, without all the themes, issues, and perspectives collapsing into a single truth, principle or totalization. Spivak’s attempt at polyphony is exemplary because it addresses text (epistemology) and social circumstances (processes of ethics) and their interrelationships. (Letiche, 2010, p. 263)

With his hypothesis “that organizational studies have made the ‘self’ of the organizationally dispossessed invisible, unrecoverable and abject-ed” (Letiche, 2010, p. 275), Letiche paid considerable attention to Spivak’s central concept of the subaltern. The subaltern is defined not by himself but by those in hegemonic power who exclude and silence her, not simply by oppression but more so by denying him answerability in the first place, the possibility to have a voice and to enter dialogue as a body that speaks. Letiche (2010) argued that with very few exceptions, the subaltern in organizational studies, are ‘fore-closed’ — absent from the text. The (very) poor are maintained in the abject — …Organizational and management studies have no space for the subaltern’s voice and the subaltern has no voice of her or his own. CMS avoids the subaltern, sticking to (anti-) managerial themes closer to home. (p. 274)

I am not pretending to do any better, here, on the contrary you could even say. I think the forensic mental health care patient might well be something akin to a ‘first-world’ subaltern, one who’s voice to existence is not heard unless on very rare and very mediated moments, slashing through the societal fabric and into the papers. The lack in this thesis of directly answering to the people who, moreover, I depict as ill and violent, is, to my mind, nothing less than an act of violence by itself. I may profess to write against othering (Krumer-Nevo & Sidi, 2012), but in the practice of this critical management study, I have chosen to focus primarily on the ethics of organization and on its working members, and not on its ‘customers,’ ‘clients,’ ‘recipients,’ ‘stakeholders,’ and other depictions of the ones being patient, the persons, in question. In light of Letiche’s critique, let me answer why. In short, an organization man myself (Whyte, 1956), I have been interested more in the predicaments of working life than in the lives of the patient.13 And because I had professional experience with policy and organization work, and none with dealing with patients, I found myself more equipped to contribute something to my ‘own field’ of work. Beyond the mundane, I found it difficult to understand how to both voice and answer the persons who are at the receiving end of forensic ACT. What does it entail to ask patients’ permission, to have their voices storyed by me in such a way that it does not lead to instrumentalization and unintended exposure? What does it entail – in all its condescending intonations – to ask permission of people who might have difficulties grasping the consequences of that permission, or what a permission might be in the first place? What does it entail to ask permission at a single point of time and place when the changing context or readings of their stories and this thesis may alter the meaning of their words and mine, and generate shared meanings with audiences about which neither the patient nor the author might have been aware of at that point? What does it entail to ask patients to have their stories voiced, stories which may have been, or may become, subject to criminal justice investigation? What does it entail to ask patients’ permission to share personal intimacies which subsequently may become the object of public news channel stories, outlets that publish about ‘crazy’ persons who committed ‘horrible’ crimes and such, often without the space needed to allow for all the different angles of how a tragedy came to be? How do we enter dialogue with vulnerable people in the first place, dialogue being the “weapon of the powerful” (Burrell, 1996, p. 650, cited in Fournier & Grey, 2000, p. 24)? How can we ‘hear’ behind the personas they have

13 In his The Organization Man, Whyte (1956) argues that contemporary man is absorbed into organizational life to such an extent that it is nigh impossible to even become aware of this immersion, let alone resist the decline of individualism and individual thought plea against organization and in particular the social ethic as an ‘imprisonment in brotherhood’ that comes with it (Whyte, 1956, p. 16). Yet Whyte (1956) stresses that his is not an appeal to non-conformity: “Such pleas have an occasional therapeutic value, but as an abstraction, non-conformity is an empty goal, and rebellion against prevailing opinion merely because it is prevailing should no more be praised than acquiescence to it. Indeed, it is often a mask for cowardice, and few are more pathetic than those who flaut out differences to expiate their inner surrender” (p. 15). Whyte gained polemic power by exposing false collectivist ideas of scientism, belongingness and togetherness, and the tendencies in organization to herald esprit de corps and downplay individual leadership. The problem, according to Whyte (1956), is: “In the 1984 of Big Brother one would at least know who the enemy was – a bunch of bad men who wanted power because they liked power. But in the other kind of 1984 one would be disarmed for not knowing who the enemy was, and when the day of reckoning came the people on the other side of the table wouldn’t be Big Brother’s bad henchmen; they would be a mild-looking group of therapists who, like the Grand Inquisitor, would be doing what they did to help you” (p. 33).
been finalized into, such as the ‘criminally insane’? I find these questions painstakingly important, yet I cannot, or rather will not, hope to come to some kind of resolution as to tackle them, still. Therefore, in this thesis, the forensic ACT patient remains silent. All I offer is a sideways glance onto her images, and the ways she is made a silent other, an instrument to serve my own main purpose in this regard: to hold something of a dark mirror in front of the organization man. A dystopic foreshadowing of what might become of her in future organization: the finalization, the violence, the exclusion, the voicing-over, the being made abject, being made to align, and being made to rehabilitate, recover, participate, integrate, purify and redeem at one’s own expense, in spite, I might add, of many of our best intentions.

First, the idea of a road toward self-directed recovery (previously ‘rehabilitation’) for persons with mental health illness and addiction issues has achieved a level of orthodoxy from where it is difficult to imagine alternative accounts. Rogers and Pilgrim (2003) depicted this as a “responsibilization,” a plotline of plight with light at the end of tunnel. It is ultimately up to the self-responsible patient to drag herself through it, supported as minimally as possible by others (i.e., care and public services). Where relapses are not accepted, non-recovery in itself is not really an option. And if it does turn out this way, one is left, ultimately, to name and blame oneself for it. As such, this approach may lead us astray from scrutinizing the ways ‘non-individual’ agency enforces and reaffirms patterns of suppression, inequality, injustice and so on, which subvert the potential for collective action and lure us toward small stories of personal achievement and failure. As Mason & Mercer (1998) argued,

From this process of identification of the “sick” and the establishment of a distance between normality and abnormality, Foucault (1967) argued that those deemed abnormal could be forced to embark upon a journey of compulsory treatment. They could be coerced, through medicine, to leave their anchorage point of abnormality and be set in transit towards normality. Unfortunately, it is often a journey from which there is no disembarkation. Some are unable ever to reach the state of considered normality and will remain forever in transit, forced upon a journey on the “Ship of Fools” named Rehabilitation. (p. 132).

Second, the image of a forensic ACT patient is an embodiment, a Foucauldian fusion if you will, a verwarring (entanglement) one might ironically add in contemporary Dutch debate, of two societal others, the ‘mad’ and the ‘bad’ that have for centuries been excluded and incarcerated in separate societal regimes. Through a process of extramuralising (‘outsidewalling,’ so you will, for lack of a proper translation), conditional sentencing and parole, and conditional compulsory ‘admissions’ by court order, the forensic ACT patient is an outsider, unendingly contained ‘on the outside’ in the community, or homeless, in sheltered housing, and at the threshold of other, often temporary arrangements. Where a violation of rules set by the judge or the psychiatrist may instantly lead to enforced readmission in either a regular clinical unit, a regular penitentiary, or, more frequently, in something of a mix of both (forensic mental hospitals, long-term penitentiary arrangement for ‘frequent flyers’). Within these secured settings the patient may be forced to undergo medical treatment or forced into isolation and away from others when it is ruled the patient is a clear and present danger to herself or others. Ironically, the risk of the patient becoming a victim of verbal and physical violence herself is a number of times higher within these clinics than it is in the community (De Mooij et al., 2015; Choe et al., 2008). And third, as elaborated already in the first chapter, what an ‘eligible’ patient is – a proper ‘case’ to be managed, what her voice is – a prestructured ‘life story interview,’ and what her problems and disorders are, are generated by a machinery of devices and instruments that has the tendency to make itself increasingly complex (multidisciplinary, interinstitutional) and increasingly become the matter of concern itself, instead of the patient who the care-industrial complex was supposed to provide for.

3.3 Collecting data

One of the most absurd myths of the social sciences is the “objectivity” that is alleged to occur in the relation between the scientist-as-observer and the people he observes. He really thinks he can stand apart and objectively observe how people behave, what their attitudes are, how they think, how they decide. If his intent were to be the clown rather than the objective scientist, we could appreciate him more, because in some ways his own behavior and the manner in which he describes the behavior of others is hilarious. (Churchman, 1968, p. 86).

How does gathering observations contribute to the composition of a scientific account that is more than ‘just a story’? This has been a heartfelt problem in both quantitative and qualitative research, and in OMT no less. One recurring shape this problem has taken is the debate between putting theory (deduction) or data (induction) first. Others such as organizational ethnographer Tony Watson (2011) argued that it is:

a vastly more productive way to proceed...to work neither in a primarily deductive way (“testing” established theory for instance) nor in an inductive way in which “data” gives birth to theory. Instead, the investigator works iteratively, switching back and forth (sometimes even minute to minute) between the inductive and the deductive (cf. Orton, 1997)...anyone setting out to do organisational ethnography should equip themselves at an early stage with as full as possible a knowledge of organisation theory and research and make sure that they have a good grasp of the sociological, anthropological, psychological and methodological thinking which has informed the study of organisations so far. Ethnography is not surgery. But to embark on organisational ethnography without being equipped in this way would be like trying to operate on a hospital patient without knowledge of anatomy or an awareness of what to do with anaesthetics, scissors, scalpels, sutures and
stitches...And the researcher will add to, refine and select from this “bank” to shape and reshape a conceptual apparatus which makes theoretical sense of the research puzzles arising in the fieldwork – as well as leading to generalisations in the finished ethnography about “how things work” in the organisation and associated social organisation which they have studied. This theory, because it has “grown in the field”, so to speak, is thoroughly grounded. In this version of grounded research, theoretical concepts are ingredients that go into the ethnographic mix, alongside and in interaction with observed fieldwork episodes and recorded/remembered utterances and conversations. (pp. 18-19)

I am in full agreement with Watson’s statements here, permeated as this study is with a conceptual apparatus from a number of scholars interested in the threshold, the awkward, and the unfinishable. I am not trying to ‘prove’ the ideas of these scholars, but I make do with their concepts while simultaneously making do with my observations and the process of doing observations. Still, one has to stay wary for the many pitfalls of making do methodologically, such as concerns for generality, plausibility and neutrality. In his seminal In Search of Management: Culture, Chaos and Control in Managerial Work, Watson (1994) focused on one particular setting to observe managerial work as it unfolds in everyday working life, hoping to contribute to our more general understanding of it in contemporary organization. Any researcher who does not follow the mainstream road of large numbers and prestructured questions is cornered into a defense of doing ‘good’ research, and so is Watson. The recurring argument (see also e.g., Yin, 1984) is that we may generalize from the particular if we keep ourselves to theoretical and not empirical inferences. So, for example, if we observe in the team at hand that some practitioners feel threatened at times, we cannot simply claim on the basis of that observation that ‘teams such as these are fraught with threatening work events’ (which is, notwithstanding, what I am stating here and there). But we could do a couple of things in theory. We could relate the particularity of the single case to argue against an existing theory that should be applicable to the case but does not (quite) explain it. Then the argument would be something akin to ‘Although theory x argues that practitioners feel threatened due to phenomenon a or b, the particularities of this case study actually (and here, different “levels” are possible): cast doubt on how phenomenon a or b are related to each other and to the sense of threat; point us toward a yet unexplored phenomenon c, or; suggest an altogether theoretical reinterpretation of the idea of ‘threat’ and so on.’ The first two levels engage with an existing framework and seek to challenge either the strength or scope of it. In the last level the scholar is not confined to a particular framework of another theorist, but more so with developing a ‘new’ stream of thought, more or less shaped into at least some already familiar patterns of reasoning. Here we enter more clearly into the realm of abduction, or inference to the best possible explanation. What the best possible explanation is, however, is in itself by definition impossible to ascertain, so we end up with a story that may very well sound the most plausible. And that will to have to do, in most, arguably all, cases. Watson (2011) deployed this argument by implying that there are some familiar things (basic human processes and universal conditions) whose existence/relevance we can take for granted:

But how is it possible to relate the particular and the general in this way? It is possible because of the existence, in the first place, of the common characteristics that every human being possesses and of the subsequent involvement of all human beings in certain basic social and psychological processes. Underlying individual uniqueness and cultural variation there are processes whereby every human being has to make sense of the world, make a living, engage with their culture, relate to others, shape identity, manage emotions and, ultimately, come to terms with mortality. There are thus continuities within basic processes underlying the variations that can be observed in how human beings across the world manage their existence. And it is possible, in the second place, to relate the particular and the general, the unique and the variable, because of the sociological and political-economic continuities which run through the circumstances of managers generally: the circumstances of advanced industrial capitalism. (p. xiii)

From the purview of the unfinishable in the self–other relationship, in spatiotemporal experience and in language, it is impossible to agree with Watson’s argument, but even from within his own reasoning it is difficult to entertain. “Circumstances of advanced industrial capitalism” seems abstract to such an extent that anything might fit under that label, and ‘basic human processes to manage their existence’ Watson defined as very basic (commonsensical, animal-like behavior–ish?) because they are...well, very basic. However, we seem to be engaging now with his statement on a superficial level, arguing that its core framework is shaky. It is a gratifying activity, but not very interesting, considering our earlier premise that the purity of x = x is meaningless. So one might conclude that complete plausibility is void of meaning. Outside the cold shelter of our crystal palace, we find ourselves murmuring that the ideas we have come up with are the best possible (almost plausible) explanation.

As to the pitfall of supposed neutrality, Watson (2011) does not present himself as a neutral observer, although he does “attempt a degree of objectivity by allowing readers to judge for themselves something of the way [he] influenced the events and accounts [he is] writing about” (p. 23). I find it difficult to imagine a way Watson could really force readers not to make up their own mind anyway. Watson also explained that by articulating one’s own afterthoughts on top of preselected fragments of dialogue – that mostly feature Watson himself as the interviewer as well –he provides as ‘something of a way’ of judging how Watson influenced the events and accounts he wrote about. But does he? It seems to only add layer onto layer of Watson’s own purviews. In effect, toward this other, “soft,” side of the scholarly spectrum, we actually risk the same x = x problem, having a qualitative researcher turning inward, making the surrounding world smaller and smaller by crowding it with one’s own reflections and anticipated reactions. But
Part 1 | Questions

Fortunately, Watson already provided a loophole, i.e. dialogue: “not just dialogue between individuals themselves – even dialogues between ideas within our minds” (Watson, 2012, p. 23). Drawing on Bakhtin’s work (although despite his emphasis on Bakhtinian dialogue, this is the only reference to him), Watson (2012) continued:

…our dialogue with our culture is a dialogue with others. It is not just a matter of face-to-face dialogue in our minds; our very process of thinking and decision-making involves us in a dialogue in our minds with the arguments of human others, whether these be remembered arguments of particular people…or cultural norms. Thinking and deciding…has a dialogic form….” I have already revealed the key role that my own dialogues with managers have played in the development of my thinking about managerial work. This relates to a view of human beings as rhetorical animals…and of human life as essentially dialogic (Bakhtin 1981). To think and to speak is to engage with counter-thoughts and counter-arguments. It is part of the process whereby we negotiate reality with others through the cultural medium of discourse and through which we justify and make sense, to ourselves and others, of what we do. Social science writers, in crafting their work, must have some kind of scaffolding with which to work, even if it is a scaffolding which they build up piecemeal as the edifice rises from the ground. (pp. 24–26)

What I have come to study is the way team practitioners on a day-to-day basis together enter into dialogue about their team responsibilities and, more particularly, the ways they participate as if they were able to care for patients in the way these trained professionals (and not a trained health care professional, nor was I supervised by one) participate in the workplace or that they might adhere to privately and to follow instead the prevailing morality of their particular organizational situation. What matters on a day-to-day basis are the moral rules-in-use fashioned within the personal and structural constraints of one’s organization. Actual organizational moralities are thus contextual, situational, highly specific, and, most often, unarticulated. This book, then, examines business as a social and moral terrain. I offer no programs for reform.

I think Jackall does actually offer very concrete tips on how to find one’s way onto the “fast track” to managerial success. (pp. 5–9)

Collecting talk
In the beginning of the process, I did not know where the ‘richest’ data would be available for me, so I hopped on every kind of activity the practitioners had during the week, in an approach called shadowing (Czarniawska-Joerges, 2007): observing, but not really participating substantively. In effect, I could not and did not want or dare to really participate as if I was able to care for patients in the way these trained professionals (and supervised interns) were. For the most part, I was in awe of these practitioners who were bold enough to meet up with patients and to both adhere to their training and improvise on the spot. I could not see myself doing that, and I actually still cannot. So, participating was not really an option in practice and pretty much against the law anyway since I am not a trained health care professional, nor was I supervised by one. In face of these legal requirements, I could not be responsible nor be held answerable for establishing a practitioner–patient relationship. I did answer the phone sometimes if the admin worker was absent for a moment, and I went to get coffee once or twice. But other than that, I did not actively participate. When I did go out with a practitioner a couple of times to meet a patient, either in the office, in their home or in some shelter, the practitioner would introduce me and ask the patient’s permission, that is, the practitioner asked the patient if it was OK with them that I was present (otherwise I would leave, but nobody should one think that reform is necessary. Nor, I am afraid, do I offer tips on how to find one’s way onto the “fast track” to managerial success. (pp. 5–9)

The story in its diversity, allowing the story to unfold from the many-sided, complex, and sometimes conflicting stories that the actors in the case have told me. Second, I avoid linking the case with the theories of any one academic specialization. Instead, I relate the case to broader philosophical positions that cut across specializations. In this way, I try to leave scope for readers of different backgrounds to make different interpretations and draw diverse conclusions regarding the question of what the case is a case of. The goal is not to make the case study be all things to all people. The goal is to allow the study to be different things to different people. (p. 238)
refused). I said hello and/or shook the hand of the patient. I did not interview the patients, nor did I record or take notes. On the way there I would interview the practitioners on their daily routines and how they experienced them and asked them about their sense of responsibility. When I was in meetings with other professionals from other institutions, I would stay silent after being introduced and say ‘Hi,’ just like with being with the patients, and take notes. In those inter-professional meetings, I did not, with one exception (and asking permission first), record the talk with my audio recorder. After having shadowed all the different kinds of activities at least once, I realized that most of the actual ‘natural’ talk and dialogue happened when the team practitioners met during their daily meetings together and debriefed each other. For me it was both a particularly efficient medium to get a sense of what everybody had done the day before and what they would do next, and to have most, if not all (everybody working was expected to participate as it is prescribed in the ACT model), practitioners present and talking to each other: data was there for the taking, so to speak. In an iterative process, data gathering finally concentrated on the audio recording of two series of daily team meetings and during the process of recording I made notes in which I highlighted utterances that I felt were important and that might help me navigate the transcriptions. I did not film these meetings to get ‘richer’ data because I did not want to be too intrusive and make the team members feel they were being observed.

As to those meetings, every working day morning since April 2011, at 8.45 a.m., all available forensic ACT team members, on average eight (± four) from different disciplines (a psychiatrist who is also the doctor-manager, a psychotherapist, psychiatric nurses of which one is the team coordinator, nurses, social workers, a housing worker, a peer-support worker, admin worker and two or three interns at any given time), assembled at their office room for their planning meeting that lasted between 25 and 45 minutes. The office was situated in an old building close to the city center and was home to about eight different outpatient teams, including two other (non-forensic) ACT teams. The office room supported about 10 workspaces in small groups in a U-shape alongside its walls, with a large screen on the wall at the open part of the U, and a large meeting table in the middle of the room big enough for about ten people to sit at. During meetings, most people would sit at the table, but some would stay at their workstation, including the one operating the spreadsheet on the screen. Supported by a planning spreadsheet projected on a large screen, they first briefed each other on the previous day’s activities and then checked and assigned the current day’s scheduled activities. The spreadsheet is structured by day and by type of activity (outbound and inbound visits, the administration of medication, and ‘other’). Generally, every conversational episode is linked to an entry with a scheduled time and represents an action that is assigned to one or two team members. Most entries display the last name of a forensic ACT recipient, on average 3 a day, out of a total of 100 persons (± 15) in the collective caseload at any given time. For example: ‘15:00. (team member) Cindy visits (patient) Mrs. S to update treatment plan.’ The day after this action, Cindy briefs the rest of the team on what happened. If there was anything remarkable about the event, according to Cindy or to someone else, it would be discussed briefly. In a way, the members thus perform and sustain a meticulous collective diary in an episodic format. The meeting has a certain rhythm, with most episodes ending within minutes or even seconds, in utterances such as: ‘done that,’ ‘yeah, talked to him;’ ‘no, he’ll be here an hour earlier‘; ‘OK, I’ll do it.’ After such a finish, the next episode, usually involving another recipient, begins. At first glance, the sense of responsibility here amounts to an apparently clear task to (be) assigned(to); the plot wrapped up by a subsequent silence that is broken with the start of the next episode. Some episodes take longer and become more intense, the rhythm temporarily broken by deliberations about predicaments that, if too long, will generally be passed over to another kind of meeting (case discussion).

Concerned with the tentative question of how the team in those meetings ‘made’ sense together of their dual objective of caring for patients and helping to make society secure, I set out to collect snippets that would be an indication of that sense-making in practice, and I did find relevant fragments, which are displayed throughout this thesis. If I was in a meeting and such a fragment seemed to be unfolding, I would sometimes approach the practitioner in question after the meeting ended, to talk about that topic a bit more in an unstructured, recorded interview. Next to this predetermined collection approach I tried to sustain an open awareness, an active receptivity, of everything as it was discussed, I noted which kind of topics seemed to recur often and which moments in the performance of the meetings to me felt extra intense, through (emotional-volitional) tone, increase in non-verbal expressions, and conversational changes. I was aware that this approach of purposively looking for ‘significance’ through apparent quality and quantity of dialogue obscured the apparent ‘insignificant,’ be it silences, rare occurrences, mistakes, and so on, and I also noted these. Some fragments of recordings I could not translate into words because of low volume and chaotic patterns of dialogue involving many practitioners with some moving in and out of the office room meeting. I did not choose to hire a professional transcriber, primarily because I wanted myself to go over and over the utterances and the words myself, becoming familiar with my own data. At first, I tried different software applications for this process, but I found the popular Atlas.ti and NVivo too complicated. I did not see the need for, or the purpose of, making use of their advanced analysis tools because I would then rely on procedures I would not understand myself or spend a vast amount of time entering data in the way required for these tools to function, thereby investing myself in an application to such an extent that I would not be able to do without it, anymore. I was content to settle with Transana, light and flexible in its use. The program has some popularity with conversation analysts and ethnomethodologists, and was recommended in ten Have’s seminal Doing Conversation Analysis (2007). Next to these performed dialogues, I collected documents (not patient files) as I could see them used by the team, either hung on the wall such as, temporarily, a poster of the code of conduct on the room door (not discussed though when I was around) or talked about in the meetings and the interviews.
Collecting things?
In both my data collection and my analysis, and throughout my thesis as a whole, the emphasis is on discourse, on text, talk, utterances, what people say about what they do, what they say about themselves and others. So, you would think I place myself comfortably on the discourse side of the once raging but now seemingly calmed debate on discourse versus materiality, with the first being accused of colonizing the latter. The debate in question was about organizational discourse analysis in the journal Human Relations, going back to 2000 (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2000) but culminating in 2011–2013 with: a contribution by Alvesson & Kärreman (2011a) “Decolonializing discourse: Critical reflections on organizational discourse analysis”; the responses by ledema (2011), Mumby (2011) and Bargiela-Chiappini (2011); the response by Alvesson and Kärreman (2011b) on those responses; another response on that one by Hardy and Grant (2012) and the final response to that response by, again, Alvesson and Kärreman (2013). Alvesson and Kärreman (2000) drew upon the work of Fairclough to raise their concern that anything “non-discourse” is marginalized through the broad use of the term “discourse,” encompassing everything deemed meaningful, and suggested “allowing space for the non- or extra-discursive (and including more than materiality in the extra-discursive)” (pp. 1364–1365). Missing in the above discourse debate about the non-discursive is the extra-discursive.

Part 1 | Questions

3 | Could a method of inquiry be made answerable?

It is also impermissible to take this categorical boundary line as something absolute and impermeable (which leads to an oversimplified, dogmatic splitting of hairs). However forcefully the real and the represented world resist fusion, however immutable the presence of that categorical boundary line between them, they are nevertheless indissolubly tied up with each other and find themselves in continual mutual interaction; uninterrupted exchange goes on between them, similar to the uninterrupted exchange of matter between living organisms and the environment that surrounds them. (p. 254)

‘The organization,’ then, is a complex case in point, demanding from the researcher to zoom in its particularities, such as meetings, forms and letters, each with their own sense of materiality that seems obvious yet at the same time each immersed in a discursive realm where notions of addressivity and receptivity calibrate not only their materiality and its sense but also that of those addressing and receiving. When someone would say, ‘At home I am a different person than at work,’ we thus might consider taking that statement somewhat literally. And in one of his last works, Bakhtin (1986) concerned himself with how we may work “Toward a Methodology for the Human Sciences” and had some things to say about things. Some points in particular are relevant here, in which Bakhtin (1986) separated the exact (“precise”) sciences from the human sciences, where the first contemplates

Mol made a convincing case that stuff indeed means, that is, that things like devices may enact particular coming-into-beings, such as the-patient-as-a-particular-diagnosis, which are then drawn upon by, and imposed upon, people (as differential coming-into-beings themselves) as meanings. Through such instruments, such dividing devices, the human body is enacted multiple. Throughout my chapters in Part II, materiality, stuff, does play a crucial role: be it in the way rooms, corridors, weapons and food impose themselves on our senses; in the way our own body relates itself as a member of an organizational body-in-becoming; or in the ways diagnostic and assessment tools, electronic interfaces, protocols and so on ‘calibrate’ our shared understanding of what is patient, practitioner, stakeholder and so on. Materiality, matter, material, figure firmly from within Bakhtin’s work and in this thesis, but one could say this idea, any idea, of materiality is colonized in a discursive hermeneutic framework, in modes of ordering. One point that Bakhtin himself stressed is the distinction between the realm of the text and that which extends beyond the written word: ‘As we have already said, there is a sharp and categorical boundary line between the actual world as source of representation and the world represented in the work’ (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 254). Yet Bakhtin (1981) was quick to add that this categorical line should not be thought of as an absolute, ‘real’ divide:

‘The organization,’ then, is a complex case in point, demanding from the researcher to zoom in its particularities, such as meetings, forms and letters, each with their own sense of materiality that seems obvious yet at the same time each immersed in a discursive realm where notions of addressivity and receptivity calibrate not only their materiality and its sense but also that of those addressing and receiving. When someone would say, ‘At home I am a different person than at work,’ we thus might consider taking that statement somewhat literally. And in one of his last works, Bakhtin (1986) concerned himself with how we may work “Toward a Methodology for the Human Sciences” and had some things to say about things. Some points in particular are relevant here, in which Bakhtin (1986) separated the exact (“precise”) sciences from the human sciences, where the first contemplates
a thing and expounds on it...In opposition to the subject there is only a voiceless thing. Any object of knowledge (including man) can be perceived and cognized as a thing. But a subject as such cannot be perceived and studied as a thing, for as a subject it cannot, while remaining a subject, become voiceless, and, consequently, cognition of it can only be dialogic. (p. 161)

Bakhtin is quite clear that we are dealing with different kinds of entities here, which demand a different approach to inquiry. Studying (or treating, more generally) a person as an object is possible, but not desirable since it foregoes being answerable which is the precondition of subjectivity. Unlike things, understanding a subject and regarding it as a phenomenon secondary to the dialogue between and within discourse, is to understand it dialogically. However, again, things are not that simple:

one must not forget that ‘thing’ and ‘personality’ are limits and not absolute substances. Meaning cannot (and does not wish to) change physical, material, and other phenomena; it cannot act as a material force. And it does not need to do this: it itself is stronger than any force, it changes the total contextual meaning of an event and reality without changing its actual (existential) composition one iota; everything remains as it was, but it acquires a completely different contextual meaning. (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 165)

In other words, we should be aware that these ideas of a thing or a personality (or soul) are limit concepts within an unfinalizable spectrum of possible meanings attached to each other. Following Bakhtin, Stengers, and ANT scholars, even objects that seem an obvious ‘things,’ allow themselves to be studied dialogically. Approaching the study dialogically implies taking the contextual (praxiographic) meaning into account. As Bakhtin suggests, the impact of this realm of meaning on us is greater than any material force might have, as it directly bears upon our idea of who and where we are and why. But not ‘by myself.’ Bakhtin (1986) added that:

The limit here is not I but I in interrelationship with other personalities, that is, I and other, I and thou...Our thought and our practice, not technical but moral (that is, our responsible deeds), are accomplished between two limits: attitudes toward the thing and attitudes toward the personality. Reification and personification. Some of our acts (cognitive and moral) strive toward the limit of reification, but never reach it; other acts strive toward the limit of personification, and never reach it completely. (pp. 167–168)

Put differently, in the responsible deed we answer to another for something, indeed: we require the personification of that other in order to relate to, to answer to, just as we need to reify, make outside of ourselves and our relationship, that which we answer for. But just as I cannot place anything meaningful completely outside of our relationship, I cannot completely regard you as a thou for you always, however partial, remain an object to me, too (an example of this might be the threshold experience of the erotic). In short, Bakhtin suggested we become and stay aware of the unfinalizable nature of discourse and to grasp our limitations in understanding both the thing and the persona, and that which separates them and that which conjoins them. For our purposes here a crucial recurring point is the critique that the above CMS scholars share: the idea that “discourse constitutes’ poses a problem to be investigated, not an investigative point of departure” (Ledema, 2011, cited in Alvesson & Kärreman, 2011b, p. 1199).

3.4 Data analysis and writing

Clarity is the disappearance of what could shock.
Totality and Infinity. Levinas (1969)

In his Qualitative Data Analysis Using a Dialogical Approach, Sullivan (2011) adopted Weber’s distinction between the bureaucratic and the charismatic tendencies in every stage of the research process. Whereas the bureaucratic approach features verifiable rules and procedures and the virtues of being systematic, exhaustive and impersonal, the charismatic approach draws its strength from the personality and the intuition of the scholar. Sullivan makes use of this distinction not to argue that they can be clearly separated, or that one is better than the other, but to “illustrate how authority of analysis resided both in the bureaucratic procedures that are followed and the charismatic style of the analyst...both ‘bureaucracy’ and ‘charisma’ offer the researcher different and complementary possibilities” (Sullivan, 2011, p. 64). Sullivan argued that even in the transcription of data one cannot rely completely on following established procedure. What I have chosen to do in the transcription of audio recordings is to write down the whole recordings without the use of the symbols in the Jeffersonian system of transcription common in conversation analysis, relying on my own memory when rereading the transcribed events; thereby running the risk of forgetting the intonation, the emotional-volitional register in which the words came to life. Of course, I still had the audio recordings themselves to listen back to, which I have done repeatedly. In the presentation of fragments of transcribed (and translated into English) utterances, following Sullivan (2011), I prefer:

not to use [the many symbols in the Jeffersonian system] as I find that they distract away from the readability of a transcript and foreground attention to the sounds of the words, for the reader, at the expense of what is being said and the format used to say them. (p. 69)

When a speaker significantly raises the volume of his or her speech, I present this by using capital letters. Finally, I have already touched upon the unpleasantly long team dialogue
excerpts presented in this thesis chapter. The majority of talk recorded is talk which was not directed at me, or, more precisely, I was not an actively uttering participant in those team conversations. The consequence of that is that I have been unable to direct the utterances of team members to such a deliberate extent so as it would produce proper soundbites to stand out and hit a theoretical point right on the empirical mark. One has to be drawn into the dialogue for a while first, before it ‘muddles into its sense,’ before we are drawn into the story as it unfolds in between the utterances. That makes for a difficult read at times, but rewarding ultimately, I hope.

Sullivan (2011) elaborated on different styles and techniques as they have been developed in the crowded field of discourse analyses, before guiding the reader toward Sullivan’s own, dialogic, method. I do not think it is enough to merely apply his dialogic approach for two reasons: first, because I am not primarily interested in subjectivity but in answerability, second, because I think (as Sullivan himself displays an iterative dialogic process of method-finding) not discarding one or the other method but finding levels of agreement does more justice to the iterative approach of both Sullivan and Bakhtin, that is, to perform at least an attempt at following a similar itinerary of partial agreements. Moreover, the three accounts below each arise from their own research question, and what we come to want to know should in principle determine what method fits best, and not the other way around (even though in practice it may very well work this way, too). These questions are: how does a grand-scale work problem come to be boiled down to a personal concern; how do people come to expose themselves and others to situations of physical force; and how do people acting on a moral impulse may actually become of no concern to each other?

These questions presuppose a particular attitude from the analyst toward her ‘data,’ which Sullivan (2011) drew into a hermeneutic spectrum between trust and suspicion (which may remind us of Churchman’s satisfied and dissatisfied scholars). Chapter 4 takes a trusting approach, in Chapter 5 a suspicious approach, and Chapter 6 is somewhere in the middle. If the analyst trusts her data, it means that she presupposes at least a certain level of unambiguity between the words uttered and the meanings ‘behind’ them, in order for her to regard these words as content codable and quantifiable into fairly unambiguous aggregates. The trusting discourse scholar attributes meaningfulness to what is said (the content of the talk itself as well as the content of what the scholar ‘distilled’ from it). Sullivan elaborated that the trusting analyst sees “the content of talk as a gateway into lived experience” and suspicious analysts as “those that look at the form that this talk takes as reflective of power relations and the local negotiation of identity” (Sullivan, 2011, p. 8). The suspicious hermeneutic is not so much interested in the content of what has been uttered, but more so in interpreting the functions that these utterances might have in foregrounding or obscuring a particular position of power(lessness). To the suspicious one, it is all about relations of power, whereas the trusting one is less consumed by the contextual (social-economic) equality in being answerable. On the trusting side of the spectrum we find grounded theory (e.g., Glaser & Strauss, Charmaz) and on the doubtful side we find the critical discourse analysts (e.g., Wodak, Fairclough). Sullivan located narrative analysts (e.g., Bruner, Bamberg) somewhere in the middle. Sullivan depicted those on the trusting side as adventurous anthropologists, who dare to step into the lived experience of the subject talking, wondering how to reveal (or better yet: translate) this ‘strange, new world.’ Those on the suspicious side, the not-so-adventurous, instead seek to have their data corroborate that same world permeated with power relations a little further. In a different categorical distinction resembling the suspicious, Hayden White classified the critical further into the positive and the eschatological structuralists. The positive structuralists such as Marx and Saussure seek to identify an integrative:

structure of structures...concerned with the scientific determination of the structures of consciousness by which men form a conception of the world they inhabit and on the basis of which they contrive modes of praxis for coming to terms with that world. (White, 1973, p. 53)

The eschatological on the other hand, such as Lacan and Foucault, understand the world as fundamentally opaque and irreducibly varied and dispersive, concentrating “on the ways in which structures of consciousness actually conceal the reality of the world and, by that concealment, effectively isolate men within different, not to say mutually exclusive, universes of discourse, thought, and action” (White, 1973, p. 53). The narrative analysts, finally, concerned with understanding the utterances before them in terms of narrative structure such as plot, genre, and so on, are interested in both the content and the form of what is uttered, and may choose to adopt a more trusting, adventurous approach as well as a more critical stance. More in touch with my own end here, you may find little room for the trusting approach as I oscillate between the narrative analysts and the eschatological structuralists.

As Sullivan explained, Bakhtin’s work is so wide ranging and thought evoking, that it has been used across the spectrum, evidencing the different readings of his work. Differences in Bakhtin’s own early and later work with their different emphases “allow for many different means of appropriating his work across different qualitative frameworks” (Sullivan, 2011, p. 13), amounting to “a jack of all trades, but a master of none” (Sullivan, 2011, p. 14). Sullivan suggested there are some unique elements to Bakhtin’s thought which have not yet been developed in the existing hermeneutic frameworks: the “existential insistence of a needy self,” the “emphasis on ‘truth’ as ‘prova’ in a dialogical approach” and “otherness and mystery can be built into the fabric of talk” (Sullivan, 2011, pp. 14–16). First, As regards to the needy self, Sullivan (2011) argued that the self and the other “are theorized as anticipative of each other,” which means that both the author and the research subjects in question are “selves as knowers – who are capable of interpreting and re-interpreting what they had trusted as suspicious, and vice versa” (p. 14). For the analyst this means we are left with no unambiguous meaning of data,
but that various interpretations are possible, are always potential. Of course, there are already many discourse analysts who readily admit that this is the case and allow for multiple accounts of the same data, as we have seen above. However, what sets this needy self in anticipation of the other principle, the unfinalizable self–other axis if you will, apart from these other analyses is the “rhetorical features of language are viewed as both internally addressed to self and externally addressed to others” (Sullivan, 2011, p. 14). A level of distrust is necessary to consider this in the first place, and Sullivan argued that this is the case with Bakhtin, and we might corroborate this by how Bakhtin analyses the utterances of Dostoevsky’s protagonists, which he regarded as permeated with the anticipated response of the other already inside the thought as it is on display in stories such as with the Underground Man (from Dostoevsky’s Notes from Underground). What we gather from this is that answerability, as a relational concept, is not only to be found in between dialogue of persons, but equally, possibly even more so, hidden within the utterances that are of themselves already an internal dialogue on how answerable the self allows itself to be toward itself, permeating the utterance, the thought, with internal conflict, for the analyst to tease out in the content and form of the utterances by making use of dialogical concepts such as the sideward glance, the sore spot, and the loophole. These concepts are more than particular aspects to shape an idea of subjectivity, such as Sullivan is after, they allow us to tease out the shapes and forms of answerability as it is played out: withholding complete commitment to a particular stance, inserting a disclaimer, appealing toward addressees to take responsibility or to shift responsibility toward them, and so on.

Second, Sullivan drew our attention to the idea of ‘truth’ as ‘provido’ in a dialogical approach, which he explained as ‘lived truth’ as opposed to ‘objective,’ cognized and unshakeable truth (istina in Russian). Drawing on the work John Shottier, Sullivan argued that “Methodologically, a focus on provido allows an examination of different ‘lived’ truths, with different levels of personal investment, in terms of how they shape self and other... such truth can be embodied in different lives and indeed lifestyles” (Sullivan, 2011, p. 15). The connection of truth with lived experience discloses a plane of analysis in which we turn our attention to the discursive devices that construct that lived experience as evidenced in the utterances under scrutiny. In other words, when we direct our attention to the lived truths as they are uttered, we make sense of them by turning toward the way in which the utterances portray the environment in which their truth indeed becomes ‘lived.’ This is where we touch upon our earlier idea of the unfinalizable eventness of the everyday, our attention toward knowledge “that is grounded in the concrete, the particular and everyday life” (Sullivan, 2011, p. 15). This is, for example, how the intended use of electronic devices such as the electronic patient record (how the system is supposed to work; objectively, laid down in a manual) oftentimes is not the actual use in the lived work practices (e.g. generating a sense of red tape, but also the ever-present chance of poaching upon it such as de Certeau, 1984, described). By using the concepts in narrative analysis, such as genre, and in particular time-space mode (chronotope in Bakhtinian), we get a differentiated sense of what lived truth in different genres and chronotopes entails, what lived truth of the ability to be answerable and hold answerable (within self and with others) might involve. Sullivan provided the example of the epic genre (in which there is no unfinalized, messy everyday life) in which the gist of the utterances by the speaker is to authorize her own plight to overcome a certain ordeal, and we can discern this epic genre in terms of how this world is constructed by the speaker herself and by the discourse in which we observe the speaker to find herself in. The differences in chronotope and genre, the nature and level of unfinalized messiness of the event-as-discourse, may reveal the mode of uttered lived truth of answerability, from authoritative discourse (‘you must do this’) to what Bakhtin calls “internally persuasive discourse” (I feel I should do this). Chronotope, as a side note, might serve to be a key concept connecting discourse studies and actor-network theory approaches such as Mol’s.

Finally, Sullivan’s third aspect of ‘otherness and mystery built into the fabric of talk’ more directly engages the anticipation of interlocution. For a further grasp on answerability it entails that we direct our attention to how discourse both finalizes and unfinalizes “the boundary lines between what is other and what is self” (Sullivan, 2011, p. 16). Double-voiced discourse’ is permeated with this anticipated interlocution, ostensibly unfinalized and indirect, drawing in otherness and ambiguity and making ourselves change speech and tone while talking without the need of an ‘actual’ response of somebody else. Sullivan (2011) provided an example to illustrate how we should apply this and the other two aspects to get a sense of his dialogical approach:

It may be of benefit to return to the example of the individual in pain to establish the differences to other qualitative methodologies. A dialogical approach would focus on how the ‘pain’ is authored or the value it is given by the participant, it would examine their anticipation of judgements of others around how they are authored as a person in pain (for example, through paying attention to their reservations in speech and in the introduction of other voices through indirect discourse) and explore their dialogues with their own self around the significance of the pain. It would seek to locate these in a particular conception of time and space (chronotope), such as future redemption, past suffering, the potential of the present, the significance of others on the landscape of the pain. (p. 16)

Bakhtin’s understanding of language is that it is “permeated with dialogic relationships: among whole utterances, toward a signifying part of an utterance, even toward an individual word, between language styles, toward one’s own utterance speaking with one’s own self–other” (Bakhtin, 1984b, pp. 182–183). Crucial here is to understand that putting dialogue center stage makes possible the analysis of how a single utterance may already be dialogized, without even having a response yet from any listener. Interlocutors may be other persons in everyday intersubjective talk, yet while talking there are other interlocutors at work at the intrasubjective level, that is, intralocutors (following the
boundary construct), in which the utterance as voiced by a ‘real’ person is already an outcome of the intrapersonal dialogue taking place between the ‘virtual’ voices. Sullivan and McCarthy (2005, 2008; Sullivan, 2008, 2011) directly addressed the idea of anticipated interlocution. As Sullivan (2011) insisted:

Methodologically, the possibility of anticipated interlocutors spilling out and into our dialogues with concrete others is missing or understated in other qualitative approaches. In discursive approaches, the ‘other’ tends to be primarily considered as the immediate interlocutor or the obvious audience of a public address... The benefit of the dialogical approach is that...it admits the possibility of a multi-levelled experience with a diversity of sometimes competing addressees and replies. (p. 172)

In dialogue as it unfolds, what Sullivan called ‘inside-out’ and ‘outside-in’ utterances coalesce. As Sullivan (2011) argued with Bakhtin,

the epic, tragedy and lyric [genres] tend to organize “outside-in” types of discourse, while irony, parody, and the novel, tend to organize “inside-out” types of discourse. “Outside-in” discourses are more “monological” in so far as they privilege a singular truth...the more “dialogical” genres are more anti-authoritative and irreverent. (p. 46)

The struggle between these two, inside-out and outside-in, and the presence of third addressees can be traced by discourse trying to find loopholes out such as sideward glances and hidden dialogue which may indicate sore spots and threshold moments, such as in the parable of the Grand Inquisitor in a novel of Dostoevsky. The parable is a monologue by the head of the Spanish Inquisition toward his prisoner that he plans to execute the next day. The Inquisitor makes immediately clear to his prisoner, who is believed to be Christ reincarnated, that he cannot be anything but a character in the Church’s plot and is not allowed to enter into dialogue anew.

“Is it thou? Thou?” But receiving no answer, he adds at once, “Don’t answer, and be silent. What carst thou say, indeed? I know too well what thou wouldst say. And thou hast no right to add anything to what thou hadst said of old...When the Inquisitor ceased speaking he waited some time for his prisoner to answer him. His silence weighed down upon him. He saw that the prisoner had listened intently all the time, looking gently in his face and evidently not wishing to reply. The old man longed for him to say something, however bitter and terrible. But suddenly he approached the old man in silence and softly kissed him on his bloodless aged lips. That was all his answer. The old man shuddered. His lips moved. He went do the door, opened it, and said to him: “Go, and come no more...come not at all, never, never!” (Dostoevsky, 2005/1879–1880, p. 238)

With a doubting author, aware of anticipated interlocutors, a focus on ‘lived truths,’ thresholds moments and its gestures, and a primary interest in narrative structures as relevant to the ‘self–other axis,’ Sullivan’s dialogic approach finds itself somewhere in the middle of the spectrum, not too far from the narrative analyst approach, something akin to a socially anxious Riceourian style, which I have adopted in this study. The three aspects that set Sullivan’s Bakhtinian dialogic approach apart from other kinds of discourse analysis resonate with the three unfinalizable aspects we discerned from our gloss over both CMS and Bakhtin’s evolving thought on answerability. But where Sullivan is primarily interested in the study of subjectivity and introduces the Bakhtinian sense of dialogue into his methodological approach to study that subjectivity, I am first and foremost interested in responsibility, or rather answerability. One may ponder whether Bakhtin was primarily interested in subjectivity or in answerability since Bakhtin shared Dostoevsky’s mistrust toward the psychologizing of the human condition. Answerability, moreover, is an intrinsically relational concept as opposed to subjectivity, which always needs further explanation as to why we should understand it as dialogal (intersubjective, see e.g. the dialogical self theory of Hermans & Kempen, 1993). Sullivan’s dialogical approach might even work better when focused not on subjectivity but on answerability. Sullivan converted these three aspects into the format of a table that depicts a key moment that is significant for the study of subjectivity. Sullivan discerned the following: participant(s); genres and discourses; emotional register; time-space elaboration; and context. As much as it offers a quick overview of the data analyzed, I found the presentation in a table too restrictive for my own purposes, and the distinction between ‘time-space elaboration’ and ‘context’ confusing. With Sullivan, I am interested in the shifts between the three aspects and in their interrelationships.

3.5 Toward an answerable inquiry

It is difficult to draw sharp lines, chronologically and categorically, between the collection, the analysis and the writing of research. These processes feed into each other. With too much of a blur you run the risk of getting lost and becoming desperate from time to time, and that certainly happened to me. As an external PhD student, I enjoyed a first year of talking and learning about research, being in a classroom once a month with a small group of colleagues on the same track as I was set. But after that year, my connection with university life quietened down to a few meetings each year, meeting my supervisors. What I felt really helped was to visit conferences and present draft chapters as papers there. It provided a fleeting sense of an academic belonging and togetherness and to meet (not so) like-minded, to get feedback on draft papers (getting accepted into conferences was feedback in itself) and, last but surely not least, to impose some time-bound schedules onto my own writing processes and be answerable for it. Deadlines did a great deal to get me writing quickly, which then helped me to collect some more data and helped me particularly in the analysis. Sullivan’s approach allows us to methodologically
shift ourselves in between narrative analysis, the more critical discourse analysis, and Sullivan’s dialogical approach, to retain the methodological dialogue between these approaches and see how they may answer each other, and that is what I set out to do in Part II below. In exploring critically the possibility of an answerable inquiry (see also Burdick and Sandlin, 2010), I will draw toward the unfinalizables of a wavering self–other axis, the eventness of spatiotemporality and the ambiguity of discourse. I hope to disclose not complete and unambiguous answers in this inquiry, but instead to disclose alternative ways of understanding. I draw upon the three phases in Bakhtin’s moral thought, each as a different constellation of the three unfinalizables, to generate a triptych of answerability.

A single case study of a forensic ACT team relevant to this inquiry and empirically rich, allows for an in-depth iterative process: slow and wandering, responsive to promising detours, returning to my ‘phenomenon’ with a readiness to be answerable for it.

In Chapter 4, I will suggest how personal responsibility comes about in organizing, by analogy of Mikhail Bakhtin’s analysis of Apuleius’ The Golden Ass, as a genre of its own: an ‘adventure novel of everyday life.’ Apuleius’ innovation, according to Bakhtin, was to construct a tale of personal responsibility emerging from a chronotopic interplay. Organization, I argue, works like such an interplay between the chronotopes of the adventure novel of ordeal and that of everyday life. I suggest how this genre permeates our thinking in organization today, and how it prefigures, and limits, the ways we feel we are able to answer each other and ourselves. Chapter 5 provides a reconceptualization of what some authors characterize as the threshold between the discursive and the non-discursive. I will instead propose that we never leave the discursive but wrap ourselves around a polarization of the body that ‘helps’ us to routinely engage in physically precarious situations to answer each other. In Chapter 6, we zoom in on the unending dilemma of a hybrid team balancing on the tightrope between different regimes, othering societal ‘strangers’ in interorganizational interaction, but, more so, how this othering is already anticipated to such an extent that open dialogue becomes replaced by a more internal dialogue of anticipated interlocutors and I will add a reflective note to illustrate further how this might work.
4 About a knife, a letter and instant soup

I had the torment of being set, like a sacrificial victim, between the altar and the flint knife, as the old saying goes.

_The Golden Ass_, Apuleius

A forensic ACT team engages people whose lives cut through predetermined sectoral and organizational boundaries. Many of them could be labeled ‘difficult patients,’ walking on society’s tightropes and managing to fall or jump off either side, repeatedly (see Koekkoek et al., 2006, for a review on how this ‘difficult patient’ is constituted by practitioners’ discourse). As an organizational response to care and to deal with their disparate challenges, forensic mental health care amounts to an intertwining of mental health and addiction care and criminal justice surveillance. Although this intertwining might seem practical, one may call into question its self-evidence. For in the everyday betwixt and between, apparent safeguards designed for patients’ and practitioners’ well-being and the roles they play, may quickly unravel, including the ‘difficult patient’ definition. A sense of responsibility then comes to the fore, not in spite of organization, but emerging from it. This chapter elaborates on such an unraveling in practice. Olive, a forensic ACT team member and Tim, an external parole officer, enter a meeting with Mrs. N., a patient who risks incarceration if she refuses the care provided by Olive and the team. The encounter does not end very well. My angle here is on how Olive and another colleague, Ed, make sense of the meeting and of their own actions, as a matter of personal responsibility. I argue that they do so, in particular, because the organization they are embedded in provides a perpendicular sense of time and space that evokes this sense of personal responsibility. As such, Mikhail Bakhtin’s etiology of personal responsibility is crossed over toward a critical interpretation of the ‘responsible organization,’ in this chapter.

4.1 Grid and play in the space of the everyday

_The door that closes is precisely what may be opened._

_The Practice of Everyday Life._

Michel de Certeau.

Most studies on organizational ethics have yet to scrutinize the temporal and spatial dimensions that precondition a sense of value (and ethics). Although there is a substantial amount of studies to rethink the notion of time and its relation to organization (e.g.

Ancona et al., 2001, for an overview), few organization studies have focused specifically on this ‘underlying’ time-space configuration of an organizational ethics or, put otherwise, in the contention that parameters of space and time are axiologically constitutive. Put a little bit more simply, our idea of what is valuable is prefigured by the sense of time and space, constituting the event as we experience it. Ramó’s (2004) is one of those few, providing an axiological matrix that produces different images of organization and their moral ‘worldviews,’ as it were. Sharing the notion that chronological time is not a given and is thus open to scrutiny (see also Pedersen, 2009; Crossan et al., 2005; Cunliffe et al., 2004; Lorino & Mourey, 2013; Nicolini, 2007; Chia, 2002; Lilley, 1995), Ramó suggests that different space-time frameworks are constitutive of organizational ethics. Opening up the possibility of several discursive frameworks and their concurrent senses of ethics, Ramó suggested focusing on the contextuality of practice to answer the question what moral sense prevails when and where. But that contextuality matters is where Ramó’s argument ends, while there is much more to be said about it, theoretically, and via empirical observation. As I will elaborate below, space–time modes are pivotal in Mikhail Bakhtin’s understanding of moral responsibility. Bakhtin calls these modes chronotopes (literally: time-place). According to Bakhtin, they function as a defining structural element in the organization of the literary novel: chronotopes underpin the narrative and define value, ‘calibrate’ what the sense of the moral course of action is. Morson and Emerson (1990) related the chronotope to ethics succinctly: “as for Bakhtin all meaning entails evaluation, chronotopes also define parameters of value” (p. 369). A complex concept, Bakhtin himself gives a description, as:

_The intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature… In the literary artistic chronotope, spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole. Time as it were thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history. (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 84)"

In search for the grounds of moral responsibility, in “Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel,” Bakhtin traced the historical development of the literary novel in its different genres and in particular the chronotopic underpinnings of these genres. One of the crucial conclusions in his work, Bakhtin contended here that “every entry into the sphere of meaning is accomplished only through the gates of the chronotope” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 258). When we are interested in the contextuality of responsibility, with Bakhtin, we should be interested in how motifs of time and space may indicate a particular mode into which the meaning of (moral) behavior is forged. In forensic ACT, dealing with threatening behavior and verbal violence – at least during the year that I was making observations – the notion of contextuality, and how it constitutes the ways people come to answer to each other, is overt, and explicitly articulated by practitioners themselves. As Uriah elaborated, when I spoke to him after the planning meeting and the incident featuring Ed and Olive that I will discuss later:

---

14 A previous version of this chapter was presented at the Sociology of Health and Illness and Exeter University Symposium ‘Concerning Relations – Sociologies of Conduct, Care and Affect’ of 2014 in Exeter, UK.
Things become more normal. Of course, you choose yourself to work with this target group, so you think: “OK, things like this can happen,” but it is always contextual. Aggressive stuff will happen regularly, but, it’s different here, [...] it happens in a certain context. Outside it happens, outside where there are conflicts, that’s where it happens, but never in the consultation room, there it doesn’t really happen, there, although you might think that stuff might happen, but I have never actually experienced something like that [...] It’s the context, and then there’s also the parole officer who enacts his supervisory duty of course, so it’s his job to confront her and then there’s the question of how to go about that, you know? We can confront, too, but we’re trained so that it doesn’t escalate, right? But then, still, it can happen anyway. (interview ii, 1 Nov. 2012)

Uriah drew a clear distinction between the context in the consultation room and the context of “outside.” Uriah himself just joined the forensic ACT team a couple of weeks earlier. What is more, this forensic ACT team itself was only established one and a half years earlier, and during the time of my observations some routines were still fresh (or incomplete or missing), such as sharing a meeting with a patient together with the parole officer. This in effect mixes two different public services with two very different goals and paths: the parole officer recurrently examining whether the patient should be allowed to venture outside the penitentiary. The team started doing these meetings together for practical reasons just a couple of weeks earlier and used a consultation room on the ground level at their office, their own office team room being on the first level of the building. In the account above, Uriah emphasized both the possibility of aggressive behavior and the very absence of just that in his earlier work experience in forensic care. When it does happen, it is outside, outside the consultation room but also located outside the view of the forensic workers, he seems to imply. Uriah suggested that escalation may follow from the way the parole officer composed himself, with such aggression normally being avoided because the care workers are trained to de-escalate in their interaction with patients. The incident itself is reported in the following excerpt, recorded a few minutes into the daily planning meeting at the team office room earlier that day. In every working day morning planning meeting, Ed, Olive, Uriah, Carol and other members of the Forensic ACT team exchange small stories about what happened to them and their patients. On the below occasion, Ed and Olive in particular, recount the incident involving themselves and Mrs. N. (who has been anonymized for privacy considerations. And as said, all practitioners’ names are pseudonyms).

Ed: Well, about Mrs. N., uh, we have said enough, I think, who, uhm... well not completely, it concerned a meeting with the parole office, and with Olive, that did not turn out as a dialogue but a quarrel, wherein, after a little while, a knife, and not such a small one, really, was thrown on the table, uhm...with the message being, what? [Turns toward Olive]

Olive: Well, I uh, so Mrs. N. had a knife in her pocket, and at one point Tim [Tim is the parole officer who was present at this meeting, in a small office room at the team headquarters, together with Mrs. N. and Olive] said: “Well hey, that’s a pretty big knife you have there, could you not bring that anymore?” And then, at a certain moment, the conversation disintegrated between these two and Tim said: “I am leaving.” And so, Mrs. N. had to talk to me alone, well, because I would help her apply to the online housing service. Upon which I said to her: “I’m OK to help you with it, but you are going to hand over that knife at the front desk.” Then she said, like: “No, I won’t.” Then I said: “Well, then it ends here.” And, reluctantly, [she] took that knife out of her pocket and slid it over the table, and then the knife dropped. And...uh, I said: “You are going to pick it up.” Well, then she did pick it up. And she handed it over, to the front desk.

Uriah: Quite firm of you.

Carol: Great, indeed!

Ed: She did, in the end, like, a good thing about it, she did, you know, like stay with you inside, for quite a while.

Olive: Yes, yes, and that was fine, you know.

Ed: And that was fine.

Olive: Yeah, yeah.

Ed: It just had to get ruined toward the end, yeah, I had her, uh...I just gave her a letter, just because...uh... weapons are an absolute no-go, and if it happens again then the conversation will just end, inside.

Uriah: But there is no security check, no one is checked.

Ed: No, but well. There, there is no guarantee, that’s a pretty conscious choice, like, there’s some real, uh [...] yes, we will, we are not going to go for a security gate or whatever now. But, uh, she immediately tore the letter apart, and uh, she drove off angrily, because you engage her outside, and then they want to engage her again and someone feels threatened by that, yeah.

Carol: Yes. (day 3, 1 Oct. 2012)

Along with most others, I was not present when this event occurred, and so what we have here is my account of the accounts of others, who in their turn reported the speech of yet others. A retelling in which practitioners together process their experiences of what was an eventful episode: Mrs. N. leaving upset, ultimately, when she was handed a letter by Ed. The letter contained an official warning not to bring weapons into the office building, by penalty of suspension of all the team’s care, by penalty of ending dialogue, together. This warning is required even more since management decided against the installation of a security gate, presuming this gate increases the threshold for patients to enter the building. It is important to note that the ‘place’ of forensic ACT is undetermined, as the work unfolds not only in the consultation room, but more so anywhere the patient is to be found: at his or her home, on the street, in a clinic, shelter, safe house, police station or penitentiary, at friends’ or family’s house et cetera. And
contrary to the clinic, the specifics of some spaces like the patient’s home are unknown before the practitioner actually arrives there (other people and objects such as weapons might or might not be present). The daily planning meeting functions as a collective grid for practitioners to collectively pinpoint their times and places of the day before and the day to come. Another important aspect of space is the environment of the practitioners’ office workplace which, from the perspective of flexible work spaces, is (albeit unsuccessfully) cleansed of personal idiosyncrasies and dislocated. Practitioners who need to do the inevitable paper work may log on to the system and the electronic patient files anywhere, such as in a consultation room, at home or on the streets with a tablet. Logged on, they are submerged in an electronic environment that forces an algorithmic thinking upon them, but over which they have little to no control, and any (inevitable) computer glitch unmasks the electronic space as an alien environment which may at any moment delay or disable the work processes of the worker indeterminately.

In sum, here we have spatial motifs of the indeterminate and the linear (grid). Other spatial motifs of forensic ACT are very tangible as well: being routinely deployed into situations of everyday life, such as drinking coffee together on the couch of the patient’s home or in a shelter somewhere. The practitioner is immersed in the biography of his patient, in the network of social and public service ties, where personages interact via their respective roles. The daily work of the practitioner (and the patient) is very much prescribed through these interconnections, where dwelling within physical proximity of another (such as visiting the patients) is regarded as something natural and an essential part of good care. Furthermore, the practitioner finds herself mostly in an environment of the ‘lower social stratum,’ with most patients living at the margins of society. Conflict, difference and encounter and connectedness are part and parcel of everyday praxis, both at the patient’s home but also routinized in working space. And even the organization’s policy is to not have metal detectors, another indication of the preference of relationality and praxis, both are difference parcel of the social stratum.’ Conflict, of patients the social culture

The episode above is a narrative fragment of the work life of the team at hand, the practitioners doing their work as it unfolds and as they retell, re-fold, their understanding of what unfolded, and their roles in it. I then started to indicate motifs of space as they are reported by the practitioners and as I have observed myself during team visits, reading about forensic ACT, and from personal experience working for this health care provider. Zooming in on the experience of moral responsibility in everyday team work is the stuff of the stream of OMT thought promulgated as ‘ethics-as-practice’ (Clegg et al., 2007). As Phillips (1992) foreshadowed earlier: “Business ethics must become the study of ethics in practice, the study of the negotiation and invocation of the organization, which will undoubtedly complicate the discussion of ethics but will also ground it in the world it wishes to affect” (p. 243). From this purview, ethical considerations are attached to the contingent and situational of everyday, which may turn out to be ‘for’ or ‘against’ management (Clegg et al., 2006; Parker, 2002): entrenched in organizational

In an article from within OMT, Courpasson (2017) inquired into how the everyday might be interesting for understanding work experiences, and asked: “How can we make sense of the myriad of disconnected actions, gestures and encounters that make the everyday?” (pp. 843–844). Drawing on the work of Lefebvre and de Certeau, Courpasson (2017) argued that the everyday designates both alienating aspects of work life (repetition, frustration, oppression) and its creative potential (emancipation, resistance), motivated by a concern for offering workers ways to “free themselves from the constant control of their thoughts and moves by the authoritarian everyday of management” (p. 845); against “the progressive partitioning of times and places, the disjunctive logic of specialization through and for work, [which] no longer has an adequate counterpart” (p. 26). Courpasson (2017) highlighted de Certeau as looking “deep into the subterranean potentials that this very alienation can trigger” (p. 845), in search of “the ruses that individuals constantly devise to free themselves from the protocols imposed upon them” (p. 846), ruses defined as “micro-social activities (walking, reading, cooking) [that] are invisible to forces of control” (p. 846). Protocols in practice, or rather routines, make up the bulk of the normal forensic ACT working day. Olive, who has been with this team from the start, recalled the incident with Mrs. N. when I interviewed her alone some days later.
I mean, safety is at stake and, yeah, we shouldn’t doubt the fact we’re working with a rough crowd and I, uh, I should have drawn the line much earlier, but past a certain point you’re already so…I’ve been working for one and a half years now with this outpatient group: after having faced so much aggression, getting spat on, threatened, that past a certain point it just seems normal. And that has me slightly…

that’s what went through my head, that night, like: I wasn’t even scared. Like, huh?

How come? (Interview I, 26 Oct. 2012)

For Olive, aggressive behavior is not a possibility but a lived reality: the presence of violence has acquired the status of normality to such an extent that Olive did not even seem to blink when she asked Mrs. N. to hand in her knife. And it only occurred to her afterward, at home, that it was not normal what happened nor what she did. On this occasion, there is no evidence for ruses or micro-social activities as sources for resistance. Instead, Olive seems to come to her senses, to her sense of what is normal behavior, when she is already at home in the evening, at a physical distance from her work place in which she both ventures into places unknown and dwells in the proximity of others. As regards to the distinction between the everyday work life in which we dwell and utter together (make do, engage in tactics) and the purpose-driven order of goals, projects and the written word (strategize and appropriate) that seem to have taken hold of us, de Certeau argued that these two realms are not located in different moments and places. On the contrary, the two realms, or modes, co-exist. The teleological schemes of the purpose driven order encroach upon where we dwell, and ‘making do’ from where we dwell poaches on the mode of the telos. As Sandywell (2004) similarly argued,

in the wake of globalization and total commodification we should ask ‘where is everyday life? We seem compelled to answer: everywhere and nowhere! Every human science that strives to resist objectivism and scientism appeals to ‘life,’ every minimally reflexive hermeneutic study invokes ‘lived experience,’ every critical theory finds its ground in the liberation of reified socialities. (pp. 172–173)

As de Certeau (1984) himself insisted,

[everyday practices] do not form pockets in economic society. They have nothing in common with these marginalities that technical organization quickly integrates in order to turn them into signifiers and objects of exchange. On the contrary, it is through them that an uncodable difference insinuates itself into the happy relation the system would like to have with the operations it claims to administer. Far from being a local, and thus classifiable, revolt, it is a common and silent, almost sheep like subversion – our own. (p. 200)

De Certeau, motivated to draw out possibilities to act for the weak against the strong, traced how senses of time and space are pivotal in how people come to understand what their abilities and relations are. De Certeau’s (1984) radical point, moreover, is not to do useless things (useless in the eyes of management), but for the oppressed to use the:

rituals, representations, and laws imposed...quite different from what their conquerors had in mind; they subverted them not by rejecting or altering them, but by using them with respect to ends and references foreign to the system they had no choice but to accept. They were other within the system they had no choice but to accept. (p. xiii)

De Certeau (1984) argued for an ‘antidiscipline’ from within the everyday ~ not a non-discipline ~ one that sits on top of a “ubiquity of the place” and on “gaps in time” (p. 200). With ubiquity of place de Certeau suggested we live in “piling up of heterogeneous places. Each one, like a deteriorating page of a book, refers to a different mode of territorial unity, of socioeconomic distribution, of political conflicts and of identifying symbolism” (de Certeau, 1984, p. 201), while gaps of time refer to the experience of a “broken and jerky temporality” (de Certeau, 1984, p. 202):

...subjected to “servitudes” and dependencies, theoretical time is in fact a time linked to the improbable, to failures, to diversions, and thus displaced by its other...The gap or failure of reason is precisely the blind spot that makes it accede to another dimension, the dimension of thinking, which articulates itself on the different as its indeterminable necessity. The symbolic is inseparable from gaps: Everyday practices, based on their relation to an occasion, that is, on casual time, are thus, scattered all along duration, in the situation of acts of thought. Permanent practices of thought... Thus to eliminate the unforeseen or expel it from calculation as an illegitimate accident and an obstacle to rationality is to interdict the possibility of a living and “mythical” practice of the city. It is to leave its inhabitants only the scraps of a programming produced by the power of the other and altered by the event. Casual time is what is narrated in the actual discourse of the city: an indeterminate fable, better articulated on the metaphorical practices and stratified places than on the empire of the evident in functionalist technocracy (de Certeau, 1984, pp. 202–203, italics in original).

It is on this pillage of places and in between gaps of time, stories may reveal “the models of good or bad ruses that can be used every day. Moves, not truths, are recounted” (de Certeau, 1984, p. 23). De Certeau (1984) put much weight on these stories: “The story does not express a practice. It does not limit itself to telling about a movement. It makes it” (p. 81). In essence, stories, narrativity, mark both our entry point to our experience of spatiotemporality and allow us to grasp the ambiguity of the discursive threshold in the everyday in between the ‘functionalist technocracy’ and the ‘casual dwelling.’ Stories move us from the one to the other: “Stories thus carry out a labor that constantly transforms places into spaces or spaces into places” (de Certeau, 1984, p. 118), where
stability and the “law of the ‘proper’ rules in the place,” whereas the space is a “practiced place, composed of intersections of mobile elements” (de Certeau, 1984, p. 117).

Between these two determinations, there are passages back and forth, such as the putting to death (or putting into a landscape) of heroes who transgress frontiers and who, guilty of an offense against the law of the place, best provide its restoration with their tombs; or again, on the contrary, the awakening of inert objects (a table, a forest, a person that plays a certain role in the environment) which, emerging from their stability, transform the place where they lay motionless into the foreignness of their own space…In the story, the frontier functions as a third element. It is an “in-between”…the story privileges a “logic of ambiguity” through its accounts of interaction. It turns the frontier into a crossing, and the river into a bridge. It recounts inversions and displacements. (de Certeau, 1984, pp. 127–128)

In sum, the gest of de Certeau’s The Practice of Everyday Life lies in its articulation of a continuous vortex of two forces, that of a grid and of a play; if you will, that encroach and poach upon each other, from within an everyday that discloses a space, an antidispline, for people to make do with those forces and their interaction, primarily through narrativity and stories in particular. But concerned as de Certeau is with empowering the weak with tactics to resist oppression, he is less concerned with scrutinizing the sense of moral responsibility itself. Moreover, our relation to another, and relationality more generally, occupy little space in this work. For this, we turn to another French thinker who engaged with space and, in particular, time: Emmanuel Levinas.

4.2 Time in touch with the other

In the separated being the door to the outside must hence be at the same time open and closed. Totality and Infinity, Emmanuel Levinas

Next to spatial motifs we have temporal motifs to consider. Forensic ACT is saturated by measured, chronological, time. A regular team working day starts at the office at 8:45 a.m. with a planning meeting that last about 40 minutes, followed by inbound outpatient contacts until midday, followed by outbound outreach contacts and concluded with desk work at the end of the day (though some disperse this desk work otherwise throughout the day). To facilitate the planning process, the organization provides the team with a number of devices (coming from the Latin ‘dividere’: divide, to force apart) that help finalizing a course of action. For example, in order to keep a quick overview, the team meetings are supported by having the daily planning schedule (another grid) projected on a large screen, in which every working hour is accounted for, retrospectively and prospectively. Furthermore, on their office room wall a whiteboard is put with the initials of the recipients up for release from the penitentiary in one column, and in another a set of recipients’ expiration dates of court-ordered admissions. Another example is the treatment plan, and how it structures the team’s time and the way they talk about it. As such, a practitioner’s time is a primary target of managed care. As Ware et al. (2000) argued, time “is a key object of management — to be parsed, packaged, and above all, limited, in the interest of containing the cost of treatment” (p. 14). MacBride-Stewart (2013) stressed the active role these practitioners themselves play in the ‘rationalization’ of their work time, describing “their working day in terms of discrete units of time” (p. 564). Essential to this chronological time is the demarcation of crucial (start and end) points, in between which time is quantified. This technical time prefigures finalization as an aesthetic ideal rather than a moral duty, as a logical end-game; the proper completion of plans and optimization of potential performance, triage and efficiency. And things turn sour if one turns up late, as did Mrs. N., Olive explained when I interviewed her about the incident.

I saw it happening, yeah. And uh, Mrs. N. was twenty minutes late. Mrs. N. is almost always late and, uh…when she entered Tim started immediately, like: “I can’t stay long,” but at a very high pitch, you know, like: “I can’t stay long, you’re late AGAIN” and, uh…He threatened a lot to stop supervision while we were talking. Uhm…so that invoked a lot of stress in Mrs. N. because that would result in her forced return to the penitentiary. (interview 1, 26 Oct. 2012)

This chronological time, this sequential avoidance of being late, is percolated and distorted by how people engage with each other, when the encounter itself starts to obfuscate purpose and deadline. Then, time loses its ordering flow and is itself subordinated to the fizzling of interpersonal action. Talking with the patient on her couch, for example, there is a ‘timelessness,’ a dwelling in relationality that is prior to the individual experience of the passing of quantified time. In a similar vein, when a patient is in crisis, the event does not allow regular planning and time management. Time flow and time spent are secondary outcomes of the movements set in action to manage the crisis. If the crisis takes a minute, it takes a minute. If it takes a day, a day. As Brodwin (2011) argued,

When a client’s life starts to spiral out of control, clinicians become painfully aware of the limits of goal setting, and by extension, their own therapeutic power. The frustration appears in the give and take of staffroom discussions, when the stark limits of clients’ lives collide with the demands for a narrative of improvement. (p. 198)

The drama of relationality disperses temporal direction, and not only in staffroom discussions, but in particular when a turbulent event demands it, such as the incident under scrutiny. Olive recounted how Tim saw the knife, and what she said in response to Mrs. N:

...
“I’m not going to help you if you don’t hand over the knife at the entrance security.” And then, uh, she got mad [...] I’m staying completely quiet at that point [...] Well, then Mrs. N. got angry, she was like: “Yeah well this is my knife, I’m not going to hand it over, I won’t.” And then I said: “Well, that’s the end of this conversation then, I am ending this meeting here and now.” And then she started mumbling all kinds of things, and at a certain point, she, like, drew the knife [...] She slid it across the table in MY direction, after which I backed away on my chair and then the knife fell down right there [...] I think it hit my leg [...] but it was still folded, luckily. It was really a quite big knife, you know? [...] Uh so let’s see, so it fell on the floor. And then I said: “I am not going to pick it up.” Tim still didn’t say anything. I think he was a bit startled. I was completely focused on the patient. (interview I, 26 Oct. 2012)

Olive made a distinction between her own response to Mrs. N.’s action to slide the knife and Tim’s, deducing that although Tim himself started agitated and saw the knife first, it was he who became startled by the situation, contrary to Olive. Deadlines evaporate when relationality is really at stake. Olive continued.

In hindsight I think, as regards to the way I handled it then, that I wouldn’t have done that if it was someone I wasn’t familiar with. But I’ve supported this woman for about a year now. And I’ve oftentimes said in the team, like: “with her I feel like I’m raising her [like a child]. That you have to tell her everything.” And that’s why I said: “I’m not going to pick up that knife. You go and pick it up yourself.” [...] So then she did pick it up. And she went to the entrance security desk with it, mumbling. That’s when Tim apologized to me. He said: “uh sorry, uh...that things turned out this way. But it’s just that, uh...she’s late, she comes with this attitude...” So apparently she somehow triggered Tim, too. So I said: “It doesn’t matter now, for me the important thing is that she’s unarmed when I talk to her again now.” And then uh, I said, yeah, actually, I don’t think I did say that we would have to talk it over afterwards. And in hindsight, I am thinking: “These are all things I should have talked them over with him, traced it backwards. His behavior. How I acted.” And that’s what I missed, afterwards. Because I did notice things. I saw how it deteriorated rapidly. But I didn’t, like, stop it there and then. So I did feel a shortcoming of my part there [...] (interview I, 26 Oct. 2012)

In hindsight, Olive can reconstruct a sequential plotline and find gaps in her own course of action. But not during the event in its contextuality of facing each other, in its temporality in particular, where chronological foreclosures of planned events stop making sense. It is from this purview that OMT scholars such as Byers and Rhodes draw upon the work of Levinas to suggest an alternative to principle-based and rules-based approaches to organizational ethics. Levinas’s work is but infrequently found in CMS and business ethics (e.g., Kaulingfreks & ten Bos, 2007; Parker et al., 2005; Jones, 2003), despite his own description of his work put simply: “it is an original ‘After you, sir!’ that I have tried to describe” (Levinas & Nemo, 1985, p. 89). As Byers and Rhodes (2007) argued, despite the depth and radicality of Levinas’s rethinking of ethics...it is nonetheless true that those interested in his ethics are left for themselves to elaborate what might be the processes of justice that can be built on the foundation of this ethics of responsibility and radical alterity (Hudson 2003). Even less does Levinas explore the implications of his thinking for the just conduct and administration of organizations. (p. 239)

It is not the ‘just conduct and administration of organizations’ directly what we are after here, but his idea of time and how it relates to responsibility for the other. As Byers and Rhodes (2007) insisted,

ethics in organizations can only emerge through an openness to the Other that is not pre-determined...the task is not to be ethical, but to manage the tension between ethics and justice through organizational practices that reject an eschatological foreclosure of the future in the present. (p. 246)

In short, Levinas regarded time as the experience of radical alterity in the encounter with the Other: “time itself refers to this situation of the face-to-face with the Other” (Levinas, 1987/1947, p. 79). Contrary to our idea of time as something outside ourselves that happens to us, as either a duration through which we wade, or an ever-moving moment that encapsulates us, temporality in Levinas is an emergent phenomenon which we experience when we are with, in proximity of, the Other, when the ‘I’ is not alone but in the face of the other. Levinas asked how one can enter in relation with the other “without allowing its very self to be crushed by the other” (Levinas, 1987/1947, p. 77), and without being crushed by the idea of one’s own mortality. But it is exactly both the self’s own inability to grasp her future finality and her inability to be reduced to sameness, that she faces up to this event as personal experience, as responsibility for the Other.

Relationship with the future, the presence of the future in the present, seems all the same accomplished in the face-to-face with the Other. The situation of the face-to-face would be the very accomplishment of time; the encroachment of the present on the future is not the feat of the subject alone, but the intersubjective relationship. The Condition of time lies in the relations between humans, or in history. (Levinas, 1987/1947, p. 79)

In Levinas’s work, we see that temporality flows from the distance that the self, “the very pulsation of the ‘I’” (1969/1961, p. 113), experiences in a desire to approximate the otherness of the Other. This otherness is radical, unattainable:

the radical separation between the same and the other means precisely that it is impossible to place oneself outside of the correlation between the same and the other so as to record the correspondence or the non-correspondence of this going
with this return. Otherwise the same and the other would be reunited under one gaze, and the absolute distance that separates them filled in. (Levinas, 1969/1961, p. 36)

The personal, the unicity of the person, is how one enjoys, lives from, this desire, in the inability to assimilate the otherness of the other, faced with “no satiety, but an uncharted future before me...This revelation of distance is an ambiguous revelation, for time both destroys the security of instantaneous happiness, and permits the fragility thus discovered to be overcome” (p. 117). In enjoying things, persons do not appropriate and organize “into a system” but allow them to “graciously” take hold of us so we can take hold of them, lingering in “the air, on the earth, in the street, along the road” (p. 130). But against this gracious enjoyment, Levinas (1969/1961), alongside de Certeau, argued that we are faced with a dominant mode of thinking and doing in which,

The meaning of individuals (invisible outside of this totality) is derived from the totality. The unicity of each present is incessantly sacrificed to a future appealed to bring forth its objective meaning. For the ultimate meaning alone counts; the last act alone changes beings into themselves. They are what they will appear to be in the already plastic forms of the epic. (p. 22)

This mode of thought and action of totality thus aims to exclude engaging with otherness, to submit enjoyment into an interiority of a single subject, in which thought ultimately does not transcend but remains “closed in itself despite all its adventures – which in the last analysis are purely imaginary, or are adventures traversed as by Ulysses: on the way home” (Levinas, 1969/1961, p. 27). Withstanding being absorbed by this totality, and welcome alterity, is to have an “inexhaustible surplus of attention” (Levinas, 1969/1961, p. 97), opening up an order that goes “beyond the rules of formal logic” (Levinas, 1969/1961, p. 104). Being in relation to the other, the non-encompassable, the “elementary gesture of the being that refuses totalization” (Levinas, 1969/1961, p. 281) is an awareness of the distance of time.

Across this distance of time the definitive is not definitive; being, while being, is not yet, remains in suspense, and can at each instant commence...This true temporality, that in which the definitive is not definitive, presupposes the possibility not of grasping again all that one might have been, but of no longer regretting the lost occasions before the unlimited infinity of the future...of escaping the crushing responsibility of existence that veers into fate, of resuming the adventure of existence so as to be to the infinite. The “I” is at the same time this engagement and this disengagement – and in this sense time, drama in several acts. (Levinas, 1969/1961, pp. 281–282)

In short, theorizing personal responsibility in organization by means of Levinas’s work begins with the idea of the primacy of a dyadic and asymmetrical relation between the self and another. An other who is always beyond my ability to know, understand, and categorize her: another who is an infinite Other who (and whose actions) I cannot foresee. Infinity here is understood as “the idea of an entity that exceeds adequation in a concept or regime of signification – the Other is non-representable in that it overflows the capacity to think it” (Byers & Rhodes, 2007, p. 241). Levinas and Nemo (1985) himself, referring to the work of Dostoevsky, presented the appeal of the Other like this:

You know that sentence in Dostoevsky: “We are all guilty before all and for all men before all, and I more than the others.” This is not owing to such or such a guilt which is really mine, or to offenses that I would have committed; but because I am responsible for a total responsibility, which answers for all the others and for all in the others, even for their responsibility. The I always has one responsibility more than all the others. (pp. 98–99)

The responsibility for all the others, then, is infinite, but, fortunately, not as in its actual totality:

but a responsibility increasing in the measure that it is assumed; duties become greater in the measure that they are accomplished. The better I accomplish my duty the fewer rights I have; the more I am just, the more guilty I am. (Levinas, 1969/1961, p. 244)

This relation, then, must always remain primary, also in organization, where ‘I’ submit and answer to the demand of the Other face to face, the demand that I cannot escape.

A similar drama in several acts, Olive reflected on how the event unfolded within the organizational context in which it took place, and starts reflecting on the routines of the team, as well.

Yes, these are some things we haven’t really talked over with the team. You know, like when someone carries a weapon inside, that he should be prohibited from entering. But in this case she WAS already inside, she was already inside, and we were already TALKING [...]. So, uh..., well, to get back to the story, Tim said to me: “Sorry I was irritated. And now I’m out of time, my next appointment’s up.” And that’s how Tim left, he was late for his next meeting [...]. Then the patient returned. At that point I was alone in the room. Mrs. N. told me she had handed over the knife at the front.

15 This sentence is actually not to be found in The Brothers Karamazov: the first part stops at “before all.” The last part, “I more than others,” Dostoevsky does elaborate upon in the book in proximity to the first part, but hitherto not as one full sentence, which is Levinas’s own.
Instead of dismissing Mrs. N. and ending the conversation, Olive explained how she kept the engagement going, thanking her kindly for handing over the knife at the front desk. The knife was an unwelcome moment in an otherwise welcome encounter between persons. Olive’s demand of handing over the knife put the relation between her and Mrs. N. on the line, and it was a demand she could not escape. But the demand of Mrs. N. toward Olive in maintaining the conversation was not betrayed by Olive, either, in face of the organizational prohibition of weapons and the act (intentional or not). The proper path according to Levinas, one might say, is to engage in a relation that is “ethical in its sacrifice” to the Other who is not yet another of me, ethical in its subjugation not to a law, a duty, or a principle, but to the other person concretely, face to face, in “proximity” (Byers & Rhodes, 2007, p. 240). As ten Bos and Kaulingfreks (2002) suggested, when we talk to and look at this other,

we may find that the profound otherness of the other calls for a reaction. I can deny it. I can incorporate the face within my horizon and rob it of its otherness. But then the relation ceases to exist. There is no other anymore and hence there is no me. My responsibility is to keep the relation alive. (p. 306)

And so Olive gave it a go again. Up close and personal.

A similarity between the thought of de Certeau (emphasizing space in the everyday) and Levinas (emphasizing time in the Other) is the binary construct (grid vs. play, totality vs. infinity) and how an ongoing, unending in-between marks the human condition. De Certeau sought to develop ways in which the powerless through everyday tactics may subvert and rearticulate the dominant mode of forceful appropriation. With both modalities poaching and encroaching upon each other, piling up onto each other, opportunities for resistance against the grid are ever-present. Yet, with an increasing refinement, resolution, of the grid it becomes more difficult to recognize these moments and places to do so. In Levinas, we see a similar divide, now between a distant mode of being that consummates and totalizes, and a mode of responding to each other, face to face. Levinas inquired into preconditions for the ethical and found it in the non-encompassable alterity, which commands the self to acknowledge, and submit, to it, to the Other. Time for Levinas is the experience of approaching the infinity of the Other, of otherness. The phenomenon of temporality, then, is inherently relational, vis-à-vis the false temporality of the epic, of totality, of the finitude of fate. Set amidst between these two temporalities, alongside being set in between the playful everyday and the functionalist grid, persons move back and forth at the interval, in the gap, at the doorstep, producing and reproducing language, stories that offer pathways to cope with both the infinite call of the Other(s) and the inclination to reduce them to sameness. Amid two spatiotemporalities set perpendicularly, at the doorstep, we may come to a sense of personal responsibility. But having accompanied de Certeau and Levinas thus far, we part ways and set foot with Bakhtin, who elaborated not only similarly upon this personal responsibility construct, but tied the ideas of the modularity of spatiotemporal, of the relational (re)production of language and of the threshold between finitude and the non-encompassable into a broader (philological) framework of understanding senses of responsibility since the literary antiquities. In this purview, we may come to further understand the (im)possibilities of this personal responsibility construct as an “adventure of everyday life” pervasive to the organizational condition. In his search of responsibility, Bakhtin takes us thousands of years back to the peripheries of the Roman empire. And there we may encounter in the work of Apuleius a genre that may help us understand how the organizational condition as a generic threshold itself produces a rudimentary sense of personal responsibility found in organizational practice today. And allows us to understand how we are lifted from a larger sense of historical awareness and answerability and drawn into a game of individual guilt and blame, and limited chances to collectively break away from that predicament. This requires an even bigger loop, if you will.

4.3 Bakhtin’s Golden Ass

Everything essential is dissolved in dialogue, positioned face to face. The threshold, the door, and the stairway. Their chronotopic significance. The possibility of transforming hell into paradise in a single instant. (Bakhtin, 1984b, p. 259)

Bakhtin (1981) argued in his “Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel” that personal responsibility emerges as a literary concept for the first time in history in what he calls the genre of the ‘adventure novel of everyday life,’ made up almost exclusively by Apuleius’ The Golden Ass (also known as Metamorphoses, and accompanied, to a lesser extent, by Petronius’ Satyricon). Apuleius, raised at the outskirts of the Roman Empire in modern day Algeria, wrote his The Golden Ass in the late second century AD. The satirical novel had a profound impact on Western literature and is also the only work of fiction from that era to have survived in its entirety to this day. The story revolves around the course of the life of Lucius; a man who is, due mostly to his invertebrate curiosity, magically transformed into an ass. Set in the first person, the narrator describes his violent and bawdry adventures as a donkey and allows other characters to narrate in-set tales (the
largest and most famous of which consists of the love story of Cupid and Psyche). Lucius wanders around Thessaly, a region of ancient Greece, where along the road he plunges into the often brutal and obscene life of the lower social classes, close to the point of death on more than one occasion. Along the numerous episodes of mishap and mischief, Lucius is recurrently punished for both being an ass and for acting as one, having others scold him like so: “In the name of all the gods, you four-footed piece of depravity, even if you could get the loan of a human voice, what kind of complete moron could you have convinced that you don’t share the blame for this atrocity?” (Apuleius, 2011, p. 157). In the end, he seems to find redemption and transformation back into his human form, in a cult of priests. Not knowing “with what kind of discourse [he] could fitly inaugurate [his] resurrected access to language” (Apuleius, 2011, p. 258), Lucius concludes: “I can now even feel a gracious gratitude toward my past as an ass because while his form was my secure covert, I could be drilled in many different contingencies and rendered well round, if not wise” (Apuleius, 2011, p. 195). This last quote indicates the way the protagonist is made to experience a sense of personal responsibility: his actions and the way he experiences their consequences bear significance for how events unfold, exactly because the way time and space is constructed by Apuleius enables the protagonist to be and to do so.

Concerned with the moral development of the literary protagonist, Bakhtin argued that The Golden Ass is a decisive break from earlier types of narrative, because of its interplay between two time-space modes, or chronotopes, interwoven in the narrative. Bakhtin’s analysis of Apuleius’ The Golden Ass can serve as a looking-glass through which organizing and its relationship with senses of personal responsibility might be understood as an outcome of a chronotopic interplay, as well. Bakhtin himself in his essay on the chronotope mentioned organizations and claimed real-life chronotopes are constantly present in them, providing the example of the “real-life chronotope of meeting [which] is constantly present in organizations of social and governmental life” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 99). OMT scholars such as Boje, Lorino, Pedersen, and Vaara have inquired into the relevance of the chronotope in organization. Pedersen (2009) explored stories of changes in a medical ward and suggested how, through Bakhtin’s chronotopes, we might understand time as narrative time, “open time yet to be defined by storyteller and listener” (p. 392). Another scholar exploring the use of the chronotope for organization, Lorino (2010) saw several benefits: to overcome dualist approaches, to exploit it in change processes, and to critically assess and question habitual meaning making schemes by “identifying and making explicit the tacit chronotopes of present organizing processes” (p. 25). Lorino stressed the notion of an interplay of chronotopes as well, and raises the question of moral calibration: “are there common characters or not between both chronotopes, are there common, distinct or contradictory purposes and values?” (p. 12). Boje (2008) elaborated on the adventure chronotope and discerned it in organizational narratives,

in how people story a business history, or story its strategy: an adventure of conquest (our strengths and opportunities overcoming each weakness and threat), or application of a chivalric code (McDonald’s clean, efficient, friendly service), an encounter with accident or novelty (Enron’s off-the-balance-sheet transactions come undone), or the heroic CEO’s biography of exploits (such as Bill Gates, or Phil Knight).

Set in the context of health care, Fraser (2006) explored this tension, suggesting that chronotopes can and do conflict which may disturb the care practice itself. Following Burton (1996) in her analysis of the co-existence of chronotopes: “they are always both possible and present, existing on the margins if not contending for the center. It is this juxtaposition and interrelation, not the typology of forms, that matters most” (p. 48).

But contra to Burton’s claim, that despite “the importance of the dialogical in his work, Bakhtin does not develop this provocative idea of a ‘dialogue of chronotopes’ explicitly” (Burton, 1996, p. 47), it is my contention that Bakhtin does exactly this, in his analysis of the ‘adventure novel of everyday life,’ offering a literary ‘etiology’ of personal responsibility. So, although there are several takes on chronotopes and their relation to organization, no study as of yet regards the chronotopic interplay of the adventure and the everyday as axiologically equivalent to the process of organizing itself. This requires a purview on organization, as an ongoing coagulation of organizing processes geared toward the teleological and the everyday, a transitional interplay at the generic level between the chronotope of the adventure novel of ordeal and the chronotope of the novel of everyday life.

Concerning The Golden Ass, Bakhtin argued that the two chronotopes had been developed separately, as the chronotope of the adventure novel of the ordeal and the chronotope of the everyday life story, but not in conjunction. The chronotope of the adventure novel of the ordeal is typical for the literary genre of the Greek romance emerging from the earlier epic): a category of ancient Greek stories that revolve around personal literary triumph (our strengths and opportunities overcoming each weakness and threat), or real-life chronotope of the everyday life story, but not in conjunction.

Set in the context of health care, Fraser (2006) explored this tension, suggesting that chronotopes can and do conflict which may disturb the care practice itself. Following Burton (1996) in her analysis of the co-existence of chronotopes: “they are always both possible and present, existing on the margins if not contending for the center. It is this juxtaposition and interrelation, not the typology of forms, that matters most” (p. 48).

But contra to Burton’s claim, that despite “the importance of the dialogical in his work, Bakhtin does not develop this provocative idea of a ‘dialogue of chronotopes’ explicitly” (Burton, 1996, p. 47), it is my contention that Bakhtin does exactly this, in his analysis of the ‘adventure novel of everyday life,’ offering a literary ‘etiology’ of personal responsibility. So, although there are several takes on chronotopes and their relation to organization, no study as of yet regards the chronotopic interplay of the adventure and the everyday as axiologically equivalent to the process of organizing itself. This requires a purview on organization, as an ongoing coagulation of organizing processes geared toward the teleological and the everyday, a transitional interplay at the generic level between the chronotope of the adventure novel of ordeal and the chronotope of the novel of everyday life.

Concerning The Golden Ass, Bakhtin argued that the two chronotopes had been developed separately, as the chronotope of the adventure novel of the ordeal and the chronotope of the everyday life story, but not in conjunction. The chronotope of the adventure novel of the ordeal is typical for the literary genre of the Greek romance (such as the genre of the Greek romance), a category of ancient Greek stories that revolve around an amorous couple forced apart by some calamity. One of them, the protagonist, must endure some strange adventure in which his/her integrity and love for the other is put to the test, and ultimately rejoins the other to live happily ever after (as such, the genre is very popular still today, e.g., in Disney films). The hero of the story typically crosses some unknown land detached from any specifics that could tie it to an existing place in real life. Space as such is an abstract realm in service of the extraordinary adventure that takes place. And like space, even more so, time in the adventure is abstract. It is “taken out of history and biography” (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 15), as if it were not there at all, except for two points in time: calamity and rejoice. The time in between these two points traces essentially only one step: “a test of the heroes’ integrity” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 106). The flow of time (and connection to space) is a technical sequence that divides that step into moments, consisting of the most immediate units: moments, hours, days-snatched at random from the temporal process. Typical temporal descriptions in this kind of novel story are: “it was many days later,” “the sun set in the west,” “the moon rose in the east,” “the sun shone brightly,” “the moon shone brightly,” “the rain came pouring down,” “the snow came falling down.”
are: ‘at the same moment,’ and ‘the next moment’” (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 11). As Keunen
argued, ‘like Bergson, Bakhtin associates the generic chronotope of the adventure with
mathematical rationality. Adventure time is characterized by an ‘elementary clear, formal,
almost mathematical character’” (Keunen, 2010, p. 47; see also Linstead & Mullarkey, 2003,
for Bergson in organization studies).

Bakhtin's portrayal of the chronotope of everyday life in "Forms of Time and of the
Chronotope in the Novel," and elsewhere, is less clear-cut than that of the adventure
novel of the ordeal. This chronotope may occur in different kinds of stories, such as
a novel of everyday life, a social-psychological novel, a family or biographical novel. The
chronotope provides these types of stories with common motifs and themes, such as
extensive descriptions of everyday scenes and an emphasis on the mundane and prosaic,
instead of the heroic and the public. Time here is ‘lived time,’ in which one dwells, set in
a place that unfolds through the description of prosaic detail, the space of the common
life with all its small differences and conflicts. Here, Lucius descends, where he

must play the most humiliating role in that setting, not even the role of a slave, but of
an ass. As an ass, a beast of the burden, he descends to the very depths of common
life, among muleteers, hauling a millstone for the miller, serving a gardener, a
soldier, a cook, a baker. (p. 121)

As Bakhtin (1981) argued, the everyday world in Apuleius is like a “maelstrom of personal
life...chopped up into separate segments...[which serve] Lucius as experience, revealing
to him human nature...itself static...It does reveal social heterogeneity" (pp. 128–129).
This everyday marks an:

exclusively personal and private life...All its events are the personal affairs of
isolated people...By its very nature this private life does not create a place for the
contemplating man, for that ‘third person’ who might be in a position to meditate
on this life, to judge and evaluate it. (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 122)

Day in, day out the same round of activities are repeated, the same topics of
conversation, the same words and so forth. In this type of time people eat, drink,
sleep, have wives, mistresses (casual affairs), involve themselves in petty intrigues,
sit in their shops or offices, play cards, gossip...The markers of this time are simple,
crude, material, fused with everyday details of specific locales, with quaint little
houses, with the sleepy streets, the dust and the flies, the club, the billiards and so
on and so on. Time here is without event and therefore almost seems to stand still.
Here there are no “meetings,” no “partings.” It is a vicious and sticky time that drags
itself slowly through space. (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 248)

What is peculiar, and pivotal, about both the chronotope of the adventure novel of ordeal
and that of the everyday life, is that the protagonist in each chronotope separately does
not bear ‘plot-bearing significance,’ and no responsibility, albeit for different reasons.
In the adventure tale the hero is fully determined by the ordeal that she is destined to
overcome, without actually experiencing a change, or making one. As in the prior epic
genre, there is a wholesome ‘alibi for being’: the high and mighty role laid out at the end
of the aforementioned test of character of this accidental hero. Contrary to the epic, the
personality of the protagonist is touched upon, but there is no real conflict of values that
is a concern for her. In the novel of everyday life on the other hand, nothing is accidental.
The life of the protagonist amounts to all what ties him to his environment and the others
in it. The ties that bind are both his environment and himself. Individuality is no more, or
less, than the relationality of which the protagonist is an inextricable part. The image of
the protagonist is embedded in relationships, to such an extent, that,

the modes for plotting the story link one character to another not as one person to
another but as father to son, husband to wife, rival to rival...The hero is assigned to a
plot as someone fully embodied and strictly localized in life, as someone dressed in
the concrete and impenetrable garb of his class or social station, his family position,
is age, his life and biographical goals. His humanness is to such an extent made
concrete and specific by his place in life that it is in itself denied any decisive influence
on plot relationships. (Bakhtin, 1984b, p. 104)

In the adventure tale the plot of the story is ‘like clothing draped over the hero which he
can change as often as he pleases’ (Bakhtin, 1984b, p. 104), where an unparticular and
unbound figure is made the protagonist. In a novel of everyday life, the plot is embedded
in relationality and particularity: These make up for the characters “body and their soul”
(Bakhtin, 1984b, p. 104). Bakhtin explains that in the epoch leading up to Apuleius' writing,
external positions that one may have in the world were devalued into mere roles in
the theater of life, "leading to the destruction of the epic and tragic wholeness of a man
and his fate" (Bakhtin, 1984b, p. 119). Man lost his predetermined (epic) fate, but it was
only substituted by mere roles, both still ‘alibis for being.’ And then Apuleius enters the
stage, venturing to combine both genres into a single narrative. And it is here that the
protagonist ceases to coincide with herself. According to Bakhtin, in The Golden Ass the
chronotope of the adventure novel of ordeal and the chronotope of the everyday life
interchange, inextricably. The combination of these contradictions interlock in what he
called the chronotope of the adventure novel of everyday life, constituting a radical break
from prior narratives. The epic character, where the image of man was one of "exclusive
beauty, wholeness, crystal clarity and artistic completeness" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 35), was
abandoned by Apuleius. As Bakhtin (1981) continued,

The destruction of the epic distance and the transferal of the image of an individual
from the distanced plane to the zone of contact with the inconclusive events of the
Apuleius introduced two key elements in the portrayal of the protagonist here: a wandering through space and a metamorphosis through time. The protagonist is a hero on a winding road (a motif chronotope), traveling alongside the spatial and social diversity of the everyday world (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 10). Dwelling along the edge of a telos between A and B, he looks to “attach himself to life’s plot” (Bakhtin, 1984b, p. 101) and finds himself recurrently at crossroads (another motif).

An intersection always signifies some turning point in the life (and) an individual’s movement through space, his pilgrimages, lose that abstract and technical character that they had in the Greek romance…Space becomes more concrete and saturated with a time that is more substantial: space is filled with real, living meaning, and forms a crucial relationship with the hero and his fate…the concreteness of this chronotope of the road permits everyday life to be realized within it. But this life is, so to speak, spread out along the edge of the road itself, and along the sideroads.

The main protagonist and the major turning points of his life are to be found outside everyday life, he passes through such life as would a man from another world…everyday life is always the case that the hero cannot, by his very nature, be a part of everyday life; he passes through such life as would a man from another world…everyday life is made of time Bakhtin (1981) described is a timeline with knots in it, with each knot representing critical events occur that cannot be reversed in time like in the previous genres. In the new chronotope of the adventure novel of everyday life, Bakhtin insists that a mere “mechanical mix of these two different times is out of the question. Both adventure- and everyday time change their essential forms in this combination, as they are subject to the conditions of the completely new chronotope created by this novel” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 111). As Allan (1994) suggested,

It is through a close reading of the temporal and spatial features of The Golden Ass that Bakhtin discerns how adventure time “mixes” with everyday time, not in a mechanical fashion, but rather in such a way that both forms of time are compelled to change their elementary forms. (pp. 203–204)

What is rendered is an everyday time “chopped up into segments,” and “arranged, as it were, perpendicular to the pivotal axis of the novel” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 128). The new form of time Bakhtin (1981) described is a timeline with knots in it, with each knot representing a key moment in the life of a transforming protagonist:

We are offered various sharply differing images of the one and the same individual, images that are united in him as various epochs and stages in the course of his life. There is no evolution in the strict sense of the word; what we get, rather, is crisis and rebirth…Apuleius presents three images of Lucius: Lucius before his transformation into an ass, Lucius the Ass and Lucius mysteriously purified and renewed…The everyday life is depicted only in exceptional fragments, shaping the definitive image of man, his essence, as well as the nature of his entire subsequent life. (pp. 115–116)

The earlier epic protagonist was a figure whose image was made up of an outside surface only: a public and unitary hero, without inner experience or development. Then in the world of the genre of the Greek romance, the glimpse of another, inner, image of man is added, creating a tension between narrating the private and the public image of man. This tension between the internal and external man resulted in Apuleius’ time in the idea that “the subjectivity of the individual becomes an object of experimentation and representation” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 57). The private becomes public through pivotal moments like public addresses and criminal courts: “events acquire a public significance as such only when they become crimes. The criminal act is a moment of private life that becomes, as it were, involuntarily public” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 122). In the time of Apuleius, the image of man was already one of contradiction, having both a “public and rhetorical side of the individual, which is responsible for his unity and which he bears with him throughout his adventures” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 110) and a private side with an inner...
experience. The innovation of Apuleius was to generate a tale where the protagonist explicitly responds from within to the call of becoming the complete hero from without: “his guilt, retribution, purification and blessedness are private and individual: it is the personal business of a discrete, particular individual” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 119). The private is made visible in narrating its place in public events that ultimately transform the individual of the protagonist: “the public and rhetorical unity of the human image is to be found in the contradiction between it and its purely private content” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 119). In the spasmodical sequence and wandering through key events, the human image is individual, but unlike the Greek romance, the life course is not shaped by an accidental ordeal. As Allan (1994) explained, “Lucius, unlike the characters from earlier Greek romances, experiences time and space in a more ‘realistic’ manner: there is the appearance of personal development” (p. 204). The protagonist is made responsible, as he “attracts the power of chance to himself. The initial link of the adventure sequence is thus determined not by chance, but by himself and by the nature of his personality” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 116). It is the combination of the two chronotopes, then, that enable a tale of guilt and transformation.

What is emphasized here is Lucius’ individual guilt…Thus the entire adventure sequence must be interpreted as punishment and redemption…what we have is guilt, moral weakness, error (and in its Christian hagiographic variant, sin) as initiating forces…The adventure sequence, governed as it is by chance, is here utterly subordinated to the other sequence that encompasses and interprets it: guilt → punishment → redemption → blessedness…It is an active sequence, determining (as the first priority) the very metamorphosis itself, that is, the shifting appearance of the hero. (Bakhtin, 1981, pp. 116–118)

This guilt is inevitably human; not mechanical or depersonalized. As Bakhtin intimated: “Guilt is a function of individual personality itself…This entire sequence is grounded in individual responsibility” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 119, italics in original). In the narrative of The Golden Ass, then, not only individuality but a sense of personal responsibility emerges, which Bakhtin views, not only as an essential contribution to the historical development of the novel, but moreover, an essential contribution to the moral inquiry into the human condition. As Burton (1996) argued, “For Bakhtin, narrative offers the richest ground for exploring the nature of both the chronotopic unconscious and the human experience of temporality” (p. 50). So instead of seeing time as something given out there, as some primordial essence outside the realm of human understanding, in Bakhtin’s analysis of the novel, time and space are subject to the words that indicate them, whilst those indicators together shape a whole where “all the novel’s abstract elements – philosophical and social generalizations, ideas, analyses of cause and effect – gravitate toward the chronotope and through it take on flesh and blood, permitting the imaging power of art to do its work” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 250). As such, chronotopes are the “organizing centers for the fundamental narrative events of the novel. The chronotope is the place where the knots of narrative are tied and untied” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 250). More specifically, each and every word for Bakhtin is a word in dialogue, and as such:

Each word enters into a “complex play of light and shadow” where, he suggests, it “cannot fail to brush up against thousands of living dialogic threads, woven by socio-ideological consciousness around the given object of an utterance; it cannot fail to become an active participant in social dialogue” (1935/1981: 276). This “dialogic imperative” of a word, that is, this constant struggle over its evaluative meaning, is always carried out in relation to a distinct set of temporal and spatial dynamics. To state that all discourse is, by definition, dialogic is to highlight the ways in which all words are shown to be riddled with the fluid contradictions of contending definitions of its real or proper meaning. (Allan, 1994, p. 197)

As Bemong et al. (2010) argued in their volume on Bakhtin’s chronotopes, the chronotope as a concept works on different levels, and without this insight one might lose track of how the chronotope shapes narrative. Vaara and Pedersen (2013) for example, in their study on the stories in a medical ward, conflated chronotopic motifs (spatial-temporal indicators such as the road and the encounter) and generic chronotopes (world views as generic, such as the adventure novel of ordeal and the idyllic chronotope). It is the dynamic interplay at the generic level that has been the focus here. Concerned with deploying Bakhtin’s work on the chronotope toward “human action in a profoundly ethical fashion,” Bemong et al. (2010, p. IV) emphasized that “enquiry into the connections between chronotopes and action is probably one of the most promising lines of future research” (p. IV). In his study inside the same volume, Morson (2010) constructed a similar argument, claiming that Bakhtin’s interest in temporality was not (merely) literary and stressing that “his primary concerns were ethical. Bakhtin shaped his major concepts so as to show why moral responsibility in a strong sense exists” (p. 97). But Morson does not provide an analysis of the pages on the adventure novel of everyday life, even though it is here where Bakhtin most explicitly writes about the connections between internal generic chronotopic interplay and the matter of responsibility. Instead, Morson articulated a chronotope of ‘humanness,’ highlighting open-endedness and unfinalizability, and foregoing the interplay of the in-between as such. But if anything, Bakhtin’s thought always was on the threshold, and to pass by the generic chronotopic interplay is to pass by Bakhtin’s idea of how personal responsibility in a strong sense might have emerged. It is remarkable that in this volume dedicated to the chronotope and the ethical, both an analysis on Bakhtin’s pages on how this responsibility comes about in the adventure novel of everyday life and Apuleius’ The Golden Ass itself are absent. But for now, time to reconnect with Olive, Ed and Mrs. N.
4.4 Problems of personal responsibility

Olive’s story was interrupted at the point where she said she would ‘give it a go again.’ While leaving Mrs. N. for a moment alone in the consultation room, she told her colleagues, including Ed, in their staffroom upstairs, what happened briefly. She then continued.

So then I went downstairs. I first passed by the security desk to check whether the knife was actually in their possession. Mrs. N. had handed it over there, like she said. So then I continued the conversation with her. And actually the conversation from that point onward went fine. You wouldn’t have noticed that before, things got ugly. She was quite relaxed. We were having fun. She made some instant soup for me. Really! She made soup, for both of us. And she was cooperating just fine. Yes, it was quite pleasant, actually. Yeah. [...] It’s just that we do not accept that people carry weapons inside. That’s the end of the line. If you carry a weapon again the next time, no one will even come down to see you. But in that conversation it didn’t come up again [...] Uhmm, so somewhere midway in our talk, Ed entered the room. The patient was busy talking on the phone at that moment. Ed told me: “when the patient leaves, come and get me, because I’ve got a letter ready for her,” and he wanted to give it himself. I said, “OK that’s fine” [...] When we finished the conversation I told the patient: “Ed was just here, and he would like to speak with you for a moment, he’s got a letter concerning the weapon that you carried inside here before”...So instantly, I saw her demeanor changing, you see all of these changes directly...Well she, uh, she didn’t like it at all, but she was also like, alright, just give me the letter. And at that point I think [...] at that point things went wrong AGAIN. (interview I, 26 Oct. 2012)

With both Tim and the knife now out of view, the atmosphere improved immediately, according to Olive, who was quite surprised by the warm gesture of the instant soup that Mrs. N. made for her. In contrast, the next object coming into play was the official warning letter which Ed had been drafting in the meantime.

So I went upstairs to get Ed, but he wasn’t there. He had told the others to tell me I would have to give that letter. But THAT is not what I had told the patient. I told her: “Ed wants to speak with you and he will give you the letter.” With this lady you need to be very consistent. What you say is what you do. That’s important for a lot of our patients, you know, they’re very sensitive like that. So, then, I went downstairs again, with the letter. And uh...I could see she was all over the place. When she saw me coming downstairs with the letter myself, she was like: “No, he was going to give it to me, not you!”...She couldn’t make sense of that. Ed was close by somewhere, but busy with something else, and uh...I don’t know, then we were outside the building. And I was outside and the patient as well. And then she really got mad, I got the feeling she got so angry because I gave her the letter and not Ed [...] The security guard was outside with me the whole time. So then I started reading the letter out loud. Not the whole letter, just the most important details that I mentioned, like: “you showed up today carrying a knife, next time you do that you’ll get a restraining order.” That was in the letter. So uh...I gave it to her and she tore it up. Right after Ed joined us outside, because you know, Mrs. N. was really yelling, losing her temper completely [...] Nobody could even interrupt her, and then she drove off [...] That’s how it happened [...] I think I had another appointment right after [...] Yes, it’s only when I was back home, when the whole event kept on spinning in my head. And yeah, I actually did not like how it went and how Tim responded and uh...Well, at a certain point it, like turned out OK, but you want to know how things should have gone better, you know, for me too [...] It actually did have quite an impact on me. It just kept running through my head. Normally, when I leave here at 5 p.m. I leave those troubles behind. But when I keep on thinking about it, that’s when I know it got to me. (interview I, 26 Oct. 2012)

In summary, Olive recounted her story about Mrs. N. carrying a pocket knife into the consultation room with the parole officer, Tim, present. Tim was pressed to leave shortly after, while Mrs. N. was told by Olive to hand in the knife and did so. Olive continued to talk with Mrs. N. but had to go upstairs to get a login, during which she told Ed what had happened. Olive returned to find Mrs. N. having made soup for her and the two of them continued in a pleasant atmosphere. Then, while Mrs. N. was answering a phone call, Ed came in to tell Olive to inform Mrs. N. that he would hand her an official warning, which he did not as he was absent when Olive tried to get him, and instead Olive tried to give her the letter while Mrs. N. was already leaving upset, again. At that time, I had little idea how – or even if – I could use these accounts, and for what purpose other than displaying a daily-yet-not-so-daily event of this team at work. More than anything, what puzzled me in the accounts of Olive and Ed was how the mood of the story (and Mrs. N.) changed so dramatically, from very tense (knife), to very relaxed (instant soup), to the very tense again abruptly (the letter). Like in most narratives, their accounts were permeated with motifs of space and time. In the above, we find terms such as ‘at the front desk,’ ‘inside,’ ‘outside,’ ‘the street,’ ‘in the consultation room,’ ‘upstairs,’ and ‘at a certain moment,’ ‘for quite a while,’ ‘toward the end,’ ‘immediately,’ ‘never,’ and ‘twenty minutes late.’ But more than window-dressing, these spatiotemporal motifs may also provide us with a sense of what is emphasized and what backgrounded contextually by the storytellers, giving color to the unfolding drama. In the conundrum of Olive, Ed and Mrs. N., a conjunction of chronotopic motifs form one indication that we are dealing with the chronotope of the adventure novel of everyday life. There are motifs of the adventure tale: the knife, for example, is an adventure motif, and so is the chronological recounting (at that point, right after, etc.) of the event. Another key element was the letter of notice, stating the rules, and how Mrs. N. did not comply and how she might be excluded as a consequence. And in the team meeting afterward, Olive’s courage during the event is heralded. On the other hand, the event is told in mundane detail. For example, Olive and Mrs. N. had
a nice time together, sharing instant soup. And Olive compared supporting Mrs. N. with raising a child, invoking a discourse of relationality.

Both de Certeau and Levinas have suggested that opposed to the wrongs of a totality or a grid (the chronotope of the adventure), there is/should be a modality of the up-close-and-personal, the playful, the antidisciplinary, the non-teleologic (the chronotope of the everyday). Of course, Bakhtin applied similar binary divisions as well, and there are more similarities in particular with Levinas, as Erdinast-Vulcan (2008) suggested: “…philosophers of exile. Writing on the ruins of a civilization, they share both the sensibilities of survivors in a world” (p. 43). But for Levinas the face (the infinity in the face of the Other) is the primordial (and a primordial demand upon the self), whereas for Bakhtin we could say the unfinalizable itself might be a first assumption. Bakhtin does not draw a priori/posteriori line, or speak about the ‘primordial,’ a critique that other scholars such as Derrida have attested to Levinas’s thought. As Erdinast-Vulcan (2008) argued: “Levinas retains, in fact, the metaphysical absoluteness of the unconditional, unreciprocal subjection to the Other. His perception of the ethical subject remains entirely within the realm of the ‘said,’ a categorical imperative which is absolute, binding, and non-negotiable” (p. 54).

Bakhtin would set the ‘face’ into the chronotope of the everyday, emphasizing the tangible relationality of family, friends and foes instead of drawing the significance of the face into the anonymous and indeterminate, into the chronotope of the adventure in effect. Either way, the absolute demand of the Other as encountered in the infinity of the face leaves little ‘plot-bearing significance’ for anybody. For the eloquent effort that Byers and Rhodes (2007) put into drawing the consequences from the heart of Levinas’s work, in their search for a possibility for the idea of justice in organization, they have run into this same basic problem. Returning to the dichotomy, Bakhtin elaborated on a discursive modality of the threshold, between the two chronotopes of the adventure and of the everyday, and exactly on this threshold a sense of personal responsibility emerges and not in opposition to the totality and the grid. Opposed to the idea of a ‘true’ responsibility enabled by the relation with the infinite of a pre-existing Other, Bakhtin offered us a conception of personal responsibility that is limited, flawed, very much incomplete, in which a self and its capacity to (morally) act is constituted through the chronotopic underpinnings of the discursive relationships it finds itself in. And in organization, I suggest, we are witness of exactly the generic interplay between the chronotopes of the adventure and of the everyday, creating a context such as in The Golden Ass, with a similarly limited conception of responsibility, a scattered everyday life which is devaluated and “systematically denigrated in the very act of being theorized as ‘everyday life’” (Sandywell, 2004, p. 161), an appearance of personal development, and an a-historicity in which the protagonist never really connects with the social reality of the world. As Sandywell (2004) insisted, it marks a “millennial-long denigration of ordinary experience (‘the devaluation of the most valuable’). everydayness is manifestly a product of the rhetorics of modernity constructed upon the denigratory dualisms of elite world-views that can be traced back to classical antiquity” (p. 175).

Taken not directly from the dialogue excerpts, I have already made the case that the work life of the forensic ACT team is set in between the two spatialities (the indeterminate anywhere and the closely connected), where the practitioner meanders along the realm of the lower social stratum. The practitioner is never really an inside member of that realm, but only touches upon it alongside its edges, just as she remains an outsider to the electronic interfaces imposed upon her. Travelling along these edges, the practitioner ventures on a winding road, a road which is discursively constructed as such, with ‘spots at the horizon’ to strive toward, situated in ‘care pathways’ aimed at further delineating and optimizing the physical whereabouts of the worker. And for a substantial part of the working day, the outreaching practitioner is indeed on the road, on her way to see patients and co-workers, in an effort to fulfill treatment plan goals as they were mapped out in earlier moments of time in the electronic patient file. As such, there is a crisscrossing of the goal-directed and abstract with the close and tangible. In other words, the spatial character of forensic ACT is a threshold between the goal-oriented and the prosaic relational, creating a meandering in-between for workers, always on the move.

Similar to the two spatial modes, everyday time is set perpendicular to chronological time. At the in-between, time becomes knotted, with the practitioner jumping from one prosaic episode in the life of his patients to the next, yet strung together by the prescribed linear course of a treatment plan. Practicing forensic ACT, then, is a continuous jolting between the exigencies of managed time and the relational contingencies of everyday time. Seen in conjunction, the intertwining of these temporal modalities indicates a chronotope of the adventure novel of everyday life. Combined with the spatial modality of the meandering road, forensic ACT organizing operates as a double (time-space) in-betweeness for its protagonists. And it is this type of in-betweeness that may evoke a sense of personal responsibility, like in The Golden Ass. In the conundrum of Olive, Ed and Mrs. N., we see a wandering through spaces, where critical moments are recounted. Tensions arise, between the abstract rule of prohibiting weapons but the palpable event in which the patient was already inside. And between the promise of handing over a formal letter of notice (future oriented, role-driven) vis-à-vis failing to uphold that promise (immediate, personal). At the turning points when a shift is made from one chronotope to the other, there is a concurrent shift in discourse. When the adventure chronotope halts, Tim falls silent and leaves. Prosas take over; the atmosphere becomes more pleasant and intimate. Mrs. N. makes a gesture with the soup which is warmly welcomed by Olive. Then the adventure chronotope returns when Ed enters the scene. Mrs. N. is made answerable and becomes infuriated, especially when Olive fails to do what she said she would do, earlier. And then there’s a sense of guilt on the part of Olive. Mrs. N. is made answerable and becomes infuriated, especially when Olive fails to do what she said she would do, earlier. And then there’s a sense of guilt on the part of Olive.
no plot-bearing significance for the protagonists because there the plot and its rules are already established, finalized. In the everyday life tale relationality dictates the plot and the movements of its characters. But setting their chronotopes perpendicularity, a sense of personal responsibility is what emerges in the narration of organizing. Set in the in-betweenness that is forensic ACT organizing, practitioners cannot be fully incorporated by the relationality of the everyday, nor can they have an ‘alibi for being’ through a complete immersion in the telos of its adventure tale.

In a study on the relation between time and ethics in the practice of social work, and followed up by Juhila et al. (2014), Fahlgren (2009) pointed at this ambivalence at work that is the outcome of a similar in-between. Fahlgren (2009), acknowledging the inevitable ambivalence of the social work praxis, stressed that:

social work has to operate both within the discourse of linear development, which awards it political and social legitimacy, and within the discourse of the time of the mindful body. The latter supports a subjectively adapted and non-linear form of assistance...It is not a question of either/or, but of both together. There are contradictions and they must be dealt with as ethical dilemmas. (p. 226)

My point is that this is exactly the ‘problem’: this in-betweenness engenders the ethical dilemma as a matter of personal responsibility for the practitioners involved. The problem on top of that, is that these ethical dilemmas are thus restricted to the up-close-and-personal, and do not transcend the specific context of the event in question.

Bakhtin depicted the construct of personal responsibility through metamorphosis in The Golden Ass as a-historical, which “leaves the world itself unchanged” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 119). As Allan (1994) added, citing Bakhtin, “The logics of the ‘adventure-time of everyday life’ dictate that the novel’s temporal sequence is ‘a closed circuit, isolated, not localised in historical time’ (1938/1981: 120)” (p. 204). The adventure novel of everyday life, while portraying some social heterogeneity, fails to let these social contradictions surface. Only when these surfaced would “the world start to move, it would be shoved into the future, time would receive a fullness and historicity. But this process was not brought to completion in ancient times, and certainly not with Apuleius” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 129). Metamorphosis, then, is (just) a vehicle for portraying an individual, not a social, becoming: “a fate cut off from both the cosmic and the historical whole” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 114). Therefore, as described by Bakhtin, the ethics of personal responsibility is an old, rudimentary construct of what responsibility might entail, outmoded in the subsequent development of the literary novel, novels that did bring out, amongst others, the intricacies of a historical and societal context to set its ‘world in motion,’ transgressing the boundaries of individual subjectivity and responsibility. As Allan (1994) elaborated: “The everyday world, far from being organized around a single systematizing temporal sequence, is to be recognized as ‘scattered, fragmented and deprived of essential connections’” (p. 205). Following the analogy of Bakhtin’s analysis of personal responsibility in The Golden Ass, the organizing of forensic ACT seems dislocated from a more historical and broader societal context, where its stories, unbound by the limits of the chronotope of the adventure novel of everyday life, might find an impetus strong enough to set the world in motion. Locked within this narrow scope, problems may indeed be ‘small-scale’ wicked problems that prove indeterminable, unsolvable and unfinalizable. In this construct, we see the practitioners, as the protagonists of the threshold, maneuvering through the in-between of the grid and the play, the public and the private, and the self and other, making do, always alongside the road of their patients, with a limited sense of plot-bearing significance, which turns into a question of personal guilt and transformation (instead of the potentiality of collective action).

4.5 The gesture of Mrs. N.

In sum, I argued that organization works like an ancient literary construct Bakhtin found in the ancient novel The Golden Ass by Apuleius, in that it generates a sense of personal responsibility by means of an in-between of two narrative time-space modes. I have argued that Bakhtin’s thoughts on time and space and make for a particularly suitable framework to understand how personal responsibility emerges from the ‘real-life’ of organizing with the individual protagonist thrust at the crossroads and alongside an unending road to personal purgatory (see also Kaulingfreks & ten Bos, 2005). According to Bakhtin, Apuleius’ innovation was to design an in-between of an adventure tale of a hero and his ordeal on the one hand, and a tale of the hardships in the lower social stratum’s everyday life on the other. The protagonist has an inner experience of the public duties that he should perform in the social turmoil he is thrown into. Driven to fulfill a hero’s role but simultaneously an awkward outsider, his sense of purpose is routed into critical turning points. As such, a tale of personal responsibility was constructed, in which the protagonist struggles to come to terms with the unsettledness both of the events and of his own capricious self. Crucially, the ways in which time and space are set perpendicular to each other prefigure how the story unfolds and the main character develops. According to Bakhtin, The Golden Ass is a blend between two time-space modes: that of the adventure novel of the ordeal and that of the everyday life, but also something profoundly more than merely a combination of the two. While the protagonist in both modes separately does not carry plot-bearing significance personally, he does so in Apuleius’ story for the first time. Understanding organization first and foremost as a discursive phenomenon, I argued that organization on a generic level is itself a similar in-between of the same two-time space modes set perpendicular, and thus prefigures how its stories of responsibility unfold. As the analogy draws toward closure, the question remains whether the praxis and scholarship of ‘responsible organizing’ has yet to outgrow Apuleius. As I have tried to suggest, the forensic ACT team is concerned with its patients and their immediate surroundings, but the threshold toward a more historical, societal
context is hardly ventured into. Concurrently, through the ongoing shifting between the
chronotopes of the adventure and that of the everyday, the relationality and responsibility
in it are never really deepened to such an extent that it would approach the casuistic of
a full-blown novel. Instead, the everyday remains something episodic, the temporary
ventures into the turbulence of the patients’ lives, calibrated by the pathways plotted by
the team. Yet one last motif deserves closer inspection and that is Mrs. N.’s gesture of
the instant soup, the warm liquid this chapter culminates in. Here is the fragment again.

Olive: You wouldn’t have noticed that before, things got ugly. She was quite relaxed. We
were having fun. She made some instant soup for me. Really! She made soup, for
both of us. And she was cooperating just fine. Yes, it was quite pleasant, actually.
(interview I, 26 Oct. 2012)

Earlier I was quick to link this to the dwelling of the everyday, where time for a moment
ceases to be counted and submits itself to an oozing relationality, there and then. It is
remarkable and surprising, in the eyes of Olive at least, that Mrs. N. provided care to
Olive for a moment, breaking with the asymmetrical practitioner–patient relationship.
Just two human beings now, enjoying a cup of soup. Where Mrs. N. may precisely reveal
herself in her “alterity not in a shock negating the I, but as the primordial phenomenon
of gentleness” (Levinas, 1969/1961, p. 150). As ten Bos (2011, p. 284) argued, a gesture is
a bodily technique that gives information about who someone is or rather about what
this particular person is (the condition in which she finds herself: her role, her function,
her state of despair, her happiness and so on). Sharing soup together, in what some
may have called a moment of formlessness (cf. Agamben, see ten Bos, 2005a, 2005b),
the only thing that may be left for us to cling to is the gesture, the gesture that “both
refuses to become a means to an end and refuses to become an end in itself” (ten Bos,

We live from “good soup,” air, light, spectacles, work, ideas, sleep, etc.…These are not
objects of representations. We live from them…Moreover, whereas the recourse to
the instrument implies finality and indicates a dependence with regard to the other,
living from…delineates independence itself, the independence of enjoyment and of
its happiness, which is the original pattern of all independence. (p. 110)

On the other hand, hardly ‘good’ as in tasty or nutritious, the instant soup itself is
a particularly elegant example of the vulnerable position in which the worker herself
finds herself in organization: being offered the single most cheap, fast-food surrogate
for actual food, something of a drizzly fuel for the being-as-human-resource, such as
water and coffee. As such, the instant soup is not a ‘gift’ at all, does not count as a
diversionary tactic, an act of voluntary loss against the profit economy, not “as an excess
(a waste), a challenge (a rejection of profit), or a crime (an attack on property)” (de
Certeau, 1984, p. 27), but is part and parcel of that profit economy. But de Certeau might
enjoy the irony of this capitalist device of managerialism being redeployed as something
very different: as a gesture that defies univocal interpretation, also for us here. In the
gesture, Mrs. N. becomes the teacher in the Levinasian sense, and Olive is drawn into
the unfinalizable self–other axis where both, and their relationship, is not yet defined,
undefinable. Where Olive and Mrs. N. become ‘whos’ instead of ‘whats’ for a moment.
Here, Mrs. N. becomes more than just patient, and Olive is invited to become more than
just practitioner, entering a zone of indeterminacy, where the chronotopic perpendicular
axis becomes suspended: in the sense that the personally answerable is not merely a
‘forceful’ becoming public of the private by way of either crime or professional discourse,
but through the more corporeal invitation to face not only each other but also the
broader social and historical context we find ourselves in, responding to the world. The
gesture of Mrs. N., then, disables the chronotope of the adventure of everyday life, breaks
it open, and discloses an alternative space that both belies the telos of the adventure,
the social predetermination of the everyday, and their intertwining, opening an active
responsivity, a responsive understanding, to the other and to the world. “To be able to
respond in this way is what integrity might be all about” (ten Bos, 2011, p. 286). But ten
Bos doubts whether organizations are capable of this kind of gesture, and it may then be
particularly remarkable that the gesture of the instant soup, in all its ambiguity, comes
from the one-made-patient, Mrs. N., as our navigator of sorts. Ten Bos (2011) suggested
that organizational moral discourse:

has never been ‘grounded’ in the body. It never had an eye for the gestural. It never
understood that morality goes beyond words, codes or legislation. In this sense, it
is part and parcel of culture that has lost its gestures and therefore fears nothing
more than its own morality. (p. 290)

It is here that we will part ways, as it is my contention that organizational moral discourse,
in a less philosophical sense, has already wholly embraced this morality beyond words,
and put it into practice.
5 Organizing moral prolapse16

Puis...qu’une fois en avez icté le dez,
...reste seulement la mettre à exécution.
...il se y convient mettre à l’aventure
...puis qu’une fois l’on se y veut mettre.
The Third Book of Pantagruel (Ch. 9–10), Rabelais17

5.1 An idea of embodied generosity in organization

This will be a critical study in what some might call corporeal responsibility or embodied ethics, and my theoretical concern is targeted particularly against just this strand of studies. In maneuvering along the edge of discourse, a diverse assortment of studies concerned with organizational life engrosses the relationship between discourse and the human body (for an overview, see e.g., Hassard et al., 2000). This may be seen in light of a scholarly trend to call attention to the ‘non-discursive’ aspects of organizing that should be disclosed to organizational discourse studies (e.g., Iedema, 2011; Phillips & Oswick, 2012). One strand of studies develops an understanding of the body as a non-discursive source of potential change in organizations, always in excess of structures that may seek to encapsulate it. Studies on organizational ethics evoking this picture, suggest the possibility of a different kind of ‘embodied ethics’: immanent, caring, and disarming (e.g., Pullen & Rhodes, 2014; Hancock, 2008). Concerned with a series of corporate scandals, Hancock provided an outline of the discipline of business ethics, indicating a supposed gap that existing research has failed to address. He theorized about another kind of ethics that might resolve it: an ethics of embodied generosity, as developed by Rosalyn Diprose (2002), who drew upon the work of, amongst others, Merleau-Ponty. Diprose described this embodied generosity as “the nonvolitional, intercorporeal production of identity and difference that precedes and exceeds both contractual relations between individuals and the practices of self-transformation figured in some postmodern aesthetics of self” (2002, p. 75, as cited in Hancock, 2008, p. 1368). Hancock puts this in somewhat simpler terms, explaining that she is concerned with an openness toward the other that “involves a mode of givenness, and therefore recognition of and by the self, that is not calculated and, as such, expects no reciprocation or symmetry of exchange” (Hancock, 2008, p. 1368). Following up on Hancock, Pullen and Rhodes (2014) explored how Diprose’s ethics could serve as a pathway to resistance to organizational arrangements targeted at the management of employee behavior. Again, the argument is used that the body may serve as a non-discursive source that engenders a pre-ordinate relation of affect toward others involved: “From an understanding of bodily practice that precedes rationality and intellect (and hence precedes also organization) in an affective dimension where bodies move and respond to other bodies” (Pullen and Rhodes, p. 7).

My concerns with this strand of CMS are both practical and theoretical. My theoretical concern focuses not so much on the above organization studies on embodied generosity, but rather, via Bakhtin’s sociohistorical contextualization of the body, on Merleau-Ponty’s understanding of flesh-as-chiasmus. My practical concern is that these critical studies that emphasize corporeality and highlight the non-discursive, fail to incorporate a reflexivity on their own obscuring acts, whilst their ideas gain ground in just those organizational practices where interpersonal and intercorporeally intense labor is growing (Iedema et al., 2006). In this limelight, being exposed to precarious events might be further enabled by a kind of business ethics that emphasizes a sense of embodied generosity that exceeds or precedes professional and safety measures imprinted in more contractual relations. The higher the stake or risk, the larger the ‘non-discursive gap’ one has to somersault over to get things done anyway. To push the metaphor a bit further, the ‘somersault with a twist’ makes for a more general argument about how people talk themselves (and others) over the sense of a threat, and into precarious situations. They do so, I argue, by talking about proper rule-following (the somersault) and about intercorporeal conjugation (the twist). We can trace how this particular technique, called a chiasmus in rhetoric, transpires by critically interpreting what appears to happen in team conversations. In this whole exercise, the human body, and the bodily force that comes with it, is pivotal, in more than one sense. But it is the swirl itself that we are interested in here: the discourse that revolves around the (potentiality) of bodily force. And this entails not only the forensic ACT team discourse at hand, but even more so the organization of the sociohistorical interplay of images of the human body. Here, we draw answerability away from the limited confines of the personal responsibility construct in the previous chapter, and into a responsiveness, and a responding, to the world. Where a ‘responsible choice’ in daily team dialogue, is a micro-cosmos of answering the past, present or future of the world at large, and a deeply disconcerting one, in particular for the forensic ACT practice.

Below I explore how team discourse prefigures a sense of corporeality that helps the argument put forward to instigate two separate measures that make people physically move from one place to another: the compulsory admission of patients, and the deployment of practitioners to ‘risky’ patients. In other words, it is about how the team ‘talks’ patients into the clinic, and about how practitioners talk themselves into visiting a patient’s home that might pose a threat. The initial wonder which set off this particular study is twofold. One thing I still find striking is that we have people at work to whom it appears an everyday thing to risk their physical and mental well-being without any substantial physical safeguards, to care for people who have proven to be unpredictable and/or violent themselves (this being a patient placement criterion) or are close to people (spouse, drug dealer, etc.) who could be. The other thing that I find remarkable

16 A previous version of this chapter was presented at the 30th EGOS Colloquium of 2014 in Rotterdam, The Netherlands and at the 9th Annual Liverpool Symposium on Current Developments in Ethnographic Research in the Social and Management Sciences of 2014 in Ipswich, UK.
is how compulsory care can seem like the sensible thing to instigate for patients who really do not want that care (or are really unable to consent to), and may end up in solitary confinement: itself considered extremely dangerous (exacerbating and/or making irreversible the symptoms, risk of suicide and self-harm) for the patients themselves, and considered a form of torture if prolonged for more than a few weeks, by some law experts. It seems as if there are just no alternatives viable, thinkable. Via critical discourse analysis, this chapter does not so much answer the question of why practitioners do this kind of work, as it attempts to formulate an answer to the question of how they do it, how they make sense of it. Recalling Sullivan’s understanding of the different relationships of the researcher toward her qualitative data: in the previous chapter I jumped into the adventure of the practitioner’s story (retold, that is) and discerned motifs that together indicate a spatiotemporal structure that predisposes people in organization to come to a sense of personal responsibility and not move beyond that. Here, that more trusting attitude toward the data is set aside, and with it much of the proximity to the practice itself, in favor of a deep suspicion of the meanings in team dialogue. (Power) structure itself becomes the main motif of the story as told by me-as-critical-researcher, and the observations are, as it were, compliant to, and illustrative of, that plot. Important, though, to note is that I am not claiming that the structure of the chiasmus is the only route to understand how this process of foregrounding and backgrounding transpires, but one indeed that may happen to be particularly compelling when we do follow its consequence through.

5.2 Bakhtin’s discursive straitjacket

Alongside the deinstitutionalization of mental health care inpatients since the 1980s in the Netherlands, a similar outflow since 2005 from penitentiaries in the criminal justice system has transpired. These trends might not indicate an end to Foucault’s ‘age of confinement’ that started with the prisons (‘tuchthuizen’) and General Hospitals of the mid-sixteenth century and resulted in the modern-day penitentiaries and psychiatric institutions, but they might well hint at a reconceptualization of confinement. No longer wholly dependent on the physical containment of persons in closed, stationary sites, contemporary confinement is enabled by arrangements of conditionality and coercive interventions, surveilled and enforced by a cross-sectoral intertwining of services in the public, semi-public and private spheres. Forensic ACT is deeply entrenched – and as such a case in point – in this cross-sectoral intertwining. But when push comes to shove within this ‘open confinement’, human bodies are at stake. Push comes to shove when people see danger in the way a patient is behaving while that patient does not agree with being treated to avert this perceived danger. Many patients of the forensic ACT team undergo this process, recurrently, mirroring a national trend of increased compulsory admissions (Mulder et al., 2006; Van der Post, 2012). A substantial amount of routine desk work is devoted to reporting and fulfilling requirements for procedures such as those that instigate compulsory admissions of their patients. The compulsory admission by court order (‘rechtelijke machtiging’ or RM) is a procedure in the Netherlands that enables a person to be admitted to a psychiatric hospital without his or her consent. Risk assessment is part and parcel of the procedure, itself part of a legal framework (the ‘special admissions to psychiatric hospitals Act’ or ‘Wet Bopz’ in abbreviated Dutch) in the health care domain and can be enacted if a person is diagnosed as having a mental disorder which is the cause of (potential) danger which can be avoided in no other way than by clinical admission, whilst that person is unwilling or unable to give consent. ‘Danger’ can mean a number of things according to the Wet Bopz, such as danger to seriously injure oneself or another or their property. The enactment of the procedure is highly protocollated, with most steps delineated in terms of scope, timeframe and jurisdiction. The procedure is initiated by having the patient assessed by an independent psychiatrist, who writes a medical statement. The patient is assigned to an attorney, which is followed by being summoned to a hearing in which a judge will decide on the authorization of the admission. A relative, friend or legal guardian of the patient can request the procedure via the public prosecutor or request it via the care provider. The care provider cannot make the same formal request to the prosecutor by itself, but as some persons do not have anyone close willing to make such a request, the care provider may by loophole suggest that the public prosecutor initiate such a procedure on his own initiative. This loophole is used in forensic ACT in the absence of significant others making such requests. So, in practice, the corporeal displacement of patients is preceded by an enabling discursive process in forensic ACT organizing: the team considering the sense of it and their subsequent plotting and administering. Key in the compulsory admission process is the patient evaluation by an independent psychiatrist (independent from the organization admitting the patient, or at least not involved in the ongoing treatment of the patient). The psychiatrist assesses if there is in fact (potential) danger caused by a mental disorder, and, if so, writes a medical statement, which will then be used to legally enable the instigation. The statement describes the mental and/or addiction disorders at hand, the reasoning why there is danger, and why the measure of compulsory admission is the only viable option to end that danger. From a critical purview, we could argue against the official rhetoric of the causal chain (disorder → danger → isolation), that in practice it is presupposed that the causal chain actually works in the opposite way, namely: the isolation in admission → reduction of danger → reduction of disorder. For if not for the last (less obvious) step, why the need for the medical statement by a psychiatrist? In other words, the legitimization of the force of separation is ultimately based on medical (not civil/justice) grounds. Separation, especially by force, however, is in itself a grave danger to the patient involved, a measure contrary to what one would expect, on medical grounds. At a societal level, we seem not primarily concerned with the stated goals (reduction of danger and ultimately reduction of mental disorder), but
more so with physical separation (compare Bauman’s responsibility = proximity). The court-ordered procedure serves as the discursive enabler to cross over to the use of bodily force to enact that separation. It is the temporary suspension of order through a routinized state of exception that enables that use of force, which, from a critical perspective, is exactly the structural arrangement of carnival. For this, we turn to Bakhtin who has studied this phenomenon in ancient folklore and beyond.

Bakhtin’s work in organization studies roughly falls into one of two themes: polyphony and carnival/the carnivalesque. While authors of the polyphonic organization concern themselves mostly with Bakhtin’s Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics, the Speech Genres essay and his essays in the bundle The Dialogic Imagination, authors on carnival herald Bakhtin’s dissertation (completed in 1940 and published in 1965 as) RAHW and his carnival chapters in the beforehand books. Carnival, and its key concept of the grotesque, in organization studies is associated with a creative overturning of traditional organizational culture and managerial order, disclosing a zone of proximity ‘without footlights’ that draws everyone in to participate, to mock their own roles and their relationships, making old meanings ambivalent, and making room for new meanings to emerge, albeit temporarily. As Rhodes (2001) suggested,

> carnival, then, is a practice that both opposes and destabilizes official views of reality. In doing so, it creates itself in opposition to official culture on a series of planes, for example, from seriousness to laughter, from the dogmatic to the open. (p. 376)

Islam et al. (2008) added, “the Rabelaisian grotesque was thus a fundamentally populist reply to aristocratic appropriation of cultural forms, a protest against regulation and taboo through the celebration of filth and the praise of folly” (p. 1574). Carnival as an ambiguous zone of proximity seems to be at play here in forensic ACT and arguably in other public sector corporeally intensive hybrids, but it is a version distant from the joyful and ‘democratic’ carnival that other authors prefer reading into Bakhtin. Critical scholars, such as Berrong, Bernstein and Agamben have been quick to highlight both the violent outbursts and the societal function inherent in carnival as a historical phenomenon (e.g., as a safety valve, see also Islam et al., 2008). Whereas the connections with violence may be obvious and urgent, conceptually critical is the way in which these scholars understand carnival as a temporary suspension. A suspension in which the old and established is set in a different light but never discarded, on the contrary: it is in its zone of exception where the presence of force may be felt most acutely:

> During these feasts (which are found with similar characteristics in various epochs and cultures), men dress up and behave like animals, masters serve their slaves, males and females exchange roles, and criminal behavior is considered licit or, in any case, not punishable. That is, they inaugurate a period of anomic that breaks and temporarily subverts the social order. (Agamben, 2005, p. 71)

Moreover, Agamben (2005) drew in Karl Meuli to make his fundamental point about the relation between force and law:

> A closer analysis shows that what at first sight seemed simply to be rough and wild acts of harassment are in truth well-defined traditional customs and legal forms... (Meuli, 1975, p. 473). If Meuli’s hypothesis is correct, the ‘legal anarchy’ of the anomic feasts...brings to light in a parodic form the anomic within the law, the state of emergency as the anomic drive contained in the very heart of the nomos...It is as if the universe of law – and more generally, the sphere of human action insofar as it has to do with law – ultimately appeared as a field of forces traversed by two conjoined and opposite tensions: one that goes from norm to anomic, and another that leads from anomic to the law and the rule. Hence a double paradigm, which marks the field of law with an essential ambiguity; on the one hand, a normative tendency in the strict sense, which aims at crystallizing itself in a rigid system of norms whose connections to life is, however, problematic if not impossible (the perfect state of law, in which everything is regulated by norms); and, on the other hand, an anomic tendency that leads to the state of exception or the idea of the sovereign as living law, in which a force-of-law that is without norm acts as the pure inclusion of life. (pp. 72–73)

As I will argue below, the human body is one of those battlefields ‘of forces traversed by two conjoined and opposite tensions,’ an ongoing war of discourse swerving around the depth of flesh. Concerned not so much with anomic violence as with the historical possibility of an ethics on the margins of the linguistic order, Mikhail Bakhtin described in his RAHW how “in the grotesque concept of the body a new, concrete, and realistic historic awareness was born and took form” (Bakhtin, 1984a, p. 367), when the world of the Middle Ages with its vertical social and spiritual hierarchy was crumbling and the Renaissance emerged. He described how this passage is reflected in the writing of François Rabelais’ Gargantua and Pantagruel, where a focus on the human body contributed to overthrowing the medieval picture of the world. This original conception of the grotesque body was both positive and ambivalent, and representative of a corporeality of the people as a whole “who are continually growing and renewed,” while degrading the medieval norm of “all that is high, spiritual, ideal, abstract” (Bakhtin, 1984a, pp. 19–20). In this grotesque realism the body is presented as something universal, connected to other spheres of life, where:

> all that is bodily becomes grandiose, exaggerated, immeasurable [...]. The essential principle of grotesque realism is degradation, that is, the lowering of all that is high, spiritual, ideal, abstract; it is a transfer to the material level, to the sphere of earth and body in their indissoluble unity. (Bakhtin, 1984a, pp. 19–20)

In this original sense of the grotesque, “Man’s encounter with the world in the act of eating is joyful, triumphant; he triumphs over the world, devours it without being
devoured himself. The limits between man and the world are erased, to man’s advantage” (Bakhtin, 1984a, p. 281). During the Renaissance (its literary development), we are witness to a drama that will ultimately lead to the body breaking away from:

the collective, growing, and continually renewed body of the people with which it had been linked in folk culture. […] Renaissance realism did not cut off the umbilical cord which tied them to the fruitful womb of the earth. Bodies could not be considered for themselves; they represented a material bodily whole and therefore transgressed the limits of their isolation. The private and the universal were still blended in a contradictory unity. (Bakhtin, 1984a, p. 23)

Bakhtin suggested the canon of the grotesque body is with us to this day, having “prevailed in art and creative forms of speech over thousands of years” (Bakhtin, 1984a, pp. 318–319). With the grotesque body, the image of the human body as collective, ongoing and open is foregrounded as deeply positive, even if (physical) transgression and force is imminent. Indeed, in the canon of this collective body-in-becoming, where the limits between self and world are blurred, violence and transgression are manifestations of that ongoing body itself; not a threat to it; where interlinking of images of excrement, gluttony, sex, birth, and decapitation are met with cheerful laughter. Bakhtin (1984a) insisted that it is difficult for us to imagine today (in his day) what the sense of the grotesque was in Rabelais’ era of the early Renaissance, how “we have ceased long ago to understand the grotesque canon, or else we grasp it only in its distorted form” (p. 29).

Near the end of the Renaissance in the passage toward modernity, Bakhtin tells us that the image of the body once again became an abstract ideal, now an object of one’s own property that should be kept pure and proper. In the canon of the proper form (suggested here as the ‘proper form’; Bakhtin depicts it in different terms like classical and modern), the image of the body is the polar opposite to that of the grotesque: individualized, private and smooth like Michelangelo’s David, expressing “this ideal in terms of a modern version of the classical Greek body—image” (Ferguson, 1997, p. 26). The image of the proper form is closed, completed, limited, seen from the outside as individual. What remains is opacity and an impenetrable smooth surface. All the events taking place within it acquire one single meaning: death is only death and hence, no signs of duality are left (Bakhtin, 1984a, pp. 281–322). Discourse on the proper form is, as the new official culture (Bakhtin, 1984a, p. 130), seemingly harmonious, unambiguous and serious, which does not allow the ambivalence and joyfulness of the grotesque that liberated “man from all the forms of inhuman necessity that direct the prevailing concept of the world” (Bakhtin, 1984a, p. 49). In Bakhtin’s view, it is this canon of the proper form that dominates our thinking about the body to this day. In this age of organization, the ideal is a smooth body sculpted to perfect proportions, a “closed instrumentality responsive to reason and command which is its primary datum,” as Ferguson (1997, p. 26) elaborated. The proper form, then, is a realm of rules, calculation and polish, in which the immaculate organization may be understood primarily to be made up of such stuff: procedures and regulations such as job descriptions and mission statements that optimize both goal-directedness and its sweeping compliance to them. Deviation, defect, dirt and disease are perceived to eat away at this proper form, (threaten to) violate it, and should be separated, at least, and wiped clean, at best. In the table below are some of the key differences between two canons of the body as described by Bakhtin (1984a) on display.

| Table 1 Bakhtin’s depiction of the two canons of the body (1984a, pp. 281–322) |
| Grotesque body | Proper form |
| ‘Golden Age’ | Early Renaissance (Rabelais) | Classic Age and (late) Modernity |
| Shape | Open and unfinished in the act of becoming, unfinishable | Closed, completed, limited, seen from the outside as individual |
| Key feature | Depths of orifices (“gaping mouth”) | Opaqueness of impenetrable smooth surface |
| Manifestation | On the boundary dividing one body from the other and at their points of intersection | Enclosed within the body’s limits of absolute beginning and end that never meet |
| Inside/outside | Swallows and rends the world apart, is enriched and grows at the world’s expense | Private individuality that does not merge with other bodies and with the world |
| ‘Desire’ | Retains only that which leads beyond the body’s space or into the body’s depths Affirming the physical body as open to the world, encompassing it and endlessly reproducing it and itself | Attributes of the unfinished world and signs of inner life are removed. No signs of duality are left. All the events taking place within it acquire one single meaning: death is only death |
| Interpretation of bodily acts | Sexual life, eating, drinking, and defecation have a direct relation to the life of society and to the cosmic whole | The meanings of these acts have been transferred to the private psychological level |

Bakhtin (1984a) suggested that the canon of the grotesque body is with us to some extent to this day:

In the new official culture there prevails a tendency toward the stability and completion of being, toward one single meaning, one single tone of seriousness. The ambivalence of the grotesque can no longer be admitted. The exalted genres of classicism are freed from the influence of the grotesque tradition of laughter. However, the tradition of the grotesque is not entirely extinct. (p. 101)
Indeed, “The grotesque mode of representing the body and bodily life prevailed in art and creative forms of speech over thousands of years. From the point of view of extensive use, this mode of representation still exists today” (Bakhtin, 1984a, pp. 318–319). Bakhtin (1984a) warned us that in “history’s living reality these canons were never fixed and immutable. Moreover, usually the two canons experience various forms of interaction: struggle, mutual influence, crossing, and fusion. This is especially true during the Renaissance” (p. 30). The two canons, then, do not exist separately, but they feed off one another in oppositional, violent, co-existence, more or less polarized from one era to the other. Moreover, according to Morson and Emerson (1990) in their seminal study on Bakhtin, the specific interplay of these two canons generates a “polarized body”:

A second binary opposition that emerges in Rabelais and his world: in addition to polarized language, we are presented with the “polarized body”...two polarizations, within language and within images of the body,...The grotesque also unites two qualities or orientations in the world that Bakhtin deeply respected: the interdependence of bodies and the messiness of life...If Socialist Realist art (and what might today be called fascist art) emphasizes the clean, closed-off, and narcissistic body, the art of the grotesque stresses exchange, mediation, and the ability to surprise. The grotesque restores “the ever uncompleted whole of being.” (pp. 448–449)

In this textual and sociohistorical polarization of the body, the two opposite images come to be juxtaposed and framed by the two respective canons. In light of the grotesque canon, the proper form is seen as distant, hierarchical, authoritarian (‘fascist’), and disembodied. In light of the proper form canon, the grotesque in turn is portrayed as diseased, disgusting, violent, and unruly. In the sociohistorical polarization of the body, then, we may discern a structure with the image of the body in the canon of the grotesque (A) and in the canon of the proper (B) which are flipped over discursively into an abject body in light of the proper form (B’) and in light of the grotesque canon (A’).

The overarching pivot (C) is the body and its property of physical force in particular, which in my observations has not been discussed explicitly, and only became clear to me (how it is done) when I asked this question to practitioners directly.

In the team excerpts below there is talk about whether it is responsible to have a particular patient clinically admitted against his will. The crux here is on how in the team meetings the enactment of the compulsory admission procedure is tied to a narrative of the grotesque as framed in the canon of the proper form. The grotesque imagery seems to support drawing to a close in considering a patient a proper case for the procedure. What is obscured is the way the patient’s body in effect becomes absorbed by the organizational body (i.e. the institution that the patient is compelled to ‘be admitted’ to) having fulfilled the proper requirements. The two excerpts below comprise a sequence recorded in two moments of time in one meeting, where the case of Mr. C. is explored in deliberations before the decision to instigate the procedure of compulsory admission.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Uriah</th>
<th>Mr. C.?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sam</td>
<td>Terrible. We’ve tried to have him uh admitted in the clinic. Well, today we’ll hear more about it, right?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nick</td>
<td>Well, he would think about it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stan</td>
<td>The pathway to housing office called yesterday, right before their meeting. They said that he was at the office having all these delusions about violation and semen oozing from his orifices and so on, so that’s uh...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophia</td>
<td>Gross...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stan</td>
<td>Some intense discussions about it followed. He’s gone now but we’ll be informed soon, as he’ll return shortly uh...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nick</td>
<td>He was going to consider it and he wants to...he is afraid he’s going to be confined. So, we said that it’s really voluntary. If he wants to leave, then he’s free to leave. He’s been talking already about a week. So, he does appear to be considering it.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Here, team members are considering the possibility of having Mr. C. admitted, but the objections of Mr. C. himself seem to foreclose any finalizing plot toward enacting that possibility. There is a description of Mr. C.’s delusions mentioned in proximity to clinical admission, but the voluntary option is emphasized and linked to Mr. C.’s potential to plot his own course. Excerpt 2 below is taken at a point later on in the same meeting, when the case of Mr. C. is brought back into discussion. Ed, who did not partake earlier, seems eager to move toward closure on the topic, drawing a course of action. Several arguments are assembled to narrow down the open-endlessness of the previous discussion and finalize Mr. C.’s case into something that fits the proper arrangements.

| Ed    | Just one little question more. Mr. C. He’s decompensating now probably, really, on drugs, right? |
| Sam   | Yes. |
| Sophia| Yes. |
| Ed    | I think a voluntary admission is fairly, uh...I think there’s a very slim chance, huh? |
| Stan  | Yeah, and it’s pretty clear that he says... |
Ed: Because he’s on antipsychotic medication. He’s on antipsychotics and still he’s crazed. Getting crazier every day. Yes, I think we should all deploy some stronger measures. Here’s this man: entering the clinic, on a voluntary basis. Whenever he gets a craving, he walks right out. Then we won’t have made any progress whatsoever. So, I…Yeah. Just to inform you, I think we should, that we should have him…That there should be at least some pressure if we are to attempt this. That he does get to hear: the court order is already prepared.

Sam: Yes, otherwise maybe we should have the parole office do something, instigate article 14A...

Ed: Yes, but those, those admissions instigated by the parole office are just like voluntary ones. You can just walk out. Yeah, that doesn’t, uh, carry any weight. I actually do think that we should consider uh a court order petition already too.

Sophia: Because now he’s got nothing?

Sam: No.

Ed: He’s only got parole. But that doesn’t enable anything if someone’s in a, uh, well, maybe we should discuss this shortly, yes, let’s just try that court order on his own request, that strengthens the procedure, but I do think it’s heading that way, and that we should be ready to act on the spot, because the man is becoming frightening. (day 20, 17 Apr. 2013)

Ed sets a different, more pressing tone on the issue here and underlines the urgency to step up their action. Again, bodily aspects (taking antipsychotics, being crazed, getting a craving, being able to ‘walk out’) are deployed to argue they are dealing with serious transgressions in need of more forceful counteraction. Running parallel, another bodily image emerges whose contours are formed by procedural demarcations. Accompanying this image is a rhetoric style that fits: by stating that he’s ‘just informing’ the others, he deploys an authoritative style to which others need not, should not, respond. And he proposes a similar scenario as regards to Mr. C., compelling him to comply by means of a warning/threat that a court order is ready to be instigated. Mr. C.’s voice here, in a way, is silenced as he is made into the proper form of the procedure, before actually instigating it. In effect, in this team meeting Mr. C.’s body is on a threshold of having the compulsory admission imposed on it, in effect, to have his body relocated and confined, usurped by the care provider’s bureaucratic body whole. In other words, drawing nearer to the procedure, the images of Mr. C. are arranged in a particular way. His bodily transgressions are made explicit: his addiction, his delusions and his capability to walk out. Equally important is that these notions are framed in the discourse of the proper form about the sequence, purpose and management of possible courses of action toward the individuated case made abnormal. Then, a switch of image and discourse occurs. The individuated case is set into the light of the grotesque body: the public (non-private) and collective task of usurping the patient into clinical admission.

By instigating the procedure, individuality is suspended by making the sense of Mr. C.’s body a public menace, which renders him the legitimate object of the provider’s discursive authority. This brings to mind how, according to Bakhtin, during and after the Renaissance the grotesque progressively became a product of the canon of the proper form: something unruly and undesirable, something to be contained and placed outside the public place. The grotesque image is thus embedded in the canon of the proper form, where Mr. C. is a risk-assessed, diagnostic-related case of a particularly voiceless person, a discordant in need of resolve. Thus, in the scenario of instigating compulsory admission, he is delineated to form elements of a proper, time-framed case to which are attached protocols and directives to adhere to. Made to submit to this procedural proper form is an image of the grotesque body: a body of becoming that transgresses the norms of order, forms a danger to the public, to be provided by forensic ACT with forensic ‘belonging to the public,’ from the Latin forensis care. Looking back onto CMS on corporeal generosity, it is exactly this idea of corporeal generosity that is part and parcel of a larger tension between itself and a countercurrent of regulation and enforcement.

This whole theoretical concoction only matters when it helps us to understand how human bodies are incorporated and decorporated by organizational bodies, and how we may recognize this pattern. How patients, in the case of forensic ACT, are talked into compulsory admission via a regulatory discourse: swallowed into the organizational body of the clinic and separated/isolated from within ‘organized’ in a quite literal sense. And how practitioners, via a communal sense or ‘esprit de corps,’ may consciously and willingly suspend their own risk of being harmed. And choose to be deployed outward from the organization (excreted) and into potentially harmful situations. Outside, the organizational body itself is not physically present, but the practitioners may still be locked into a suspended order, that of the discretionary space. And, finally, how in both cases, the organizational device of risk (threat) assessment may be the pivotal discursive instrument, the somersault with a twist, of the crossing-over, in which organizational embodiment is simultaneously an abjectification of the human body.

What I suggest at play here, rather than a difference of body versus non-body, is an ongoing chiasmos on the body, resulting from a discursive polarization of the body
into a proper and a grotesque image. Taking a critical move some may call recolonizing (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2011), I have thus dragged the body, or at least its circumscription, back into the quagmire of discourse. Along the lines of the study of Dale and Burrell (2014) of organizational wellness and ‘unwellness,’ I argue that these two images are locked in an interplay of discursive foregrounding and obscuring. Indeed, my approach follows up on their focus on the “inherent contradictions” (p. 168) of organizational discourse of the body, where they, too, draw upon Merleau-Ponty. Dale and Burrell (2014) emphasized the urgency of Merleau-Ponty’s work for CMS, as follows.

Merleau-Ponty’s approach suggests the existing critical literature pays insufficient attention to the ongoing organization of embodiment. By providing a sensitivity to the individual level of phenomenology and to how this is socially and culturally mediated, Merleau-Ponty would imply that there is rarely a corporeal tabula rasa for humans upon which organizations “later” inscribe themselves...the body is always already a product of the social and cultural norms and institutions in which the individual is conceived, matures and learns to labour...Organizations are a central part of this, not only at the point at which we enter them as producers, but also because in Western nations we live in societies that are almost totally constructed by and through organization(s)...Even the unemployed, the pre-employed and the retired confront an organized world in which their habits and habitus are shaped. And here of course lies the covert issue of categorizing what is “normal” and what “pathological.” (pp. 165–166)

In other words, zooming in on how either body image is foregrounded or obscured via the chiastic structure, I hope to illustrate how physically precarious events are stepped over and into quotidian organizational praxis, enabled through devices such as risk assessment tools and compulsory admission protocols. Both the discourse of ‘micro’-interactions of situated talk and the ‘macro’-level Discourse on the body are at play in understanding how this polarization works to constitute two different ‘absent present’ bodies (Shilling, 2012). Specifically, I argue that the folding of the human body in and out of organization, is a discursive process in which the body in question is either pulled in through the genre of the proper form which calls for a removal of the grotesque, and conversely, that the body is deployed outward through the genre of the grotesque which calls for a suspension of the proper: official, regulated, procedural. This single case study makes for an extreme case that may expose how these processes intertwine, getting the point across in a somewhat “dramatic way” (Flyvbjerg, 2006). This, in turn, might help scrutiny of><br>the above-mentioned organization studies on embodied generosity which seem to forego a deep ambivalence in their own discourse on the (human) body. But first, a more elaborate answer to the question of what a chiasmus really is.

5.3 χ

Chiasmus is a concept which has been embraced by thinkers – besides Merleau-Ponty – such as Derrida, Levinas, and more recently Butler and Critchley, and its use has spilled over from literary studies into studies on the cultural, political, social and ethical (see e.g., Korhonen et al., 2018, and Wiseman & Paul, 2014). The unsettling impetus of the chiasmus, then, may serve not only as a “figure of speech, but as a generative principle, an aesthetic idea, a method of composition, a tool of ideological manipulation, a matrix of social interaction, a philosophical problem, a metaphor; an elemental image or sign” (Paul & Wiseman, 2018, p. 1). Along with Butler (1997) and in particular Merleau-Ponty, we might use the concept of chiasmus to explore the unending intertwining between language and the body as the (seeming) object, or rather the abject as argued below, of that language. For we may discern a pattern in processes of shared understanding, and in the ways practitioners talk about corporeality as abject to overcome the moral objection to expose one’s body or the body of another to (the threat of) physical force or, more precisely, physical violence. Below I will illustrate how in situated talk and in Discourse on the body we may discern this chiasmus, enabling practitioners who are well aware of risks and contradictions in their work, to make sense of such exposure, anyway.

In its original rhetorical sense, a chiasmus means that two grammatical forms or ideas (A and B) are followed by their variants (A’ and B’). Frequent in classical texts, an example from Virgil’s Aeneid is Speluncam Dido dum et Troianus eandem – Dido and the Trojan leader (come) to the same cave.19 Here ‘Speluncam’ is A, Dido is B, dum Troianus is B’ and eandem is A’. Another example, again with the cave theme, from Virgil: Hic vasto rex Aeolus antro – Here King Aeolus in a huge cave. Vasto here is A, rex is B, Aeolus is B’ and antro is A’. According to Johnson (see footnote 19), in both examples of the cave, the chiasmus works in an additional semantic way by literally placing the figures involved inside the cave, through the placing of the words in the sentence. The chiastic structure itself, then, is an ‘incorporation’ of the B and B’ by the A and A’ elements. Another aspect of incorporation flows from the explicit of a central theme C, where both A and B revolve around a central theme (C) as: A B C B’ A’. According to Breck (1987), the distinctiveness of the chiastic structure lies in its pivotal theme, around which the other propositions of the unit are developed: a ‘crossing point’ illustrated by the Greek letter chi (χ) (p. 71).

Both whole writings and individual units have been structured chiastically in the Scriptures (note χ as the sign of the cross). The pivot C itself might be a hidden theme and not explicated in the text itself. Breck (1987) provided an example (Book of John 1:6–7), in which C is explicated:

A: If we say we have fellowship with Him
B: and (yet) walk in the darkness,
C: we lie and do not do the truth.
B': If we walk in the light as He is in the light,
A': we have fellowship with one another.

The chiastic pattern works like a Mobius strip where a symmetric structure is inverted halfway and the opening and closing A’ complete a circle. A chiastic line of reasoning appears elegant and articulates a sense of closure, a balance of order, binding oppositions together. A chiasmus may allow us to understand how a line of reasoning is flipped upside down yet still make sense like an orderly course of reasoning (of anticipated action). It may also enable us to articulate obscured central themes that are not actually explicated, to critique its self-evident appearance and to articulate alternatives.

Only one of the most recent rewritings of this chapter did I realize that this chiasmus and its use in reading and writing is basically what doing deconstruction is about. Simon Critchley’s dissertation of 1988 “Chiasmus: Levinas, Derrida and the Ethics of Deconstructive Reading” (altered and published as the 1992 book The Ethics of Deconstruction: Derrida and Levinas), points us to deconstruction as a way of opening up to (radical) alterity.

As Derrida remarked once in an interview: “Deconstruction is not an enclosure in nothingness, but an openness toward the other...Philosophy, particularly in its Hegelian moment, has always insisted on thinking of its other (art, religion, nature, and so forth) as its proper other, thereby appropriating it and losing sight of its otherness.” (Critchley, 1992, p. 28)

In other words, we are, through deconstruction, opening up the apparent closure that is the chiastic structure of language circumscribing its radical alterity: the body. Critchley pointed us to the writing of ethics as an explosive problem, “...namely that if ethics is defined in terms of respect for alterity...how is alterity respected in a discourse upon that alterity?” (Critchley, 1992, p. 12). It is a problem that pervades the relationship between Levinas and Derrida themselves and their ideas, as they both mark its chiastic structure. Critchley cited a passage on Derrida (in 1975 Proper Names) where Levinas noted:

Indeed the ridiculous ambition of “improving” a true philosopher is not our intention. To meet him on his way is already very commendable and is probably the very modality of the philosophical encounter. In underlining the primordial importance of the questions posed by Derrida, we wished to express the pleasure of a contact made in the heart of a chiasmus. (Levinas, 1996/1975, p. 62)

Derrida, in his turn responded to Levinas in a letter (in Peeters, 2012, p. 254):

I don’t express properly, or enough, how touched I am by the way you send me your texts, and everything they give me to read, to think. Forgive me. The strange relationship that you have so lucidly and generously defined, “contact at the heart of a chiasmus”, is still for me a living experience. Especially since, on this chiasmus – and such is the logic of the chiasmus – I feel unstable enough to pass over, often, to your side. [...] Across the distance, the silences, the dispersion, all the difficulties that make encounters so rare, please believe in my proximity, very attentive and very friendly, very cordial – for I am sure that at the heart of the chiasmus the heart must always prefer itself.

Another scholar, drawing on Derrida and Merleau-Ponty, keen on using the figure of the chiasmus is Judith Butler, who in Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative (1997) has more explicitly drawn it in to characterize the utterance (as in Austin’s speech act theory) as the tense and overflowing intertwining of the bodily act of uttering with the discourse of speech itself, which are “incongruously interrelated” (p. 11). Inquiring into what marks the performative, Butler (1997) locates in the chiasmus of the utterance the force of the performative; because when we utter, we forcefully break with prior contexts and meanings and thrust, and “this force is never fully separable from bodily force” (p. 141). Butler explained this by the example of the threat as a chiasmus: both corporeal and linguistic. Drawing on the Lacanian scholar Feldman, Butler (1997) emphasized the tension and unfinalizability that marks the meanings that are uttered by the body whose performance is out of bounds of (the intentions of) that speech, making its meanings always unstable, and overflowing:

That body becomes a sign of unknowingness precisely because its actions are never fully consciously directed or volitional...the body is the blind spot of speech; that...
which acts in excess of what is said, but which also acts in and through what is said. That the speech act is a bodily act means that the act is redoubled in the moment of speech: there is what is said, and then there is a kind of saying that the bodily “instrument” of the utterance performs. (p. 11)

In uttering a threat, the linguistic interpretation alone does not provide us with a sense of its seriousness. For that, we need the corporeality of the utterance as well, the gestural aspect of it. Certainly, there is quite a difference from someone texting you a threat on your phone to someone actually shouting the same words in your face while towering over you with clenched fists waving. As Butler (1997) argued, “The threat prefigures or, indeed, promises a bodily act, and yet is already a bodily act, thus establishing in its very gesture the contours of the act to come” (p. 11), with this act of threat and the threatened act “related as a chiasmus” (p. 11).

Earlier work on the chiastic relationship between sense and the body was done in 1959–1961 when Maurice Merleau-Ponty wrote his text “The intertwining – the Chiasm,” posthumously published as Chapter Four in The Visible and the Invisible (1968/1964). Merleau-Ponty made his meaning of chiasm accessible by describing how hands feel themselves and feel each other by holding each other:

This can happen only if my hand, while it is felt from within, is also accessible from without, itself tangible, for my other hand, for example, if it takes its place among the things it touches, is in a sense one of them, opens finally upon a tangible being of which it is also a part. Through this crisscrossing within it of the touching and the tangible, its own movements incorporate themselves into the universe they interrogate, are recorded on the same map as it; the two systems are applied upon one another, as the two halves of an orange. (p. 133)

In Merleau-Ponty’s (1968/1964) purview, the body we have here is a sense of “carnal being, as a being of depths...a sensible sentient (p. 136). But then, one wonders with Merleau-Ponty, is the body a thing or an idea? It is neither, according to him, as the body is:

the measurant of the things. We will therefore have to recognize an identity that is not alien to the flesh, that gives it its axes, its depth, its dimensions. But once we have entered into this strange domain, one does not see how there could be any question of leaving it. (p. 152, italics in original)

The chiasm of the “sensible sentient” is a reciprocal and reversible intertwining, like a single movement but in two phases, “it incorporates into itself the whole of the sensible and with the same movement incorporates itself into a ‘Sensible in itself’” (Merleau-Ponty, 1968/1964, p. 138). And this body is more than the visible body that meets the eye; it is a body of depth, “incomplete, gaping open; as though the physiology of vision did not succeed in closing the nervous functioning in upon itself” (Merleau-Ponty, 1968/1964, p. 147). Merleau-Ponty (1968/1964) emphasized that the chiastic reversibility is “always imminent and never realized in fact. My left hand is always on the verge of touching my right hand touching the things, but I never reach coincidence; the coincidence eclipses at the moment of realization” (p. 147). This sensible non-coincidence marks an ongoing shifting, an “ hiatus between my right hand touched and my right hand touching, between my voice heard and my voice uttered, between one moment of my tactile life and the following one” (Merleau-Ponty, 1968/1964, p. 148). Ideas cannot be ideas except as in a carnal experience as in both the occasion to think them, but, moreover,

it is that they owe their authority, their fascinating, indestructible power, precisely to the fact that they are in transparency behind the sensible, or in its heart. Each time we want to get at it immediately, or lay hands on it, or circumscribe it, or see it unveiled, we do in fact feel that the attempt is misconceived, that it retreats in the measure that we approach. The explicitation does not give us the idea itself; it is but a second version of it, a more manageable derivative. (Merleau-Ponty, 1968/1964, p. 150)

In the concluding passages, Merleau-Ponty (1968/1964) indicated how, through this carnal experience of the world and its ideas, phrases, too, can be understood only by fully welcoming them, with the meaning not:

on the phrase like the butter on the bread, like a second layer of “psychic reality” spread over the sound: it is the totality of what is said, the integral of all the differentiations of the verbal chain; it is given with the words for those who have ears to hear. And conversely the whole landscape is overrun with words as with an invasion. (p. 153)

According to Erdinast-Vulcan (2013), “What we ultimately encounter in Merleau-Ponty’s work, then, is a full-fledged deconstruction of the dualism of body and language, a rejection of the primacy of body as that which is irreducible, self-evident, and axiomatic” (p. 154). The analogy of chiasm is associated with the crossing-over that occurs in the optic chiasm of the optical nerves at the base of the human brain (see for a discussion of the post-ocularcentric position Gardiner, 1999, Erdinast-Vulcan, 2013, Leder, 1990).

The non-visual, then, becomes the depth of flesh, but the problem with Merleau-Ponty’s choice of the word flesh, as other scholars have pointed out (Dillen 1990, see also – Erdinast-Vulcan, 2007), is in his description of this flesh, which closely resembles the concept of the grotesque. But if we consider this depth of flesh not as ‘what has no name’ but as a phenomenon thoroughly interwoven in the discursive tension such as Agamben described (force and law) and Bakhtin traced sociohistorically (the proper and the grotesque body), then Merleau-Ponty’s idea of chiasm providing a concept that could give shape to the ideas of reversibility and non-coincidence is mistaken. It is not
the flesh, the human body, the ‘what has no name’ which is the marker of reversibility, it is
the ongoing discursive tension itself, the swirl, marked by a polarization of the body
traceable to ancient times from which Merleau-Ponty does not escape himself. It is not
so much that between the sentient and the sensible there is a chiasm, it is rather that the
chiasm on the human body is already within the sentient and within the sensible, and
providing this perceiver with predisposed images such as the grotesque to make sense
of that what appears to be the ‘what has no name.’ This, admittedly, may seem nitpicking
alongside a vast plane of agreement between Bakhtin and Merleau-Ponty. However, the
rift widens when the gist of Merleau-Ponty is drawn upon in arguments that not only
forego this crack but hitherto fail to open up the potentiality of violence at the heart of
this intertwining. On a more reconciling note,

...both Bakhtin and Merleau-Ponty are working toward a recognition of the
inescapable liminality of our embodiment, discourse, and subjectivity, but their
respective itineraries do not lead to the disempowerment of agential subjectivity
that has gained such currency in postmodernist thought. The dynamic of mutual
decentering that emerges from the work of Bakhtin and Merleau-Ponty does the very
opposite of this: it is precisely this living on borderlines – not relative but relational –
that highlights the immense responsibility of being human and grants us the freedom
of contraband. (Erdinast-Vulcan, 2013, p. 158)

In sum, with Derrida, Levinas, Butler and Merleau-Ponty, we have touched upon the
workings of the chiasmus as an ongoing encounter of different ideas crossing over and
into each other, holding and being held at the same time. This two-phase movement
marks sense as an intertwining of corporeality and linguistics, each flowing into each
other with the unfinalizable body as the pivot, the heart of the chiasmus that is, in
turn, the ethical of deconstructive reading, circumscribing its depth, its gestural being,
gaping upon. Below, a second set of excerpts revolves around the question whether it is
responsible to make a home visit to a patient who might turn violent. The forensic ACT
team employs a set of patient placement criteria, as do most mental health care teams,
to regulate the inflow and outflow of their caseload. Eligible for this forensic ACT team
are patients with (severe) mental illness that have been repeatedly convicted of a violent
offense and/or have recently shown violent or threatening behavior toward either civilians
and/or practitioners. The forensic ACT practice thus has its members reaching out to
patients many of whom have a documented history of aggressive behavior, although
deployment is not accompanied by the physical means to secure themselves. Hence,
practitioners may and do sometimes find themselves in perilous situations outside, in
which they can only talk or run their way out. In the above we have seen patients facing
an ambiguous mental health care practice that provides not only open-ended care but
helps instigate procedures to physically coerce their bodies into clinical admission against
their will. Below we see practitioners confronted with the risk of aggressive behavior of
their patients in face-to-face meetings. Both themes, I might add, were discussed very
frequently and at times intensely in most of the observed meetings.

5.4 Being dis/membered

According to Morrissey et al. (2009), in the United States “the inattention of the mental
health community to risk assessments and the over-reliance of the criminal justice system
on such measures have created disconnects in care” (p. 121); for Dutch disconnects,
see Wierdsma, 2008, and Zwemstra, 2009). However, risk assessment seems to be on
the rise in mental health care as well, and (semi-)public sector organizations in general,
where, as Hillman et al. (2013) put it, “the management of risk in healthcare systems
has fallen victim to a wider societal trend to attempt to eradicate uncertainties through
reasoned calculation” (p. 951). Hillman et al. (2013) warned against ‘undignified’ care: “the
mediation of institutional risk and accountability into everyday caring relationships not
only reduce patients as a moral demand…but can even constitute patients as an enemy,
posing a potential threat to those who care for them” (p. 952). The practitioner, then,
is managed to care less for her patients and more for the minimization of risk and the
aesthetic of accountability. In the case of forensic care, risk assessment is already part
and parcel of what makes this care forensic, and the practitioners employed are aware, or
are made aware, that risk is something that they will need to acknowledge and manage
on a daily basis. Risk-taking, then, becomes less of an occupational hazard and more of
an occupational norm, something which practitioners will have to digest in order to do
the work involved. But this occupational norm may have its corporeal effects in itself. As
Dale and Burrell (2014) contended,

Prior to entry into an organization, people may have an understanding that certain
occupations are risky, but rarely do individuals expect or understand that their
embodiment changes as a result of their occupation […] The nature of risk-taking
changes as “fitness for purpose” becomes taken for granted. (p. 172)

Moreover, Dale and Burrell (2014) pointed toward the idea of normative involvement:

As we willingly enter into the occupation, we also willingly allow the occupation to
enter ourselves. This welcome embrace is particularly evident in the rise of “the new
managerialism” (Deem et al., 2007), HRM, the “management of meaning” (Gowler
and Legge, 1983) and the “management of identity” (Collinson, 2003). The ways in
which these occupy embodiment very often obscure the relations of power under
which they are constructed. They are seductive, such that the employee is caught in
a close, tight enfolding with these forms of occupation. The construction of the
willingly occupied body, engaged in meaningful sanctioned activity, is in itself an
occupation of sorts. In this case, the recesses of the mind and cavities of the body
The forensic ACT team at hand uses the Short-Term Assessment of Risk and Treatability (START; Webster et al., 2004, 2006, 2009) risk assessment form characterized as a tool in structured professional judgment to evaluate patient risk across seven domains (violence to others; suicide; self-harm; self-neglect; unauthorized absence; substance use; risk of being victimized). It is regarded as less time-consuming than other tools such as the widely used HCR-20 (Historical Clinical Risk management), but little to no evidence has actually been found for its use as an intervention for the reduction of violent behavior among forensic psychiatric outpatients (O'Shea & Dickens, 2014). But as one team member intimates, the START is not really used for each and every patient in their caseload anyway, only for some patients who have already raised concern in the team.

The sense of filling in the form together in a small group (multidisciplinary, usually two practitioners) is mostly to gain awareness of the usually higher-than-considered risk of potential future violence, and in this way it informs the team’s decision to deploy two members (or one, which is the norm). So, the practical reasoning goes: established risk → two practitioners deployed instead of one → less danger. Most of the time though, the START is not used at all, and assessment of risk is done through everyday deliberation in and around the daily planning meeting. There is much to be said about the application of risk assessment, but from a critical purview one might say that the action of risk assessment not so much reduces the risk of violent behavior (which START states it is for, but for which there is no evidence), but for providing practitioners, who ultimately take that risk, with peace of mind that at least they have taken a methodical step to better prepare themselves for the action of physically deploying themselves in a risky situation. When outreach work is the norm such as in the forensic ACT team, next to the START a number of devices are enacted that facilitate this deployment: professional requirements to assemble a team of practitioners fit and willing; the protocol of placing a red cross beside a patient considered dangerous; the morning meetings themselves in which the deployments are planned and evaluated; and so on. These arrangements do much in routinizing the work, up to the point where interventions to potential threats are prescribed in protocol. Written protocols and procedures, then, explicate the links between situation and prescribed intervention, but in situated talk these links work on a more implicit level, and these are the ones on which the analysis below focuses. More specifically: How are the grotesque and proper images of the corporeal self (of practitioners) set into the light of their corresponding canons? In other words, how does the corporeal chiasmus of risk assessment work? The following excerpt is taken at a point midway through a meeting. Setting aside the obvious finalizing remarks about Mr. F., the real concern here is the link between the problem of a physical threat and the resolve that two people go – instead of nobody, or instead of having the police accompany team members.

There is a frivolity about the final question that does not seem to follow from the description of the scene that preceded it. But apparently, it does, as it is the normal conclusion after many team discussions about similar situations. How so? In the excerpt below, a similar conclusion is arrived at, but the extended dialogue in this excerpt enables a view on the interplay between the images and discourses of the body. At first, concerns of sexual transgression and fear are expressed through the proper form. But this image of potential harm to the proper form is subsequently overtaken by a discourse shift that sees the practitioner’s individual body ejected toward the patient by foregrounding its body as grotesque: as joint members of the organizational body whole. In other words, from the perspective that everything should be clean and proper (in organization), deviations are seen as frightening and sickening. But to go and do something about it in a sense of agency – other than taking distance or ‘cleaning dirt’ – the way of talking changes: teamwork, a sense of collective agency, is foregrounded which uplifts the (individual’s) sense of danger. Exactly what you would expect in the canon of the grotesque.

Nicole: …are willingly opened up to occupation, and internalized control is embraced as the individual’s choice. (p. 171)
Sam: Uh...
Nicole: You, you are really busy.
Sam: Yes, no, I know, but Mr. W.
Sophia: Sure, he is really a bit...
Sam: I’ve been visiting him alone for so long, he and I are really, he just doesn’t know better than me visiting him, you know, and last week I thought it was already a bit tense with Tara and I, and that if I didn’t look him in the eye for a second, he just kept looking at me all the time, so it’s all quite tricky, you know.
Nicole: Uh, okay, well, then, uh...
Nancy: Did you feel it like that, Tara?
Tara: Uh...
Sam: Yeah, I don’t know how you felt that.
Tara: Well, yes, I didn’t feel it like that, but that’s, you know him really well and the tension was rising with him, he didn’t give me that vibe, personally.
Nicole: But intuitively?
Tara: No, I didn’t get that, but I don’t know if I’m able to assess it, you know, because I don’t really know him. But, uh, what you just said: “the tension was rising with him,” he didn’t give me that vibe, personally.
Sam: Yes.
Tara: But yeah, you know him well and you know how he reacts.
Sam: Yes, yes, it was just the tension when I tried to have a conversation the three of us and that he, at a certain point, that he indicated quickly that he uh well and I looked another way and he looked behind his back. So yeah, it was all pretty precarious.
Tara: Yes, that’s what you said, and I believe you instantly of course, because I don’t know him well, but that’s how I felt it. But that surely doesn’t mean that it wasn’t like that.
Nancy: Okay, but Mary shouldn’t go there alone, so who’ll join her? (day 16, 11 Apr. 2013)

Here, two team members, Sam and the recently started team member Tara, exchange evaluations of the visit to Mr. W. they undertook the day before. Here (and elsewhere in the meeting) they evaluate not what was said at the visit, but how the visit felt. Along the conversation, bodily senses and movements are put into words and knowing the other becomes something that manifests itself in a porous zone (i.e. the canon of the grotesque body seems at work). However, the under- or meta current of this conversation is delineation: articulating the demarcations of the riskiness, the extent of fear and precariousness. Such talk is the proper form in meetings in which the delineation of the practitioner’s body’s senses (feeling tense, being intuitive, feeling the vibe, making a connection) contribute to a shared team understanding of what was going on. This makes for a daily routine, which has the individual partake in a ‘normalized intensity’ (McCann et al., 2008).

The visit, then, is understood as an open-ended event in which a connection with the patient should be established, like a “joint space of exploring where no one has full control over the other or the unfolding of the conversation” (Helin, 2013, p. 238). This open-ended engagement is understood to be beyond full prescription, but formally part of the team’s discretion, as daily routine body work. Foregrounded to enable a risky deployment outward, toward the patient is an image of a ‘we’, an esprit de corps, a corporeality that exceeds individual bounds, that is a body-of-two which in effect is deployed in forensic ACT. As a member of a collective enduring organizational body of deployment in hazardous, unpredictable and intricate situations, to answer the other is to move beyond the delineations of the proper form: to shrug off the image of a ‘proper’ practitioner that does not connect, does not engage, does not care. The grotesque body becomes the prevailing canon enabling an open-ended engagement with the patient. The risk of getting hurt is resolved not by simply withholding an answer (not being deployed, which is obscured) but through a ‘grotesque’ argument in which the body becomes two bodies: being a member part of an ongoing collective. In a sense, opposite to the compulsory admission case below, where the patient’s ‘grotesque’ but individuated body is plotted into proper form’s grotesque absorption, here a sense of collective body suspends the proper form to enable individual members of the organization to be temporarily ‘cut off’ outward.

A caring practitioner engages (A)
Bodily force (C)

The proper practitioner is delineated by risk protocol (B)

Unprotocolled behavior should be expelled (B’)
Suspend the individual’s body into discretion (A’)

In a working environment saturated with protocols, training and scripted instruments, the practitioner ultimately finds herself in situations that lie beyond that which protocol can enter but does circumscribe, does discursively incorporate: a zone of discretion where the proper form is suspended, like a miniature state-of-exception (Agamben, 2005) which exposes the unfinalizability of bodily force. One figurehead of forensic ACT in the Netherlands summarized this mechanism succinctly in an interview for a national TV news item on the daily work of forensic ACT:

If I had behaved like a “true” practitioner, like if I had told them how to run things properly here, I would have been thrown off the balcony. Literally, yes. It’s something...
you get a feel for, a bit. I'm from this town as well, so it's easy for me...to connect. But at the pace the patient sets. 20

Being a good practitioner, then, and this is typical of professional work, is something more than complying with the ways of the proper, procedural form. Another canon is put into play here, and in this canon of the grotesque body the proper form is seen in a negative light: detached and stiff, impervious. What is called for, instead, is an ability to adapt to unforeseen circumstances and to establish, not through knowledge of protocol but by affective craft, an 'authentic' personal connection. As the grotesque body involves a sense of ongoing positivity and ambivalence, it prefigures the way its members may embrace a sense of corporeality in these open-ended situations. Human bodies may be exposed to corporeal violence at workplaces where it is normalized to the extent that individuals might only 'come to their sense' of its abnormality at a point distant to it; for example, the evening after, at home, as we heard Olive say in the previous chapter. It is only then and there that they exit the grotesque body of organization, until the next morning.

5.5 A bitter carnival of twenty-first century organizing 21

Key in the analysis of these processes of discursive prefiguration, I have argued, is a crossing-over of two different canons on the human body: where one image of the body is set in light of the other, and vice versa. This rhetorical crossing-over pattern is called a chiasmus, which may work not only in terms of ‘grand narrative’ Discourse, but also at the ‘micro’ level of organizational discourse. Unable to touch upon the unfinalizable body itself directly, to penetrate it; language circumscribes its ways around the depth, the flesh, the gesture, by crossing-overs. I have indicated how this chastic structure does that and how it, in effect, articulates a normalizing order. In contemporary organizational practices such as those of the forensic ACT team, we see some exceptional people engage each other in exceptional circumstances. Their bodies are moved outward, inward, separated, isolated, conjoined, absorbed, by a discursive interplay of images and ways of talking about the body: shaping it, polarizing it by an unending twisting and turning around the physicality of bodily form. This chastic interplay between grotesque body and the proper form unfolds in both the prosaic of everyday conversation and in the grander scale of sociohistorical transitions, as the body-image:

offers itself as a kind of accumulated history of itself. It is in this context that the divergent and even contradictory views of, and interests in, the contemporary body

can be understood in terms of the quite different historical locations of the body-images which each invokes. (Ferguson, 1997, p. 26)

In drawing nearer to the point of engaging the patient, on the threshold of deployment the practitioner’s body becomes polarized. The grotesque body canon becomes the prevailing discourse in the need for open-ended engagement with the recipient. The risk of getting hurt is resolved by a ‘grotesque’ argument in which the individual body becomes (two) bodies: being a member part of an ongoing collective, an unfinalizable body. The proper form image becomes abject, a cold harness that prohibits real contact, real care. Opposite, yet in a sense parallel to the compulsory admission case where the patient’s ‘grotesque’ body is plotted into the proper form, thus enabling its forced absorption into the provider, here the body of the practitioner is delineated properly into an idea of a collective body, thus enabling its suspended discharge out of the organization’s corpus. The forensic ACT practitioner thus finds herself in a bitter carnival, one in which an ethics of an embodied generosity runs parallel with a precarization of the body. As Gardiner (2004) puts it succinctly, carnival and prosaics are not antithetical notions, as is sometimes implied in the literature. Bakhtin’s evocation of the carnivalesque is best understood as indicative of his desire to draw our attention to the underlying sociocultural forces that continually subvert our received commonsensical notions and habitualized viewpoints, and to encourage a renewed awareness of the hidden and all-too-often suppressed potentialities that lie within “the dregs of an everyday gross reality” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 385). (p. 42)

I have tried to trace the process of how such potentialities within the organizational prosaic may enable the enactment of what may amount to a gross reality for some.

In the first case, instigating a court-ordered compulsory admission, I argued that the patient’s body becomes polarized in drawing nearer to the point of discursive closure. That polarization entails an image of a grotesque body that has lost its private and individual character, a body of becoming that transgresses the norms of order, to be delineated by forensic ACT care. The abject body becomes a rhetorical device that enables the proper procedure. This brings to mind how, according to Bakhtin, during and after the Renaissance the grotesque progressively became a product of the canon of the proper form: something unruly and undesirable, something to be contained and placed outside the public place. Thus the patient is made a proper form, fitting the procedural requirements of the tools, devices and legal frameworks at hand. On the threshold of instigating the procedure of physical confinement and thereby suspending the individual’s freedom of movement, imposing the proper form becomes grotesque: enabling the patient’s body to be forced into the corpus of the provider’s organization, and from within the isolation of her body organized.


In the Netherlands, a new Bill on compulsory care is to be enacted in 2020. This Bill marks a Discourse shift in the grander narrative between the two canons of the body. While the current legal framework enables confinement but prohibits (to a large extent) the enforced breach of the surface of the body, with the new Act coming into force, more compulsory arrangements will be enabled outside the clinic and inside the body of the recipient – reviving the times before the General Hospitals and the proper form. The original Bill contains a telling passage that reads:

Care that is accompanied with either a far-reaching restriction of freedom or of privacy of whom it concerns, or with an impairment on the integrity of the body, is to be applied with great care and restraint. Protociling the forms of care...should thus be obvious. (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2010a, p. 56)

One might question to what extent the body of the recipient will become a more permanent grotesque body in this compulsory outpatient care: public and permeable, in spite of (though enabled by) the arrangements prescribed to augment a patient’s individual rights. Until that time of permanent emergency, suspension lies at the point of instituting the admission. Another interrelated bill coming into effect in the Netherlands is about forensic care (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2010b, which is the House of Representatives of the Netherlands), which institutionally unifies several current health care arrangements provided to convicted persons. The target of the coming is about forensic care (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2010b, which is the House Netherlands in interrelated effect instigating the into admission. Bill

One Bos argued with Giorgio Agamben:

...during the Roman Empire, very rarely “used” by the political sovereign, nowadays the state of exception has become the rule. The disquieting suggestion made by Agamben is that the normal and civil order in which we, as average citizens of our late-capitalistic society, might feel so protected and secure might easily turn into a perverted order where the law is suspended and where we lose our civil status and become, indeed, less-than-human. If we are to believe Agamben, the likelihood that this happens to the citizens of our precious democracy has never been bigger. (ten Bos, 2005a, p. 18)

By means of the concept of chiasmus, we may discern patterns in the ways practitioners talk about corporeality, to instigate a suspension of what is deemed a closed-off individual interest and to instigate separation of what is deemed a dangerous threat to the public. In other words, while crossing over through the opposite canon whilst obscuring bodily force itself, (moral) objections to expose oneself or another to a (threat of) physical force are overcome, enabled, and enacted. This invites a reevaluation of Hancock’s (2008) concluding remarks:

if this [ethics of embodied generosity] is to be achieved it will not be through compliance, or the actions of isolated subjectivities, but rather through the emergence of a mutual recognition of, and state of generosity toward the other; one that seeks not closure, but a genuine openness to difference, creativity and the conviviality of an ethical organizational life. (p. 1371)

I have argued the opposite, and tried to illustrate that this state of openness is already put to work, circumscribed by an image of the grotesque body, that as such did settle into a new regime: a ‘precategorization’ of the body “that describes that process of acclimatizing a population to unsecurity” (Butler & Athanasiou, 2013, p. 43). This kind of ethics has already been put into play by its evocation of the grotesque, embedded in a precarious praxis where the procedural prescriptions of the proper form do enable, but ultimately do not apply. Put differently, (business ethics) discourse on the responsible put into practice, is interlocked with its own negation, and the more tangible the stake, the more painstakingly this becomes visible, visceral. It is in light of these discursive dynamics of the ‘mad, bad, and sad,’ that we turn our attention to the unfinalizable relation of the self and other inherent in discourse itself, and in addressing these anticipated others we come to find ourselves in the heart of Bakhtin’s responsibility-as-answerability.

And this silk seems Fire to me. And now no longer Fire, but Blood. And blood is but a sign of that which we Call, in our poor language, Love.

Love is but a sound... At this late hour, What comes next I can’t reveal. No, not fire, nor blood, but only satín Creaks beneath the timid needle.

From “The Seamstress” (1901), Zinaida Gippius

5 | Organizing moral prolapse
6 Navigating *Narrenschiff* narratives

I am a sick man...I am a spiteful man. I am an unpleasant man.
*Notes from Underground*, Dostoevsky

Whereas in Chapter 4 I ventured into personal responsibility of the self and in Chapter 5 the embodied crossing-over onto the other was scrutinized, in this chapter a third party takes center stage. On a grand narrative scale, Foucault illustrates how the discursive construction of societal stranger as an outside third party plays a pivotal part in the way the western subject is plotted, governed, into the modern age. Following Foucault towards his idea of governmentality, we then move towards Bakhtin and how his ‘anticipated interlocutor’ is pivotal to a dialogic understanding of responsibility: responsibility as answerability. In short, the anticipated interlocutor is embedded in the addressive nature of the language in which we are immersed, and the presence of this anticipation in various shapes and sizes within our utterances may tell us how receptive we are to the unfinalizable other; be it societal strangers, others around us, or the others we sense from within us. The point of all this is to argue two things: methodologically, we should pay close attention to utterances as they may reveal anticipated interlocution by third parties addressed parallel in conversation with real life others. And, theoretically, the presence of a third party or super addressee may contribute to an understanding of the sense of answerability as it unfolds, not only in dialogue, but more so in the absence of dialogue between stakeholders, in this case between the two regimes of criminal justice and mental health care.

6.1 Prisoners of the passage being patient

In the beginning of his *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* (Foucault, 2001/1967), Michel Foucault describes how an allegory called the Ship of Fools came into fashion between the end of the Middle Ages and early Renaissance, when madness and the madman became major figures as they symbolized a great social unrest, a fear of the ambiguity and upheaval of changing times. The allegory entails a story of a ship, “whose crew of imaginary heroes, ethical models, or social types embarked on a great symbolic voyage which would bring them, if not fortune, then at least the figure of their destiny or their truth” (Foucault, 2001/1967, p. 11). Foucault suggested that of these imaginary ships of fools, there seem to be one kind that has its tangible existence registered in historical archives: *Narrenschiff* that conveyed their ‘insane’ cargo from town to town, up and down the Rhine. Foucault described that in this era madmen led a wandering existence, not yet confined to the General Hospitals that were to be built soon. He suggested that, alongside the symbolic connotation of the *Narrenschiff*, there was a practical reason for some cities, apparently overpopulated with madmen, to hand these over to boatmen. So, it came to be that groups of madmen were shipped from one town to the next, always on the move, as passengers *par excellence*:

> The madman’s voyage is at once a rigorous division and an absolute Passage. In one sense, it simply develops, across a half-real, half-imaginary geography, the madman’s *liminal* position on the horizon of medieval concern – a position symbolized and made real at the same time by the madman’s privilege of being *confined* within the city gates; his exclusion must enclose him; if he cannot and must not have another *prison* than the *threshold* itself, he is kept at the point of passage. A highly symbolic position, which will doubtless remain his until our own day, if we are willing to admit that what was formerly a visible fortress of order now has become the castle of our conscience. (Foucault, 2001/1967, pp. 8–9, italics in original)

In his 1973, “Foucault decoded – Notes from Underground,” Hayden White (known for his claim that the discourse on history is marked by ideological emplotment) elaborated how Foucault traced the history of madness into modernity to reveal:

> no consistent progress in the theoretical conceptualization of it as an illness, that, on the contrary, the history of the treatment of the insane revealed a consistent tendency to project very general social preconceptions and anxieties into theoretical systems which justified the confinement of whatever social group or personality type appeared to threaten society during a particular period. (p. 39)

Medicine, and psychiatry in particular, was not a science, according to Foucault, but was entangled with societal forces more so than with understanding the needs of the patient, marked by a refusal to listen to the patient, a refusal that was challenged by Freud.

The clinic and hospital were microcosms of the attitudes toward man prevailing in the macrocosmic world of society in general. As thus envisaged, medicine was more a political than a scientific discipline; and this was especially the case in that branch of medicine purporting to deal with the mentally ill, for here the prejudices which informed the maltreatment of any social deviant were reflected in all their brutality, incomprehension, and lack of scientific knowledge. It is within the context of considerations such as these that Foucault assessed the importance of Freud for Western cultural history. Freud’s revolution – which represents a third shift in our attitude toward the insane – consisted of nothing more than a willingness to listen to the mentally ill, to try to grasp the nature of madness from within the experience of the insane themselves, and to use their perspective on the world for

---

22 I presented a previous version of this chapter (besides the parts described in a previous footnote) at the aforementioned 8th Annual Liverpool Symposium on Current Developments in Ethnographic Research in the Social and Management Sciences of 2013 in Amsterdam, The Netherlands and at the 15th International Bakhtin conference of 2014 in Stockholm, Sweden.
In another study of Foucault (1977), *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, he illustrated how the image of another kind of societal outsider came into being in early modernity: the delinquent. Foucault argued that the discursive development of the delinquent was intricately bound to that of the madman. He described how the contemporary concept of the delinquent, like that of the madman and the asylum, is a historical production enveloped in the establishment of the prison or, more precisely, in the institutionalization of disciplinary practices and their techniques as part and parcel of an increasing social stratification. Crucially, the delinquent is someone who is less defined by her particular offenses than by her life as offender. Yet as dangerous as one delinquent may become toward any given individual, she poses no threat to the civil-state order and is indeed a functional element in that order (in accordance with the ‘personal safety state’ of Zygmunt Bauman (2006). Foucault (1977) elaborated how, in the nineteenth century, the perception of delinquents “as close by, everywhere present and everywhere to be feared...a perpetual threat to everyday life, but extremely distant in its origin and motives” (p. 286), was normalized in sociopolitical discourse – a definition which nowadays induce another image of societal stranger.

Drawing closer to the nexus of criminology and psychiatry, in “About the Concept of the ‘Dangerous Individual’ in 19th-century Legal Psychiatry,” one of the few journal articles of Foucault (1978), he traced how, next to the crime and the penalty, the criminal as a person became a third element in the historical development of legal justice practice. Foucault (1978) warned us against the “psychiatrization of criminal danger” (p. 3), and the horrifying society to emerge when the law authorizes “to intervene against individuals because of what they are” (p. 18). Punishment, such as:

imprisonment, forced labor, constant surveillance, partial or total isolation, moral reform – all this implies that punishment bears on the criminal himself rather than on the crime, that is on what makes him a criminal, on his reasons, his motives, his inner will. (Foucault, 1978, p. 9)

Nevertheless, we are witness to exactly this trend, according to Foucault, who turned his attention to a 1975 criminal court case: a trial of a man accused of multiple rapes. Of particular interest to Foucault is the silence of the accused and the intolerance of the court against that silence, compelling the suspect to speak up and be answerable for his actions, in effect to answer the question of who one really is: “Beyond admission, there must be confession, self-examination, explanation of oneself, revelation of what one is. The penal machine can no longer function simply with a law, a violation and a responsible party” (Foucault, 1978, p. 2). In his analysis of another case, of the kidnapping and murder

of a child, Foucault furthered the argument that the suspect must be known as a person, as a being answerable in order to be responsible and to be condemned.

In his plea, which was directed against the death penalty more than in favor of the accused, the lawyer stressed the point that very little was known about him, and that the nature of the man had only barely been glimpsed at in the interrogations and in the psychiatric examinations. And he made this amazing remark (I quote approximately): “Can one condemn to death a person one does not know?” This is probably no more than one illustration of a well-known fact, which could be called the law of the third element, or the Garofalo principle, since Garofalo was the one who formulated it with complete clarity: “Criminal law knew only two terms, the offense and the penalty. The new criminology recognizes three, the crime, the criminal and the means of repression.” In large part, the evolution, if not of the penal systems, at least of the day to day penal practice in many countries, is determined by the gradual emergence in the course of the 19th century of this additional character. At first a pale phantom, used to adjust the penalty determined by the judge for the crime, this character becomes gradually more substantial, more solid and more real, until finally it is the crime which seems nothing but a shadow hovering about the criminal, a shadow which must be drawn aside in order to reveal the only thing which is now of importance, the criminal. (Foucault, 1978, p. 2)

The ability to answer for oneself and to draw up an intelligible story is anticipated to such an extent, that if a suspect fails to compose herself in this way and refrains from answering for herself, then the trial, and increasingly the machinery of criminal justice in general, comes to a halt. The absence of the possibility of interlocation with the suspect leads to the moment when “justice will then agree that it cannot proceed with the case since the subject is insane and will commit him to psychiatric confinement (Foucault, 1978, p. 10). It is then, in this ‘unexplained’ crime, that the discipline of psychiatry is drawn in so we may still make sense without in effect having to enter into dialogue with a suspect unable or unwilling to provide any motive or leanings: “…if one has nothing more than the crime on one hand and the author on the other, pure and simple judicial responsibility formally authorizes punishment, yet does not allow one to make sense of it” (Foucault, 1978, p. 9). What I seem to want to be getting at, is that Foucault explained how in criminal courts a suspect is more clearly “punishable” when that suspect is able and willing to answer for his or her actions, to be answerable not so much for the crime itself but for being that person explaining his or her story about the crime as it unfolded: “In order to punish, one needs to know the nature of the guilty person, his obduracy, the degree of his evilness, what his interests or his leanings are” (Foucault, 1978, p. 9). The (legal) responsibility of the suspect, the author, is related to the ‘psychological validity’ of her story, in other words, the one on trial is deemed more punishable when her story is not one of crisis or irrationality but a story that in a psychological way makes perfect sense to us.
A paradox, then: the legal freedom of a subject is proven by the fact that his act is seen to be necessary, determined; his lack of responsibility proven by the fact that his act is seen to be unnecessary. With this untenable paradox of monomania and of the monstrous act, psychiatry and penal justice entered a phase of uncertainty from which we have yet to emerge; the play between penal responsibility and psychological determinism has become the cross of legal and medical thought. (Foucault, 1978, p. 11)

This intertwining has grown into a "psychiatric and criminological continuum" in which psychiatry does not only concern itself with the inexplicable crime, but where the whole of legal theory of responsibility has been permeated with the analysis of conduct and emotion, an "infinite labyrinth in which the legal and psychiatric problem of crime found itself" (Foucault, 1978, p. 12), where the judicial notion of responsibility makes way for the level of danger to society one appears to pose, “Moreover, it meant noting that the accused whom the law recognized as not responsible because he was ill, insane, a victim of irresistible impulses, was precisely the most seriously and immediately dangerous” (Foucault, 1978, p. 13). The changing sense of responsibility in criminal law was accompanied with a similar change of the concept in civil law, according to Foucault. From the nineteenth century and the age of industrialization onward, two major elements in this sense of legal responsibility emerged: risk incurred by third parties (e.g., innocent bystanders) and the fact that the culprit often only made a minor error (e.g., not paying attention) and was regarded at fault in the sense of carrying the load of possible consequences. Part of the solution was the idea that risks could never be eradicated but should be minimized:

By eliminating the element of fault within the system of liability, the civil legislators introduced into law the notion of causal probability and of risk, and they brought forward the idea of a sanction whose function would be to defend, to protect, to exert pressure on inevitable risks. In a rather strange way, this depenalization of civil liability would constitute a model for penal law. Just as one can determine civil liability without establishing fault, but solely by estimating the risk created and against which it is necessary to build up a defense (although it can never be eliminated), in the same way, one can render an individual responsible under law without having to determine whether he was acting freely and therefore whether there was fault, but rather by linking the act committed to the risk of criminality which his very personality constitutes. The purpose of the sanction will therefore not be to punish a legal subject who has voluntarily broken the law; its role will be to reduce as much as possible – either by elimination, or by exclusion or by various restrictions, or by therapeutic measures – the risk of criminality represented by the individual in question. (Foucault, 1978, p. 16)

In sum, Foucault traced several epochs wherein the discursive construction of the third party indicates larger schemes of western societal development. While detaining the ‘madman’ at the point of passage, a prisoner of the threshold, maintains its relevance to this day, an intertwining of two societal strangers, the psychiatric patient and the delinquent, increasingly came to dominate criminological thought. Psychiatry, less a discipline of listening than one of classification, came to fulfill a pivotal role in the workings of the justice system geared towards holding its suspects answerable. If no sensible, relatable explanation could be gathered from the one answering for the crime, then psychiatric classification could at least provide for an answer the patient could not or would not. Following developments in civil law, the third figure of the patient/delinquent, then, was to be reframed into a discourse of risk to other third parties involved: punishment for a particular crime was remodeled into minimizing the risk a particular prisoner of the passage embodied. On the doorstep of the twenty-first century, this epistemic intertwining between the madman and the delinquent is further institutionalized by the organizational crossing-over of the regimes of criminal justice and mental health care, with forensic ACT a case in point. Morrissey and Meyer (2005) suggested that in the case of the United States, for instance:

Jails have clearly supplanted state hospitals as the main revolving door for the most disabled people in the public mental health system. The growing recognition of this situation has led a number of programs around the country to develop specialized ACT teams that shift the focus from just preventing hospitalization to preventing jail detention and recidivism for persons with severe mental illness who are involved in the justice system. The name “forensic ACT” or FACT is the emerging designation for these hybrid teams. (p. 532)

Set against this grand narrative of mental health care and criminal justice intertwining, we may be able to discern a diminishing epistemic divide between the madman and the delinquent in the small stories of daily work life: where the Narrenschiff may regain some of its original meaning, large and small. An all too obvious interpretation is that we have forensic ACT teams navigating their ‘prisoners of the passage’ through the murky waters of public services, perpetually confined inside and outside. In the ambiguity and upheaval of these changing times, a time of “verwarde personen” (confused persons, ‘verward’ also translatable as entangled, messy, disordered, rambling, and so on), as articulated first in law enforcement discourse and becoming a more common denominator of the non-norm, the sociopolitical question of who is or should be responsible for managing the patient/delinquent is directed toward teams in this hybrid domain. Below, we again take this seemingly extreme case of the patient/delinquent, to pursue a little less obvious take on the Ship of Fools: to what extent the contemporary worker might be a prisoner of the passage herself, confined by another type of arrangement that makes her answer an internally persuasive discourse that simultaneously impairs her active receptivity toward the otherness of the other. On how the forensic ACT practitioner, concerned with both
the ‘real’ third party of the life of the patient/delinquent and with the lives of those around her, becomes entangled in both the sectoral threshold between criminal justice and mental health, and in an internal dialogue with anticipated third parties about what plot needs to unfold vis-à-vis what one should answer for, from one person to the other.

6.2 The polyphonic kybernetes

Taking care for and against the figure of the patient/delinquent is not without its organizational complexities: chaos, crises and calamities abound; centrifugal forces that refract the attention of team members daily, necessitating large amounts of interpretative labor to plot a commonsensical course. A plot is the patterning of characters, objects and such that make up an accountable sequence of events, the backbone of a story, while a plot device is anything in a story that serves to advance the plot, that helps answer the ongoing question in forensic ACT, and organizing more broadly: ‘What’s the story?’ (see also Weick et al., 2005; Latour, 2013). Counteracting this centrifugal mania is a melancholy (lingering on a single subject, as Foucault, 2001/1967, explained) of organizational devices, like: procedures, protocols and plans; measuring tools; diagnostic and risk assessment instruments; meetings; job descriptions; and so on. These devices do much to ground individual work experiences into a shared past and a common sense of immediate and future consequence. Helping in the everyday sensemaking of both the expected and the unforeseen, these organizational devices have an influence on matters of responsibility, to such an extent that “they are deeply consequential for the lived activities of those of us who organize our actions in their terms” (Suchman, 2007, p. 20). Shared experience is codified by plot devices and generates rapid, regulated responses necessary to engage in our daily work life. To uphold this routine, considerable organizational effort seems to go out to the ‘housekeeping’ of plot devices (cycles of mission statements, red tape reduction, redundancies, and so on), so that work events are foreshadowed, and prefigured. The experience of the everyday work life is thus plotted into familiar rhythms (for emplotment in OM, see Conliffe & Coupland, 2012; Rhodes et al., 2010; Ricoeur, 1990). What logistic devices, devices of the plot of the ‘flow,’ have in common is that they invoke not an open-ended engagement but a codified exchange, that is either a proper (originating from proprius: to take as one’s own) or a foiling fit of character of the patient/delinquent. To be allowed lock passage to services means to not enter into open-ended dialogue but to subject oneself to the helmsman’s course: to be tailored and identified as a finalized character in the (inter-) organizational placement plot. As Foucault (1988) stated long ago about the historical development of mental disease science, it is “only of the order of observation and classification. It would not be a dialogue” (p. 238). Placement logistics thus operates precisely on the idea that “man is a final and defined quantity upon which firm calculations can be made; a character in the mouths of others, not directed to him dialogically and therefore a second-hand truth” (Bakhtin, 1984b, p. 59). In the discourse of interorganizational logistics, patients are supposed to be classified into codified cases by gatekeeping devices, rather than being persons who are addressed as such and who may hold their interlocutors answerable.

As I have argued earlier, what makes forensic ACT, and all forensic care for that matter, particular is how it is organized, itself and in connection with other stakeholders, on the threshold between the criminal justice domain (police, parole, penitentiary, criminal court, etc.) and the non-criminal justice domains (health care, welfare, housing, etc.). Different logics, regimes, or genres one might add, reign in these domains, each with their own criteria on what constitutes factuality, relevance, agency, normality and breaches thereof. This betwixt and between becomes tangible, urgent, when patients are deemed to be on the brink of causing danger to others, but not yet quite so clearly as to instigate immediate, decisive action. In the below excerpts, taken from several team meetings, team members discuss the threshold between the two regimes. They deliberate toward which regime they should steer particular patients: the prolonged imprisonment of SID (‘inrichting stelselmatige daders’: institution for habitual offenders) in the criminal justice system, or the compulsory admission (discussed in the previous chapter) via an ‘RM’ (rechterlijke machtiging: court order) within the health care domain. The borderline between regimes becomes a contested threshold for the involved organizations and their members. As described in the previous chapter, the compulsory admission by court order (RM) is a procedure in the Netherlands that enables a person to be admitted to a psychiatric hospital without his or her consent. SID is a long-term sentencing measure (max. 2 years) for persistent (petty) offenders, established in 2004 within the criminal justice domain (Goderie et al., 2006). The SID-measure focuses on the reduction of recidivism by both prolonged imprisonment in a state penitentiary and a resocialization program. Meant as an ultimate remedy; there are strict eligibility requirements and formal procedures for a judge to ultimately have it enacted. Below we see a deliberation where both regimes are considered in light of each other.

Ken: Mr. G.? O dear, Mr. G.
Ed: Yeah, good question. But he’ll be back shortly. SID. There’s a meeting with parole officer X today.
Uriah: He was eligible for SID, right? [...] Let’s see what’s the fastest way.
Steve: Yes, well, it’s just that, where he’ll be most, uh, yeah, a RM is going to be difficult, you know, as to where we are going to have him admitted then...
Ed: Well, they’ll make the request to handle it as an emergency RM, as I understood it.
Uriah: For forensic clinic X?
Steve: Yes, but they won’t just have him admitted there before we tried admitting him at addiction clinic X, yeah...
Ken: Forensic clinic X, that’s a real forensic clinic where you need to be convicted before you may be admitted, that’s no voluntary admission.
Steve: Well, it’s not a voluntary admission, but one with an RM.
Ken: Hey, Mr. G.’s case is a quite the pain in the neck, isn’t it? (day 1, 24 Sep. 2012)
In the above excerpt, team members are exploring the options available to have Mr. G. admitted. Several logistic aspects come into play, such as the ISD eligibility, it being an emergency case, having a conviction that enables admission, and the RM. They prefer Mr. G. to be admitted to a forensic clinic but face the requirement of first having him admitted to a (less secure) addiction clinic. Some concerns are voiced at the beginning and the end of the excerpt, but the conversation is mostly an exchange of logistic technicalities. The hesitant tone of Steve, however, who brings in the RM as a possible yet difficult option, foreshadows the predicament as it will be discussed at a later point. After the closing remark, the team moves on to discuss other patients, but minutes later they return to Mr. G.’s case.

Nick: So, if you want to call parole officer X for a meeting on how to proceed, Stan spoke to Mr. G.’s family to inform them that it’s the parole officer’s duty to visit.

Uriah: Yes.

Nick: You might be able to join them, to support parole officer X. It won’t be a system therapy meeting, but parole officer X will do the talking as the supervisor in charge.

Uriah: Yes, but I don’t need to be present for that.

Steve: What about, uh, because I feel that, I said that before my vacation and I’m still thinking about that, that there should be a RM/ISD meeting with that public health officer X, he was supposed to take care of that?

Nick: Yeah, that’s taken care of.

Steve: It’s taken care of? But that doesn’t mean, I think, that this is still mostly a criminal justice issue and I find it difficult that we now, and that has happened before with Mr. Z., that we, you know, that this person gets drawn into psychiatric care and that we end up being responsible. That he might attack someone in our clinic or does who-knows-what and that people say something like: “Well, how could you have put this man there in the first place!”

Nick: Yes, it’s been getting worse for him the last two weeks, since he left the penitentiary and really started using. His father is worried, everybody is worried. He was seen in town, […] Then he was taken into custody. Detained. Assessed by public health. Good, we met up with his family.

Uriah: We had his family here, I talked with them.

Steve: He’s in the special program for young frequent offenders, right? It’s just bizarre, I think.

Uriah: So yeah, we told [deleted for privacy considerations] to make a statement, because we think he should be prosecuted. Then later I got a call through Nick. He’s being released now.

Steve: And that’s while he did [deleted for privacy considerations]? Like, you know?

Nick: Yes, but there wasn’t enough evidence, to detain him any longer.

[...]

Ken: I think, I think that, I agree with you, you should really...

Steve: Yeah, I think it’s bizarre if this turns out to be an RM, actually, a bit. (day 1, 24 Sep. 2012)

Here, team members first discussed the option of accompanying the parole officer who, enacting his duty to supervise the patient, will engage in a conversation with Mr. G. and others. While Nick suggested the added value of Uriah’s presence at that meeting, Uriah rejected the idea. This is followed by Steve who contested the zone of contestation between the ISD and RM, argued against the RM path by pointing toward the potential consequences, not only in terms of endangering others, but also to be held answerable for it. He described the threat the patient might pose to others, and forecasted trouble for the team will get into vis-à-vis their colleague practitioners. Uriah, in an interview, elaborated upon the case of Mr. Z.

Look, from my perspective it’s how you frame this, you know, someone may have a disorder, and behavior can be explained by it, but sure, it’s still, yeah, menacing for the person involved. With this guy we know he thrashed someone into the hospital when he was admitted, that kind of thing really gets to people, to everybody [...] Funny thing is, I had heard of him from before I started working here […] his name came up as someone who should return to the clinic and people reacted instantly, like: “Yeah, he shouldn’t be here! How did he end up here?” I remember that it was hard for them, while they were struggling with the idea that they did not want to adhere to too many placement criteria either, thinking: we’re here for, you know, most people. […] So yeah, he really made an impact, the question is what to do in which situation, how to handle each patient, uh, it’s an occupational hazard: things become normal, you know. (interview II, 1 November 2012)

Returning to the case of Mr. G., Nick’s description shifted toward more prosaic detail, voicing the concerns of the people involved. Steve, however, shifted back toward another logistic arrangement, the program for young persistent offenders. This is a program for young persistent offenders, which was started in 2012 (a list of young delinquents drawn up by the city). The program, involving more than 40 organizations, focuses on quick police and legal action (‘fast-lane’), deploying (mental) health care where needed and preventing siblings from going down the same path. Instigated to resolve bureaucratic hindrances for resolute action, the program became a topic of its own within the zone of contestation between the criminal justice and mental health care domains. Steve expressed his incomprehension of how reality fails to comply with the purposes of the arrangements already deployed. It then becomes clear that, although the team actively intervened to have the case pass the criminal justice threshold, the ISD regime could not be enacted due to a lack of felicity conditions. Compared to the things (the details of which have been deleted for privacy considerations) Mr. G. is thought to have done, team members agreed on the bizarreness of the predicament and of the idea of an RM in particular, implying the obviousness that this is a criminal justice issue, although even
this is slightly undermined in the utterances as they are expressed (‘actually, a bit’). In the excerpt below, in the same meeting but half an hour later, the team for the second time returns to the case of Mr. G. Although returning to the same case in a single meeting is not remarkable (as a recipient may appear twice or three times on the planning schedule in different tasks), the intensity and duration of these particular episodes combined are definitely out of the ordinary.

Steve: So, there should be some kind of extended meeting with uh [overlapping voices, inaudible] because he’s in the special program for young frequent offenders, so you would think that this would enable us to do more?

Ken: There is a coordinator, do we know who he is?

Steve: Yeah, it’s public health officer X.

Uriah: Yes, but I think that’s just retarded, you have to, if WE say, and more people are saying it’s dangerous, then he should be taken into custody [loud overlapping voices, inaudible].

Nick: The coordinator was aware of the situation, he was called by the special police intervention team then.

Steve: I’m almost at that point where I would call the mayor myself, like the Minister of Justice did in Mr. O.’s case, like: “How is this possible?”

Ken: Exactly, exactly. Actually, the coordinator, his boss should have him take the initiative to arrange this and uh...

Nick: He knew he was taken into custody, arrested and he also agreed on his release, he wasn’t, we can’t detain him any longer legally speaking.

Uriah: Yeah, well, I think someone should put pressure on that guy, because it’s a REAL danger. He could just kill someone. And then we’ll be like: What else should we have done? So, you should really lay it on him, Steve, like: This just CANNOT happen.

Steve: Yes.

Ken: Okay, so who’s going to call the coordinator?

Nick: Well, I think Steve should. (day 1, 24 Sep. 2012)

In the above excerpt, discussing the characteristics of the program for young frequent offenders, a responsibility is indicated for taking the action that the team considers crucial. The intensity of how team members will take up their own course of action if this person does not act according to the urgency the team believes to be at hand, increases with the forecasting of reported speech and the tone that should be used against him. Nick and Ed emphasized the authority that they think their team should have in this matter, and that anticipated others should listen. Then the tone instantly quiets down again, when the question is raised who inside the team will take an actual step to enact what has been foreshadowed. In the following two weeks the case of Mr. G. lingers on. Team members deliberated with their stakeholders on how to proceed, in ad hoc gatherings and in themed network meetings. Eventually the provisional outcome of those deliberations is explicated in the final excerpt below.

Ed: But this guy is now so addicted and acting on impulse, it’s bound to go wrong. He’s just one misdemeanor away from ISD, which I think would actually be better and more justified. I would think it’s strange in fact to tackle this problem with an involuntary commitment, though we decided in the [Special network on young frequent offenders] meeting that, uh, because we’re able to see in advance what may happen, that we at least give it another try, to anticipate it, and that we will do, uh, that we will do that. With a bullet, this one.

Ken: Yes.

Uriah: Yes, well, not for now, but it’s kind of weird that you’re not able to act, right? It’s quite weird, I think. That it’s like waiting for a violent offense, I think that’s uh, yeah it doesn’t feel right.

Ed: Right, and considering he’s on parole, with conditional sentencing, but doesn’t comply with those conditions...

Nick: And then there’s the appeal running.

Ed: Yeah, but that’s a different procedure altogether. (day 5, 8 Oct. 2012)

Here, Ed explained that together with their stakeholders it is finally decided to have Mr. G. admitted via an RM, although he seems to portray it as the wrong route to follow, almost apologizing for it. His argument in favor of the decision is to at least give it another try and that the team is capable of foreseeing any harm that could occur. An explanation for this decision (in other data) is that the threshold to cross over to ISD is considered by other organizations (in the criminal justice domain) to be more complicated and time consuming, so the team may at times be pressured by its criminal justice partners to instigate a non-forensic court-ordered admission to get someone out of harm’s way more quickly than the ISD could. In his utterances, Ed’s use of pronouns is interesting, first legitimizing his own viewpoint before deploying a ‘we’ that refers to collaborative network, and then deploying another ‘we’ that refers to the forensic ACT team itself, himself part of both ‘we’s.’ Uriah appears to align himself with Ed’s own implicit (and earlier) disagreement, by expounding the dilemma and what that does to them (‘it doesn’t feel right’), which is then confirmed by Ed, although he refrares it as a technical matter of not fitting the proper requirements of the parole.

The question is whether the resolve to ‘responsibilize’ a forensic ACT team with a cluster of responsibilities is by any means a proper response to their wicked problems at hand. This wickedness is complex logistically in the sense that is nearly impossible to have their ‘cases’ comply with the plethora of service providers, but it is also morally ‘verward’ in the sense that they are organized into situations where strong personal appeals are made to them: under the veil of team empowerment they are ‘ployed’ into the management of their morality in such clustering of diverging responsibilities. As such, along with ten Bos and Rhodes (2003), a reflexive self-management is created on the part of the team and its members, akin to Foucault’s ‘governmentality.’ As ten Bos and Rhodes (2003) argued, organizational discourse about and by the team,
... uses the language of empowerment, loyalty and shared values...[it] is not about telling people what to do, it is about convincing people to tell themselves what the organisation would like to have the power to tell them. This does not rely on an all-seeing panoptic management to attempt to implement, instead it is the eye within the worker who becomes the agent. It suggests a divided worker—on the one hand s/he requires cultivation; on the other hand s/he becomes the agent of this cultivation...

An example of this contraption is a clause in the organization’s code of conduct, of which in late 2012 a poster was put on the door of the forensic ACT team room for everyone to take notice of (and was taken down some time later, apparently having fulfilled its purpose). A passage in the whole text of the code reads:

Employees venture to put themselves on the line, in their pursuit of tailor-made solutions, not surrendering directly to the limits that the organization seems to impose on them.

The employer thus seems to explicitly plot that its forensic ACT employees do more, than it is willing to explicate itself, and expects from them a personal stake in that effort. Ten Bos (1997, p. 1010) in a discussion on Bauman’s moral impulse, cited Green (1994, p. 147) regarding a similar code of conduct rule:

When an employee or manager of a company learns of a condition created by the company that threatens human life or health and that has been missed or neglected by others responsible for correcting it, the employee must take steps outside his or her normal area of authority to report and to try to correct the problem - even if doing so could seriously damage her or his career.

Ten Bos asked what could be wrong with such a rule, when it supports whistleblowers to follow their moral impulse even though it might be at their own expense. Yet this idea of seizing an exceptional moment of blowing the whistle of responsibility does not compare to the idea that putting yourself out there – ‘in spite of the organization’ – is the everyday work life norm, especially where one might recurrently end up harmed in situations of crisis where trusted plots, even ‘emergency plots,’ stop making sense. For the team and their practitioners, then, this amounts to a double bind ( Bateson et al., 1956, 1963; Hennestad, 1990; Tracy, 2004), materialized in individual employees, who may wake up to find themselves a site of the management of morality. Here we arrive, according to ten Bos and Willmott (2002), at the pessimist in Bauman, where totalizing forces of the organization feed upon the moral impulse itself, “redirecting or manipulating [it] rather than destroying it” (p. 778). Yet Bauman (1993) also suggested a loophole, that “the social management of morality is a complex and delicate operation which cannot but precipitate more ambivalence than it manages to eliminate” (p. 13). This hints at the optimist in Bauman, who:

contends that complete and irreversible engulfment by totality is nigh impossible. Closure by totality is always precarious and thus subject to deconstruction and dissolution. Redemption is always a possibility. People may cling to totality as it proffers them some degree of security and authority. Yet, insecurities can never be completely eliminated because “totalitarian logic” cannot adequately deal with the ego’s openness to infinity, an openness that makes possible reversals. The dedicated company man/woman may become the whistleblower; or a murderer may become a saint (ten Bos & Willmott, 2002, p. 778–779).

But what if ambivalence is not intended to be eliminated in the first place, but managed in effect to nourish and to employ, deploy it, as ten Bos and Rhodes (2003) argued? Returning to the pessimistic view, a ‘moral impulse’ is not only redirected or manipulated, rather, it is generated, constituted as a functional element in the larger order of morality management; an anchor of difference between explicit organizational compliance and the aberrant of one’s implicit yet anticipated virtue. And the practitioner who fails to dance on this smooth ice awaits not paradise but discipline and punishment.

In the excerpts of the forensic ACT team discussing patient Mr. G. above, we can observe the team estimating the level of risk, convinced that something should be done quickly to avert anyone (such as a third party) getting hurt. The team and the patient are quite literally on the threshold of two possible ways to eliminate the risk of (further) criminality, and the predicament becomes tangible exactly because the edges of both regimes grind against each other. For an ISD measure to be installed by the criminal court, a delinquent has to have committed a minimal amount of crimes, to justify the prolonged sentencing. The (emergency) compulsory admission, on the other hand, can only be court ordered if there is a causal link between the presence of danger and the presence of disorder and the conclusion that there is no other way to avert the danger than by compulsory admission. Both arrangements, or sanctions, ultimately have the same target: eliminate the danger to the third party (for as we have seen above, the danger to the patient is not eliminated when clinically admitted). And it is to this third party that the team most forcefully refers in their conversations (risk to someone in the clinic, someone on the street).

From within the criminal law – psychiatry nexus, the motive or leanings of the ‘criminally insane’ are not really of any relevance to the question of what action should be taken to minimize risk. In that plot, the patient is nothing more than a plot device himself, and the agency, the ability to steer the circumstances one way or the other, into one regime or
Part 2 | Answers?

6.3 Answerability’s anticipated others

In his Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics (1984b), Bakhtin draws our attention repeatedly to the ways in which the protagonist in Dostoevsky’s Notes from Underground (2000/1864) anticipates the response of others to what he thinks and says. For the most part, those others, and their responses, are not “real” but imagined. They nevertheless completely preoccupy the thought of the protagonist, the unnamed Underground Man, and that anticipation pervades, guides, governs his thoughts, his discourse, and his actions. Notes from Underground is a novella in two parts. The first appears to be a diary excerpt of a bitter, secluded narrator, who, in the second part called ‘Apropos of the Wet Snow,’ recounts a story of three episodes in St. Petersburg. Recurring themes in the first and second part are critiques against the influx of Western European thought in Russia, in particular against the then current ideas of both nihilism and of the utopian society (the ‘crystal palace’). In the first part, the Underground Man argues against the rationality of humankind, arguing that humanity and its individual members, in their nature, desire irrationality and chaos as well, and will go as far as to destroy themselves if only for the sake of proving logic and reason wrong. But aware of the truth of this undercurrent, the narrator feels condemned to dwell in it and contemplate, rather than to emerge to the societal surface and act upon these thoughts. In the second part, we do see the Underground Man skimming to the societal surface: in his encounters with a military man he wants to stand up to but who does not even notice him; with a group of old acquaintances who he seems to want to belong to but falls miserably at; and finally with a woman who is first drawn to his honesty and who he subsequently pushes away. As Bakhtin argued, Dostoevsky the author has drawn up a hero without outer characteristics and without a real plot which both help the hero find some stability in time and place – without a clear chronotopic grounding – being endowed with some definitions that help shape his form and thought. Instead, we have a hero who is all consciousness, drawn out in his own discourse, ‘pure voice’ (Bakhtin, 1993, p. 53), generating a hermetic flow of thought from which there is no escape and which seeks to encompass all: ‘There is literally nothing we can say about the hero of Notes from Underground that he does not already know himself [...] and he stubbornly and agonizingly soaks up all these definitions from within. Any point of view from without is rendered powerless in advance and denied the finalizing word’ (Bakhtin, 1993, p. 52). Denying the possible finalizing final word of the other is what drives the hero to anticipate that response, all possible responses, in his own discourse.

What the Underground Man thinks about most of all is what others think or might think about him; he tries to keep one step ahead of every other consciousness, every other thought about him, every other point of view on him. At all the critical moments of his confession he tries to anticipate the possible definition or evaluation others might make of him, to guess the sense and tone of that evaluation, and tries painstakingly to formulate these possible words about himself by others, interrupting his own speech with the imagined rejoinders of others. (Bakhtin, 1993, p. 52)

Ironically, the hero without predefined qualities is obsessed with both soaking up external definitions of him and proving them wrong, perpetually entangled into in internal dialogue, an “inescapable open-endedness, the vicious circle of that self-consciousness” (Bakhtin, 1993, p. 51), that pushes outward any actual person in the real world who might try to connect with him. All these ephemeral events with actual other persons become not plot but “material for his self-consciousness” (Bakhtin, 1993, p. 51). Bakhtin argued that Notes from Underground is one of Dostoevsky’s first full-blown attempts to do away with the “monologic design” of the novel, in which the “hero is closed and his semantic boundaries strictly defined: he acts, experiences, thinks, and is conscious within the limits of what he is, that is, within the limits of his images defined as reality; he cannot cease to be himself, that is, he cannot exceed the limits of his own character” (Bakhtin, 1993, p. 52). In contrast, in the way Dostoevsky developed the Underground Man, we have a hero here that seems conscious of the author’s design, knowing that all: definitions, prejudiced as well as objective, rest in his hands and he cannot finalize them precisely because he himself perceives them; he can go beyond their limits and can thus make them inadequate. He knows that he has the final word, and he seeks
at whatever cost to retain for himself this final word about himself, the word of his self-consciousness, in order to become in it that which he is not. His consciousness of self lives by its unfinalizability, by its unclosedness and its indeterminacy. (Bakhtin, 1993, p. 53)

But how do we move towards something of a firmer grasp of this anticipation? The utterance is key here, in that every utterance is addressed to some other, and within each utterance the dialogue with that anticipated other is already present: "When constructing my utterance, I try actively to determine this response. Moreover, I try to act in accordance with the response I anticipate, so this anticipated response, in turn, exerts an active influence on my utterance (I parry objections that I foresee, I make all kinds of provisos, and so forth)." (Bakhtin, 1993, p. 95). In this discourse, as Bakhtin argued, there are no mere objects, and therefore there is "no word about an object, no secondhand referential word – there is only the word as address, the word dialogically contacting another word, a word about a word addressed to a word" (Bakhtin, 1993, p. 237). Bakhtin argued that the speaker already is the listener to the response and that is "precisely what matters" (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 95). So, although an 'actual' response can be missing, the utterance can still be permeated by the influence of an addressee and her anticipated reaction.

When speaking I always take into account the apperceptive background of the addressee’s perception of my speech: the extent to which he is familiar with the situation, whether he has special knowledge of the given cultural area of communication, his views and convictions, his prejudices (from my viewpoint), his sympathies and antipathies—because all this will determine his active responsive understanding of my utterance. These considerations also determine my choice of a genre for my utterance, my choice of compositional devices, and, finally, my choice of language vehicles, that is, the style of my utterance. (Bakhtin, 1986, pp. 95–96)

This anticipated interlocution defines the discourse of the Underground Man, which is always addressed to someone, and to speak about himself means to address himself. But the hero never only speaks to one other, or only to himself:...

... while speaking with himself, with another, with the world, he simultaneously addresses a third party as well: he squints his eyes to the side, toward the listener, the witness, the judge. This simultaneous triple-directedness of his discourse and the fact that he does not acknowledge any object without addressing it is also responsible for the extraordinarily vivid, restless, agitated, and one might say, obtrusive nature of this discourse. (Bakhtin, 1993, p. 237, emphasis added)

This third party (in dialogue the speaker is the first party and the addressee is the second party) is "'a stranger, a man you'll never know'—[who] fulfills his functions in dialogue outside the plot and outside his specificity in any plot, as a pure ‘man in man,’ a representative of 'all others' for the 'I'" (Bakhtin, 1993, p. 264). Bakhtin explained how, in Dostoevsky’s The Brothers Karamazov (2005/1879–1880), the presence of this third party can completely overtake one’s thought:

We will pause on one passage where this function of "the other" as such, whoever he may be, is revealed with extraordinary clarity. The "mysterious visitor," after confessing his crime to Zosima and on the eve of his public penance, returns to Zosima at night to murder him. What guided him was a pure hatred toward “the other” as such. Here is how he depicts his condition: "I went out from you then into the darkness, I wandered about the streets, struggling with myself. And suddenly I hated you so that I could hardly bear it. Now, I thought, he is all that binds me, and he is my judge. I can’t refuse to face my punishment tomorrow, for he knows all. It was not that I was afraid you would betray me (I never even thought of that), but I thought, ‘How can I look him in the face if I don’t proclaim my crime?’ And if you had been at the other end of the earth, but alive, it would have been all the same, the thought was unendurable that you were alive knowing everything and condemning me. I hated you as though you were the cause, as though you were to blame for everything.” (SS IX, 390–391, The Brothers Karamazov, Part Two, Book Six, Ch. 2). (Bakhtin, 1993, p. 264)

On the other hand, the complete absence of the third party in dialogue is unbearable too, as Bakhtin argued, referring to Thomas Mann’s (1948/1947) work Doctor Faustus. In Mann’s story the devil explains,

That is the secret delight and security of hell, that it cannot be denounced, that it lies hidden from language, that it simply is...which is why the words “subterranean,” “cellar,” “thick walls,” “soundlessness,” “oblivion,” “hopelessness,” are but weak symbols...“here all things cease,” every mercy; every grace; every forbearance, every last trace of consideration for the beseeching, unbelieving objection: “You cannot, you really cannot do that with a soul” – but it is done, it happens, and without a word of accountability, in the sound-tight cellar, deep below God’s hearing, and indeed for all eternity. (Mann, 1948/1947, pp. 260–261)

Bakhtin noted that Mann had the fascist torture chambers in mind describing such a hell (the goal of torture, then, may not be to force someone to speak; it is to enforce the idea that the unspeakable is happening without anyone, not even a third party such as God, listening). In between these two limits (the near absolute presence or absence of the third party), every utterance carries within itself another particular third addressee, one with an ideal responsive understanding ("God, absolute truth, the court of dispassionate human conscience, the people, the court of history, science, and so forth," Bakhtin, 1986,
of an internally persuasive discourse is not finite; it is open; in each of the new contexts that dialogize it, this discourse is able to reveal ever newer ways to mean (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 346, emphasis in original).

Internally persuasive and authoritative discourse may be fused into a single discourse but this unity is very rare according to Bakhtin, who stressed the sharp gap that exists mostly between these two discourses and the struggles between them, which shape one’s (moral) consciousness. We may compare this struggle between these two discourses with the rules-based (compliance, and failure to comply with that authority) and the moral impulse (to do what feels right, and inversely, to betray yourself and your integrity if you do not) distinction. A predicament hard to resist, and the forensic ACT practitioner, then, may end up remaining a prisoner of the passage, and becomes in this plotted threshold between compliance and moral impulse, something like a divided self (Bochner, 1997; Laing, 1960).

In the following, I will deploy the genre in which Notes from Underground (a diatribe: “a conversation with an absent interlocutor,” Bakhtin, 1993, p. 154) was written, the Menippean satire. This ‘inside-out’ discourse allows a more dialogical inquiry into answerability, and the genre was “able to wield such immense influence – to this day almost entirely unappreciated in scholarship – in the history of the development of European novelistic prose” (Bakhtin, 1993, p. 119). The Menippean satire allows for a writing that “seeks to offer an escape from boundaries as well as being illusive, playful, seductive and fluid” (Phillips et al., 2014, p. 12). Weinbrot (2005) described the promise of the Menippea more dramatically:

One could set the dead against the recent living, the ancient against the modern, nation against nation, man against woman, cleric against courtier, and always seek to find or exploit a truth hidden in the world of warm flesh and hot blood. (pp. 66–67)

Moreover, as Sullivan and McCarthy (2005, p. 633) argued, “the advantage of the Menippean design is that it interrogates the participants, encourages them to hear their own characterization, and invites them to respond...it emphasizes the potential to be different through dialogue with the other.” In other words, a Menippean satire discloses an unrestrained space to play with different ideas, and flesh out felt truths and urgent problems, in the face of convention and self-evidence. What writing in the genre of Menippean satire does, according to Weinbrot, is to oppose a threatening, false orthodoxy by mocking attitudes that have become normal. It is “a genre for serious people who see serious trouble and want to do something about it” (Weinbrot, 2005, p. 63).

In Menippean texts, hyperboles and other devices are used to expose these attitudes, and different styles and multiple voices are adapted to unhinge the seeming univocity of discourse. It is here that I, as a searching author, a ‘needy self’ (Sullivan, 2011), try
to prod into an autoethnographic story of anticipated interlocution, paraphrasing the Underground Woman more than once.

6.4 What is to be done?

At that time I was only 24-years old. I had been a civil servant at the Ministry of Health. There, in the office, I tried to fit in, but I noticed that my colleagues not only considered me unusual, but – as I also kept thinking – seemed to look at me with a certain repugnance. There was one in our office who had a preposterous teddy bear tie. Another seemed to make a daytime job out of Solitaire, more than anything else. I would not even have dared to glimpse at anyone, but neither of these men was embarrassed – either with regard to his clothes, or somehow morally. And even if they had imagined that, it would have been the same to them, so long as their managers did not dare to pay heed. I know now that it was I who, owing to my endless vanity and self-demanding, repeatedly looked upon myself with furious disappointment and, consequently, attributed my view to everyone else. Of course, all I ever wanted was to be so confident as to wear a teddy bear tie, but I would settle with at least an amazing intellect, if you will. All these colleagues I reviled and feared concurrently, always the one to drop my eyes first, which plagued me further: “I never have been a coward at heart, though I have always been a coward in action,” or so the saying goes (Dostoevsky, 2000/1864, p. 51). So finally I changed jobs and moved to another Ministry, a move which would amount to a fiasco as well which I realized on my first workday there, but which I managed to stretch out to an unnoted drama of two years, shrinking more into my corner as yet another pale shadow from a pen-pusher family tradition.

Well, by all means, I remained so, washing up into the role of manager at a mental health care provider. In the second year I came to work here, I started this part-time doctoral study into the workings of the forensic ACT team at hand. From the moment I heard of the existence of this team, I could not wait to find how this nexus between health care and criminal justice was played out in everyday practice. But in the daily planning meeting that morning, on my very first day of fieldwork, I became daunted quickly by stories of absorbing verbal abuse and even threats of physical violence, and by the light-hearted way the practitioners discussed them. When the meeting came to an end, a nurse, whom I will call Cindy, agreed I could accompany her on a visit to a patient’s house. On our way there, I asked Cindy about her experience doing this kind of work, and she told me how exciting and diverse it was. She said it felt like the right thing to do, providing care to vulnerable people who were in real need of it. However, Cindy continued, being deployed to sometimes volatile home circumstances meant that she had to be constantly on guard: not knowing what those circumstances were until the door was shut behind her. As we drew near to the house, I asked Cindy about the patient. I remember she responded by describing him as quite an imposing figure. On approaching his front door, I nervously asked her how I should behave. She smiled, and I recall her saying...

Cindy: It’s no big deal, but he’s is a bit wary of meeting strangers, especially men he’s not familiar with. But it’s going to be fine. (day 1, 24 Sep. 2012)

I managed to clear my throat for one final question: “Okay...is there anything in particular I should avoid?” To this, her unstirred reply was:

Cindy: Nah, just act naturally.

But the sense of ‘acting naturally’ had already abandoned me. I became painfully aware of not having acted naturally from the moment I stepped into that team meeting, conscious of my foolish awkwardness. And as far as I could tell, me acting naturally in the eyes of this patient amounted to being a bearded stranger: the one thing that would set him alight. As I tried to recompose myself, Cindy rang the door. We waited for the door to open...

Only in hindsight did it come to me that I had not written about this event previously. It was as if I had never answered for what occurred that day, after I departed: for what I did and what I did not do. It is only just now, on my final passage toward academic scholarship, that I am beginning to answer: not just for what happened then, but more so for where I came to find myself afterward. In an attempt to understand responsibility in the wicked problems of the forensic ACT team and follow through the consequence of tracing the significance of anticipated others in answerability. Nothing really happened when we were waiting at the door. I am sure nothing happened, but I still remember wondering whether Cindy had played me for a fool, to give me a little scare (‘surely a managerial clerk knows nothing about practice!’). Or maybe it was only her response to ‘just act naturally’ that kept nagging. What did she mean, really? I should have asked her. But I left the whole incident behind me. I later decided my thesis would be a theoretical piece on responsibility with just an illustrative case study, instead of an ethnography. This led me to focus on non-participatory observations of team meeting discussions. Yes, meetings that were conveniently situated in my own natural office room habitat. You might say – as I am sure you would – that this is a turn away from those monumental in-depth studies such as Watson’s (1994) and Jackall’s (1988). Unable to touch upon the tangible work life of these practitioners, in my circumscriptions I turn my approach to the inquiry upside down: ‘Instead of bringing possible knowledge into the context of our actual life from where it is made answerable, we attempt to bring our actual life into account of a possible, theoretical context’ (Bakhtin, 1993, pp. 50–51). A world made up with stuff like ‘unfamiliarizability,’ ‘chronotopes,’ ‘functionalist technocracy,’ no less... A world so detached it does not matter if I or anyone else would actually exist. You might say I did not experience anything happening in front of that door, because I was too busy attempting not to live the moment, a move similar to the non-participatory observation...
of the team meetings afterward. Present yet not present at these team meetings, I was in awe of the practitioners and concurrently conflicted about being different, not belonging, remaining disconnected and targeting my answerability toward larger wholes instead of manifesting in shared moments. It is what it is.

I know I have already mentioned that I was always somewhat of an awkward outsider, be it in management, team practice or scientific community. It would have eased my mind to be an insider: to live the rituals and think the thoughts that come with that whole. To be a humble servant, you might say, and write like I am supposed to. Like you suppose me to write, like you feel entitled to have me write in a particular way, turn me into the imposter you have long sensed I am. Well, who reads nowadays, anyway...And the patient, you ask? Did he even have a name? An absent other completely finalized to the point of a grotesque caricature in my account. To be sure, he is only described in the words of you.

One of the things I didn’t really grasp is whether you were having fun with me, testing me, by telling me that ‘it’s going to be fine’ and asking me to ‘just act naturally.’

Before I turn towards her answer, I remembered that aesthetic writing is what we love to do, be it beautiful, clear, truthful, neutral, (dis)passionate, and so on. We could have endless debates on what it properly should entail, and, in fact, we do so. But the aesthetic, for Bakhtin, and for our purposes here, is something more than a reflection on these attributes. According to Haynes (2013),

The uniqueness of Bakhtin's approach to aesthetics is that it is based not on traditional aesthetic values such as truth, goodness, or beauty, but on the phenomenology of self–other relations, relations that are embodied – in actual bodies – in time and space. (p. 18)

Haynes observes how Bakhtin (1990), in “Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity,” describes aesthetic activity as a composition of three moments: projecting the self, returning to one's singular place, and consummating (making whole) the other. Now, all three moments are relevant to our discussion. The moment of consummating the other is relevant, in that the writer has a responsibility to give shape and unity to her characters: “the author knows and sees more not only in the direction in which the hero is looking and seeing, but also in a different direction, in a direction which is in principle inaccessible to the hero himself” (Bakhtin, 1990, p. 13). But the author who refuses to return to her own unique place and endeavors to empathize wholly, loses herself in ‘aestheticizing’ her answerability, and her world becomes a set of roles and plays. In doing so, she aspires to live her (academic) life as if it were a story with herself as the protagonist, and forgets she is answerable for the role she plays – as the one playing outside that role – and not as “the one represented, i.e. the hero” (Bakhtin, 1993, p. 18). But surely this is no concern to you, and these detached musings seem no more than needless procrastination. As to Cindy’s response...

Cindy: No, no I wasn’t. You know, what’s difficult about these patients is that they have such a history. I didn’t want to go through that whole history with you because it might give you preconceptions that would lead to fear or prejudice and make you engage with him differently. And of course, if you don’t have a practitioner's background, it’s important for you to go with an experienced professional who can read the subtle cues and think on the spot: “the patient is becoming uneasy, let’s take a step back.” That’s just how the interaction together should unfold, although it isn’t always that obvious, of course. I thought: it’s your first day on the road, if I described everything beforehand, you’d already have a judgment about the patient, and I was also curious to see – I wanted you to just experience it, what we were about, what we usually do. But he wasn’t there. That was a conscious decision, to first see the patient and to ask you afterwards about your experience. But there was

I met Cindy soon after at her new workplace, an acute psychiatric unit. We found a place near the coffee machine and the instant soup boxes and began to talk. After a little while I had her read the story I had written down about this event.

Cindy: It’s funny that you wrote your thoughts like that... [smiles while reading] Yeah, that was some patient, for sure...[reads] Oh how nice, I’m a ‘Cindy’! [Laughs]...‘But it’s going to be fine’ [laughing]...Yeah, what is that, ‘just act naturally’?...[It’s pretty funny, actually.]” (interview IV, 16 Apr. 2015)

She smiled when she read my text. I finally asked her what had been on my mind all the time.

>>> [Cindy] 26-03-2015 10:20 >>>
Hi Chris,
It’s a long time ago and I can still remember that situation and you ;-) A visit to Westside [deleted for privacy considerations] Had he been standing on the balcony, refusing to open the door?
It’s nice to hear that you’re still doing research here. It would be nice to meet and talk about the text for your paper.
best,  
[Cindy]
no debriefing since the patient was absent. I wasn’t aware of this [points toward my text] at the time... That may also be how I do things: I like to have people just experience, you know? Maybe I have a certain playfulness: just let it happen and see how it affects you, and then afterwards we share experiences and compare them with the electronic patient record... I had the confidence that I would be able to read the patient because I knew him – and that’s a risk in itself. So yeah, it is trust, the fact is that you really had to have confidence in me. (Interview IV, 16 Apr. 2015)

Maybe it was a mistake to begin writing about that event, or the mistake was to impose my text and put her on the spot and invite, force a response out of her. What could she have said, anyway? I promised to send her the final text, and I did when it was published in a journal not long ago. I am sure that she must have looked over my email somehow, or forgot to read it, or forgot to give me a response. Maybe, in the end, she did not like what she read. Surely, compared to the turbulence and meaningfulness of her daily work, this must have been of no significance in any case. Even now, all this comes out not too well in my recollection; it feels like corrective punishment of this spite in the underground. We seem to have grown unaccustomed to living life, it feels like a service, so inferior to the mediated lives we are fed with. Maybe I should be saying ‘I instead of ‘we,’ being called an imposter, an amateur, a bungler, myself. But I am done with writing now. However, my notes do not end here, being the kind of person unable to abdicate, and resolve...An inconclusive end, for now.

6.5 ‘The court of dispassionate human conscience’

As to the purposes of the half-baked murmuring above, an attempt was made to illustrate the dead ends of academic inquiry when internal dialogue with anticipated others dominates. If "a continuous living process of questioning, discussing, creating, generating and regenerating meaning...in a continuous movement forward to a future of ever-broadening and deepening horizons, is the radical and fundamental essence of Bakhtin’s thought" (Simons, 1988, p. 22), then it should be added that this ‘essence’ cannot be drawn into a single coherent consciousness. Well, this is basically what Cindy told me. The genre of the Menippean satire, as a vessel for those who seek to challenge the orthodoxies of our practices and communities, may ‘remind us that nightmares occur while we are awake, and that sleep is not an acceptable alternative to moral responsibility’ (Weinbrot, 2005, p. 392). Science, too, has its ways to do away with the third addressee. The ongoing dialogic struggle appears to be absent when this third party is identified as the “objective position” as such, with the position of some ‘scientific cognition’ (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 143). But Bakhtin warns us against this move, which fragments the whole utterance and our understanding of it.

The position of the third party is quite justified when one person can assume another’s position, when a person is completely replaceable [cf. Levinas’ primal disrespect, 1961, p. 298]. But it is justified only in those situations, and when solving those problems, where the integral and unrepeatable individuality of the person is not required, that is, when a person, so to speak, is specialized, reflecting only a part of his individuality that is detached from the whole, when he is acting not as I myself, but “as an engineer,” “as a physicist,” and so forth. In the area of abstract scientific cognition and abstract thought, such a replacement of one person with another, that is, abstraction from the I and thou, is possible (but even here, probably, only up to a certain point). In life as the object of thought (abstract thought), man in general exists and a third party exists, but in the most vital, experienced life only I, thou, and he exist. And only in this life are such primary realities as my word and the other’s word disclosed (exist). And in general those primary realities that have not yet been the subjects of cognition (abstract, generalizing) therefore go unnoticed by it. (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 144)

We started this chapter with a third and final everyday wicked problem of our forensic ACT team: what is to be done with our prisoners of the passage, how do practitioners navigate them along logistic devices, themselves edges of regimes of societal othering the ‘man-in-man,’ plotting themselves into threshold situations where they come to answer a multiplicity of possible others, actual and anticipated. Crucially, the team excerpts above address not so much the responsibility for the patient or for team colleagues, but are meant to indicate dialogues which are addressed, sideways, to third parties involved. That third party may be a practitioner of another organization or, more broadly, society at large, either directly as a proximate fragment of the public in harm’s way or, more conceptually, as the general public body having a say; a verdict, a stake, in the (in)action that the team members deliberate. On the crossing of the mental health care court order and the criminal justice habitual offender procedure, the team of practitioners itself is drawn into a wicked problem they need to answer for, responsible for actions without the right to be wrong in their consequences (Rittel & Webber, 1973). Pivotal in coping with these predicaments is the presence of team dialogue itself, such as it unfolds in the daily planning meetings. An active receptivity towards the thoughts of responsive colleagues may facilitate the worrying practitioner to disclose a hermetic internal dialogue with anticipated others. And to come to a sense of closure from within the internally persuasive discourse that continually finds new ways to mean, amidst the ambivalence and ambiguity that these practitioners are organized into.

A failure to move beyond regarding the other as a subject of cognition amounts to what Morson and Emerson (1990) have suggested that Bakhtin might have called “psychological otherlessness”: a refusal to risk genuine encounters with others (p. 188). Resonating Churchman, Levinas suggested a loophole that may denaturalize the thought of the navel-staring academic, “seeing the possibilities of the other as your own possibilities.
of being able to escape the closure of your own identity and what is bestowed on you, toward something which is not bestowed on you and which nevertheless is yours – this is paternity (sic). This future beyond my own being, this dimension constitutive of time, takes on a concrete content in paternity” (Levinas & Nemo, 1985, p. 70). And so, quite literally, I came to stop and talk with my then nine-year-old daughter about responsibility, for she, as a child, seems to understand the core concepts in life in a more practical and everyday sense, less detached one might say, than I do. I asked her what she thought of the people working in the forensic ACT team.

Olivia: Yes, I think they're brave. And really nice. That they want to help people. And uh... put themselves on the line for someone who does something bad or something bad to them and that they go on anyway.

Chris: Yes. And do you think they are...uh, responsible?

Olivia: What do you mean?

Chris: That they, you know what responsibility is, yes you know what responsibility is, right?

Olivia: Yes, but...

Chris: That you want to take care for another person for example, to take care something good happens and not something bad.

Olivia: Well, not exactly, but they should act if it gets worse, of course.

Chris: Yes, then they take that responsibility, right? Do you think they have a responsibility for a neighbor [of a patient], for example?

Olivia: Not really.

Chris: But a bit?

Olivia: A little bit, yes. Because if you solve the problems of this patient, then you solve directly that the neighbor is safe.

Chris: Yes...

Olivia: You get it?

Chris: Yes, yes, so then they have...

Olivia: ...To kill two birds with one stone.

Chris: Yes. And if the team doesn't do that, are they responsible for not acting? For the fact that the neighbor might stay unsafe?

Olivia: Hmm...yeah well...Half yes, half no.

Chris: Hmm, that's tricky, right? Hey, and talking about responsibility, suppose dad did this kind of work? And that I was a member of such a team?

Olivia: Hmm.

Chris: What would you think about that?

Olivia: Uh...cool, but also not really, because I'd be afraid you were going to get beaten by this crazy person or something.

Chris: Hmm, yes. So am I a little responsible for you, too?

Olivia: For what? What do you mean?

Chris: For you as my daughter.

Olivia: But that has nothing to do with this, has it?

Chris: No? So, if I am responsible for something in my work, then I'm not responsible as a father for you anymore?

Olivia: You are, but, that's not really related with these people, you know?

Chris: Concerning those problems.

Olivia: Hmm, yes.

Chris: But you might also say: “Well, I think it's scary that you do this kind of work, so I'd like you to do another kind of work because you're responsible for me and if you put yourself in danger then you may not be able to take enough responsibility for me if you're in the hospital.”

Olivia: But, mama. Mama.

Chris: What about mama?

Olivia: Mama can always help you.

Chris: That's true. At home.

Olivia: Yes.

Chris: Because these people do exist, so someone needs to help these people, right, you know?

Olivia: Yes.

Chris: But rather by someone else, or preferably by us?

Olivia: It depends who.

Chris: Hmm.

Olivia: It depends who of us.

Chris: Well, not you. But I could, for example.

Olivia: I'd rather you don't.

Chris: Rather someone else?

Olivia: Yes. Rather by someone who does not have kids because he doesn't have to look after different things at the same time. (Interview V, 23 Aug. 2016)

Olivia encountered ambiguity: it makes sense that the team in some way is answerable to a neighbor if they can anticipate violence toward her, but the argument feels stretched. It depends on how such an event unfolds. As Olivia replied, the responsibilities as a father and as a team member do not seem to be related. But then they do. I can try to think away my responsibilities toward my daughter while at work and live my life in separated frames, but that does not mean they have gone. Maybe I should not be the one doing this kind of work, Olivia suggested. But what about the practitioners? Who answers to them? Those who work in an organization and help prepare for team members to be deployed in risky situations, may very well answer to them, not only for how well they have prepared (for the ‘how’), but also for doing that in the first place (for the ‘what’). We, then, are answerable, in light of our relation to another, each from within our own particular center of responsibility. And so am I, answerable to those I write about (even when, as I suggested above, I anonymize my data), those I write for, and those who are in any way impacted by my writing. Along with Bakhtin, then, I am learning that
responsibility is not about rules or empathy, nor is it about ideals and critical turning points. Instead, it is about becoming and remaining answerable to each other in the ambiguities of the everyday; about maintaining an active receptivity, a willingness to be open to the otherness of the other, beyond anticipation. Since in anticipated interlocution others transform into images of strangers, who in a zone of ambivalence quickly appear dangerous.

Chris: So, uh let me think, do you have any final questions you want to ask me? I asked you so many...
Olivia: Uh, so do you actually do any interesting stuff?
Part III | Raveling
7 Threshold

What better way to put an end to a thesis on the unfinalizable than to withhold any conclusive remark? Again, better in theory perhaps, but in practice... On the doorstep between health care and criminal justice, I have tried to make you witness to a team of practitioners facing wicked problems; where basic human needs such as housing, health, work, relationships and safety are at stake for their patients. Problems they are organized into but cannot hope to solve, while being deprived of the right to be wrong in doing something about them. And so, the question of responsibility is pressing, not only in daily practice but also in theory. Not only are there no easy answers to this question, but this inquiry should have made clear that it is not an easy question to begin with, either. Not for this team, and probably not for contemporary organizing practice more generally where clusters of responsibilities are organized into ‘responsibilized’ teams. A critical purview on the organization of responsibility brings one into the theory of underground, that of CMS: ‘the place where philosophy and critical social science come together: the place where philosophical concepts and social scientific concepts meet without being reduced to one another’ (Spooelstra 2007, 163). To my mind, CMS could do with a little more moral outrage and draw nearer to the most vulnerable, to contest its own practices and boundaries, and to engage a mode of active receptivity. Yet in the face of a radical destruction of our planet and a conspiring ‘fast science,’ the conclusion is that this is anything but obvious. When radical alternatives are thus needed, box-breaking ideas should come to the fore: to think in possibilities. I have aspired to provide one such study here, in the domain of organizational ethics, drawing first and foremost on the work of Mikhail Bakhtin.

Ambivalence, ambiguity, suspension, disruption, awkwardness, messiness and other concepts I have deployed to try to move beyond, ‘unfinalize,’ seemingly given delineations and demarcations, engaging in an ‘antidiscipline’ that does not seek to propagate and appropriate a new truth, but that plays alongside the edges of our understanding of how organization works. The common phenomenon – the wickedness of the ethics of wicked problems you might say – is that of the unfinalizable: in the intersubjective and intrasubjective threshold, in the narrative threshold between the spatiotemporal of the everyday and of the adventure, and in the threshold between the word and the ‘signified.’ If we wish to understand and critique how people in their organizations come to find themselves answerable for unresolved problems, it helps if we look at the phenomenon manifested in these three interrelated areas. As it would be a little improper to study and write about the unfinalizable in a traditional finalized way—or, to put it more dramatically: to avoid the fate of Mr. Why—I have tried to follow the content through in form and suggest answerability itself as a method of inquiry. I suggested that the quality of this method is indicated by how it draws in all those involved, evoking a readiness to answer each other: for how a larger work problem comes to be boiled down to a personal concern, for how people with good intentions expose themselves and others to situations of physical force, and for how people acting on moral impulse seem to become of no concern to each other. The method itself draws heavily on Sullivan’s translation of Bakhtin’s ideas of a dialogic approach to qualitative inquiry. Methodologically I have navigated with Sullivan along the spectrum of discourse analysis, to where questions demanded.

7.1 A theoretical reflection on active receptivity

The path toward responsibility as an unwavering mode of active receptivity meandered along the obscure and not-quite-so obscure, and in this sense I felt right at home. I have tried to elaborate on this active receptivity, or mode of responsiveness, and lack thereof, in what has been written and done by scholars before me, by how the team of practitioners talk with each other and deal with their responsibilities in their daily work, and by the ways I have tried to construct this text before you: open, reflexive, over-signifying at times—well, perhaps (too) many times, really. This active receptivity refers to an ongoing willingness to respond to the openness of the self-other axis and the spatiotemporal ‘eventness’ and to the openness of language itself. As Levinas (1969/1961) argued, with Bakhtin, language ‘presupposes interlocutors, a plurality’ (p. 73). Reason lives within language, and rationality comes forth with the language that finds itself in relating oneself with another, with the unicity of any other, with the unfinalizability of their otherness:

...the first signification, is the infinity of the intelligence that presents itself (that is, speaks to me) in the face, if reason is defined by signification rather than signification being defined by the impersonal structures, if universality reigns as the presence of humanity in the eyes that look at me, if, finally, we recall that this look appeals to my responsibility and consecrates my freedom as responsibility and gift of self—then the pluralism of society could not disappear in the evaluation to reason, but would be its condition. (Levinas, 1969/1961, p. 208)

A monological world that imposes its authority on an equivalence between language and the person-as-object, disintegrates the addressee’s capacity to answerability, attempts to negate the sideward glance toward other, third addressees, and places us all in a tortured chamber, figuratively speaking. Additionally, I have suggested that Levinas’s idea of the infinite is actually more like the idea of the unfinalizable, that is hard to escape the binary good/bad approach also for philosophers such as Levinas and de Certeau, and that Merleau-Ponty was wrong to dub the flesh ‘itself’ as chiasmus. I did not mean to engage in yet another critical Foucauldian study, but he has emerged as a source of inspiration throughout. Along with Erdinast-Vulcan, this has been a loop of philosophers of exile, self-professed troublemakers and the self-destructive insufferable. Rather than exhaustive, I have tried to draw in the relevant, without implying the irrelevance of the left out. I could have
drawn in the work of, for example, Michel Serres on noise, Paul Ricoeur on emplotment, Donna Haraway on cyborgs, and Gilles Deleuze on...I guess everything, but I did not for reasons pertaining more to practical limitations than anything else. There is so much more to explore.

Drawing upon the work of Bakhtin, as Holquist and others have argued, is almost exclusively done in one of two ways, and both are waning in numbers: on one side you have the Bakhtinians in the field of literary theory, and on the other you have the fringy characters of other disciplines seeking to ‘apply Bakhtin’ in their own field. Certainly an awkward outsider among die-hards in the 15th International Bakhtin Conference (Stockholm, 2014). I claim to have gone a little further than just apply a concept like carnival into OMT. I put some work into reading Bakhtin and in an active receptive reading some of the works he read – which has turned out a greater conceptual inspiration than anything else. I have claimed with Morson that Bakhtin’s drive to produce the work that he did was a moral one, seeking ‘the responsible’ out in pathways available and promising to him. It is in this way that the deployment of his thought into this study should be regarded. What I have done a little differently from some other Bakhtin-inspired studies in OMT/OMS is to draw Bakhtin into turbulent, violent and remote pockets of organizational practice. Where the potential (deemed positive) of the carnivalesque, the open-ended and the polyphonic has been turned against itself, focusing not explicitly on (underlying) power structures, but on the daily practice of people talking (each) other into and out of trouble. This has thus been a somewhat darker Bakhtin-inspired study.

7.2 Practical implications of dialogue as the prime concern

Relentless pressure to have practitioners constantly make transparent what they do and when they do it, is, in the genre of the grid, a thing of daily life. The red tape associated with this trend has been documented amply both in popular and scientific discourse, which needs no repetition here. One particularly relevant aspect to this study does deserve special attention and that is the endangered space of practitioners to engage in meaningful, open-ended dialogue with each other. Not just because that is the humane thing to do, although that is an end in itself, but also, more instrumentally, because it should be clear from the above that the inextricably difficult problems team practitioners face together cannot be protocolized into a further allocation of the responsibilities externalized into the individual worker; because it is morally wrong to do so and because it is ‘technically’ irresponsible to expect a single person to deal with these precarious situations. For the practitioner driven by a moral impulse, internally persuasive dialogue is likely to take over at the expense not only of the practitioner in question but also at the expense of the patient and the co-workers inside and outside the organizational boundaries. Open-ended dialogue, where space is made because team practitioners feel that it is necessary to do so, is threatened because it is hard for ‘the organization’ to account for what is done in these meetings (What do they really talk about? Why does it have to take so long?). Of course, in health care, time should be spent with the patient (‘nothing about us without us’), but undirected space and time is vital too: to share viewpoints, concerns, expertise, for doing the right things and doing them with care, with an active receptivity toward each other.

There are limits to the gravity and the sheer number of clusters of responsibilities one team can handle. And, it is an illusion to think we can just organize wicked problems away, or that wicked problems are a mere consequence of the way we are organizing ourselves. There are advantages in building teams that employ different disciplines with close connections to both patients and to the plethora of other public and health service providers involved in support (and supervision) of what some would call ‘difficult patients’ and what I have also led you to believe they amount to. Of course a cold, distant and authoritative attitude toward the patient is not to be desired, but neither is engaging in a patient–practitioner relationship which is so open-ended that one could confuse it with friendship or family. The predicament of navigating between alignment and transgression is part of an ongoing dialogue about what good care is, in principle and in daily work life. You could say it is better that people talk each other into trouble than for them to get into trouble without even talking about it first. So I am not saying people should not talk to each other, on the contrary. Protocols and procedures will take you only so far: guiding one alongside proper compliance to clinical judgement in any particular case, inevitably. But what I am assuming is that the more turbulent these particular cases are, then the more pressure emerges to enforce particular grids upon them in an effort to control and avoid risk. I have argued that we should look very carefully into the effectiveness of these devices and suggested that they often tame the growl, but not the beast. And, in doing so, they provide us with a way of making sense, to expose ourselves to the real possibility of physical force and possible harm. It is not possible or desirable to think that we could or should avoid situations where a gestural, physical force takes over the world of words. But it may well be a mistake to think these situations disclose a space for embodied generosity without the risk of threat and force, and ignore that world of words which enable, prefigure and constrain us to engage in these situations in the first place.

7.3 Methodological limitations and suggestions for further research

I explored the possibility of a scientific method of answerability, in other words, if a methodological ‘design’ could be evaluated upon the criterion of evoking a mode of responsiveness in those the wicked problem study concerns itself with. I have argued that such a study cannot be of an ‘x = y’ type. Then, instead of a fast-track towards an inference to the best possible explanation, or the inductive approach, we end up in a maximum loop while remaining receptive towards ongoing changes in the ‘object’ of
inquiry and how we relate, answer, to it and to those of concern. In doing so, I poached on the dialogical approach developed by Sullivan, and, rather than a study on subjectivity, offered a single case study on responsibility. My study could have been larger, more in-depth, with video-recorded observations, more triangulation and more empirical observations, in more settings than I have undertaken, and in terms of more traditional methodological criteria one may conclude that the quality of the study might have fared well with those improvements. But they complicate the study as well in expanding what and who is involved, especially given that all of those techniques, settings and persons are not finalized entities either, and demand good care of their own. In assuming that the question of responsibility is a difficult one when facing wicked problems, I have thus tried to engage in big problems and grand narratives yet on a ‘small scale’, with small stories, in three different ways. In adopting an adventurous attitude toward the observations of the team, the narrative analysis of what I have presented of team dialogue and interviews in Chapter 4, and the way I talked about it, could seem uncritical. On the other hand, in the way the argument is built up it appears as if the message (the spatiotemporal threshold engendering personal responsibility) was already premeditated and I just needed to find ‘corroborative evidence’ to make for a plausible enough story. I still wonder whether it is possible to convey a theoretically trying message with a belief that this message primarily emerged from the observations. Either way, in Chapter 5, trust in the content of the talk was gone in our search of how people talk each other into risky situations, zooming in more exclusively on the shape people talked, and framed more in the grand narratives of critical inquiry. At the same time, the construct of chiasmus came to me very late in the rewriting of this chapter and appeared as a coincidental ‘fit’ with the observations much more than a premeditated strategy into which to force the data. But, because of the, arguably neat, fit, I stuck with it, especially when it emerged that the construct itself was related in a number of different streams of thought and authors I was engaged with already. But proximity to the data, to the people of this team, falters in this chapter where the stretch from theory to data is a sparse and long one. One could argue that the fixation on the chiasmic structure itself is ironic considering the message I meant to convey. Finally, adopting a more dialogic approach to the data, in Chapter 6 the needy author yearning for a sense of balance ends up finding little, first by a shaky narrative analysis of criminal justice – mental health nexus in team talk – and then by a more dialogic approach to an event where the author self demonstrates his own closing off of the other, be it the practitioner and the patient, again, in extremis.

A suggestion for further research is to engage into the nitty-gritty of the questions I raised earlier concerning the qualitative inquiry of the forensic ACT patient. Concerning myself with the practitioner first and foremost, this study has engaged with the organization of the forensic ACT patient as well. But rather than serving as the means for another’s end in this study, further study on the organization of the Forensic ACT patient should engage with those people directly, however (morally) difficult. This has been an inquiry into the wickedness of wicked problems as much as an inquiry of responsibility as a responsiveness to the other, and the unfinalizable sits well with both of them. A wicked problem might become a little less wicked when we, instead of compartmentalizing it into fragments or incrementalizing it into non-sequiturs, let the moral outrage simmer and persevere in answering ourselves just how many assumptions are made as regards to the limits of self (us) and others (them) of those involved to blame or to ignore; to the discourse of normality in exposing those who mean well to the problem’s spearhead; to the strain it takes to avoid othering in anticipation of one and other. During all of this writing, I have been an amateur in more than one sense, also in not having to pay lip service to a discipline or a faculty, which has had its effects on the ‘homespun’ manner of drawing in ideas and scholars. With Churchman I contend that the ‘we’ starts in primary school, encouraging a critical thinking that does not distance itself, engaging together in complex and messy examples, such as the forensic ACT team does every day. Where we move towards a mode of policy which turns the dial down in its expectations of transparency and efficiency, and rather invests in a tenacious readiness to answer each other for problems – some of which we might at least make a serious effort to take responsibility for, together. A loophole before the ultimate word, you might say, and a maximum loop implication in terms of further research.
References


Jones, C. (2003). As if Business Ethics were Possible, within Such Limits... *Organization, 10*(2), 223–248.


Spicer, M., & D. (2010). unfinished


Tweedie Kamer der Staten–Generaal. (2010a). *Voorstel van wet (Wet forensische zorg)*)


Appendix: overview of the data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sep. 2012</th>
<th>Mo</th>
<th>Tu</th>
<th>We</th>
<th>Th</th>
<th>Fr</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>21</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>24</strong></td>
<td>25</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Daily team planning meeting days 1-27: recorded between 24 September 2012 (1) and 29 April 2013 (27).

Interviews I-III recorded on:
I (Olive): 26 October 2012
II (Uriah): 1 November 2012
III (Naomi): 22 November 2012

Excerpts of recordings of the **dates underscored** are presented in this thesis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Oct. 2012</th>
<th>Mo</th>
<th>Tu</th>
<th>We</th>
<th>Th</th>
<th>Fr</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1 ( Uriah)</strong></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4 (d)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 (5)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19 (7)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>26 (8)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Next to these ‘official’ meetings and interviews, throughout and beyond this data gathering process many instances of ‘member checking’ transpired: purposively, but also simply due to the fact that as an employee of the same organization I talked, carefully, about my research with team members, and other colleagues, some of which were closely connected to the team at hand. I also discussed the intermediate findings via a presentation to the team at their office.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nov. 2012</th>
<th>Mo</th>
<th>Tu</th>
<th>We</th>
<th>Th</th>
<th>Fr</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>22 ( Uriah)</td>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mar. 2013</th>
<th>Mo</th>
<th>Tu</th>
<th>We</th>
<th>Th</th>
<th>Fr</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>29 (10)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Apr. 2013</th>
<th>Mo</th>
<th>Tu</th>
<th>We</th>
<th>Th</th>
<th>Fr</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3 (17)</td>
<td>4 (12)</td>
<td>5 (13)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 (14)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10 (15)</td>
<td>11 (16)</td>
<td>12 (17)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 (18)</td>
<td>16 (19)</td>
<td>17 (20)</td>
<td>18 (27)</td>
<td>19 (22)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 (23)</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>24 (24)</td>
<td>25 (25)</td>
<td>26 (26)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 (27)</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Summary

On the threshold between mental health care and criminal justice, this thesis will make you witness to a team of practitioners facing wicked problems (Churchman 1967; Rittel & Webber, 1973); where basic human needs such as housing, health, work, relationships, and safety are at stake for their clients/customers/recipients and other depictions of the ones being patient, the persons in question. Part of a large mental health and addiction care organization, since 2011 this team provided what is called assertive community treatment (ACT) to persons with a criminal justice record and/or a history of violent behavior, ‘forensic ACT’ in short. As with most mental health care teams, the forensic ACT team employs a set of eligibility criteria to regulate the in- and outflow of patients. People with (severe) mental illness who have been convicted of a violent offense and/or have recently shown violent or threatening behavior toward either civilians and/or practitioners are eligible for forensic ACT, which sets the team apart from other ACT teams.

Every day these practitioners work toward realizing an amalgam of caring for and securing persons at the fringes and yet in the heart of society: an extreme alternative case of organizational ambidexterity, you might say. Understanding what this organizational borderline predicament means to the practitioners involved, as they enter into dialogue with each other about their daily experiences, has received little attention thus far; let alone understanding of how their organization is itself related to their stories of responsibility. And this question of responsibility is pressing, not merely in daily practice but also in theory. Not only are there no easy answers to this question, but this inquiry aspires to make clear that it is not an easy question to begin with. Not for this particular team, and possibly not for contemporary organizing practice more generally where clusters of responsibilities are organized into ‘responsibilized’ teams (Du Gay, 2000; Painter-Morland, 2007). As Churchman (1967) suggested half a century ago, even with our best efforts we might not be taming the whole problem, just the growl. Who, then, are these people facing unresolvable problems, thrown into dens to tame growls? And, more particular to my own inquiry into the ‘responsible organization’ here: How are they thrown in? I hope to redirect some of the potential for moral outrage away from persons and particular organizations into a critical outlook on how we have come to understand and organize responsibility.

A critical purview on the organization of responsibility brings one into critical management studies (CMS). I will argue that CMS could do with a little more moral outrage and draw nearer to the most vulnerable, to contest its own practices and boundaries, and to engage a mode of active receptivity (Vetlesen, 1994, ten Bos & Willmott, 2002). Yet in the face of a radical destruction of our planet and a conspiring ‘fast science,’ the conclusion is that this is anything but obvious. When radical alternatives are needed, box-breaking ideas (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2014) should come to the fore: to think in possibilities. I aspire to provide one such study here, in the domain of organizational ethics, drawing...
first and foremost on the work of Mikhail Bakhtin (1895 – 1975), in particular his concept of unfinalizability, to explore the following research questions:

How is it that in some contemporary work practices an exposure to precarious situations is accompanied by a sense of personal responsibility, from a self to another? How do we actually deploy ourselves and others in those precarious situations by talking about them first? And how do we seem to not need anyone in particular to make us do this anyway?

Beyond the seemingly simple question ‘Who is responsible here?’ the above questions probe into the everyday work of teams of practitioners responsible for engaging with complex problems. They question the idea of responsibility as a benign notion in organizational practice and theory, the assumptions of discursive and corporeal fault lines, and the possibility of moral abdication.

I deploy ambivalence, ambiguity, suspension, disruption, awkwardness, messiness and other concepts to try to move beyond, ‘unfinalize,’ seemingly given delineations and demarcations, engaging in an ‘antidiscipline’ (de Certeau, 1984) that does not seek to propagate and appropriate a new truth, but that plays alongside the edges of our understanding of how organization works. The common phenomenon – the wickedness of the ethics of wicked problems you might say – is that of the unfinalizable, in the self–other axis, spatiotemporality and the ambiguity of discourse. Or, put simply: if we wish to understand and critique how people in their organizations come to find themselves responsible for difficult problems, it could help if we look at three interrelated issues. The process of how a dilemma at work becomes a personal problem is the first issue. How our senses of time and place in organization make us take risks in a volatile world is the second issue. The third issue is how ambiguity, instead of opening practitioners up toward each other, may redirect their receptivity inward (and alterity outward).

Bakhtin located the possibility of the ethical, not so much in the existence of indeterminism (the possibility of free will), but in linguistic open-endedness and one’s active receptivity to that open-endedness. Bakhtin’s quest from here on was to trace, not so much sociohistorical moral deeds, but rather, via philology, how that linguistic unfinalizability, the receptivity toward it, and its interplay, evolved and manifested itself. The ways in which moral responsibility as the active receptivity in answering is related to the ‘lived truth’ of the unfinalizable in the swirling triptych of self–other axis, spatiotemporal ‘eventness’ and discourse, is – in a nutshell – Bakhtin’s work.

As it would be a little improper to study and write about the unfinalizable in a traditional finalized way I will try to follow the content through in form and suggest answerability itself as a method of inquiry. I suggest that the quality of this method is indicated by how it draws in all those involved, evoking a readiness to answer each other: for how a larger work problem comes to be boiled down to a personal concern, for how people with good intentions expose themselves and others to situations of physical force, and for how people acting on moral impulse seem to become of no concern to each other.

The method itself draws on Sullivan’s translation of Bakhtin’s ideas of a dialogic approach to qualitative inquiry. What I will do a little differently from some other Bakhtin-inspired studies in CMS is to draw Bakhtin into turbulent, violent and remote pockets of organizational practice. Where the potential (deemed positive) of the carnivalesque, the open-ended and the polyphonic is turned against itself, focusing not explicitly on (underlying) power structures, but on the daily practice of people talking each other into and out of trouble. This will thus be a somewhat darker Bakhtin-inspired study, muddling through an ongoing dialogue about good care and its ‘responsible organization.’
Nederlandse samenvatting

Op de drempel tussen ggz en justitie opereren bemoeizorgteams, zoals forensisch assertive community treatment (ACT) teams, die zorg bieden aan ‘verwarde’ mensen met kluwens problemen rondom (psychische) gezondheid en verslaving, werk, huisvesting, relaties, geld en schulden en veiligheid. Naast de steun in het herstel van hun cliënten signaleren deze teams wanneer er gevaar dreigt te ontstaan: voor de cliënt zelf, of voor anderen dichtbij de cliënt. In dat geval kunnen er procedures in gang worden gezet om een cliënt onder dwang op te nemen of, als er sprake is van justitiële voorwaarden, om terug te keren naar detentie af te dwingen. Maar als het onverhoopt een keer helemaal misgaat ergens in de keten, dan haalt het dagelijkse werk van deze professionals ineens de voorpagina’s van de media. Te midden van alle complexiteit mag je het als team dus ook eigenlijk nooit bij het verkeerde eind hebben. Zoals forensisch ACT-boegbeeld Harry Gras eens zei: ga daar maar aan staan. En dat is wat hulpverleners van een forensisch ACT-team dag in dag uit doen. Maar hoe gaat zo’n team in de weerbarstige praktijk om met deze onverbiddelijke verantwoordelijkheid? En hoe kunnen we de organisatie van zo’n praktijk begrijpen? En ten slotte, wat vraagt het van onderzoek, van de onderzoeker, om tot een begrip daarvan te komen? Dit zijn vragen die als rode draden door dit promotieonderzoek lopen.

Het is inmiddels gebruikelijk dat multidisciplinaire, ambulante teams met een zekere bewegingsvrijheid worden ingezet op maatschappelijke uitdagingen. Dergelijke teams zouden beter aansluiten bij de cliënt en het sociale netwerk in de wijk en ook nog eens een goedkopere, effectievere aanpak vormen dan klinische opnamen. Maar ze staan vooropvragen die vaak geen oplossing kennen: ‘onvoltooibaar’ zijn of lijken te zijn. De vraag wie of wat verantwoordelijk is, is dan des te pregnanter. hoe is dit georganiseerd, zowel in de dagelijkse praktijk waarin teamleden met elkaar praten hierover, als ook in een bredere context? Door in te zoomen op een forensisch ACT-team waarin dat onvoltooibaar aan de oppervlakte komt, ga ik na hoe de organisatie van verantwoordelijkheid in de praktijk ten uiting komt. Daarvoor heb ik met name een reeks dagelijkse team overleggen geobserveerd, waarin steeds weer twee vragen worden beantwoord: wat is er (gisteren) gebeurd en wat gaan we (vandaag) doen? In die overleggen ontvouwen zich verhalen over verantwoordelijkheid: in de verhouding tussen de een en de ander; met betrekking tot de beleving van context; en ten aanzien van de ambiguïteit van taal.

Het eerste deel van dit proefschrift positioneert mijn onderzoek in een wetenschappelijke stroming die critical management studies (CMS) heet. CMS geeft kritiek op het idee van prestatiegerichtheid in organisaties, propageert (zelf)reflectie en trekt het schijnbaar vanzelfsprekende in twijfel. Daarnaast licht ik het onvoltooibaar toe, een belangrijk concept van de Russische filoloog/ethicus Mikhail Bakhtin (1895 – 1975). Ik beschrijf hoe Bakhtin’s begrip van het onvoltooibaar in drie perioden is in te delen. Voordat ik dat drieluik gebruikt als het tweede deel van dit onderzoek, ga ik in op mijn methodologische aanpak en ook hierin staat de dynamiek van de verhouding tussen zelf/ander, context en taal centraal. Het tweede deel wordt voorafgegaan door drie volgende onderzoeksfragen, die in de hoofdstukken 4, 5 en 6 van deel twee worden behandeld:

Hoe gaat de blootstelling aan kwetsbare situaties bij een forensisch ACT-team gepaard met een gevoel van persoonlijke verantwoordelijkheid?
Hoe komen hulpverleners en cliënten in dat soort situaties terecht?
Hoe lijken we, anticiperend op andermans reactie, het contact met die ander niet eens nodig te hebben om ons erin te begeven?

In hoofdstuk 4 staan de verhouding tussen zelf/ander enerzijds en de context anderzijds centraal, langs de verhaallijn van een uit de hand gelopen gesprek tussen een cliënt en twee hulpverleners. Mijn idee is dat de fundamentele structuur van een organisatie een bepaalde verantwoordelijkheidsgevoel als het ware opwekt en dat die structuur overeenkomt met die van een antieke voorloper van de literaire roman. In hoofdstuk 5 maakt context plaats voor de ambiguïteit van taal. Te midden van overwegingen om een risicovol huisbezoek af te leggen en gedwongen opnameprocedure te starten, voltrekt zich een polariserende strijd tussen de ambiguïteit van taal en de verhouding tussen zelf/ander, over en door de grens van het lichamelijke vis-á-vis het organisatorische. In hoofdstuk 6 komt een derde binnen de verhouding tussen zelf/ander op de voorgrond te staan: een gevaarlijke buitenstaander misschien, of een begripvolle zielsverwant, of een ideaal zelfbeeld. Met beelden van de ‘verwarde persoon’ verwrongen tussen de verhaallijnen van justitie en van geestelijke gezondheidszorg, doe ik een poging tot die derde te komen. Om na te gaan hoe die derde een bepaald verantwoordelijkheidsgevoel kan opleggen of iemand kan doen denken dat dat idee vanuit zichzelf komt.

De rafels van de drie rode draden en de bevindingen in deel twee blijken in deel drie van dit proefschrift vooral afgehecht als een betoog over ontvankelijkheid: een motief dat tevens in de verschillende verhalen van de hulpverleners is terug te vinden. Verantwoordelijkheid vanuit deze invalshoek is een proactieve openheid: een bereidheid om je te verhouden tot anders zijn. Dit proberen te organiseren is lovenswaardig, maar niet zonder valkuilen. Hetzelfde geldt voor onderzoek doen.
Acknowledgements

It has been a joy and a privilege to do a PhD. It is safe to say I have been truly passionate about it, for all these years. Doing justice in this short space to those who have supported me in the process of this study is proving to be a wicked problem. First, I am tremendously grateful to my supervisors, René ten Bos and Claudia Groß for their guidance, support and perseverance, for allowing me to wander and discover my scholarly interests, for their inspiration, and for teaching me how to build an argument.

I would also like to thank Prof. Dr. Willem de Nijs, Prof. Dr. Chris Steyaert and Prof. Dr. Damian O’Doherty as members of the manuscript committee.

Special thanks go out to all the practitioners of the forensic assertive community team, who allowed me to be part of their everyday working life. I hope some practitioners will find this work to be of some value.

Many thanks to my colleagues, my own team members, and my RESORG teachers and classmates.

Special thanks go out to Paul Sullivan, for his encouragement and for his inspiring works on Bakhtin.

I also want to use this opportunity to acknowledge my gratitude to Bas Koene, whom I met only once, at the Rotterdam EGOS conference. His simple advice proved crucial: meet some like-minded scholars in your niche. And so I did, coincidentally at the same conference, when Kari came to tell me that many of the works I was citing in my paper presentation were on his bookshelves. Together with Jenny, we shared many thoughts on Bakhtin and organizational theory. Many, many thanks to you both.

I am very grateful to Hilary, Sarah, and Jessica, the editors of the special Work/Think/Play edition (2018) of Qualitative Inquiry, as well as to Charlotte, Ninna and Elina, the editors of Cultivating Creativity in Methodology and Research (2018).

I have met many interesting and kind people at academic symposia and conferences over the years, and a heartfelt thanks go out to Sonja Jerak-Zuiderent, Maria Celia Labandeira and Manuel Libenson, in particular. Many thanks to the organizers of the annual Liverpool ethnography symposium, in particular Mike and Manuela.

Many thanks to Linda for the close reading and especially for tackling the worst excesses of gender bias in my writing.

Many thanks to Lex, for our open dialogue and your active receptivity.

Many thanks to Ashvin and Leo, my paranymphs, for their support and comfort with such remarks as "well, seeing it’s your birthday too, if the defense falls apart at least we’ll have something else to celebrate."

Finally, this list would be incomplete without acknowledging the support and love from my family and friends.

To Oli and Tobi, I love you!!!

Last, but certainly not least, I am deeply indebted to my amazing wife, Florencia, for your love and support, and for encouraging me to pursue this goal. I cannot offer much as compensation, but my never-ending gratitude.
About the author

Chris Smissaert (1 November 1977) was born in Utrecht and raised in Nieuwegein. After completing his secondary education at the Cals College, he went abroad to do volunteer work. There he would meet his future wife, Florencia Chausovsky. Chris studied Cultural Anthropology (propedeuse), and earned his Master’s degree in International Relations at the University of Amsterdam. Chris has worked as a policy advisor and manager in different (semi-)public institutions and organizations. He started his PhD journey in 2011 as an external PhD student at the RESORG PhD school of the Institute for Management Research of the Nijmegen School of Management (Radboud University). Early on, after reading David Boje’s 1995 Disney article, Chris came across Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosaics (Morson & Emerson, 1990). There would be no turning back. His other research interests are primarily in critical management studies, organizational ethics, discourse studies, and reflexive methodologies. He and Florencia have two awesome kids, Olivia (2007) and Tobias (2013).